

ORDINATION WITHIN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF THE ROCHESTER GENESEE REGION

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Introduction

Ordination in the ABC Rochester/Genesee Region is a **shared venture** involving the **candidate**, the **local church**, and the **Rochester Genesee Region**. Ordination grants recognition to the person's calling, fitness, and preparation for a ministry and confers upon such person its approval of her/his place among peers.

One of the commonly held convictions of churches today is that all Christians are ministers who participate in Christ's own ministry. This is evidenced in the baptism of the individual Christian and in the doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers," where within faith communities individuals inspired by the Holy Spirit are both competent and responsible for approaching God on behalf of themselves and others.

Baptists further asserted that any member of the church could be called upon to exercise all ministerial functions and responsibilities, even though this did not ordinarily happen. When a radical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was combined with a strictly independent concept of the local church, with each congregation directly responsible to Christ, and its officers having no standing outside its membership, there seemed to be little practical or doctrinal foundation for a special order of ministry, the ordained ministry.

But the actual situation was not that simple. Baptists long have possessed a "separate" or "set-apart" ministry that has served a constituency wider than the local congregation. Ordination has tended to be the setting apart (by the call of God and the action of the church) of one of the many ministers to perform special functions of ministry on behalf of the community of faith.

Ordination historically has been understood by many American Baptist congregations as affirming that an individual has had a call to this specialized ministry and has met the necessary qualifications for carrying it out. Although most often a local congregation has taken the initiative in ordaining that individual, it did so in cooperation with other congregations. This participation of a group of churches in ordination has given the rite much more than merely local significance. In fact, if the ordination was carried out according to the standards of the American Baptist Churches, it

represented a denominational recognition of the individual's call and qualifications for the ordained ministry of Christ's universal church.¹

Persons planning for service in the following categories may be considered for ordination:

- Parish ministry, including all staff who exercise pastoral functions
- Mission service on the home or foreign field in which pastoral functions will be exercised
- Specialized ministries: institutional, military, and academic chaplaincies; pastoral counseling; or staff membership in a church-related institution where preaching, teaching, and/or pastoral work is required
- Staff service, involving educational or pastoral functions of an American Baptist agency, a council of churches or some other ecumenical ministry appropriately related to the American Baptist Churches USA

Any candidate whose proposed type of service does not fall into one of the above categories may consult with the Ordination Review Committee.

Ordination Requirements

The candidate seeking recommendation for ordination through the American Baptist Churches of the Rochester Genesee Region must have evidenced a calling and preparation for ministry and have met the following requirements.

Local Church Membership

- The candidate must be a member in good standing, for at least one year, of an ABCRGR church which is in good standing, prior to completing the ordination process. (If a candidate changes church membership during the process, the one-year requirement starts again.)
- The candidate must be commended in writing by that local church prior to entering the ordination process. (Sponsorship form in Appendix D.)

Educational Requirements

- Graduation from an ATS-accredited seminary with an M.Div. or equivalent (See Appendix B for equivalencies)
- Successful completion of an approved course in Baptist history and polity (Note: These courses may not be offered every year so plan ahead.)
- Successful completion of one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (Required only for those called to chaplaincy; recommended for all others)
- Successful completion of Field Education/Supervised Ministry

Additional Requirements

- The candidate should proceed into the process of ordination at least a year before a Permanent Council for ordination can be called.
- A candidate engaged in seminary studies may not start the ordination process until their final year.
- The candidate must have a Center for Ministry Review at an ABCRGR-approved center.
- Participation in either the ABCUSA Orientation to ABC life (**Note that this is not provided on an annual basis*), attending a region gathering (selection of gathering approved by the Executive Minister or ORC), or an ABC Biennial Mission Summit.
 - Prepare and submit to the Executive Minister within 30 days of participation a post-experience reflection paper (no more than 5 pages)
- Submission of signed the Background Check Authorization and the ABCRGR Code of Ethics at onset of the process
- Submission of two references using the ABCRGR Ordination/Recognition Reference form submitted online using a link obtained from the Executive Minister.
- Complete a Ministerial Boundaries training through ABCRGR or provide documentation of attendance of one in another region or denomination within the last three years.
- Candidates have four years (starting from the date of the church sponsorship letter) to complete the ordination review process if the candidate remains in active conversation with the mentor and region during the four years. The ORC is empowered to grant one extension (generally not longer than twelve months) to candidates who

¹Adapted from "Recommended Procedures for the Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches," <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/procedures-for-ordination.pdf>.

have been active in completing the review process, who face extenuating circumstances (i.e., accident, health, military active duty, etc.) that prevent the completion of the process within four years.

