



PREPARING FOR MINISTRY

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS TO RECEIVE AN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
CREDENTIAL IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN MINISTRY NETWORK



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Preparing for Ministry

Educational Options to Receive an Assemblies of God Credential in the
Rocky Mountain Ministry Network

By Gene Roncone

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gene Roncone has a passion to help people explore and develop their call to full-time ministry. For years he has coached and led small groups of young adults who are exploring God's call to ministry. Gene presently serves as the District Superintendent/Network Pastor of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network where he provides support, resourcing, and training for nearly 170 churches and 600 ministers serving over 44,000 constituents in Colorado and Utah. Gene also enjoys podcasting and has authored several books including *Rise Up*, *Isolation in Ministry*, *Prevailing Over Impossibility*, and *A Season for Legacy*. He enjoys reading, wilderness camping, and spending time with his wife, Rhonda, their adult children, and their grandchildren. You can contact Gene through www.generoncone.org.

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1: Why Should I be Credentialed?

If God has called you to the ministry, why is it important to be credentialed by a denomination or ministerial organization? That's the question I want to answer in this chapter.

Certification is the method by which an ecclesiastical authority acknowledges the divine call and qualification of a person to serve in ministry. In most denominations, credentialing is only available to men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These are people who are fulfilling one of the types of equipping ministries described in Ephesians 4:11. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Being credentialed should be embraced with the utmost seriousness and diligence. There are several reasons why it should be important to you, to the church, and to God's people.

Credentialing facilitates accountability. Credentialing is the act of having someone in spiritual authority over you recognize God's call upon your life. You remain accountable to this spiritual authority in areas of moral wholesomeness, family health, doctrinal purity, ministerial ethics, corporate integrity, financial uprightness, and leadership standards. We see this kind of accountability modeled all throughout the New Testament.

Credentialing facilitates credibility. Full-time ministry in most churches involves the official endorsement of a reputable denomination or credentialing organization. In the Assemblies of God, this endorsement is usually in the form of being certified, licensed or ordained. This process will ensure the following:

- The genuineness of your Christian experience.
- The sufficiency of your spiritual, moral, and emotional maturity.
- The reality and confirmation of your divine call.
- The correctness of your doctrine.
- The adequacy of your preparation and abilities.
- Your commitment to the policies and programs of the church.

The important thing to remember is that if God has called you, your call will be evident to godly leaders who serve in authority over you. When you seek their confirmation, they will either say yes, no, or wait.

Credentialing facilitates opportunities. Being credentialed creates opportunities for ministry, participation, and contribution within the Assemblies of God. Those who are granted a credential are given the opportunity to minister, perform functions, participate in the privileges of membership, and receive a covering for civil benefits, such as a housing allowance and recognition as an employee of a non-profit organization.

Credentialing facilitates health. It ensures that the pastoral leadership within Assemblies of God churches is comprised of individuals who are proven, qualified, genuine, and divinely called. It also helps to maintain a higher level of doctrinal purity within the body of Christ, as well as an accountability structure outside of the local church.

If you desire to serve in full-time ministry, any church you serve in is going to expect you to be credentialed. Doing so and continuing to advance your credential to the level of ordination will expand the potential of your gifts, opportunities and impact upon the Kingdom of God.

2: The Importance of Formal Training

The call of God is a call to preparation. Many people don't understand the need for ministerial training. They may ask, "Why isn't the call of God enough? Why should I waste time getting an education when people are dying and going to hell each day?"

In this chapter, I would like to answer three important questions.

- Why is formal training important?
- What will it consist of?
- How can I get it?

Let's start with why formal training is important. The ministry is a profession that requires a unique set of skills and knowledge to minister on a spiritual level. Passion is good, but passion without education is what gives rise to false teaching, heresy, and cults. Billy Graham was one of the most effective and well-known ministers of the century—but so is the cult leader David Koresh. Mother Teresa changed lives for many years in Calcutta, India—but Mary Baker Eddy changed lives by starting a false religion. William Carey is most remembered for his missions work in a foreign land—but so is Jim Jones. Passion without education does more harm than good.

