

Minister Ordination and Licensing Policy and Procedures

Policy: The Assembly shall have a policy that addresses the process for ordaining and licensing Awakening Together (AT) ministers, as well as for maintaining minister ordination or license. Moreover, this policy shall also address the procedural criteria that underlie the Minister Preparation Program (MPP).

Procedure I: All Awakening Together ministers other than the initial Chairman-Minister, President-Minister and Vice-President Minister must complete MPP. The requirements for being admitted into MPP are:

- A. One must be an AT member to apply for MPP.
- B. In order to be accepted into MPP, one must profess a calling from within to be a servant of the one true Self through Awakening Together and must be dedicated to support members and friends on the path of awakening to one true Self. (Note: A friend is defined as anyone and everyone who is not a member.)
- C. In order to be accepted into MPP one must have a demonstrated commitment to spirituality by meeting at least one of the following criteria:
 - a. Prior completion of at least one program of relevant and substantial spiritual/religious education. Self-study is accepted. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Significant structured time at an ashram, monastery or other communal setting rooted in spiritual study and/or practice.
 - ii. Completion of self-study courses such as, but not limited to, A Course in Miracles, The Holy Spirit's Interpretation of the New Testament or The Way of Mastery.
 - iii. Completion of another minister ordination program with a significant education component.
 - iv. Formal education with a spiritually focused major, such as but not limited to Religious Studies.
 - b. Perform at least two years of consistent volunteer service with Awakening Together.
 - c. Pass an interview with the President-Minister in which it was determined that the applicant has the calling, motivation and commitment to enter MPP.
- D. The applicant must agree to adhere to the expectations of an MPP participant prior to being admitted into the program.
- E. Applicant who claims financial hardship status may apply for partial scholarship to help offset the financial cost of the program.

Procedure II: Prior to being ordained, one must meet the following criteria:

- A. One must be a founding member (a member who signed the constitution) or a member of good standing for at least two years.
- B. One must be at least 18 years of age.

- C. One must successfully complete both Phase I and Phase II of MPP according to the requirements for successful completion in Procedure III.
- D. One must attend an Awakening Together ordination ceremony and take the Awakening Together Ordained Minister's Oath.
- E. Although the Ordained Minister's Oath may be updated from time-to-time with the approval of the Member Board of Trustees, the oath shall include the following components:
 - a. Indication that the AT ordained minister feels called from within to be a servant of the one true Self through Awakening Together, dedicated to support members and friends on the path of awakening to one true Self.
 - b. Commitment to uphold, demonstrate and maintain AT purpose and core values.
 - c. Pledge to remain in communal relationship with Awakening Together through service to the assembly or the broader community on behalf of the assembly.
 - d. Agreement to join the AT Minister's Association and adhere to the procedures of that assembly.
 - e. Promise to be a living ethical demonstration becoming of an Awakening Together minister.

Procedure III: Although the MPP curriculum may be updated from time-to-time by the President-Minister or under the supervision of the President-Minister, the program shall include the following components:

- A. One introductory class or module prior to application to the program to explain the commitment one is making as a participant in the program and as an Awakening Together ordained minister.
- B. An application, which must be approved by the President-Minister.
- C. Two phases of curriculum. Phase One shall be a program teaching true discernment. Phase Two shall be a program introducing a broad spectrum of spiritual teachings.
- D. Two exams, one after each phase of the program, both of which must be passed with at least 75%. If a participant does not pass an exam the first time it is taken, the participant shall be afforded a second opportunity to pass that exam. If an exam is not passed after two attempts, the participant must complete a program of self-study designed for the participant by the President-Minister before taking the exam for the third time. If the exam is not passed after the program of study, the participant must retake the applicable phase before being permitted to take the exam again.
- E. Total length of MPP curriculum is approximately 18 months (70 – 85 weeks) based on weekly participation without interruption.
- F. Although it is not mandated, it is recommended that one complete the entire MPP curriculum within three years or less. The maximum time one may take to complete the MPP is five years from the date of application unless the

President-Minister approves an extension application due to special circumstances.

- G. MPP is typically offered as a facilitator-led online class with 4 to 10 students per class. However, MPP may be offered in other formats
- a. When one or two participants are interested in MPP, but there are not enough students to warrant a class, the program may be offered as a mentor-led program with the permission of the President-Minister. When the program is mentor-led, one or two students will meet with the mentor on a regular basis to go over the curriculum.
 - b. On occasion, a participant may be permitted to complete a class as a self-study program with the permission of the President-Minister. Introduction to MPP may also be offered as a self-study class. Self-study homework must be reviewed by the President-Minister or another assigned MPP facilitator.