Fitness for Ministry

Fitness shall be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Commitment to Christ and the propagation of the Christian gospel
- Concern for people and an unselfish commitment to their needs
- Ability to communicate with others effectively
- Evidence of and commitment to maintain emotional stability, maturity, and competence
- Commitment to maintain a high level of intellectual discipline
- Evidence of competent formation of pastoral leadership
- Adherence to professional standards regarding ethical behavior
- Ability to articulate clearly a call to ministry

The ORC acknowledges that these criteria are subjective. We want the candidate to realize that once this process has begun the candidate is held accountable for his/her past and present actions. A candidate is evaluated throughout the process.

The above criteria will be assessed based on dialogue with the local church, information from Field Education/Supervised Ministry, Clinical Pastoral Education evaluation, Center for Ministry review, conversation with the assigned mentor, and discussions with the Ordination Review Committee. The candidate shall submit a signed release of evaluations to be sent to the Executive Minister. These documents are retained only for ordination.

Ordination Paper

The ordination paper is the first introduction of the candidate to members of the Permanent Council if and when the candidate reaches that stage of the process. It is expected to reflect Masters-degree-level writing and reflection. See Paper Requirements, Appendix A. Candidates will work with their pastor, mentor, and sometimes a member of the Ordination Review Committee to prepare their paper for review by the Ordination Review Committee.

The Responsibilities of the Mentor

The Ordination Review Committee (ORC) will assign a mentor to each candidate. The mentor will be a resource throughout the process as the candidate explores his/her calling and strengths for ministry and prepares the ordination paper. The mentor will:

- Engage the candidate as he/she explores his/her calling and strengths for ministry
- Review candidate's plans for continuing growth in areas in need of development
- Help candidate get oriented to American Baptist life
- Assist candidate in preparing ordination paper prior to the full ORC review
- Approve written draft(s) of ordination paper before the paper is presented to ORC
- Review the major themes to be covered during the meeting with the ORC
- Attend ORC meeting(s) with candidate when possible

The mentor should anticipate making a commitment to meet with the candidate a minimum of three times each year. (See Appendix C for mentoring materials.)

The Responsibilities of the Local Church

Fitness for Ministry

As a part of the shared responsibility for preparing candidates sponsored for ordination, the local church is expected to play an active role in assessing, monitoring and evaluating the candidate's "fitness for ministry." In addition to routine updates on the academic progress of a candidate in seminary, the local church should review information from any field education and clinical pastoral education evaluations they have received from the candidate, and candidate meetings with the Ordination Review Committee, with attention to the following:

- Commitment to Christ and the propagation of the Christian gospel
- Concern for people and an unselfish commitment to their needs

- Ability to communicate with others effectively
- Evidence of and commitment to maintain emotional stability, maturity, and competence
- Commitment to maintain a high level of intellectual discipline
- Evidence of competent formation of pastoral leadership
- Adherence to professional standards regarding ethical behavior
- Ability to articulate clearly a call to ministry

Any church sponsoring a candidate shall assume certain responsibilities:

