



Ministry Licensing Policy

September 2026

1. Purpose

At 1st Street Church, pastors are recognized through licensure. A ministry license is the Church Council's formal endorsement of a person for pastoral work in this congregation — the church's way of naming those gifted by God to shepherd His people among us.

Scripture frames pastoral leadership as a gift to the church for a purpose. Christ gives pastors and teachers to His church to equip God's people for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, until we grow together into maturity and into the unity of faith (Ephesians 4:11–16). Licensure is how 1st Street Church identifies, affirms, and commissions those called to that work.

This policy describes what a ministry license is, who may be licensed, and how licensure is granted, held, and ended. It governs all licensed pastors of 1st Street Church, whether they serve as paid staff or as volunteers.

2. What a Ministry License Is — and Is Not

A ministry license is an *ecclesiastical status*: the Church Council's recognition that a person is called and qualified to serve as a pastor at 1st Street Church. It is the exclusive path to being recognized as a pastor here. No title, role, function, or job description establishes pastoral standing on its own — only a current license issued by the Church Council.

Licensure is *not* employment. Some licensed pastors serve as paid clergy on the church staff. Others are volunteers, drawn from the congregation, who exemplify pastoral gifts and assist in pastoral work with the backing of the Lead Pastor and the Church Council. This policy governs both. Becoming an employee is not a condition of being licensed,

and being licensed is not a promise of employment. The employment consequences of licensure — how "clergy" is defined for staff, the hiring sequence, compensation, and tax treatment — are carried by the Employee Handbook, not by this policy.

3. Qualifications for Licensure

The church looks for the same things in every pastor it licenses. What matters is *who a person is and what they are called to*, not credentials or tenure:

- **A genuine call to pastoral ministry**, evident in the person's life and recognized by the church's leadership.
- **Christlike character**. Scripture sets out the character that spiritual leadership requires — the qualities described for overseers and elders in 1 Timothy 3:1–11 and Titus 1:5–9. These passages are held as a portrait for prayerful discernment, not as a checklist to score a person against. They are the same standards 1st Street Church already applies to its Church Council.
- **Theological understanding and the ability to teach**. A licensed pastor affirms the church's Statement of Faith (Mission, Doctrine & Values) and has the aptitude to handle Scripture faithfully — to read it, understand it, and teach it — with a depth of comprehension equal to the responsibility of leading others in it.
- **Pastoral wisdom for building up the body**. The work of a pastor is more than teaching. It asks for compassion, for care and counsel rooted in a robust, biblical worldview, and for the Spirit-given discernment to love a congregation well. This is the giftedness, named in Ephesians 4, for building up the body of Christ.
- **Ongoing growth as a disciple of Jesus**. A licensed pastor is not someone who has arrived, but someone who keeps following — still pursuing Christ in prayer, in Scripture, and in the life of the church.

How these qualifications are weighed is left to the prayerful judgment of the Church Council, exercised through the application and the conversations described in Section 4. They are not reduced to a formula.

These qualifications describe competence, not credentials. A seminary degree is not a requirement for licensure, and the Master of Divinity expected of the Lead Pastor is a qualification of that office in particular, not of licensure generally. Where a candidate does bring formal training, it informs the discernment rather than standing in for it. The Lead Pastor — to whom a candidate first brings the application, and who knows the church's leaders best — weighs a person's demonstrated gifts alongside any credentials they hold, and carries that discernment into the Church Council's review.

4. The Licensing Process

A person enters the licensing process by *invitation*. How that invitation arises differs by the nature of the role, but the process itself is the same.

Volunteer pastors are most often recognized organically. As a member serves and participates in the life of the church, their pastoral gifts become evident over time, and the Lead Pastor and Church Council invite them to be licensed so that they may assist in pastoral work with the church's backing.

Staff pastors are sought intentionally. When the church identifies a need for a pastoral role, candidates are considered for that express purpose through the hiring process. A candidate is invited into the licensing process once initial interviews have shown that the candidate merits serious consideration for the role. The candidate completes the Ministry License Application — including a statement of beliefs — and submits it to the Lead Pastor, who examines the candidate's theological convictions in the formal interview that follows. The Lead Pastor carries that discernment into the Church Council's review, which is reserved for candidates the Lead Pastor endorses. In a hiring situation, the Church Council approves the license by motion, conditioned on the candidate's acceptance of the job offer, so that the license takes effect when the hire does — the licensing review proceeding alongside the candidacy, as established in the Employee Handbook's hiring section.