When God calls a person to ministry, He first prepares them. After God called the Apostle Paul, He required him to spend three years preparing in the desert. Paul was obedient even though he had already completed rigorous training as a Jewish Pharisee. What about Jesus? He spent the first 30 years of His life preparing for three-and-a-half years of ministry.

Things have not changed much. Like God, most churches and denominations require their ministers to have some kind of formal education. The extent and type of educational requirements vary depending on the group or the level of credential desired. Nearly all reputable denominations use a process to confirm that you have satisfied some form of minimal educational requirements. In most cases, this involves the following:

- Reviewing your educational history.
- Evaluating your ministry experience.
- Requiring you to submit an application.

- Taking a series of tests covering everything from your temperament, doctrine, Bible knowledge, theology, church history, polity, and practical ministry.
- A personal interview.

This might seem extreme but let me assure you that it is not. After three decades in ministry, I have seen one truth demonstrated time and again. A person rarely experiences a ministry deeper than their preparation. Your future ministry is a lot like a building. Its height, width, and length will never exceed the structural strength of the foundation of preparation.

What will your formal training consist of? Although it may vary in each church or denomination, formal training is most likely to include instruction in the following areas:

- **Bible:** You will take courses to help you understand the books of the Bible, how they are related to each other, and what makes them different.
- **Hermeneutics:** That is a fancy word that describes the skills needed to correctly interpret the Bible in its original context and language.
- **Theology:** In other words, categories of truth on important topics like God, man, sin, salvation, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, end times, and other subjects.
- **Preaching and teaching:** You will learn how to isolate and teach important truths, write sermons, and communicate God's Word to people.
- **Church history:** How God has worked in, through, and with His people down through the centuries.
- **Discipleship:** How to be intentional in helping people of all ages systematically grow in their faith and Christian maturity.
- **Church administration and leadership:** You will be taught how to use process, mobilize resources and lead people to minister more effectively.
- **Church ceremonies:** You will learn how to lead communion services and perform ceremonies like baptisms, weddings, funerals, and baby dedications.

- **Pastoral counseling:** You will learn the basic skills to help people work through the emotional problems and various kinds of life crisis they may be facing.
- **And many other important subjects that ministers must have a working knowledge and familiarity with if they are going to be successful.**

Now let's talk about how you can get this needed training. A person called of God to ministry must undergo some kind of formal preparation in order to be ordained. There are three basic options in acquiring this. I will list them in the degree of difficulty.

- **Local entrustment.** One, seek an independent or self-proclaimed ordination based on life experience or the authority of a local pastor. A local church credential is provided by a local church, is not transferable and only enables one to serve in the church that issued it. Although they require the least amount of preparation and have the lowest level of accountability, a few independent and non-denominational churches provide them.
- **Distance learning.** Two, participate in a certified correspondence or online degree program that satisfies the needed educational requirements. Trinity Bible School, Pathway and Berean School of the Bible are examples of programs that can help you and will be discussed in another chapter.
- **Residential college.** Three, attend an accredited Bible college or university which gives a formal degree, while at the same time meets your denomination's educational requirements.

I am among a vast number of ministers who believe that a formal Bible college or seminary provides the best training for ministerial preparation. We will talk more about this in our next chapter, but it isn't too late to start praying about this important subject now.

You need more than passion to be effective in ministry today. Passion is needed, but passion without education can do more harm than good. On the other hand, you'll need to make sure your education does not extinguish the fire of your passion. The best way to guard and fuel your passion is to stay involved in ministry. Whether it's now or later, stay engaged in local church ministry every week while you are being trained for ministry.

God will help you keep this balance, as well as determine the best training for you. But the most important decision you need to make now is how deep and wide you want your foundation of ministry to be. Once you make that decision, stick to it and continue exploring the call!

3: Is a Residential Bible College a Better Way?