- The church shall provide the Executive Minister with a letter of reference (Sponsorship Letter) indicating endorsement by the church, stating that the candidate is a member in good standing, has the gifts for ordained ministry, and has the desire to pursue ordination through the Region's process before the candidate meets with the ORC. (See Appendix D for Affirmation of Sponsorship Form.)
- The pastor and/or designee shall monitor and nurture the candidate, engage in a dialogue regarding the ordination paper, and provide assessment of fitness of the candidate for ordination.
- The sponsoring church will help the candidate to defray the cost to have a Center for Ministry Review and attendance at the ABC USA Orientation to ABC life or alternative event (as described above).
- The pastor and/or designee shall endorse in writing to the Executive Minister the final draft of the ordination paper. The paper must be submitted to the Executive Minister in a timely fashion so that ORC members receive the paper **three** weeks prior to the review meeting.
- Following the ORC's approval, the church shall request in writing to the Executive Minister a meeting of the Permanent Council on Ordination to examine the candidate for ordination.
- The church will email the ordination paper to the region office for distribution to the Permanent Council.
- The paper must be received by members of the Permanent Council at least **two** weeks prior to the meeting of the Permanent Council.
- A date shall be set for the ordination service only after the examination by and recommendation of the Permanent Council on Ordination.

The Responsibilities of the Ordination Review Committee

The Ordination Review Committee is charged with monitoring the progress of candidates as they move toward ordination. The ORC provides consul and guidance as appropriate, helping the candidate to prepare for the Permanent Council on Ordination. As outlined below, the ORC serves in several important roles to help the candidate reach a successful conclusion to the process. At the same time, the ORC is empowered to suspend and/or end the review process when there are concerns regarding a candidate's evidence of call, preparation, and fitness for ordained ministry. In addition to the ORC discussions/meetings with the candidate, the Ordination Review Committee will consider feedback from the local church, the mentor, recommendations from the Executive Minister, and evaluations from Supervised Ministry, Clinical Pastoral Education, and/or Center for Ministry review to require additional steps to address concerns or to suspend the review of a candidate in process.

To attend to these supportive and assessment functions, the ORC shall:

- Provide an opportunity for interested candidates to meet with the ORC at the outset of the process, including an invitation for that candidate's pastor to be present
- Provide a written overview of procedures, requirements, and expectations to each interested candidate
- Name a mentor in consultation with the candidate
- Meet as needed with each candidate to review progress and to monitor any concerns and problems
- Review the ordination paper with the candidate; this meeting may also include the candidate's pastor and their assigned mentor. Pastor and mentor will be invited to make comments at the end of the meeting, prior to deliberation by the ORC. Note: candidates may be invited to meet with the ORC more than once to finalize any revisions. The goal of this meeting/these meetings is to prepare the candidate for the Permanent Council on Ordination.
- Communicate to the church the readiness of the candidate to appear before the Permanent Council on Ordination
- Authorize the church to call for the convening of the Permanent Council
- Confirm with the sponsoring church the date and time for the Permanent Council (in consultation with the region calendar and other possible churches also scheduling a Permanent Council)

The Responsibilities of the Executive Minister

The Executive Minister shall:

- Provide an initial meeting with all interested and prospective candidates
- Process the Criminal Background Check and the ABCRGR Code of Ethics (see Appendix E for Code of Ethics)
- Communicate with the sponsoring church regarding the letter of sponsorship, conveying the expectations and guidelines for the church's work in monitoring and nurturing the candidate and in the preparation of the ordination paper
- Communicate with the mentor conveying the expectations and guidelines for the mentoring process.
- Schedule candidates to meet with the ORC
- Receive evaluations from the Center of Ministry Review
- Track the candidate's process and provide periodic updates to the candidate, mentor, and sponsoring church pastor as needed.

The Responsibilities of the Permanent Council on Ordination

The Permanent Council on Ordination of the Region shall have the final responsibility for assessing the calling and readiness of the candidate for ordination.

The chair of the ORC chairs the Permanent Council on Ordination.

The Permanent Council on Ordination shall evaluate 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

Voting members of the Permanent Council on Ordination

- All active and retired ABCRGR recognized ordained clergy
- One lay member of each ABCRGR church
- The members of the ORC

Technological Requirements for Permanent Council Meeting

Due to the geographically-dispersed nature of ABCRGR, the Permanent Council on Ordination must be held in a location in which videoconferencing technology is possible. It is of primary concern that the candidate arrange for videoconference technology of a high enough quality to be easily heard and seen, with limited concerns about dropped calls. The Executive Minister and members of the ORC will assist candidates making arrangements that allow for adequate technology.

