

**HANDBOOK ON THE RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION
AND LAY PASTOR CERTIFICATION**

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW YORK STATE



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INTRODUCTION

The enclosed explanations of the Role of the Committee on Ministry and Guide to Ordination are intended to help the candidates, churches, and Associations of the American Baptist Churches of New York State to understand our Regional and national expectations in regards to ordination to the Christian ministry and recognition.

Our standard and guide is Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches (Adopted 1980, Revised 1997 by the Commission on the Ministry and the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches, USA).

THE ROLE OF THE ABCNYS COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY (On behalf of ABCNYS and ABCUSA)

The Committee on Ministry of American Baptist Churches of New York State is charged with the task of admission and dismissal in regards to ministerial standing within the Region and national family. While each local church and Association acts on its own behalf, the Committee on Ministry acts on behalf of ABCNYS and ABCUSA. In this task it assists the Executive Minister of ABCNYS and represents its Associations.

In carrying out its charge, the committee seeks to acknowledge: the sovereignty of God; the mystery of call; the autonomy of the individual church and Association; and the need for meaningful, standardized certification in the midst of a mobile and interrelated denominational family.

From the Rules of Procedure of the American Baptist Churches of New York State (adopted October 1988).

RULE X. COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Section 10.1 The Committee on Ministry shall:

- a. Review and recommend to the Board of Mission ordination standards for ABCNYS and coordinate the various ordination practices which now exist in ABCNYS;
- b. Assist in the local implementation of ABCNYS ordination standards;
- c. Promote and provide assistance in the establishment of local church pastor-people relations committees;
- d. Provide services in ethical/moral problem situations which cannot be effectively provided otherwise;
- e. Provide for the protection of the local congregation and provide for the protection of the integrity of the professional leadership standards in ABCNYS;
- f. Provide for regular professional review of ordained persons, encourage growth through counseling, continuing education, etc.
- g. Determine and suggest to local congregations, or their appropriate planning committee, an adequate and equitable pastoral support package consistent with the needs and economics of the local geographical area;
- h. Relate directly to those in specialized ministries;
- i. Advocate equal accessibility to professional ministry by all ordained persons;
- j. Review ordination credentials of those seeking recognition for ministry in ABCNYS; and
- k. Recommend to the Board of Mission any policies related to the professional ministry

GUIDE TO ORDINATION

I. ABC STANDARD ORDINATION STANDARDS

- Membership in an American Baptist church
- License of six months to four years from the church in which membership is held (may be renewed)
- Evidence of four years of college with a B.A., B.S. degree or standard equivalent from an accredited institution.
- Evidence of M.Div. degree or standard equivalent from an accredited institution
- Evidence of a completed course on American Baptist history and polity or its equivalent
- Definite plans for entering an American Baptist field of service: a. Parish Ministry b. Mission Service c. Specialized Ministry d. Staff Service.
- Assent by signature to the Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council
- Completion, with signature, of the Statement of Personal Conduct
- Enrollment in the American Baptist Personnel Services profile system
- Evidence of completion of a career assessment program by the Center for Career Development and Ministry or another accredited career assessment center or organization. The candidate shall provide written consent permitting the assessment center to provide the Executive Minister with a written report of the result of its assessment of the candidate. The Executive Minister will then obtain written consent from the candidate to share the report with two other Regional Committee on Ministry members.
- Evidence of satisfactory completion of training approved by ABCNYS on boundaries, ethics, and standards of behavior.

STEPS TOWARD ORDINATION

A. The Preliminary Steps

The candidate will:

- Confer with the pastor and appropriate board or committee of the church in which membership is held.
- Confer with the Association Committee on Ministry Representative who serves the Association to which the church belongs. The Association Committee on Ministry Representative will gather information as to eligibility for and counsel regarding procedure for ordination. If the Association does not have an elected Committee on Ministry or is unable/unwilling to establish a temporary committee, the Regional Committee on Ministry will fulfill the responsibilities of the Association Committee on Ministry.
- Schedule a career assessment program with the Center for Career Development and Ministry or another accredited career assessment center or organization. (The Association Committee on Ministry Representative, together with the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry, shall work with the candidate to secure the necessary funding for his/her assessment.)

It is recommended that the candidate participate in a watch care program, where available.

B. The Ordination Committee of the Association

It is required that the Committee includes the Association Committee on Ministry Representative who serves the Association in which the candidate is seeking ordination.

