

RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION WITHIN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF THE ROCHESTER/GENESEE REGION

Churches and agencies within the American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region may wish to call a person who has been previously ordained through another denomination or affiliation and have that person's ordination recognized through ABCRGR. Recognition does not replace the original ordination. Rather, it allows candidates who are serving as professional clergy in the Rochester/Genesee Region to have a ministerial standing in the American Baptist Churches USA. While respecting and valuing the ordination process of other denominations, it is appropriate that the ABCRGR expects certain criteria to be met by any person who is seeking an American Baptist ordination. Thus, the Ordination Review Committee and the delegates of the region have approved the following guidelines.

If the Candidate Holds a Local Church Ordination:

A candidate who holds a local church ordination and wishes to be ordained by the American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region is ineligible for the recognition process and must follow the **"Guidelines for Ordination in ABC Rochester\Genesee Region."**

Some denominations/church affiliations follow ordination practices which, while sometimes including elements of an ordination process beyond the local church, do not necessarily require a larger associational or clerical body to affirm a local church ordination (such as The Alliance of Baptists). On a case-by-case basis, a candidate for recognition and the Ordination Review Committee will work together to review what procedures were undertaken by the candidate in their ordination process and how those procedures compare with ABCRGR ordination standards.

Guidelines for Recognition of Ordination:

In order to be eligible for recognition of ordination, the candidate must be a member in good standing of a church within ABCRGR for at least one year before recognition can be granted. The other elements of the recognition process may be completed within that year.

Additionally, the candidate must provide the following:

- An official transcript from an ATS-accredited seminary with a M.Div. or equivalent.
- A copy of the original ordination document
- A letter of good ministerial standing from the ordaining body (see "Exceptions to This Process" below)
- Documentation of participation in a comparable examination process to the ABCRGR Permanent Council in which the candidate is evaluated by credentialed (ATS-equivalent) ordained clergy and laity along the following criteria:
 - Possession of gifts and attitudes that qualify the candidate for ministry
 - A basic knowledge of the Bible, understanding of the gospel, and ability to articulate and defend their theological understandings
 - An understanding of church history, practice and beliefs
 - A stance of openness before God, one's community, and the world
- A signed ABCRGR Ministerial Code of Ethics (sent to candidate upon entry into process)
- A completed Background Check Authorization (sent to the candidate upon entry into the process)
- Documentation of a seminary course in American Baptist polity and history or its equivalent.
- Complete a Ministerial Boundaries training through ABCRGR or provide documentation of attendance of one in another region or denomination within the last three years.
- An evaluation from a comprehensive career- and candidacy-assessment program at an ABCRGR-approved Center for Ministry within the last three years (or completed within the timeframe of the recognition process)

- Written reflection following participation in one of the following: the ABCUSA Orientation to American Baptist Life, an ABCRGR gathering approved by the executive minister for this purpose, or an ABC Biennial Mission Summit (see requirements for reflection paper below)
- A written statement of faith (see requirements for statement of faith below)

Mentor

All candidates for recognition of ordination are assigned a mentor by the Ordination Review Committee, after discussion with the candidate the candidate's ministry interests and needs. The mentor assists in shepherding the candidate through the process, helping the candidate become familiar with ABCUSA foundational beliefs and practices, and making connections with the candidate's colleagues in ABCRGR. The mentor helps the candidate in sharpening the statement of faith paper and will need to approve it to be sent to the ORC when the mentor deems it is ready.

Timeline for Recognition Process

Candidates for recognition have **two-year period** from the date of entry into the process to complete the process, providing that the candidate remains in active communication with mentor and the executive minister during this time.

Exceptions to Recognition Process

The ORC is empowered to waive the requirement of a letter of good ministerial standing from the ordaining body when a candidate's:

- Ordination has been withdrawn solely due to his/her sexual orientation or gender identity
- Ordination has been withdrawn solely due to a commitment to welcome and affirm all individuals without regard to their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Ordination has been withdrawn when the ORC determines that an ordination was done in good faith, under the existing judicatory guidelines of the region (or denomination); where the ORC has not identified integrity concerns or violations of the principles consistent with the ABCRGR Code of Ethics; and where the candidate has a clean Criminal Background report
- Documentation of the ordination cannot be substantiated due to extraordinary circumstances (i.e. refugee status, catastrophic event that destroyed files, etc.)
- The waiver of the requirement of a letter of good standing will also apply to candidates who have had their ABC ordinations withdrawn for the above-noted reasons. (Voted in February 8, 2009)

Requirements for Reflection Paper

When the candidate attends the ABCUSA Orientation to American Baptist Life (OTABL), an ABCRGR gathering approved by the executive minister for this purpose, or an ABC Biennial Mission Summit, the candidate must submit a reflection paper to the executive minister of ABCRGR within 30 days of the participation. This reflection paper should be no more than five (5) pages long (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font).

It must include:

- A brief description of the event
- At least three aspects of American Baptist life the candidate learned more about during the event, such as elements of polity, the "four fragile freedoms," American Baptist views on ordination, communion, or baptism, etc,
- A reflection upon the candidate's experience of the event in relationship to her or his recognition of ordination

Requirements for Statement of Faith

- The statement of faith should be approximately 4-6 double-spaced typed pages

- Use line numbering
- Use Times New Roman 12-point font
- The paper will be sent as a PDF to the executive minister for distribution to the members of the ORC at least three weeks before a scheduled review session.
- Mentor must review and sign off on the paper before it is sent for distribution to the Ordination Review Committee.

The Recognition Review

The Ordination of Review Committee of ABCRGR shall have the final responsibility for assessing the calling and readiness of the candidate for ordination. This assessment will happen via an in-person meeting or video conference call with the candidate. The candidate's mentor will also be invited to the meeting, and the candidate may also invite one other person of support if s/he chooses. Although the candidate is required to answer all questions of the ORC her/himself without input from the mentor and other person of support, the mentor and other person of support will be invited to share their comments at the end of the review session, before the ORC deliberates.

The ORC shall assess the candidate along the following criteria:

- Possession of gifts and attitudes that qualify the candidate for ministry
- A basic knowledge of the Bible, understanding of the gospel, and ability to articulate and defend the theological assertions in the paper
- A stance of openness before God, one's community, and the world
- An understanding of Baptist history, polity and beliefs

Upon Completion

The candidate's standing in ABCUSA will be updated by the ABCRGR executive minister to reflect his or her changed status in the denomination. The candidate will receive a letter and certificate of recognition from the executive minister to serve as additional documentation. It is expected that the candidate will make any notifications necessary to her or his previous denomination or ordaining body.