Summary and Checklist of Requirements

The following summary is given to help you in your preparation for ordination but be sure to read the detail above. This summary and checklist is merely for quick reference and does not include all the information you'll need. The Ordination Review Committee is available in many ways to facilitate your preparation for ordination into the Christian Ministry. Please feel free to consult with the Executive Minister or the chair of the committee at any point in the process.

Ordination Requirements

- A well-articulated call from God
- Membership in an ABCRGR church in good standing for at least one year prior to ordination
- Recommendation by local church by pastor, local church governing board, or deacons
- Center for Ministry review at an ABC-approved center
- Successful completion of an approved course in American Baptist history and polity
- Successful completion of one unit of CPE
- Successful completion of Field Education
- Completion of a Ministerial Boundaries training provided by the region, or documentation of the equivalent provided by another region or denomination during the time of the ordination process.
- Graduation from ATS accredited seminary with a M.Div. or equivalent
- Attendance at the Orientation to ABC Life provided by ABCUSA, ABCRGR event approved for this purpose by the Executive Minister or ORC, or ABC Biennial Mission Summit, with reflection paper.

- Background Check Authorization and the ABCRGR Code of Ethics (Appendix E)
- A written ordination paper approved by the Permanent Council on Ordination

Summary of Process for Ordination

- Candidates must meet with the Executive Minister to get acquainted, to review the requirements and to sign the Background Check Authorization (emailed to candidate) and Code of Ethics (Appendix E) before meeting with the ORC
- Be a member of an ABCRGR church in good standing with the region at least one year prior to entering the ordination process, and recommended by the pastor, local church governing board, or deacons.
- Local church appoints a committee to monitor candidate's progress and to offer support and encouragement
- Meet with Ordination Review Committee for an introductory meeting to get acquainted, project a time line, and later as needed to check progress
- Complete Supervised Ministry
- Complete CPE
- Take at least one approved course in American Baptist history and polity
- Attend the Orientation to ABC Life provided by ABCUSA, or an ABCRGR event approved for this purpose by the Executive Minister or ORC, or ABC Biennial Mission Summit, and write reflection paper
- Participate in Center for Ministry Review and provide evaluation to Executive Minister
- Submit official transcript showing completion of Master of Divinity degree
- Complete Ministerial Boundaries training
- Notify Executive Minister of readiness to write the ordination paper in last year of seminary or upon completion of all the requirements
- ORC appoints mentor to work with the candidate
- Meet with pastor and/or local church committee to discuss ordination paper
- Send paper to Executive Minister to distribute to ORC members at least three weeks before meeting
- Meet with ORC to discuss paper and make necessary revisions
- Following approval by ORC, the Executive Minister notifies the local church of approval to request a meeting of the Permanent Council
- Pastor or chair of governing board negotiates dates for the Permanent Council meeting with the region office
- The region sends paper electronically or by mail to each church and pastor for distribution to members of the Permanent Council, so it arrives at least two weeks before the Council meeting

APPENDIX A: Ordination Paper Requirements

The ordination paper is the candidate's first introduction to many members of the Permanent Council. It will also lay the groundwork for the inquiries members of the Permanent Council may want to make of the candidate to assess the candidate's readiness for ordination. Therefore, it should reflect Masters-level writing and reflection.

General requirements are that the paper be:

- Carefully edited for clarity of thought and grammatical accuracy
- Closely proof-read to be as error-free as possible
- Concise (adhering to page count as closely as possible)

Ordained leadership as defined in the ABCRGR includes, but is not limited to, the following competencies:

- The ability to articulate an understanding of the world, including its social, political, and economic dimensions to which the gospel speaks
- An understanding of the nature of the gospel, including its texts, traditions, and trajectories, and the ability to teach, preach, and witness to that gospel
- An ability to understand and articulate the role of the church and to function as a leader of the church in the movement of the gospel into the world

Consequently, each candidate for ordination is required to write an ordination paper to reflect these competencies.