In this chapter I would like to speak about why I believe a certified Bible college is the best place to receive ministerial training. When using the term Bible college, I am not just referring to schools that include the words "Bible College" in their name, but also those colleges and universities who offer a major in ministerial studies in addition to other majors as well. Even though you may be in the early stages of exploring your call to ministry, I would like to encourage you to both consider and start planning now to attend a residential Bible college. If you are already in an established career and have a family, a residential Bible College may not an option for you. If so, don't worry. We'll talk more about that later on. But, if you are someone whose life situation would allow you to attend a residential Bible College, it's a powerful option for the following reasons.

Bible college helps you meet the educational requirements for ministry. The ministry is a profession just like law, medicine or even accounting that requires advanced preparation. If you're going to minister on a spiritual level, you will need more than passion. Passion is good, but passion without education produces derailed callings, false teaching and shallow ministries.

When God calls a person to ministry, He prepares them. After God called the Apostle Paul, He required him to spend three years preparing in the wilderness. Paul was obedient even though he had already completed rigorous training as a Jewish Pharisee. Even Jesus spent the first 30 years of His life preparing for three-and-a-half years of ministry.

Things have not changed much. Like God, most churches and denominations require their ministers to have some kind of formal education. If you intend on being ordained, you are going to need some kind of formal training for ministry.

Bible college is an investment in your life as a Christian. Even if you are not certain as to whether God is calling you to full-time ministry, I think you should still consider going to a residential Bible college for a few years. Investing two to four years of your life gaining an advanced understanding of the Word of God could hardly be considered a waste of time. At the very least, you would be:

- a highly qualified lay leader, deacon, or Bible teacher in your church.

- a powerful mentor to your children and others in your life.
- equipped to take advantage of ministry opportunities that present themselves every day in the normal course of secular employment.
- better equipped to worship, grow, serve, and reach lost people.

Bible college provides a spiritual environment. Although there are several quality distance educational opportunities to prepare a person for ministry, few can compare with the environment that exists at a residential Bible college. A Bible college is more than a campus. It is a community of believers who are interacting and participating in each other's ministerial preparation. It offers interaction with the most qualified instructors, opportunities for one-on-one mentorship, chapel services that focus on ministering to individuals who feel called to ministry, and a fraternity of those who share a common life purpose. Most Bible colleges also provide hands-on ministry opportunities to apply what you are learning under the direction of mentors and in the presence of peers. In a nutshell, Bible college provides a structured environment where you can maximize your efforts in ministry preparation.

Bible college provides an interactive learning environment. Students learn through face-to-face interaction, one-on-one mentoring with instructors, and the opportunity to dialogue, ask questions, and interact with others who are on the same journey. The difference can be compared to playing a soccer game on PlayStation or going to soccer camp for a week with friends and competent instructors. The learning environment is three dimensional.

Bible college provides a lifelong network and support system. Because a Bible college is a community of people who share a similar calling, you will develop lifelong relationships. These relationships with friends, associates, and faculty become a powerful network and support base for your future ministry.

Bible college provides you with an appreciation for diversity. True diversity is only found in the context of relationship and community. In Bible college you will experience the diversity of gifts, temperaments, experiences, passion, and abilities found in the Kingdom of God. Independent study does not offer this kind of diversity.

Bible college provides you with powerfully relevant resources. Bible colleges give students immediate access to a vast array of ministry resources. Whether it's recent ministry research, powerful libraries or up-to-date ministry journals, they are readily available to students preparing

for ministry. Students also get exposure to experienced experts, trained faculty, and cutting-edge ministries through campus life. Guest speakers and presenters expose students to some of the most relevant models of ministry. In short, Bible colleges are an environment where students can have hands-on access to some of the best resources in ministry.

Bible college nurtures a deeper preparedness. I have served in an executive capacity in two different state denominational headquarters. My experience has taught me that the depth of ministerial preparation will improve one's longevity and quality of ministry. For some, economics and life situations prevent them from an accredited Bible college or seminary learning, and certificate-level learning is their route. What is vital here is the motivation. Are you taking the easy way out of convenience or even pride, not believing that deeper learning matters? Do you think technology and ministry involvement alone can equip you to meet the complex needs of the people you serve? As a leader helping serve our ministers, I have observed many more problems among those with less preparation. Research in other movements indicates that formal education is one ingredient of a healthy leader who begins and finishes well.