Procedure IV: Awakening Together desires to support and equip ordained ministers for meaningful and effective ministry. This support includes ministerial categories that are responsive to changing personal circumstances. These include: Active Status, Leave Status, Emeritus Status, Suspended Status and Inactive Status.

A) **Active Status:** Upon being ordained as an AT minister, one must maintain active ordination status unless another status is requested and approved by the President Minister. Criteria for maintaining Active Ordination Status are:

- a. One must maintain a meaningful communal relationship with the assembly. Examples of "meaningful communal relationship" include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Teaching in the Sanctuary.
 - ii. Writing and submitting articles for publishing on the AT website or in an AT newsletter
 - iii. Leading or assisting in AT gatherings
 - iv. Officiating an Awakening Together regular or special member meeting, retreat or pilgrimage. (A special meeting is defined as a meeting initiated by the President-Minister to benefit the entire assembly and open to all members and friends.)
 - v. Offering coaching/counseling to members without cost
 - vi. Teaching AT course offerings
 - vii. Serving on the Board of Directors, as a Member Board Trustee or on an AT Member Board subcommittee
 - viii. Serving in any AT volunteer position
 - ix. Serving in the broader community as a representative of AT while also maintaining contact with AT teachings.

- b. If an ordained minister does not remain in meaningful communal relationship with the assembly for a period of 12 months, that minister shall be restricted from leading gatherings. If an ordained minister is not in communal relationship with the assembly for a period of 18 months, the Member Board of Trustees may suspend

his/her ordination. Once an ordination is suspended for failure to remain in communal relationship, it can only be reinstated by the Member Board of Trustees or the Board of Directors.

- B. Leave Status:** Leave Status supports wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. It is for ordained ministers who need rest, renewal, healing, or a concentrated time of spiritual contemplation. Leave Status is appropriate when an ordained minister feels the need to be relieved of ministerial responsibilities for a time with *the clear intent of returning to active ministry*. Leave Status is also appropriate when an ordained minister faces significant personal circumstances that are best managed by stepping away from ministry for a time *with the clear intent of returning to active ministry*.
- a. Leave Status must be requested by an ordained minister and may be approved by the President Minister for up to one year.
 - b. Unless reinstated to Active Status by the President Minister, an ordained minister on Leave Status may not:
 - i. Lead an Awakening Together gathering
 - ii. Officiate an Awakening Together regular or special member meeting, retreat or pilgrimage.
 - iii. Teach the MPP Curriculum
 - iv. Administer sacraments
 - v. Offer coaching/counseling
 - c. An ordained minister on leave status retains her or his minister certificate.
- C. Emeritus Status:** Emeritus Status recognizes and honors faithful service curtailed by health or age-related conditions. This status must be requested in writing by the ordained minister or by another member on her or his behalf and approved by the President Minister.
- a. An ordained minister on Emeritus Status (Minister Emeritus) may occasionally lead an Awakening Together gathering
 - b. An ordained Minister Emeritus retains her or his minister certificate.
- D. Suspended Status:** Suspended Status removes ordained ministers from active ministry who have failed to comply with the requirements set forth herein, including failure to abide by the Minister's Oath.
- a. Only the Board of Directors can reinstate an ordination that has been suspended by the Board of Directors. The Member Board of Trustees or the Board of Directors can reinstate an ordination that has been suspended by the Member Board of Trustees.
 - b. During *suspension*, an ordained minister may not:
 - i. Lead an Awakening Together gathering
 - ii. Officiate an Awakening Together regular or special member meeting, retreat or pilgrimage.
 - iii. Teach the MPP Curriculum
 - iv. Administer sacraments.
 - v. Offer coaching/counseling
 - vi. Teach AT course offerings

- vii. Serve on the Board of Directors, as a Member Board Trustee or on an AT Member Board subcommittee
- viii. Serve in any AT volunteer position
- ix. Serve in the broader community as a representative of AT
- c. The minister certificate of an ordained minister on suspended status will be revoked while suspended.
- d. **Reinstatement to Active Status After Suspension:**
 - i. An ordained minister on suspended status who wishes to return to active status must submit a written request to either the Member Board of Trustees or the Board of Directors, depending on which Board took the action suspending the minister. Upon application, the applicable Board may interview the minister and may approve or disapprove the request.
 - ii. An ordained minister on suspended status who wishes to return to active status must step back into communal relationship with Awakening Together by performing a service sufficient to satisfy the criteria for maintaining ordination (*See IV(A)(a) above*). The service to be performed will be determined jointly by the minister and the Ministers' Subcommittee. The minister will not be reinstated to active status until after the communal relationship has been reestablished.
 - iii. If an ordained minister has been on suspended status for 12 months or longer, he or she must also retake and successfully complete the "Being an Awakening Together Minister" portion of the MPP curriculum either in the online classroom or self-study format.
 - iv. The Board to whom application for reinstatement is made may, at its discretion, determine whether additional requirements must be met prior to reinstatement of any applicant.