In both cases, the process proceeds as follows:

- The candidate is invited to be licensed as a pastor for 1st Street Church.
- The candidate completes the Ministry License Application — including a statement of beliefs — and submits it to the Lead Pastor.
- The Church Council reviews the application and meets with the candidate to discuss their theology and ministry.
- If the Church Council approves, the congregation prays for and commissions the candidate at a worship service (for staff pastors, once the hire is complete).

Approval is by action of the Church Council. Commissioning at a worship service is the public moment at which the congregation receives and prays for its newly licensed pastor.

5. Licensure, Membership, and Screening

Membership. It is the church's clear preference and expectation that a licensed pastor be, or become, a Member of 1st Street Church, pursued through the ordinary membership process. Belonging to the church one pastors is fitting, and it reflects the congregational life this church is built around. Membership is *not*, however, a

precondition of a valid license: a person may be a validly licensed pastor whether or not they are yet a recognized Member, with validity flowing from the Church Council's approval. (The Lead Pastor, however, must be a Member under the Constitution and Bylaws.)

Screening. Every licensed pastor is screened before serving, under the church's Abuse Prevention & Reporting Policy:

- A **paid** pastor is screened as a Paid Employee — application, background-check consent, and a completed background check reviewed before beginning work, as described in that policy and in the Employee Handbook.
- A **volunteer** pastor is screened as a Volunteer Leader — an adult in a position of authority over others, subject to background-check screening under that policy.

The screening requirements themselves live in the Abuse Prevention & Reporting Policy and are not restated here.

6. Term, Stepping Away, and Revocation

Term. A ministry license is granted for as long as 1st Street Church is the licensed pastor's home church. It has no fixed expiration and no renewal cycle. It remains current until the pastor steps away from pastoral ministry at 1st Street Church, or the Church Council revokes it. The Church Council keeps a simple record of who is currently licensed, so that "current license" always has a clear answer.

There is no routine review process. As part of his ordinary oversight of the church's leaders, the Lead Pastor brings any question about a pastor's licensure to the Church Council as the need arises.

Stepping away. A license ends, without any disciplinary action, when a pastor steps away from pastoral ministry at 1st Street Church — by resigning the license, ceasing to serve, or moving on so that 1st Street Church is no longer their home church (for example, by relocating or joining another church).

Leaving paid employment does not, by itself, end a license. A staff pastor who steps out of a paid role but continues to serve the congregation continues as a volunteer pastor. Licensure and employment are separate throughout.

Revocation. The Church Council may revoke a license for conduct that disqualifies a person from pastoral leadership or for departure from the church's doctrine. Loss of

good standing in the congregation is among the considerations the Council weighs. As in every matter of this kind, the Council acts with kindness, grace, and the aim of restoration — the same posture the church brings to all of its care and accountability, and that the Employee Handbook promises in its conduct and termination provisions. The pastor will have the opportunity to be heard before the Council acts.

7. Relationship to Other Documents

This policy is the authoritative source for what licensure is and how it works. It relates to the church's other governing documents as follows:

- The **Employee Handbook** — Sections 3.3 and 4.2 (which define "clergy" for employment as a current license held while serving in a pastoral role), Section 5 (the hiring sequence), and Section 13 (Clergy Employment Policies), which carries the employment, compensation, and tax consequences of licensure.
- The **Constitution and Bylaws**, the church's foundational governing document, several parts of which bear on licensure:
 - **Article 5**, which governs the appointment and termination of the Lead Pastor through a vote of the Membership. Nothing in this policy alters that process.
 - The church's **Statement of Faith** — its mission, doctrine, and values — which a licensed pastor affirms.
 - The **Membership Requirements** (Addendum B), which govern the Membership a licensed pastor is expected to pursue.
- The **Abuse Prevention & Reporting Policy**, which governs the screening of paid and volunteer pastors.

8. Communication

This policy and others can be found at <https://1ststreetchurch.com/info>

This policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Amendments may be made with the approval of the Lead Pastor.