If you are called to ministry, you will want to do everything you can to get to a good Bible college. There will be no greater investment in your future ministry.

4: How to Choose a Bible College

In the last chapter, we talked about the advantages of going to a residential Bible college. In this chapter I would like to give you some helpful tips on how to find the one that's right for you. Choosing a Bible college can be as personal as buying a cell phone. You need to know your needs, the options available, and what fits your budget. Here are ten of the most important things to consider when making your decision.

Check out the options. There are many Bible colleges—large and small, good and bad, liberal and conservative, denominational and non-denominational, far and close, and as many other extremes as you can think of. You will want to check your denomination's website as a starting place. If you are a Spirit-filled believer, you can access every Bible college associated with the Assemblies of God at www.colleges.ag.org. After looking at the schools, you should pick three or four to visit and experience on a firsthand basis.

Evaluate the courses offered. Each college is different and offers an array of unique courses. If you're going to prepare for full-time ministry, you will want to limit your options to schools that offer a major in an area of full-time ministry—like pastoral leadership, children, youth, missions, or worship. You will also need to pick a school that offers other courses in an area that complements your calling and interest. Some schools also offer options as a minor emphasis, like preaching, evangelism, or administration. If you plan on going on to a graduate program, you need to make sure the college is properly accredited so your classes will be recognized by the higher institution you will later choose. Just because a school does not have the word “Bible” in its name does not mean it does not offer a major in some form of ministry, especially if they are a large school.

Location and facilities. The school's location is important. It will determine the following:

- How much money you spend on airfare or gas in the next four years.
- What kind of employment opportunities there are for you while in school.
- The cost of things like housing, parking, and public transportation.
- The availability of ministry opportunities for you while in school.

The facilities and resources offered at the campus are also important. Are the dorms conducive to study? Is the campus organized in a way that facilitates interaction and relationship with other students and faculty? Is the library well supplied with both hard and electronic resources? Is the campus located in close proximity to work, worship, shopping, eating and ministry opportunities? These are the kind of issues you will need to weigh when considering location and facilities.

Area of specialty. While most schools offer degrees in multiple areas of ministry, it is common for them to have a reputation for excellence in a particular area. Preaching, youth ministry, missions, children's ministry, and church planting are just a few of the areas of specialty. Knowing what the school specializes in and how large and experienced the faculty is in that area may help you decide.

Educational focus. In addition to having areas of specialized study, some schools have a unique focus or approach to training. These can usually be broken down into the categories of "ministry only" or "ministry and..." Some Bible colleges are strategically focused on preparing students for full-time ministry in a Spirit-filled context. As a result, every faculty member, program, building, and dollar is strategically aligned to achieve ministry training. Other schools offer ministry degrees along with a menu of other liberal arts degrees, like business, science, education and others. These schools try to offer a balanced program and faculty in multiple disciplines and areas of study.

Spiritual environment. The spiritual pulse of any given Bible college is another characteristic that is important. Chapel services usually provide teaching, worship, and prayer that minister to the students with the knowledge that they are preparing for ministry. Chapels are also an opportunity for the college to model the kind of ministry they want to reproduce. Some Bible schools offer chapel once a week, while others offer it daily. Some have a powerful spiritual dynamic, and others are more passive and neutral. Some Bible colleges hold the students accountable to developing spiritual disciplines, and others are more removed.

Let me give you one word of advice on this important issue. I have found that no five things influence the spiritual climate of a Bible college more than the following:

- The spiritual passion and anointing of the sitting president.
- The moral standards of the school.
- The priorities and resources they invest in their chapel services.

- The faculty's consistent involvement in their own local church.
- The frequency and kind of ministry opportunities for students sponsored by the school.

Schools with a strong spiritual atmosphere will bring out the best in you, while schools with a mediocre spiritual climate will usher you into apathy. With that said, you will need to experience the atmosphere of your top two or three selections on normal days, not recruitment drives, to decide what the spiritual pulse of the campus is really like.