Specifications of the Paper

- Between 15-20 pages (see suggested page counts for each section below for guidance)
- Double-spaced
- Times New Roman 12-point font
- 1" margins on all sides
- Header to include candidate's name and page number
- Line numbers through entire document (to number lines in MS Word – go to Page Setup – Line Numbers – Continuous)
- No title page is necessary
- Use centered, bold section headings for the four main sections
- Use bold sub-headings aligned to the left margin to indicate each sub-section as indicated below

Submitting the Paper

- The paper must be submitted electronically as a Word document. However, if requested to send in print, it may be printed double-sided.
- Once the candidate's pastor and mentor both sign off on the paper, the paper will then be reviewed by a member of the ORC to assess its readiness for distribution to the members of the ORC prior to the ORC paper review meeting. The candidate will be requested to send the paper and be in conversation with the designated member of the ORC. The purpose of this review is simply to help the candidate ensure their paper is in the best shape possible for meeting with the ORC.
- Once the designated member of the ORC signs off on the paper, the paper should be sent electronically to the Executive Minister for distribution to the members of the ORC at least **three weeks** prior to a scheduled review session.

On Quotations and Citations

- If all scripture references are from the same version of the Bible, please indicate with a footnote in the first reference the version used. Citations need not be repeated after that. If using different versions, simply indicate which version using the abbreviation in parentheses after the version. No need to footnote each one.
- If using a quotation from a published work, author, hymn, blog post, etc., it needs to be cited appropriately using footnotes rather than in-line citations. If in doubt, Chicago Manual of Style is preferred (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>). However, candidates are strongly discouraged from using other people's words. The point of the ordination paper is for the reader to get to know the candidate and the candidate's perspectives. Keep quotations to an absolute minimum, if using them at all.

Contents of the Paper

Introduction (4-5 pages)

- Write a concise statement of your personal journey, Christian experience, and your call to the ministry.
- How do you sustain and maintain your relationship with God?
- Explain your understanding of what it means to be ordained in the Baptist tradition.
- Explain why it is that you are pursuing ordination.

The world to which the gospel speaks (3-5 pages)

Include your understanding of the relationship between God and humanity. Include the following, each with its own heading:

- Who is God to you and who are you in relationship to God?
- How do you understand God's relationship to the created order?
- How do sin, evil and freewill factor into your understanding of humanity's relationship with God?
- What is God's and humanity's relationship to creation?

The nature of the gospel (3-5 pages)

Describe your understanding of the nature and purpose of Jesus Christ. Include the following, each with its own heading:

- Describe your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What is the Good News to you?
- What must one do to be saved and to become a disciple?
- How has the truth of the gospel been revealed to humankind?
- How are the Scriptures authoritative for you and for the life of the church?
- Where are the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifested in your life?

The movement of the gospel into the world (3-5 pages)

Discuss your beliefs about the nature and purpose of the church. Include the following: Each with its own heading:

- What is the mission of the church?
- What is distinctive about American Baptist belief?
- How do you understand the local church's relationship to the ABCUSA, and to ecumenical and interfaith expressions of faith?
- How do you feel your understanding of the gospel has an impact on your leadership style? How do you feel God calls you to act as a leader in the Christian community?
- What are the challenges and opportunities facing the church at this time and what steps will you take in responding to them?
- What is a significant social justice concern for God's people? Speak to the biblical and theological imperatives which draw you to this concern and reflect on how you might lead the church in addressing this challenge.

Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs)

Summarize your calling to ministry and desire to be ordained as it relates to your responses to the movement of the gospel into the world.

APPENDIX B: M.Div. Equivalencies

(As per "Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches," Adopted by the Professional Ministries Team and Minister's Council, ABCUSA, 2012)

There are three preparatory educational tracks which a candidate for ordination and ministry may pursue. Track I is considered to be the track most candidates will pursue in the American Baptist Churches. Any candidate wishing to pursue Track II or Track III MUST secure the written permission of the regional department of ministry PRIOR to entering either of these tracks and meet all requirements of these tracks.

The candidate for ordination shall meet the following educational standards:

Track I

This track is viewed as the standard track toward ordination and is the most recommended option among ABC regions.