E. *Inactive Status:* An ordained minister may request, in writing, to be placed on *inactive status*. *Inactive Status* is for an ordained minister who does not want to continue in active ministry and has no desire to return to active ministry in the foreseeable future.

- a. An ordained minister on inactive status may not:
 - i. Lead an Awakening Together gathering
 - ii. Officiate an Awakening Together regular or special member meeting, retreat or pilgrimage.
 - iii. Teach the MPP Curriculum
 - iv. Administer sacraments.
 - v. Offer coaching/counseling
- b. The minister certificate of an ordained minister on inactive status will be revoked while inactive.
- c. **Reinstatement to Active Status:**
 - i. An ordained minister on inactive status who wishes to return to active status must submit a written request to the Ministers'

Subcommittee. The Ministers' Subcommittee may interview the minister and may approve or disapprove the request. The Ministers' Subcommittee may bring a request for reinstatement to the Member Board of Trustees in making the decision whether to grant the request for reinstatement.

- ii. An ordained minister on inactive status who wishes to return to active status must step back into communal relationship with Awakening Together by performing a service sufficient to satisfy the criteria for maintaining ordination (*See IV(A)(a)* above). The service to be performed will be determined jointly by the minister and the Ministers' Subcommittee. The minister will not be reinstated to active status until after the communal relationship has been reestablished.
 - iii. If an ordained minister has been on inactive status for 24 months or longer, he or she must also retake and successfully complete the "Being an Awakening Together Minister" portion of the MPP curriculum either in the online classroom or self-study format.
- F. All Awakening Together Ministers must adhere to the AT Ordained Minister's Oath. If one does not adhere to the oath in ways other than that which is stated in this Procedure, ordination can be suspended by the Member Board of Trustees or the Board of Directors. Conduct unbecoming an AT minister is cause for suspension of ordination by the Board of Directors.

Procedure V: Members currently serving on the Board of Directors or Member Board of Trustees may become a Licensed AT Minister. The criteria for becoming and maintaining Licensed Minister status are:

- A. Member must currently serve on the Board of Directors or the Member Board of Trustees to become licensed and to maintain that license.
- B. Member must meet the requirements of Procedure I, apply for MPP and successfully complete Phase I of MPP according to Procedure III D. A licensed minister is not required to take Phase 2 of MPP.

Procedure VI: It is beneficial to the assembly when members of the Board of Directors and Member Board of Trustees choose to become licensed ministers because it ensures consistent discernment according to the Phase I curriculum. The following criteria outline the limits on the licensed minister:

- A. A licensed minister can function in the following capacities:
 - a. Lead an Awakening Together gathering when requested to lead a gathering
 - b. Officiate an Awakening Together special meeting, retreat or pilgrimage. (A special meeting is defined as a meeting initiated by the President-Minister to benefit the entire assembly and open to all members and friends.)
 - c. Teach the MPP Introduction and Phase I.

- B. A licensed minister cannot administer sacraments.

Procedure VII: Participants of MPP who are taking the program for credit toward licensing or ordination must adhere to the following expectations:

- A. Commit to full participation in MPP modules or classes. Full participation includes complying with the “Participant Expectations” section set forth for each course in the Facilitator Guide and Participant Workbook for that course.
- B. Complete homework and actively participate in classes or modules. Homework and class participation is the performance aspect of the program. A student cannot pass a phase without consistently meeting this requirement within the phase.
- C. Get prior permission from the President-Minister to be excused if he/she will miss more than two classes or modules in a row due to special circumstances. The homework requirement stated in the applicable MPP facilitator’s guide applies.
- D. When a class is missed, the student must provide the for-credit homework to the facilitating minister no later than 7 days after the missed class unless alternate arrangements have been agreed to in advance by the facilitating minister.

Procedure VIII: Once a minister is ordained, he/she shall join the Minister’s Association. The purpose and procedures for this association are:

- A. Association of AT ministers shall serve as an integral component of our commitment to the purpose and core values of Awakening Together. The primary purpose for the Association is to mentor new ministers and to oversee all ministers to ensure they are abiding by the AT Minister Ordination Oath.
- B. The Minister’s Association is managed by a subcommittee consisting of at least three AT ministers. The chairman of this subcommittee shall be an AT minister selected by the Member Board of Trustees from among the Member Board of Trustees or the Board of Directors. The chairman of the subcommittee shall select the remaining members of the subcommittee. The Minister’s Association Subcommittee will meet at least once per quarter.
- C. Upon ordination, each newly ordained minister will be admitted to the Minister’s Association and paired with an AT ordained minister for 3 months for the purpose of orientation as a new minister. The function of the orientation program is to assist the newly ordained minister as he/she adapts what has been learned from MPP into practical application as a functioning ordained minister. The Minister’s Association Subcommittee is responsible for developing and designing the minister’s orientation agenda and for training selected AT ministers as orientation mentors.
- D. The Minister’s Association Subcommittee is responsible for developing and managing a process that enables ministers to request and receive a mentor after the initial orientation period.

