

ORDINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS
THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF LOS ANGELES, SOUTHWEST & HAWAII
P. O. BOX 1868, GLENDALE, CA 91209-1868

INTRODUCTION

Ordination is the recognition by the Lord's people of the call of an individual to serve as Christ's under-shepherd. Ordination is first and foremost a response of the local church. It is her responsibility to determine the candidate's worthiness for sponsorship and to walk with the candidate through each step of the ordination process. A regular American Baptist ordination service takes place in the sponsoring church after the candidate has prepared, applied, been examined by the sponsoring church and the Ordination Committee and found ready to serve in vocational Christian ministry. The following document is a guide for the candidate and the sponsoring church to help in the preparation for ordination as an American Baptist in the region of ABCOFLASH.

I. PROCESS

The staff of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest & Hawaii (ABCOFLASH) serves the Ordination Committee in the administrative responsibilities of the ordination process. Therefore, all correspondence should be directed to the Ordination Committee in care of the ABCOFLASH (address above).

- A. A church recommends a candidate for ordination to the Ordination Committee of ABCOFLASH based upon the church's assessment of the candidate and recognition of the candidate's preparation and calling to ordained ministry. This assessment will involve:
1. Candidate holding current membership in a church of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles or the Congregations of the Southwest & Hawaii recommending ordination. (see II B)
 2. Candidate's educational preparation for ministry.
 3. Recognition of candidate's spiritual maturity and preparedness for ordained ministry (1 Timothy 3:1-7).
 4. Recognition of candidate's foundation in Biblical understanding and ability to accurately represent the Christian faith and beliefs (II Timothy 2:15).
 5. Candidate must have evidence of vocational call to a recognized American Baptist ministry and perform ministerial functions.

A recommendation of a candidate is considered to be the result of a corporate recognition of a candidate's preparedness. It is therefore considered important that the appropriate leadership structure of a church be involved in the candidate's assessment and recommendation. Subsequent to a corporate assessment and recommendation, the church shall address a letter to the Ordination Committee of ABCOFLASH requesting examination of the candidate for the purpose of recommending the candidate for ordination.

- B. Upon receipt of an official letter from the requesting church and the completed application form, the candidate will have one year to complete and submit the application requirements and material.

Every ABCOFLASH church should have a copy of the Ordination Process and Standards document.

- C. After the completed application form is received, the ABCOFLASH office will send:
 - 1. A copy of the ABCOFLASH Code of Ethics for Church and Pastor"
 - 2. Reference forms to the candidate's pastor (or equivalent, i.e. peer/associate in ministry), one seminary professor, and (3) other women and men named by the candidate.
 - 3. Information on The Center for Ministry with waiver of confidentiality
 - 4. Personal/criminal background checks will be obtained; waiver attached, please sign and return.

When a candidate submits his/her ordination document in a language other than English, he/she will be required to go before an ad hoc committee of 5-6 persons fluent in that language, chaired by a member of the Committee.

- D. The candidate shall complete and submit his/her ordination paper to the Ordination Committee (see WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS) no less than 60 days prior to the Ordination Committee meeting.
- E. Upon receipt of all complete application materials, the Ordination Committee has one year to complete the review of the candidate. The paper will be read/pre-screened by a Credentials Committee; presently composed of Rev. Dennis Casaje, Dr. Sam Chetti, Dr. Joe DeRoulhac, Dr. Bob Wallace, and Dr. Wes Brown, as Chair of the Committee. (a process to take no longer than 28 days before the candidate meets with the Committee). The candidate and his/her church will be notified of the decision of the Credentials Committee.
- F. F. The present schedule of Committee meetings is the 3rd Tuesday of February; May; September; and November. Time: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

A translator may be needed at the Committee meetings, depending on candidate that day.

- G. The sponsoring church is expected to send the pastor or a representative to be an advocate for the candidate. The candidate's spouse or fiancé (fiancée), if applicable, is strongly recommended to attend. A candidate could bring several persons with him/her when being examined by the Committee, i.e. spouse, pastor, 2 of his/her references (with candidate that would be a total of 5).
- H. When the candidate comes before the Ordination Committee, the Committee, will determine the readiness of the candidate for ordained ministry in ABCOFLASH. If, in the judgment of the Committee, the candidate is not ready, he/she will be advised regarding areas needing to be addressed and will be asked to appear before the Committee, at a later date. The candidate and the church will be informed of the Committee's decision promptly. If the Committee withholds recommendation, the candidate and the sponsoring church will be advised of possible courses of action.
- I. The candidate and the local church will consult with the chair of the Ordination Committee regarding the service of ordination. Items to be addressed promptly are date (which must be cleared with the Chair of the Ordination Committee and the Executive Minister), participants and service format. (See Sample Service) The service should be held at a time that would enable churches and ordained pastors of ABCOFLASH to participate in the laying on of hands. ABCOFLASH will furnish the Ordination Certificate.