A. The education prerequisites as adopted by the American Baptist Convention in 1961:

RESOLVED, That the "educational standards of four years of college and three years of seminary (the A.B. and B. D. [now M.Div.] degrees or their standard equivalents) be the educational prerequisites for the recognition by the American Baptist Churches of candidates ordained after and including January 1, 1965. This action is not retroactive. It will in nowise affect the manner in which American Baptist Churches pastors ordained before January 1, 1965, shall be recognized. This action is accompanied with a call to all local ordination councils and local churches to prepare . . . prospective candidates for the implementation of this standard in 1965" (1961 ABC Year Book, pp. 37-38).

It is a common understanding that North American seminaries will be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. In those cases where seminary education takes place in other than North American settings, refer to Track II. A person who has already been ordained through an organization recognized as a constituency of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) should be accepted as a person with a Track I ordination with no additional review of ordination required, recognizing that eligibility for call is a separate issue as outlined in the definitions of this document. The credentials of persons holding international degrees who have not yet been ordained should be reviewed using Track II requirements.

B. A functional knowledge of American Baptist history and polity. This normally can be satisfied by a seminary-level course on both the history and polity of American Baptists or by a rigorous self-study course approved by the candidate's Region.

C. The candidate's professional ethics and intention of cooperation must be affirmed by accepting the Covenant and Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches. All persons seeking ordination will have completed a course in professional ethics offered either by a seminary or a region. This course will consider areas such as professional boundary issues, relationships, confidentiality, ethics in financial matters, and other related issues which can dramatically affect the relationship between pastor and people.

D. Candidacy assessment. Ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and consistent Christian character. Therefore, candidates for ordination will complete a comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored by or in consultation with an American Baptist related Career Development Center within five years prior to examination by the regional department of ministry. (Candidates of Track I are encouraged to complete this requirement no later than the first year of their seminary preparation.)

Track II

Adopted by the General Board of ABCUSA, September 27, 1973, this track is the "equivalency track," in which an equivalent degree or years of experience may be substituted for up to three years of higher education.

A. The primary education prerequisite for the recognition of candidates for ordination within the American Baptist Churches is reaffirmed to be four years of college and three years of seminary (the B.A. and M.Div. degrees or their equivalents). "College," "seminary," or "higher education" are terms used throughout this document to mean post-high school study in regionally or nationally accredited institutions of higher education, such study to have been done for credit while enrolled in a degree program.

B. "Their equivalent" may mean an experiential equivalent verified by the appropriate committee of the region as provided in this document. It may also mean another educational sequence (e.g., Th.M. or Ph.D. in religion) or include international degrees which may be approved by the department of ministry of the regional judiciary.

C. Exceptions to the educational prerequisite are not encouraged, but in certain instances individuals may apply for the recognition of their ordination without having completed four years of college and three years of seminary on the following conditions:

1. Experience as an equivalent to educational preparation is granted on the basis of two 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.
2. The maximum experiential equivalency which may be granted is six (6) years, the equivalent to three (3) years of higher education.
3. To merit consideration as an exception to the educational prerequisite, the candidate's professional experience must meet the following criteria:
 - a. It must have been within the broad range of professional leadership categories recognized by the registry of professional leaders of the ABCUSA. Any requests to consider paraprofessional experiences must include substantiating evidence from third parties.
 - b. It must have been full-time experience (twenty hours per week or more).
 - c. It must be verified as to length and satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance by the appropriate committee of the region, in which the candidate is presently serving. "Satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance" is understood to include (in the judgment of such committees):
 - satisfactory learning through the work experience;
 - satisfactory growth in self-understanding and in understanding the nature and work of ministry;
 - satisfactory competence in interpreting the Christian Gospel;
 - satisfactory competence in understanding the forces shaping church and society; and
 - satisfactory competence in leading the church community.
 - d. Evidence concerning the individual's periodic involvement in professional continuing education experiences is required. The number and extent of such experiences will be weighed by the committee and utilized as one index of the candidate's seriousness in pursuance of professional competency.
 - e. A functional knowledge of American Baptist history and polity. This can normally be satisfied by a seminary-level course on both the history and polity of American Baptists or by a rigorous self-study course approved by the candidate's region.
 - f. The candidate's professional ethics and intention of cooperation must be affirmed by accepting the Covenant and Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches, signified by signing. All persons seeking ordination will have completed a course in professional ethics offered either by a seminary or a region. This course will include attention to areas such as professional boundary issues, relationships, confidentiality, ethics in financial matters, and other related issues which can dramatically affect the relationship between pastor and people.
 - g. Candidacy assessment. Ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing formation of pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and Christian character. Therefore, candidates for ordination or recognition of non-ABC ordination shall complete a comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored by or in consultation with an American Baptist related Career Development Center within five years prior to examination by the regional department of ministry.