Quality of faculty. A Bible school is only as strong as its faculty. You will need to muster the courage to meet with key faculty and ask some tough questions in this area. What kind of academic qualifications do they possess? What kinds of ministry experiences have shaped their philosophy? Were their experiences positive, effective, and practical? How are they involved in ministry within their own local church? How often are they involved in the spiritual life of the students? How accessible are they to the students on a regular basis?

Ministry opportunities. A minister must strive to keep a balance between passion and knowledge. Both are needed. However, an excessive focus on knowledge can extinguish spiritual passion. The worst thing you can do in Bible college is to disengage from ministry and become a “four-year professional student.” The best way to guard and fuel your passion is to stay involved in ministry. That is why you must find a Bible college that either provides or offers ministry opportunities within a local church on a weekly basis.

Cost versus investment. Sooner or later, you are going to have to pay for your education. Cost must be a consideration. At the risk of sounding exorbitant, let me encourage you to not let cost hijack your decision. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about.

I was called to ministry from a life of drugs and alcohol. Due to being raised in a single-parent family and circumstances beyond my control, I received little financial assistance during my four years of Bible college. Student loans and small local scholarships were my primary source. I left Bible school with a lot of debt and stress. It was very difficult and at times impossible to service this debt on the salary I made in my first ministry position. Although God didn't provide for my financial needs at the time of my education, He did a few years later when I sold my first home and benefitted from a market high in home equity. It was at that time, after

several years of making monthly payments, that I was finally able to pay off the entire balance.

Don't get me wrong, and please hear what I am NOT saying. I am not saying that debt is good or desirable. What I am saying is that for me, it was the way God provided for my education. If need be, I would do it again. To me, my education was an investment as worthy as my house, car, or stock market. It is that valuable!

On another note, I did have to use wisdom in evaluating the cost of my education. I could have selected a more renowned school that would have easily been two or three times the cost. Had I done that, all the equity of my home would not have been able to retire the debt. Wisdom is the key. Only you can decide what is right for you and your budget.

Accreditation. The quality of the education, faculty, financial standing and programing that a Bible college has is usually reflected by its accreditation. There are all kinds of accrediting agencies that endorse colleges. Some are comical and others are coveted. When it comes to Bible schools, there are three that you want to take note of.

- The first is the A.B.H.E., which stands for the Association of Biblical Higher Education.
- The second is a standardized regional accreditation whose name will vary depending on the geographic region that the Bible school is located in. Nevertheless, the institution's name will start with the two words, "Regional Accreditation." It is important to know that in some situations regional accreditation is much more rigorous and difficult to obtain than A.B.H.E. accreditation.
- Some Bible schools may offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. In this case they may be considered a seminary and have A.T.S. accreditation (Association of Theological Schools).

Bible schools with either of these accreditations stand out because they have passed an independent evaluation of their entire program, made themselves accountable to these organizations' high standards, and submitted to periodic reviews.

When it comes to choosing a Bible college, there are many variables to consider. You will have to determine what order of importance they are to you. Don't get overwhelmed by all this. It's just a small piece in a very large plan that God has for your life. I have enjoyed various opportunities over the years to serve on the board of several schools, to work with and

teach at a few Bible colleges. If I can give any advice to you, please feel free to reach out to me at www.generationone.org.

As good as resident Bible Colleges are, they aren't for everyone. In the next chapter I will address alternative ways to get the education you need for ministry and ordination.

5: Online Alternatives to Bible College

In the last few chapters, we have talked about the advantages of going to a residential Bible college. But what if a residential Bible college isn't possible for you? As a District Superintendent, I give leadership to a Network of nearly 170 churches, 600 ministers and 44,000 constituents. I have seen outstanding spiritual leaders come from all walks of life. Not everyone can go to a residential Bible College. Some are called to ministry after having already earned a degree in some other field. Others may have received a call to ministry after having been in another career path for decades. Several may not be able to afford the cost of a residential Bible College. A few will already have had children and families to support and unable to devote their full time to study. Others are in co-vocational ministry that requires them to take classes on the side while working a secular job and ministering in a local church at the same time. I have even seen a few young people who want to take online ministry classes while they are still in high school and before they ever go to Bible College. Whatever the case may be, there are some powerful alternatives to getting a good education without attending a residential Bible college. Here are a few of my favorite options listed in order of convenience.