The candidate will meet with the Ordination Committee of the Association to which the church belongs to ascertain that the candidate:

- Meets the above standards
- Understands the nature of an ordination council and is prepared to meet with one
- Has given proper attention to the preparation of an ordination paper (see I.D., The Ordination Paper);
- Understands and subscribes, by signature, to the Code of Ethics of The Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches.

The Ordination Committee, if it judges appropriate, shall recommend that the candidate's church call an ordination council.

C. The Ordination Council

Membership: according to the bylaws of the Association, or one member of the clergy and one layperson from each of the Association churches and at least one representative from ABC/NYS.

Quorum: at least one-third of the active member churches and one representative from the staff of ABC/NYS.

Note: The date for the ordination council must be cleared with ABCNYS staff prior to the calling of the council.

Purpose: to examine and make recommendation to the local church

Agenda:

Call to Order

Roll Call of the Churches

Reading of the Ordination Paper by the Candidate

Question period for clarification

Council vote with the recommendation that the local church proceed with the ordination, not proceed with the ordination (stating reasons), or defer the ordination to some future date (stating reasons) .

The candidate may choose a sponsor to assist in the clarification and interpretation of the questions.

If the council votes positively for the candidate, then the council will recommend that the candidate's church of membership proceed with the ordination at a date which is convenient for the church and the candidate.

The clerk will compile all minutes, papers, and materials used by the Association committee and council and, with a letter stating council action, send them to the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry (see p.10).

Note: Under no circumstances may a date for the proposed ordination service be set until after the ordination council has met and has voted to recommend the candidate for ordination. The ordination date should be coordinated with ABCNYS staff.

D. The Ordination Paper

The ordination paper should be carefully prepared by the candidate, mailed in advance to Association churches, with additional copies available for each person who attends the ordination council. The paper should contain the following:

- Choice of vocation and call to ministry.
- Christian testimony and baptismal experience.
- Academic and field preparation. Include significant experiences during this time to who you are and your call to ministry.
- General comprehension of Christian doctrine and practice, including an understanding of:
 - God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
 - Humanity. Include the relationship with God, creation, one another, fallenness and salvation.
 - Holy Scripture. Its purpose and role, as well as its usage in the lives of individuals and in the church.
 - Church. Its purpose and place in today's world, regenerate membership, and the relation of the local congregation to the wider fellowship of American Baptist Churches, its mission, and its ecumenical witness.
 - Ordinances. As practiced in ABC churches.
 - Key characteristics of the Baptist tradition that are not included in other areas of the paper, including, but not limited to, the priesthood of all believers, the autonomy of the local church, the associational principle, soul liberty, discipleship, the local church as the fundamental unit of denominational life and mission.
 - Roles of ordained and laity.

THE ORDINATION

Following a positive vote by the ordination council, the local church may proceed with preparations toward the ordination. Sample copies of ordination services are available through the American Baptist Churches of New York State.

THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW YORK STATE

The Committee will receive a letter from the clerk of the Association (or clerk of the council) stating:

The Association Committee recommended the calling of the council after meeting with the candidate (and ascertaining that the candidate had: met the standards for ordination; understood the nature of a council and was prepared to meet with one; given proper attention to the ordination paper; and subscribed, by signature, to the Code of Ethics) .

The ordination council was held with quorum (including ABCNYS staff), indicating the date, time, and place.

The action taken.

The minutes are attached.

Along with the letter and minutes, the Committee on Ministry of ABC/NYS shall receive from the clerk copies of all materials used by the Association committee and council to reach its decision (including licenses, degrees, certificates, ordination paper covering indicated items, indication of completion of course on American Baptist history and polity, signed Code of Ethics, American Baptist Personnel Services profile and written indication of a specific call to ministry in an American Baptist church or American Baptist field of service*) .

Based on a favorable review of the material, the Committee on Ministry of ABC/NYS will recommend to the Executive Minister that the individual's name be placed in the professional registry of ABCUSA, and will notify the candidate and Association.

*ABC/USA requires indication of a specific call for inclusion in the professional registry.

II. RECOGNITION OF NON-AMERICAN BAPTIST ORDINATIONS

Whenever an individual (hereafter known as the candidate) seeks recognition from American Baptist Churches of New York State (ABC/NYS) of his/her current, non-American Baptist ordination, the individual and the local church or agency involved shall make a written request to the Committee on Ministry of the Association to which the local church or agency belongs. The candidate shall also confer with the Association Committee on Ministry Representative who serves the Association to which the local church or agency belongs.

