

American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii
Ordination Committee
Policy for Standards for Licensing
for the Christian Ministry

(Code 1 under the ABC/USA Professional Leadership Status)
 adopted by Ordination Committee ABCOFLASH September 2000

Licensing is generally understood to be the first step toward ordination. Licensing is placing a candidate under the Watchcare of the local church to test their abilities and giftedness in all areas of ministry. The candidate must be a member of the licensing local church. After a person is licensed, ABCOFLASH is to be informed of the action taken by the local church.

Authority

A. Church

1. The local congregation is the focus of authority for licensing. It is assumed by the church's sister congregations and the Region that a decision to grant a license for the Christian ministry signifies that the licensing congregation is well-acquainted with the person and, by this act, indicates that:
 - a) the person has sensed a call to the Christian ministry;
 - b) he/she possesses the spiritual and emotional qualities necessary to fit him/her for the ministry; and
 - c) typically the person is in the process of pursuing or has already completed the academic preparation required for ordination.
 - d) The congregation is affirming the person's call to Christian ministry and to their church.
2. By receiving the candidate under their Watchcare, a local church is expected to give regular counsel regarding vocational and professional training. Such counseling should be performed by the pastor, appropriate board or committee of the church, and/or the ABCOFLASH Ordination Committee. Licensing is not transferable to another church, must be turned in when leaving the membership of the licensing church and does not apply to ministry outside of the local licensing church, i.e. a church cannot license a person to serve on the ABCOFLASH staff.
3. The licensing is to be granted for a limited period of time 3 or 4 years. The license may be renewed but only for another 3 or 4 years. The candidate should then seek regular Standard Ordination or seek to be a Certified Licensed Pastor.

B. Civil

The State of California - as with the U.S. government itself, particularly IRS and Social Security - rely upon each denomination's definition regarding who is authorized to perform a church's sacerdotal functions. If in licensing a person, an American Baptist congregation intends that the person is authorized to baptize and conduct communion services for that congregation, then the right to conduct weddings and funerals as a licensed minister would be legitimate also. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii that local congregations shall determine and make clear their intentions in written form to the licensee whether or not their licensed ministers have the authority to baptize, preside at the Lord's Table, and conduct weddings and funerals.

C. Types of licensing

1. A license with full sacerdotal functions (preaching, teaching, baptizing, communion, funerals and weddings) and proceeding towards ordination.
2. A license with full sacerdotal functions (preaching, teaching, baptizing, communion, funerals and weddings) and *not* proceeding towards ordination.
3. A license with full or limited sacerdotal functions (preaching, teaching, baptizing, communion and funerals) with possible other restrictions (ministry to men only, ministry to women only, etc.).

Procedure

- 1) The candidate makes known his/her desire to be licensed to the pastor, church governing board or Support Committee of a new church start.
- 2) The interview with the candidate may involve the entire congregation or the church governing board or the Support Committee of a new church start. That decision is made by each church.
- 3) A decision is made to proceed with licensing or to refrain from licensing the candidate. In the latter case, the church, church governing board or Support Committee of a new church start are to inform the candidate regarding the reasons for its action.
- 4) Upon a positive action by the church, church governing board or Support Committee of a new church start, a certificate of licensing is to be presented to the person. The Ordination Committee of American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii= policy is that the term of such licensing be no longer than four years. If, at the end of the licensing period, the person has not been ordained, the person may be re-licensed for another set amount of time (three to four years) upon action by the church, its Board of Deacons, or the Support Committee of a new church start. Notification of this decision must be made known to the ABCOFLASH Ordination Committee.
- 5) The church shall grant a Certificate of Licensing for Christian Ministry. It shall have clear starting and ending dates. The granting church is to have its pastor and officers sign the certificate.

*****The action taken needs to be recorded in the church business session minutes or board minutes. This is a legal action and must be documented in corporate records.***

Requirements - The candidate for licensing must:

- 1) Be a member of that local congregation.
- 2) Make his/her desire to be licensed known to either his/her pastor, church governing board, or support committee of a new church start.
- 3) Fill out a Ministerial Application.
- 4) Have five reference forms filled out and returned to person in charge of licensing in this local church.
- 5) Submit a statement of faith to include his/her beliefs about God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, the Bible, man's salvation, and the church (about one page each topic).
- 6) Submit a statement of personal history, conversion, and call to ministry.
- 7) Submit transcripts of all academic work and/or a statement of type of training or experience received.
- 8) Agree and sign with the ABC Code of Ethics.