Track III

This track is known as the "Regional Training" track to ordination. The following requirements must be fulfilled to qualify for this track:

A. Candidates must be sponsored by an American Baptist congregation.

B. Candidates must provide evidence of satisfactory completion of a lay pastor program from a U.S. or international Seminary or an ABC Region.

C. Candidate must also complete three years of satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance. The candidate's professional experience must meet the following criteria:

1. It must have been full-time experience (twenty hours per week or more).
2. It must be verified as to length and satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance by the appropriate committee of the region, in which the candidate is presently serving. "Satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance" is understood to include (in the judgment of such committees):
 - satisfactory learning through the work experience;
 - satisfactory growth in self-understanding and in understanding the nature and work of ministry;
 - satisfactory competence in interpreting the Christian Gospel;
 - satisfactory competence in understanding the forces shaping church and society; and
 - satisfactory competence in leading the church community.

D. A functional knowledge of American Baptist history and polity. This normally can be satisfied by a seminary level course on both the history and polity of American Baptists or by a rigorous self-study course approved by the candidate's region.

E. Candidacy assessment. Ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing formation of pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and Christian character. Therefore, candidates for ordination will complete a comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored by or in consultation with an American Baptist related Career Development Center within five years prior to examination by the regional department of ministry.

F. The candidate's professional ethics and intention of cooperation must be affirmed by accepting the Covenant and Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches. All persons seeking ordination will have completed a course in professional ethics offered either by a seminary or a region. This course will include attention to areas such as professional boundary issues, relationships, confidentiality, ethics in financial matters, and other related issues which can dramatically affect the relationship between pastor and people.

G. Candidates will be examined on issues of conversion and Christian identity, call to ministry, biblical and theological convictions (including Baptist history, polity, structure, and function), pastoral competence, and character (including ministerial ethics and spiritual disciplines).

APPENDIX C: Mentoring Materials

Career in Ordained Ministry Mentoring Guide for Ordination/Recognition

By Dr. Gaya Shakes and Rev. Dr. Peter Grinion

The process of preparing candidates for ministerial leadership in the church requires that much attention is given to ministerial formation. Through ministerial formation, the candidate grows in the acquisition of knowledge, religious identity, discipleship, ministerial skills, and spiritual maturity expected of church ministers. One of our roles as the Ordination Review Committee is to help ministerial candidates hear their calling most clearly and answer it most faithfully. As a consequence, we recommend reflective coaching conferences between mentors and candidates.

Reflection involves how we think about our work, the decisions we make about it and the impact of those decisions on our students and our profession. Being reflective means valuing inquiry and the continuous consideration of what we do know as well as what we do not yet understand (Shakes, 1998). A reflective coaching conference is appropriate in a mentor-candidate relationship when the candidate has the knowledge, skills and dispositions to think through the decision making process. With coaching, the candidate arrives at his or her own conclusions about what needs to be done to cultivate the integration of that knowledge, skill, moral integrity and religious commitment. Reflective coaching, therefore is a set of strategies, ways of thinking, and interacting that invite reciprocity in shaping thinking and problem solving (Lipton and Wellman, 2001). In this process, mentoring and coaching are inextricably linked as partnership concepts. They are powerful and inspirational tools than can be appropriately used to help our candidates realize their dreams and become the best they can be in ministry.