II. STANDARDS (Should be met prior to coming before the Ordination Committee)

- A. A vital, personal experience of Christian regeneration followed by baptism by immersion.

- B. Active membership in an American Baptist Church for the preceding 12 months.
- C. Skills, gifts and qualities for Christian work and evidence of God's call to ministry.
- D. Definite plans to enter one of the following fields of ministry:
 1. Local church ministry;
 2. National (home) or international (foreign) missions in which pastoral functions will be exercised;
 3. Specialized ministries, e.g. institutional, academic or military chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or staff membership in a church-related institution, where preaching, teaching and/or pastoral work is required;
 4. Staff ministry, involving educational or pastoral functions in an American Baptist agency, or ecumenical ministries appropriately related to the American Baptist Churches.
- E. Evidence or intent to work in an American Baptist related or recognized ministry.
- F. Adequate academic training: four years of college and three years of seminary training (Bachelor or M.Div degrees or their equivalent including course study, or approved self-study, in Baptist history and polity).

Latitude in applying educational standards is possible in certain instances: Long-term effective Christian service and specific training related to the Applicant's field of Christian ministry may be considered equivalent.

If the applicant does not hold full academic qualifications, the Committee may consider equivalent qualifications. The candidate will be required to continue further education until the full standard has been attained. All exceptions to educational requirements must be cleared by the Committee one meeting prior to examination by the Ordination Committee.

A seminary senior may receive special consideration if an immediate call to a specific full time work has been extended.

For non-English speaking procedures, please see Addendum I, page 6.

- G. An understanding, acceptance and support of the life, ministry and history of American Baptist Churches USA as a denomination.
- H. A person whose lifestyle demonstrates his/her Christian commitment.
- I. A doctrinal position which is both well-articulated and compatible with the American Baptist Churches.
- J. Candidate is required to attend the Center for Ministry (or an authorized equivalent) and to provide a confidential report to the Chairperson of the Ordination Committee, and the Executive Minister of ABCOFLASH.

III. WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS

- A. A letter from the church requesting that the ordination process begin which includes a statement that, insofar as possible, the church determined that the candidate has met all standards outlined in I above. (See Sample Letter)
- B. An official transcript from the seminary from which the candidate is a graduate is to be mailed directly from the Seminary to the Region Office.

C. A 12-20 page, typed and doubled-spaced document from the candidate which includes:

1. A brief biographical statement including:
 - place of birth
 - places lived family and marital status
 - education
 - experiences
 - important for personal development
 - a description of the spiritual journey by which the candidate became a Christian, including conversion; baptism; specific growth experiences; call to ministry.
2. Reasons for seeking ordination
3. A statement expressing the candidate's understanding, acceptance and support of ABCUSA as a ministry and mission. The statement shall include a brief summary of Baptist principles.
4. PREPARATION FOR MEETING THE ORDINATION COMMITTEE
The candidate shall present a summary statement of faith (with Biblical references). This is to be in the candidate's own words and so structured as to reveal professional and theological competence; candidate must give information revealing a mature, reflective faith, relevant to today's concerns, not just quote Bible verses. Content must include statements showing the candidate's understanding of the following:

God: Who is God? What is God's character and nature? What is our knowledge of God based on?

Jesus Christ: Who is Jesus? How do you state your Christology?

Holy Spirit: Who is the Holy Spirit? What are the primary roles of the Holy Spirit in the church and world today? What are the gifts of the Spirit and their function in the church today?

Trinity: What is the Trinity and its relevance for Christian teaching today?

Humanity: What is God's interaction with humanity? How is humanity understood in relation to God (fallen, sinful, redeemed, etc.)?

Sin: What is sin and what are its effects on the human race? How does sin affect the life of believers in Christ?

Salvation: What is salvation and how is it obtained? What are the benefits of salvation?

The Bible: What is the Bible? What is your view of the canon, inspiration, and hermeneutics of Scripture? What should be its role in the life of the church today?

The Church:

- 1) its nature and mission
- 2) the significance of its ordinances
- 3) the meaning and goal of the church's ministry
- 4) apologetic for local church membership: is there one?
- 5) its organization and structure for ministry?

Christians and social responsibility:

In your view, what should be the Christian response—

- 1) to the environmental crisis and creation care?
- 2) to issues of social injustice (like racism)?
- 3) to the need of peace with justice, and reconciliation?
- 4) to the Great Commission and world mission?

Eschatology: What is the future for humanity and for the church in the plan of God?

Note: During your examination before the Committee, some case study related to church ministry may be presented for your comments.