- E. A minister shall be considered qualified to serve as a mentor when he/she has:
 - a. Demonstrated clear discernment.
 - b. Demonstrated exemplary understanding and application of AT purpose and core values.
 - c. Consistently abided by the Awakening Together Minister's Oath.
 - d. Demonstrated willingness to be a mentor.
- F. The Minister's Association Subcommittee shall be responsible for presenting areas of concern regarding a minister (e.g., not abiding by the minister's oath) to the Member Board of Trustees or, if warranted, to the Board of Directors. Misconduct by a minister who is a Director, officer or employee of the assembly warrants notifying the Board of Directors.
- G. The Minister's Association Subcommittee will oversee AT ministers to ensure they abide by the AT Ordained Minister's Oath including remaining in communal relationship with the assembly with the following exceptions:
 - a. The Chairman of the Minister's Association will oversee the remaining ministers on that subcommittee.
 - b. The President-Minister will oversee the chairman of the Minister's Association Subcommittee.
 - c. The Board of Directors will oversee the President-Minister, the Vice President-Minister and the Chairman of the Board.

Procedure IX: A minister who is ordained with another church or ordaining authority may apply to be ordained with Awakening Together through a reduced MPP curriculum. The following criteria apply:

- A. The applying minister must provide documentation showing that he/she is an ordained minister in good standing with the ordaining authority.
- B. The applying minister must provide documentation of the curriculum he/she completed as part of the prior ordination program.
- X. The applying minister must meet with the President-Minister to review his/her reasons for wanting to be ordained as an Awakening Together minister.
- Δ. If the President-Minister accepts the applying minister's application for a reduced program, the President-Minister will develop an individual MPP plan for the applying minister based on his/her prior learning and experience. The reduced program will include:
 - a. The introductory class
 - b. The standard application
 - c. Phase I and the Phase I test
 - d. Selected classes from Phase II that were not taken as part of the applying minister's prior curriculum.
 - e. The Phase II test

Procedure X: This procedure outlines who may teach MPP when MPP is being offered for ordination as an Awakening Together Minister. These same

requirements apply for ministers who mentor one or more MPP students per Procedure III.G.

- A. Ministers who are certified to teach MPP by the President-Minister or by the President-Minister's delegate may teach MPP for ordination. In order to be certified, an ordained minister must:
 - a. Be a Founding Trustee or complete MPP Facilitator's Training.
 - b. Demonstrate the clarity necessary to facilitate MPP.
 - c. Demonstrate that he/she is able to fulfill the commitments necessary to serve as an MPP facilitator.

When a substitute facilitator is needed for an MPP class or module, a minister who is not certified to teach MPP or a member who is in their second year of MPP may facilitate as a substitute for the regularly assigned facilitator of a given MPP class or module. That minister/member may substitute for no more than 2 classes or modules or 33% of the given class, whichever is less. (E.g., If the class is a 3-week class, the non-certified minister/member may only substitute for one class or module.)

Procedure XI: Awakening Together Ordained Ministers may purchase MPP Facilitator Guides for their own personal use. This opportunity is available because it benefits Awakening Together for our ministers to continually review the MPP curriculum after ordination. Facilitator guides purchased for personal use shall be handled as proprietary information. Ministers are not permitted to duplicate facilitator guides, put them online or share them in any other way with any individual.

Procedure XII: MPP was developed for the purpose of ordaining members as Awakening Together ministers. However, the truest value of MPP is that it points consistently to truth and can assist individuals in their awakening. Therefore, it is helpful to offer MPP in ways other than for ordination of Awakening Together ministers. This procedure outlines other authorized uses of MPP.

- A. Members who are Awakening Together Certified Teachers, Licensed Ministers or Ordained Ministers may teach MPP classes as a non-MPP program outside of Awakening Together according to Procedures I and IV in the Awakening Together Classes Policy.
- B. Individuals who take MPP classes as a non-MPP program according to Procedure IV of the Awakening Together Classes Policy may transfer credit for some classes taken and continue the program directly with Awakening Together in order to become an Awakening Together Ordained Minister. Reference Procedures V and VI of the Awakening Together Classes Policy for specific details.