The chair of the Association committee, or a representative appointed by the chair, assisted by the Association Committee on Ministry Representative, shall gather the written documentation and other information required by the committee. The committee shall then take the following three steps:

1. Review and verify.

At a called meeting, the committee shall review and verify the written documentation and other information.

Such documentation and other written information shall include the following:

a. The candidate's current membership in an American Baptist church and the church's desire that the candidate's current ordination be recognized by ABC/NYS;

b. Evidence of a completed course on American Baptist history and polity or its equivalent;

c. Evidence that the candidate has satisfactorily completed training approved by ABC/NYS on boundaries, ethics, and standards of behavior;

d. Evidence of completion of a career assessment program by the Center for Career Development and Ministry or another accredited career assessment center or organization. The candidate shall provide written consent permitting the assessment center to provide the Executive Minister with a written report of the result of its assessment of the candidate. The Executive Minister will then obtain written consent from the candidate to share the report with two other Regional Committee on Ministry members.

e. Evidence that the candidate has definite plans for entering an American Baptist field of service, such as: pastoral ministry, missionary service, a specialized ministry recognized by ABCNYS, or staff position in an agency of American Baptist Churches or a recognized ecumenical agency;

f. Evidence of appropriate education. (This may include transcripts or other forms of certification of graduation from (an) appropriate and accredited institutions) ;

g. Evidence of ordination of the candidate and a letter from the ordaining body indicating the candidate's standing. If a candidate had ordination or other ministerial standing in another denomination and lost that standing due to ethical or moral violations, then, if possible, the candidate will need to have that ministerial standing restored before the Committee on Ministry will consider their request for recognition by ABCNYS. They will need to show written evidence of the restoration of ministerial standing.

h. Satisfactory documentation from three character references.

i. Originals of the signed "Code of Ethics" of the Ministers Council and the "Statement of Personal Conduct".

j. A short paper (three-to-five pages) by the candidate on his/her statement of faith and call to ministry or, if the Association has a written statement of faith, the candidate's interactive response to that statement.

2. Discuss with the candidate.

The candidate shall appear before the Committee on Ministry of the Association. It is required that the

membership of the Committee on Ministry of the Association include the Association Committee on Ministry Representative to the ABC/NYS Committee on Ministry. Discussion shall include:

- a. All documents and written information received (and not received, if any);
- b. The paper prepared by the candidate;
- c. The personal background, faith, baptism, and ministerial experience of the candidate;
- d. The candidate's understanding of American Baptist polity, including ordinances, relation of the local church to the wider denominational fellowship, American Baptist missions and its support, and ecumenical ministries; and
- e. The candidate's willingness and agreement to become part of the American Baptist Personnel System, as appropriate.

3. Vote to Recognize (or Not to Recognize)

The Association committee shall vote to recognize or not to recognize the candidate's current ordination.

- a. If the vote is to recognize the candidate's current ordination, a letter recommending recognition of the candidate's ordination, along with all of the documentation and other materials used in the above steps, shall be sent to the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry.
- b. If the Association committee votes not to recognize the candidate's current ordination, a letter stating this fact and the reasons why the Committee voted not to recognize the candidate's ordination shall be sent to the ABC/NYS Committee on Ministry, along with all of the documentation and other materials related to the candidate's request for recognition of ordination. If the candidate chooses to appeal this decision, the appeal shall be made to the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry.
- c. In either event, the candidate shall be informed of the Association committee's decision and the reasons for the decision.
- d. The ABC/NYS Committee on Ministry shall review and affirm (or not affirm) the recommendation of the Association committee.

III. EXPERIENCE AS EQUIVALENT FOR REGION AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Those not meeting educational requirements and who seek recognition based on experience are expected to follow the guidelines of either the I. Standard, or II. Non-ABC recognitions (whichever is appropriate). Experience as an equivalent to educational preparation is considered on the basis of three years of satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance for every one year of academic preparation that is lacking in the candidate's background, seven years of higher education being the norm (four years college, three years seminary).

The maximum experiential equivalency which may be granted is nine(9) years, the equivalent to three(3) years of higher education.

Candidates are expected to complete the form "Application for Full Recognition of Ordination Based on Experience". Materials should be submitted to the ordination committee of the Association who will make a recommendation to the ABC/NYS Committee on Ministry. The Committee will receive all materials while the candidate is in process for an ordination council. After reviewing all materials, the Committee on Ministry will then act on behalf of ABC/NYS and ABC/USA and notify the candidate and Association.