- D. A signed statement indicating that the candidate has read and agrees to comply with the American Baptist Document "A Code of Ethics for Church and Pastor."
- E. Encourage entrance into American Baptist Personnel Service (ABPS). (Any questions - call ABPS, VF, 1-800-222-3872, extension 2488.) A Validation Form will be sent to Valley Forge by the Region Office when the candidate begins the ordination process.

ADDENDUM I

ORDINATION OF NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF LOS ANGELES, SOUTHWEST, AND HAWAII.

Candidates for ordination from non-English speaking backgrounds may have different options.

1. Traditional Education Standards. The candidate follows the process indicated above in the educational requirements.
2. Non-Traditional Education Standards. Candidates with English language barriers, pending resident status, or with unique personal/family situation as approved by the Credentials Committee, may fulfill the following educational standards:
 - A. Submission to the Credentials Committee of all academic/theological endeavors for evaluation as to adequacy.
 - B. Complete a class on Baptist History and Polity, or a guided course with a tutor on American Baptist history and polity, approved by the Committee.
 - C. After three or more years of satisfactory ministerial experience, when other steps are completed in the standards process, 2 members of the Credentials Committee will review the candidate's documents, including one's statement of faith. Upon their recommendation, the candidate's interview before the full Committee may be scheduled.
 - D. At the meeting of the Ordination Committee, an interpreter shall be present, if needed. If the Committee's vote is affirmative, the Ordination Committee will recommend to the sending church to proceed with the ordination, or may recognize a previous ordination.
 - E. The candidate is strongly encouraged to pursue graduate theological study and continuing education opportunities.
 - 3-Unusual Condition. A candidate with long ministerial experience in our Region, who has shown denominational loyalty, faithfulness and ministerial fruit, may opt for the following process:
 - a. A representative, language-appropriate 3-member Credentials Committee appointed by the Committee will review the candidate's documents, profile and recommendations.
 - b. This Committee will make a recommendation to the Ordination Committee. If the recommendation is affirmative, and other standards are fulfilled, including a translation of one's statement of faith, the Ordination Committee will interview the candidate and vote.
 - c. If the Committee's vote is affirmative, the Ordination Committee will recommend to the sending church to grant the candidate, in a public service, a certificate of ordination, or may recognize a previous ordination.

Revised and Adopted by the Ordination Committee, May 10, 2011

SAMPLE FIRST LETTER FROM CHURCH TO ORDINATION COMMITTEE

Must be on Official Church Letterhead.

(Date)

ABCLA/ABCOSH
Ordination Council
P. O. Box 1868
Glendale, CA 91209

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On _____ the _____
(date) (official governing body)
of _____ voted to recommend
(church)

_____ for ordination. As far as we can determine after assembling the
(candidate's name)
candidate's packet (references, covenant, and written requirements) he/she has met all the
standards required for ordination as outlined under I of the Ordination Process and Standards
Document. We officially request that you begin this process.

Signed by the Pastor
or Chairperson of Board
or Church Clerk

SAMPLE SERVICE

Call to worship, Hymn,

Invocation

Welcome

Reading of the Ordination Committee's recommendation (by Ordination Committee member)

Special music

Scripture reading

Brief ordination sermon

Hymn or special music

Exhortation to ordinand and congregation Ordination vows (sample follows)

Leader: "Having heard the call from God to serve Him exclusively as a minister of Jesus Christ, do you (name) now affirm before Him and our fellow Christians that you accept that call humbly and in all sincerity?"

Ordinand: "With God's help, I do."

Leader: "Do you now reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son and your Saviour and do you declare your loyalty to Him as your Lord?"

Ordinand: "I do."

Leader: "Do you determine to submit your life and energies to this ministry and to the discipline and guidance of the Holy Spirit?"

Ordinand: "I do."

Leader: "Do you promise to study the Scriptures diligently and to deliver God's message fearlessly so His people may hear what God says to them?"

Ordinand: "I do."

Leader: "Do you now commit yourself as Christ's under shepherd to His sheep in gentleness, love and prayer?"

Ordinand: "I do."

Leader: "Do you agree to abide by the code of Ethics of your fellow American Baptist ministers and safeguard the good name of your calling in unity and integrity, placing God's concerns above your own personal advantage?"

Ordinand: "I do."

Leader: "Having heard your promises, we, your fellow believers, recognize God's call to you and your response in sincerity and desire to affirm you in the fellowship of American Baptist ministers."

The ordination prayer (The ordinand will kneel as all ordained ministers present are invited to participate in the laying on of hands symbolically signifying their recognition of God's commissioning.)

Presentation of ordination certificate Welcome to fellowship of American Baptist ministers (to be done by an ordained American Baptist Minister) Hymn Benediction (by newly ordained minister)

*NOTE: Executive minister should be invited to participate in service.