1. Trinity Bible College. If you're looking for the perfect balance between flexibility, affordability, options and academics, Trinity is your place. That is why the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network enjoys a collaborative partnership with Trinity Bible College and Graduate School in Ellendale, North Dakota. Although they are a residential Bible college, they provide a powerfully unique online experience. Their ministerial training is offered online in either an accredited or non-accredited learning track. Both can be converted down the road towards graduate study, and both meet the minimum standards for all three levels of an Assemblies of God credential (certified, licensed and ordained).

- **MyTrinity Online™ Certificate of Ministry Program.** Trinity's online classes offer a certificate of ministry training that is approved for all three levels of ministerial credentialing with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed, and ordained). These 100% online programs allow participants to take the same accredited classes offered in Trinity's ministry degrees at a fraction of the cost. Not only does this help individuals move into ministry more quickly with less debt, but it also provides a high-quality academic education and training in the process. It also

provides an opportunity for students to move seamlessly into a full degree program at Trinity should they so choose.

Each course is taught by one of Trinity's professors and students have regular access to professors through online course interaction, email, phone, and/or online video calls. All courses are run through Trinity's online course platform (Moodle), where students will have access to course notes, lectures, assignments, and other course materials. All courses in the Certificate of Ministry Training can transfer over into any of Trinity's degree programs.

- **MyTrinity Online™ B.A. & A.A. in Biblical Studies Degree.** Trinity offers a Biblical Studies Degree that is 100% online. The core courses and general education classes in this program are the same as a residential program but more affordable and convenient. They can also be a pathway to their graduate program if desired.
- **Trinity Ordination Scholarship (Masters and PhD programs).** We have more good news if you are a minister with the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network and currently ordained! To recognize and honor the sacrifice, commitment, and ministry accomplishments of those who have achieved the highest level of credential, the Rocky Mountain Ministry offers exclusive benefits to those who are ordained. Among these benefits is a 50% discount on all graduate level tuition in the Masters and PhD programs of Trinity Bible College and Seminary. As our primary educational partner, Trinity assists us by investing in leaders already serving in our Network, as well as increasing our ability to recruit new ministers to serve as lead pastors and staff in our RMMN churches. For more information on the qualifications and requirements of this and other benefits, contact the District Superintendent's office or visit www.agspe.org/trinityscholarship.pdf.

Trinity has put together a quality program with accumulating opportunities. More information about these and other programs offered by Trinity Bible College can be found at www.mytrinity.online.

2. **Pathway (Online Interactive Learning).** Pathway is the newest innovation in online ministerial training and credential advancement. The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network has established a formal partnership with them that we believe has tremendous potential. Pathway was created as just that...a pathway to get both formal Bible education and an Assemblies of God credential at the same time. They are a “Church-Based Bible Institute” that has been approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The Bible training they provide will give you a great education, while also fulfilling the educational requirements needed to apply for all three levels of credentialing with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed and ordained).

Pathway is one of the most innovative approaches I have seen to earning all three levels of ministerial credentials. The following characteristics make it uniquely user-friendly.

- **Fully online.** All their courses and materials are online. This means you don't need to buy, order or ship books! All you need is accessible by your computer or smartphone.
- **App-based.** Once you register for your subscription through the Pathway website, you can then use the platform through Pathway's app. Their app will then enable you to access your courses anywhere and anytime. That means you don't need to learn complicated educational technology platforms like Blackboard or Moodle. To access the app, just search for "Pathway Training" in your app store.
- **Self-paced.** You can progress as fast as you like. There are no due dates or completion windows for any assignments, and you may take as long as you want in any course! That means no long waits for annual class rotations, inconvenient meeting times or inconsistent class schedules.
- **Subscription based.** A subscription of \$50 a month will give you access to their entire catalog. This makes all credentialing courses and electives available to you.
- **Credit mobility.** Because Pathway has partnered with Assemblies of God universities, you can continue your studies and transfer over more than a full year's worth of credits to a partnering university.