IV. COMMISSIONED MISSIONARIES AND MINISTERS

Those seeking commissioned missionary or commissioned minister status should be in consultation with ABC/NYS staff.

V. LOSS OF ORDINATION RECOGNITION AND RESTORATION

An individual can lose ordination recognition with the American Baptist Churches in the following ways:

- They have had "Inactive" status (not functioning in ministry in a recognized part of the American Baptist Churches mission and structure) for a period of five years.
- They have been granted recognition with another denomination.
- They have gone through "A Process for Review of Ministerial Standing" as a result of allegations raised about them and their recognition is withdrawn. (See VI.)

Those seeking restoration of recognition shall prepare a written statement for the ordination committee of the Association stating reasons for desiring restoration. The Association and/or ABCNYS staff and/or ABCNYS Committee on Ministry shall make contact with the body which withdrew ordination to better understand the particulars involved. The ordination committee and the Association Committee on Ministry Representative who serves the Association in which the candidate is seeking restoration shall meet with the candidate to consider restoration. The Committee on Ministry of ABCNYS will receive the letter from the ordination committee recommending restoration and copies of all written material. The Committee on Ministry will then act on behalf of ABCNYS and ABCUSA and notify the candidate and Association.

VI. A PROCESS FOR REVIEW OF MINISTERIAL STANDING

The ABC/NYS Committee on Ministry has both the responsibility for the recognition of ordination and for the church's review of the recognition of ordination. In the context of the ongoing care for the churches and their professional church leaders, there are occasions in which allegations may be raised about a professional church leader. Frequently these allegations are handled within the ongoing service and care of the Region. In those rare instances in which a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, it may be necessary to have a more formal process of review of recognition of ordination with professional church leaders. ABCNYS has such a process in place, a copy of which is available from the ABC/NYS office.

VII. PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP CATEGORIES

Professional leadership categories, as defined by American Baptist Churches U.S.A., are as follows:

1. ABC Standard Ordination: Persons ordained within the ABC prior to January 1, 1965, or persons ordained subsequent to that date who meet the education prerequisite for ordination (A.B. and M.Div. degrees or standard equivalents) . The Seminary must be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. (See page 4.)
2. Non-ABC Ordination Recognized by ABC: Persons ordained by a denomination other than ABC whose previous ordination has been recognized by a regional administrative unit of the ABC. (See page 6.)
3. Other ABC Ordination (Temporary): Persons ordained by ABC since January 1, 1965, according to Region, Association, or local church standards and do not meet the national educational standards of the ABC.
4. Non-ABC Ordination Not Recognized by ABC: Persons ordained (in or out of the ABC) who have not had their ordination recognized by a regional administrative unit of the ABC.

5. Commissioned: Persons commissioned by a national board or a regional board.
6. Certified Lay Minister: Persons who have completed a certified lay ministry program and have been certified by an ABC region.
7. Licensed: Persons licensed by an ABC congregation as a preliminary step towards ordination.
8. Lay Professional: Persons employed professionally by a church or agency of the ABC for a minimum of 20 hours per week or who are applicants for professional employment with ABC.

Individuals in all of the categories are included in the Directory of Professional Church Leaders of ABC/USA. Individuals in categories 1, 2, and 5 are included in the ABC/USA Professional Registry.

VIII. A PROCESS FOR A LOCAL AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH LICENSE

Definition: A license is an action taken by a local American Baptist church granting an individual member the right and privilege to perform certain tasks of ministry on behalf of the local church for a specific time.

The granting of a license assumes membership in the local church granting the license.

A license may be granted to a person performing specific acts of ministry on behalf of the church.

A license is granted by a local American Baptist church to a person who is preparing for ordination.

A Recommended Procedure

The Board of Deacons interviews the candidate to review a person's qualifications. These include: demonstrated gifts for ministry, agreement to maintain standards, and a process for accountability to the licensing church. The Board of Deacons will define the specific ministry tasks which the Board would expect the person to perform. The Board of Deacons would make the recommendation to the church.

The church will decide at a duly called congregational meeting to act on the recommendation made by the Board of Deacons.

As part of the action the church will decide on the length of time the license will be effect, as well as establish a review process.

The document presented to the individual would outline the length of time the license would be in effect as well as define the range of ministry and would include any restrictions to be maintained.