Accountability For Those Preparing for Ordination

A decision to grant a License for the Christian Ministry carries with it the following responsibilities on the part of a local congregation:

- 1) Periodic meetings, at least annually, with the person to determine his/her progress toward readiness for ordination. This includes adequate educational counsel regarding the person's preparation for the ministry.

- 2) Opportunities within the life of the congregation for the person to demonstrate and develop his/her gifts for ministry within the church.
- 3) Financial assistance, if possible, for the high costs of the seven years of higher educational preparation for ordination.
- 4) Informing the Region's Ordination Committee when the congregation has determined (discerned) that the candidate is ready for ordination.

Resources

- 1) Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1991), pp. 115-116.
- 2) Licensing certificates may be obtained from American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii.
- 3) Ordination Committee of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii
- 4) Recommended Procedure for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches, The Ministers Council, ABC/USA, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851.

American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii
 Southwest and Hawaii
 And the Local ABC Church
**APPLICATION FOR
 LICENSE FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**

PLEASE TYPE

Personal

Name _____ Home Phone () _____

Work Phone () _____ E-Mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Date of Birth _____ General Health _____

Married? _____ Spouse's Name _____ Single? _____ Ever Divorced? _____

If married, is your spouse supportive of your ministerial plans? _____

Is your spouse active with you in your church? _____

Do you have any addictions (substance or behavioral)? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please explain:

ABC/USA adopted the following resolution in October 1992 and the ABCOFLASH endorsed and February 29, 1996. -- AWe affirm that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.@

Are you a homosexual? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, are you practicing or celibate? _____

Educational Preparation

High School _____ # of Yrs. _____ Graduate _____

College _____ # of Yrs. _____ Degree _____

of Yrs. _____ Degree _____

Seminary _____ # of Yrs. _____ Degree _____

of Yrs. _____ Degree _____

Other Education _____

_____ # of Yrs. _____ Degree _____

Have you had a course in American Baptist History (not required for licensing)?

Yes_____No_____When? _____Where? _____

Have you studied American Baptist Polity and Organization (not required for licensing)?

Yes_____No_____When? _____Where? _____

Please use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

Church Affiliations

Current local church membership _____ How long? _____

Why did you seek licensing as an American Baptist?__

What church office(s) have you held?_____

In what capacity are you now serving? _____

Describe the ministry for which you are now prepared _____

What are the major emphases of your ministry?_____

What is your philosophy of ministry?_____

Why is receiving a certified pastor license important to you?_____

Please submit complete names and addresses of five references ***other than*** your pastor and relatives. Include both men and women, ministers and lay people, who have known you in different settings.

Name	Address
1. _____	_____
	Phone _____
2. _____	_____
	Phone _____
3. _____	_____
	Phone _____
4. _____	_____
	Phone _____
5. _____	_____
	Phone _____

Signature _____ Date _____

(Name of Church)

(City)

and

American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii

Reference Form

Certified Pastor License for the Christian Ministry

TO THE APPLICANT: I understand that this confidential statement is being submitted to the (Name of church) with the understanding that its contents will not be shared with me. I hereby expressly waive any and all rights I have of access to this evaluation under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Acts of 1974, the California Information Practices Act of 1977, and any/or all other laws, regulations or policies. I understand that the rights I am waiving include, but are not limited to, the right to inspect and review this letter; the right to have a copy of this letter made for my use; and the right to request an amendment of this letter.

I agree to waive access to this statement. I do not agree to waive access to this statement.

Signature of Applicant _____ **Date** _____

To _____ **Date** _____

The person named below has applied to be a certified licensed pastor for the Christian ministry. Your name has been offered in reference as one who can supply pertinent data which will help in the decision to grant a license. Your answers will be held in confidence and will be used only in arriving at the decision. Please answer those questions in which you have firsthand knowledge. Add any comments which you feel will help us to be fair to the applicant and the church.

Name of Candidate _____

1. **Relationship to candidate:** What is your relationship to the candidate (e.g., supervisor, friend, colleague, etc.)? How long and how well would you say you know him/her?

2. **Evidence of being called by God (fruit in ministry):** Other people's feedback, candidate's ongoing passion for ministry.

3. **Relationship with God:** How would you describe or characterize the candidate's relationship with God?

4. **Relationship with others, community, team?**

5. **Evidence of Christian faith, obedience to God, and Spirit-led decisions and actions:** What evidence have you seen of the candidate's ability to walk by faith and in obedience to God, and to engage in Spirit-led decisions and actions?