- **Gamified experience.** Earn points and badges to level up as you progress through the courses. Check the leaderboard to see how you match up to your friends.

Pathway's online interface allows you to track your progress, view your professor's feedback to coursework and get an all-access pass to all of their credentialing courses and any future electives they publish. For more information go to <https://pathway.training>.

3. **Global University (traditional correspondence school).** Global University provides both a formal accredited (degree) and non-accredited (diploma) option to complete your ministerial training through their online correspondence courses. These are offered in English and Spanish. The non-accredited (diploma) track is not transferable to other universities but is affordable and strategically aligned with the Assemblies of God's educational requirements for all three levels of ministerial credentials (certified, licensed and ordained). Students register, pay and order books for each individual class and are given a deadline to complete the requirements. Once each of the three levels are completed, they automatically meet the appropriate educational requirements for a credential with the Assemblies of God.

- **Non-accredited (Berean School of the Bible diploma).** Upon successful completion of the Ministerial Studies Program, students should be prepared for credentialing interviews and tests for each of the corresponding levels of credential (certified, licensed and ordained). The student will have mastered the basic Bible content (Old and New Testaments), theological principles, and practical ministry skills for service in a church leadership position. Ministerial credentials are issued by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, not by Global University. This program provides academic training, not ministerial recognition. Fees are very affordable.
- **Accredited degree (Global University MA Degree).** This degree prepares you to minister and serve with professional excellence as pastor, educator, leader, missionary, and support

staff within church, missions, and educational organizations. Upon successful completion, students will have met the minimum educational requirements for all three levels of credentials (certified, licensed and ordained). Ministerial credentials are issued by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, not by Global University. This program provides academic training, not ministerial recognition. Tuition is considerably higher than the non-accredited track and the course work is more demanding.

More information on these and other programs offered by Global University can be found at www.globaluniversity.edu.

As you can see, it is possible to find various options to receive quality ministerial training without attending a residential Bible college. The benefits of these options are:

- **Flexibility.** The primary benefit of online learning involves scheduling flexibility. You sign up for the classes when you want without having to move, travel, miss work or block out predetermined class times. Students can work during the day and complete coursework in the evenings or on the weekends.
- **Affordability.** Online education is more economical as you are not paying for on-campus housing, meal plans, hardbound books, travel back and forth during semester breaks or having to quit an existing job.
- **Convenience.** Online ministerial education allows for a more comfortable learning environment because you complete class work at home, in a coffee shop or library. You can basically work anywhere there is a good internet connection.
- **Pace.** You can move at a pace and rhythm that complements your own lifestyle and unique situation.
- **Sustainability.** Online education allows you to stay connected with your existing job, relationships and emotional and spiritual support base.

- **Development.** Online ministerial training allows you to both learn and apply what you are learning while continuing ministry in your current church or ministry. You are in essence turning your current ministry, whether volunteer or paid, into a practical laboratory of learning and personal growth.
- **Technical skills.** Online ministerial training gives you the opportunity to develop and sustain valuable technical skills such as doing online research, discussion boards, teleconferencing, streaming and educational platforms.
- **Financial aid.** The accredited options allow you to access financial aid, grants and scholarships.
- **Opportunity.** Should you later decide the Lord is calling you to full-time ministry, all of the above options would position you to have met the minimal educational requirements for all three levels of an Assemblies of God credential (certified, licensed and ordained).

Perhaps the most powerful benefit of any of these online options is accelerated personal growth. Should you decide the Lord is not calling you to full-time ministry, you will be one of the most qualified and Biblically educated volunteers in the churches you will attend and serve. Imagine how blessed your church or pastor will be to have a deacon, small group leader or board member whose personal spiritual development was backed up by formal theological and Biblical training. It's a win/win either way.

There are fewer things in this life more fulfilling than serving in the ministry. If I can be of any help to you as you try to identify a path for ministerial education and preparation, please feel free to contact me at any time at gene@rmdc.org.

I remain committed to your success,

Gene Roncone
 Rocky Mountain Ministry Network
 District Superintendent/Network Pastor (aka "helper")
<https://generoncone.org/about-gene>