The church would clarify the issue of performing marriage ceremonies with the individual receiving the license as it related to New York State Religious Corporations Law.

IX. LOCAL ORDINATION

Historic Baptist polity recognizes that "ordination is the act of the church by which, in the name of God, it delegates to a qualified person who has responded to the call of God a wide range of ministerial functions and responsibilities... For decades Baptists have celebrated the autonomy of the local church... (and) have also joined in voluntary association with each other for education, mission, and related endeavors of the church which can best be done jointly... It is the right and responsibility of the local church to ordain those whom it recognizes as being called by God." While in most cases the ordaining church seeks the advice and cooperation of other likeminded churches in determining if the candidate meets the basic qualifications

deemed necessary for ministering in all Baptist churches, it is also recognized “that ordination may be particular for the local church”* and not general on behalf of all churches of like faith and order.

(*Selected sections quoted from Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches)

Therefore, it is recommended that the following policy regarding Ordination to a Local Ministry be adopted by members of the American Baptist Churches of New York State:

1. Local ordination to a particular ABC/NYS ministry be recognized as valid for the individual and church or institution where the call is carried out.
2. That Ordination to a Local Ministry need not require fulfillment of all standards required for Ordination and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches.
3. That the local church/institution wishing “Local Ordination” for one of its members follow the recommended procedures for ordination in the American Baptist Churches, which shall include:
 - a. Licensing
 - b. Call to a recognized ABC field of service.
 - c. Consultation with the appropriate Association committee on ministry and appropriate board or committee of the church/institution establishing a clear understanding that the candidate is preparing for ordination to a local ministry and that such local ordination will be recognized as valid only for that particular ministry and only for the duration of the individual’s ministry in that particular field of service and that such local ordination does not convey ordination standing or recognition of professional standing in the American Baptist Churches USA.
 - d. Demonstrates to the appropriate church/institution committee on ministry a readiness for ordination by the preparation, writing, and delivering of statements regarding (1) call to ministry, (2) Christian experience, (3) academic and field experience, (4) general comprehension of Christian doctrine and practice; the place of the church in today’s world; the role of the ministry of the laity; an understanding of the ordinances as practiced by American Baptist Churches; commitment to the ABC mission program; understanding and affirmation of the Pledge for Ministers of American Baptist Churches and Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council; completion, with signature, of the Statement of Personal Conduct; and evidence of the completion of a course in Baptist history and polity, or its equivalent.
 - e. Examination of the candidate by the members of the local church/institution by means of prepared statements. Members of the Association and Regional staff may be invited to observe and participate in the questioning of the candidate.
 - f. A vote of the local church to “Ordain to a Local Ministry”.
4. That the local church/institution is encouraged to invite members of the Association churches and Regional staff to be present at and participate in the celebration of local ordination.
5. That the name of the individual receiving “Ordination to a Local Ministry” be placed on file with the ABC/NYS Committee on Ministry until such time as he/she leaves the field of service.
6. Training approved by ABCNYS on boundaries, ethics, and standards of behavior is encouraged.

X. LAY PASTOR CERTIFICATION

ABCNYS has made a particular opportunity available to individuals who wish to pursue lay ministry in more depth. Certified Lay Pastor is a denomination-wide term for American Baptists who have successfully completed courses of study and who have met defined requirements. The awarding of a certificate will provide visible and tangible evidence that the individual has satisfactorily completed the lay pastor certification program. Completion of required course work and the fieldwork assignment will enable the individual to carry out responsibilities in the congregation, the community, and the work place more effectively than before.

Certification as a lay pastor is not a step toward ordination. Nor does it bestow any ecclesiastical or legal rights. While new opportunities of service may come to those who complete the program, ABCNYS is not in a position to offer assurances or guarantees that such will be the case.

Persons who have completed the program have spoken of inner satisfaction and the feeling of fulfillment it has brought them. Above all, the program enables individuals to be more faithful stewards of the gifts given to them by God and of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LAY PASTOR CERTIFICATION PROCESS

A candidate will:

1. Earn the Certificate in Lay Pastoral Studies offered by the ABCNYS Lay Study Program
2. Meet with the Association Committee on Ministry (or a representative member) to discuss certification requirements
3. Maintain active membership in an ABCNYS church
4. Provide to Association Committee on Ministry names and addresses of three references (current pastor and two others)
5. Receive through the Association Committee on Ministry the endorsement of local church leadership
6. Submit a paper of 3-4 pages to the Chairperson of Association Committee on Ministry. This paper should describe and reflect your biblical and theological understanding of:
 - ◇ Faith Journey
 - ◇ Understanding of Lay Pastoral Ministry
 - ◇ Understanding of Christian Faith
 - ◇ Personal Commitment to American Baptist Churches (including its goals and mission).
7. Submit a signed copy of the Ministers Council Code of Ethics
8. Submit a signed copy of the Statement of Personal Conduct
9. Provide evidence that candidate has satisfactorily completed training approved by ABCNYS on boundaries, ethics, and standards of behavior.
10. Meet with Association Committee on Ministry for final review.
 - a. Certification will be recommended, denied, or postponed for further review and the action taken will be reported to the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry.
 - b. If the Association recommends certification, the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry will act on the recommendation.
 - c. Upon approval for certification by the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry, the individual's Association Moderator will be notified so that an appropriate service can be scheduled in the Association. The Association presents the Certificate of Lay Pastoral Ministry, a Regional Certification.
 - d. If certification is denied and the individual wishes to appeal, a letter of appeal may be sent to the chairperson of the ABCNYS Committee on Ministry.

ABC/NYS COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY – ORDINATION CREDENTIALS CHECKLIST
(Condensed from ABC/NYS Handbook on Ordination)

In order to grant full recognition and recommend entrance into the Professional Registry of ABC/USA, the Committee on Ministry of ABC/NYS shall receive the following items:

- ___ 1. A letter from the Association's committee on ministry recommending full recognition. This should be based on a review of the applicant's educational credentials, baptismal experience, and written Statement of Faith and Call to Ministry (full explanation of written statements, see pg. 4 Handbook on Ordination ABC/NYS).
- ___ 2. Minutes of the Ordination Council (date, time, place, quorum with ABCNYS staff, action taken)
- ___ 3. A copy of the Ordination Paper
- ___ 4. A letter from an American Baptist church indicating applicant's membership
- ___ 5. Copies of licensing and ordination certificates, if any
- ___ 6. Copies of undergraduate and graduate degrees and/or courses completed
- ___ 7. Written indication of completion of a course on American Baptist history and polity or its equivalent
- ___ 8. Written indication of completion of training approved by ABC/NYS on boundaries, ethics, and standards of behavior.
- ___ 9. A signed copy of the Ministers Council Code of Ethics
- ___ 10. A signed copy of the Statement of Personal Conduct
- ___ 11. Profile from American Baptist Personnel Services (ABPS)
- ___ 12. Written indication of a specific call to ministry in an American Baptist church or an American Baptist field of service
- ___ 13. Evidence of completion of a career assessment program by the Center for Career Development and Ministry or another accredited career assessment center or organization)
- ___ 14. Copies of any other written materials used by the Association Committee and Council
- ___ 15. In addition, for full recognition of an ordination based on experience as equivalent to seminary education, the form "Application for Full Recognition of Ordination Based on Experience"
- ___ 16. Furthermore, for full recognition of a non—American Baptist ordination, a letter of ministerial standing from the previous ordaining body, a written statement of Faith, Call to Ministry, Understanding of ABC Polity, Personal Commitment to ABC, and Reasons for Desiring ABC Recognition (for written statements, see II.B., pg. 7 Handbook on Ordination ABCNYS)



Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches USA

Having accepted God's call to leadership in Christ's Church, I covenant with myself, my colleagues, my communities of care and practice, my denomination, the church, and the wider world and with the help of the Holy Spirit, 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. When needed, I will seek out best practices from others and share my guidance when it might edify and empower wise choices for others. 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 below in this Code of Ethics.

CENTEREDNESS

A. I will grow in and 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 dignity, maintain the discipline and promote the integrity of the vocation to which we have been called.

B. I will strive for a disciplined life by tending to my mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being in such ways as keeping hours of prayers, devotion and rest, endeavoring to maintain wholesome family relationships, sexual integrity, financial responsibility, constructive use of social media, and regularly engaging in educational and leisure activities for ministerial and personal development.

C. I will strive for balance and will work toward being fully present in my obligation to the church or employing group to which I have been called.

D. I will not seek personal favors or discounts on the basis of my ministerial status.

COMPETENCE

A. I will not use my ministerial status, position or authority knowingly to abuse, misguide, negatively influence, manipulate, or take advantage of anyone, especially children. I will be constantly mindful of my ministerial status, position, and authority, and will use them to advocate for those in need.