6. **Practice of spiritual disciplines:** To what extent are the spiritual disciplines (e.g., solitude, prayer, meditation, fasting, personal worship, community, etc.) an ongoing part of the candidate's life?

7. **Knowledge, application, and personalization of the Word:** What is the candidate's degree of biblical knowledge, and how would you assess his/her ability to wisely interpret, apply, and personalize it for himself/herself and others? What is his/her ability to engage in theological reflection?

8. **Fruit of the Spirit:** What character qualities are most noticeable in the candidate, and how are these expressed?

9. **Evidence of spiritual giftedness in area of pastoring:** In what specific ways does the candidate demonstrate spiritual gifts related to pastoring?

10. **Degree of balance in life and ministry:** To what extent does the candidate's life and lifestyle reflect balance regarding home life, relationships, ministry, rest, and play?

11. **Degree of influence:** How do others in the church respond to the candidate's leadership?

12. **Areas of strength:** In what areas do you think the candidate demonstrates excellence and effectiveness in ministry? (e.g., attitude, emotional stability, self-concept, issues of power and control, skills, interpersonal relationships, biblical teaching, etc.) Explain.

13. Areas for growth: In what areas do you think the candidate needs to grow in order to become a more effective pastor? (e.g. attitude, emotional stability, self-concept, issues of power and control, skills, interpersonal relationships, etc.) Explain.

14. Recommendation: Do you recommend this person for licensing to the Christian Ministry? (Yes, no, or with reservation.)

If applicable, is his/her spouse sympathetic with the applicant's interest in ministry?

Print Name

Signature

_____(Date)

Please return completed form to:

Name of Church_____

Attention:_____

Address of Church_____

THE COVENANT AND CODE OF ETHICS
FOR PROFESSIONAL CHURCH LEADERS
OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE U.S.A.
AND AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF LOS ANGELES, SOUTHWEST AND HAWAII

Having accepted God's call to leadership in Christ's Church, I covenant with God to serve Christ and the Church with God's help, to deepen my obedience to the Two Great Commandments; to love the Lord our God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself.

In affirmation of this commitment, I will abide by the Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches and I will faithfully support its purposes and ideals. As further affirmation of my commitment, I covenant with my colleagues in ministry that we will hold one another accountable for fulfillment of all the public actions set forth in our Code of Ethics.

- [I will hold in trust the traditions and practices of our American Baptist Churches. I will not accept a position in the American Baptist family unless I am in accord with those traditions and practices; nor will I use my influence to alienate my congregation/constituents or any part thereof from its relationship and support of the denomination. If my convictions change, I will resign my position.
- [I will respect and recognize the variety of calls to ministry among my American Baptist colleagues, and other Christians.
- [I will seek to support all colleagues in ministry by building constructive relationships wherever I serve, both with the staff where I work and with colleagues in neighboring churches.
- [I will advocate adequate compensation for my profession. I will help lay persons and colleagues to understand that professional church leaders should not expect or require fees for pastoral services from constituents they serve, when these constituents are helping pay their salaries.
- [I will not seek personal favors or discounts on the basis of my professional status.
- [I will maintain a disciplined ministry in such ways as keeping hours of prayer and devotion, endeavoring to maintain wholesome family relationships, sexual integrity, financial responsibility, regularly engaging in educational and recreational activities for professional and personal development. I will seek to maintain good health habits.
- [I will recognize my primary obligation to the church or employing group to which I have been called, and will accept added responsibilities only if they do not interfere with the overall effectiveness of my ministry.
- [I will personally and publicly support my colleagues who experience discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, marital status, national origin, physical impairment or disability.
- [I will, upon my resignation or retirement, sever my professional church leadership relations with my former constituents, and will not make professional contracts in the field of another professional church leader without his/her request and/or consent.
- [I will hold in confidence any privileged communication received by me during the conduct of my ministry. I will not disclose confidential communications in private or public except when in my practice of ministry I am convinced that the sanctity of confidentiality is outweighed by my well-founded belief that the parishioner/client will cause imminent, life-threatening or substantial harm to self or others, or unless the privilege is waived by those giving the information.
- [I will not proselytize from other Christian churches.
- [I will show my personal love for God as revealed in Jesus Christ in my life and ministry, as I strive together with my colleagues to preserve the dignity, maintain the discipline and promote the integrity of the vocation to which we have been called.

Signed _____

Date _____