B. I will not plagiarize; I will be truthful in all my communication and give due credit to others' words.

C. I will report all instances of abuse as required by law to the appropriate agency. In any case involving persons working in ABC ministry, I will also report the circumstances to the appropriate regional and/or national denominational representative.

D. I will hold in confidence and treat as confidential communication any information provided to me with the expectation of privacy. I will not disclose such information 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 life-threatening or substantial harm will be caused.

E. I will not proselytize from other Christian churches.

COLLEGIALITY

- A. I will respect and recognize the variety of calls to ministry among my American Baptist colleagues, and other Christians.
- B. 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.
- C. I will work to gain greater awareness and sensitivity to colleagues who experience discrimination on any basis in order to discern and undertake my obligations for support.
- D. I will, upon my resignation or retirement discontinue my ministerial leadership roles with my former constituents, and will not make ministerial contacts in the field of another ministerial leader without request and/or consent.
- E. I will advocate adequate compensation for my profession. I will help lay persons and colleagues to understand that ministerial leaders should not expect or require fees for pastoral services from constituents they serve, when these constituents are helping pay their salaries.
- F. 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.

Signed _____ Date _____

February 1, 2023

STATEMENT OF PERSONAL CONDUCT
American Baptist Churches of New York State

In recent years concerns about professional misconduct and malpractice have become widespread. Instances in which professionals from a variety of disciplines have been found to have abused their power and/or their privileges have prompted a careful review of the background of leaders.

Pastors and staff of ABCNYS churches are employees of the congregation, and it is the responsibility of the congregation to do criminal background checks and to talk with references. Nonetheless, ABCNYS seeks to support congregations in their pursuit of responsible and trustworthy clergy. It is in that spirit that we are asking you to sign this statement as a condition of Lay Pastor Certification, recognition of your ordination, or the Region making your availability known to churches.

1. Have you ever been convicted or did you ever plead guilty to any charge of child abuse, sexual misconduct, or domestic violence? Yes No

If "yes," please explain on a separate sheet.

2. Have you ever been accused of child abuse, sexual misconduct, or domestic violence? Yes No

If "yes," please explain on a separate sheet.

3. Has any ecclesiastical process and/or any professional committee ever found you guilty to any charge of child abuse, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, clergy misconduct, or professional boundaries violation? Yes No

If "yes," please explain on a separate sheet.

4. Have you ever resigned, been asked to resign, or been terminated from a position for reasons of child abuse, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, clergy misconduct, or professional boundaries violation? Yes No

If "yes," please explain on a separate sheet.

5. Have you ever resigned, been asked to resign, or been terminated from a position for reasons of your ethical or moral misconduct of any type? Yes No

If "yes," please explain on a separate sheet.

6. I know of no circumstances regarding my background that would adversely affect my fitness for ministry and being entrusted with the responsibilities of ministry on behalf of a congregation. True False

Use the back of the sheet to provide any explanation of the above.

The information I have provided on this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Print Name _____
Signed _____
Date _____

Please return this form to: ABCNYS, 3218 James Street, Syracuse NY 13206 or send a scanned copy to jkelsey@abc-nys.org followed by the original to the above address.

ABC/NYS 9/2021

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW YORK STATE

APPLICATION FOR FULL RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION BASED ON EXPERIENCE

(Use additional sheets as need.)

Note: It is strongly recommended that the applicant consider every possibility for meeting the full educational requirements for national recognition of ordination before making this application (the satisfactory completion of four years of college and three years of seminary in regionally or national accredited institutions, such study to have been done for credit while enrolled in a degree program). Transcripts of all college and seminary courses taken and copies CEU continuing education certificates must accompany application.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: Home _____

Business _____

PHONE: Home _____ \Business _____

EMAIL: _____

SCHOOLS ATTENDED (most recent first):

Name & Location	Major (if any)	Dates	Degree (if any)
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CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES (most recent first):

Sponsoring Group	Area of Study	Dates	CEUs earned
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Have you completed a course on American Baptist history and polity or its equivalent? Give specifics.

PREACHING LICENSE

Date(s)	Sponsoring Church (es)
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ORDINATION

Date	Denomination Sponsoring Church and/or Association
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MINISTRY HISTORY (most recent first)

Dates	Organization	Position	Hours per week
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REFERENCES

In the case of pastoral ministry, references should include two (2) members of your church and one (1) pastor (American Baptist or other denomination) who know you well. In the case of other types of ministry, the references should include at least one (1) supervisor and one (1) colleague.

Name	Business/Church	Position	Address & Phone
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EXPERIENCE

Experience as an equivalent to educational preparation is granted on the basis of three (3) years of satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance* for every one (1) year of academic preparation that is lacking in the candidate's background, seven (7) years of higher education being the norm. The maximum experiential equivalency which may be granted is nine (9) years, the equivalent to three (3) years of higher education – Recommended Procedures for Ordination, page 18.

*Satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance includes:

1. Satisfactory learning through the work experience
2. Satisfactory growth in self-understanding and in understanding nature and work of ministry
3. Satisfactory competency in interpreting the Christian Gospel
4. Satisfactory competence in understanding the forces shaping church and society
5. Satisfactory competence in leading the church community

I. Ministerial Performance

Give an overall account of your work experience with special attention to your major accomplishment(s).

Consider, for example:

- (a) Churches and communities served
- (b) Your leadership in church growth experiences
- (c) Congregational needs and your ministry
- (d) Community and societal needs and your ministry
- (e) Your leadership in American Baptist witness and involvement
- (f) Your leadership in ecumenical witness and involvement

II. Professional Growth

Identify and describe what you have learned through your experience of pastoral ministry, personal study, and professional relationships. Specifically highlight critical experiences, books, periodicals, professional associations and mentors.

Consider, for example:

- (a) Ministerial competence
- (b) Self understanding
- (c) Personal faith
- (d) Interpersonal relationships

III. Concept and Goals of Ministry

Briefly state your concept of goals of ministry.

IV. Relationship to American Baptist Churches

National recognition of one's ordination to the ministry in the American Baptist Churches, USA is a special privilege. Describe your relationship to ABC/USA. Include:

- (a) Your understanding of, and agreement with, American Baptist polity and practice
- (b) Your agreement with the Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council
- (c) Your participation in the affairs of the American Baptist Churches
- (d) Why you seek American Baptist recognition

V. Need for Equivalency

Please state why it is not feasible for you to obtain full recognition of your ordination by meeting the standard requirements of four (4) years of college and three (3) years of seminary from accredited institutions of higher education. Be specific.

05/2014

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW YORK STATE

REFERENCE FORM
FOR FULL RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION BASED ON EXPERIENCE

Please return this completed form to the chairperson of the appropriate Association committee (ordination/ministerial standing/ministry, etc.) If additional space is needed, please use the back of this form.

To the person providing this reference: This form will be used to help determine whether the applicant's ministerial experience is an equivalent to educational prerequisites as a basis for full recognition of ordination.

NAME OF APPLICANT _____

How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity?

Churches served _____

I. MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE

A. How does he/she function in these areas?

Circle the number that you feel most clearly describes the effectiveness of this candidate.

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Exceptionally Effective	No Basis for Judgment
1. Preaching	1	2	3	4	5
2. Worship	1	2	3	4	5
3. Educational Ministry	1	2	3	4	5
4. Organizational and Administrative Ability	1	2	3	4	5
5. Committee Work	1	2	3	4	5
6. Counseling	1	2	3	4	5

B. Illustrate involvement in community life.

C. Illustrate involvement in ecumenical concerns.

II. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

A. Ministerial Competence

1. Has the applicant developed a library of any substance? Yes () No ()

2. What is the applicant's attitude toward study?

B. In what ways does the applicant reflect a positive faith?

C. In what ways does the applicant reflect self-understanding?

D. What characterizes the applicant's interpersonal relationships?

III. CONCEPT AND GOALS OF MINISTRY

A. From the emphasis of the applicant's ministry, what do you perceive his/her goals for ministry to be?

B. Are the applicant's goals clear and articulated?

C. Is he/she achieving the goals?

IV. RELATIONSHIP TO AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES

A. Illustrate the applicant's attitude, as you perceive it, toward the American Baptist Churches. Does he/she demonstrate commitment to the life and mission of the denomination?

B. Does he/she participate in the activities of the American Baptist Churches? For example, does he/she attend Association, Region, and national meetings?

C. Please indicate why you think this applicant is seeking American Baptist recognition.

On the basis of the above information, I

1. strongly recommend
2. recommend
3. recommend with reservation
4. do not recommend

this applicant to receive full recognition of ordination.

Thank you for responding to this reference. The information will be extremely helpful in making appropriate decisions regarding this applicant.

Your Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

05/2014