A coach/mentor should help the candidate to:

- Increase knowledge of subject matter and foster an ability to analyze the world of the church
- Envision and construct learning events
- Form theological habits of mind
- Understand historical traditions of clergy
- Increase knowledge about diverse religious communities
- Develop nurturing relationships with his/her congregation
- See the relationship between certain teaching practices and enhanced congregational engagement
- Use theological standards and rubrics to create a context of shared values and definitions
- Foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction (Foster, Dahill, Goleman, and Tolentino, 2006)

In a reflective coaching situation, a mentor/coach:

- Is non-judgmental and evaluative
- Encourages self-awareness
- Encourages self-reflection and "pastoral imagination" (Dykstra, 2001)
- Uses data appropriately

Benefits of Coaching:

- Supports the candidate on his/her journey
- Enhances intellectual capacities of both mentor and candidate
- Provides candidate feedback on collaboration
- Builds positive interpersonal relationships
- Supports and makes successful theological learning communities
- Informs the relationship between theory and praxis, between intellect and commitment (Adapted from Barkley,

2005)

Areas of Mentoring and Coaching:

- Communication/Correspondence
- Personal and professional development
- Acquisition of knowledge
- Pastoral skills/Spiritual maturity (Adapted from Barkley, 2005)

Components of the Reflective Coaching Conference

- The candidate explains issues or situation
- The coach/ mentor checks for understanding
- The coach/ mentor clarifies and probes for specificity and/or to identify real problems (i.e., What exactly do you want to occur? What do you think could be the cause?)
- The candidate identifies the problem or concern and considers options as the mentor facilitates thinking
- The candidate decides what to try and makes an action plan
- The coach/mentor verifies plan and sets follow-up meeting (Adapted from Barkley, 2005)

Empowering Questions for Theological Coaching:

Empowering questions can and should motivate and challenge a candidate to stretch for excellence—realizing that his/her greatest performance is yet to come. Candidates grow when they are involved in thinking about their performance" (Barkley, 1985).

Empowering coaching questions are evaluative, creative, and personalized (Barkley, 2005).

Evaluative questions encourage the candidate to make a weighed decision, which indicates the candidate's value structure.

Creative questions serve two purposes: 1) to remove the candidate from present, up-close issues and allow the candidate to see the evaluative component from the outside. When this occurs, a new perspective often emerges; 2) to generate new ideas, combinations, and ways of doing and being.

Personalized questions show that the mentor is listening to the candidate. These questions are asked to connect to something that *he/she* said earlier. The use of these personalized questions indicates that the coach/ mentor is truly interested and wants to know more.

Sample Questions that Support Reflective Coaching:

- Where in your studies and ministry are you most satisfied? Why? Where are you least satisfied?
- How do you know when you are successful as a congregational leader?
- How do you know when you have appropriate assessments?
- What do you understand now about the role of professional clergy that you did not understand before? How did this occur?
- What are your indicators for a need to grow?
- How do you see the relationship between learning in seminary and the culture of a particular religious community? How does this impact your approach to ministry and the professional work of clergy? (Adapted from the Rochester City School District's Career in Teaching Mentor/Intern Handbook for Interns, 2008)

A helpful metaphor for reflective coaching is a mirror through which the candidate constantly sees him/herself (Grinion, 2012). The conferences with candidates should be consistent and unpredictable: consistent in that acceptance of responses is assured by a safe environment; and unpredictable in that, the questions are new, fresh, and thought provoking.

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APPENDIX D: Church Sponsorship Form

(Use this print form or complete the online DocuSign form emailed to you upon request of the candidate)

AFFIRMATION OF SPONSORSHIP

Note: The candidate must have been a member in good standing of a church in good standing within ABCRGR for at least one year before becoming ordained. The candidate should also be licensed (an affirmation of call, a limited credential approved by the church) at least a year before ordination. Receipt of this sponsorship form is recorded as the starting date of the candidate's process, so please be sure to send it promptly.

ABCRGR Sponsoring Church:

Candidate's Name:

Date of Local Church Membership:

Date and location of the candidate's licensing (not required):

As an authorized representative of the church my signature affirms that the church will comply with the noted requirements and expectations of an ABCRGR church sponsoring a candidate for ordination.

Signature: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____

THE ORIGINAL SIGNED AFFIRMATION MUST BE RETURNED TO

**The Rev. Sandra L. DeMott Hasenauer, Executive Minister
ABCRGR
1230 Long Pond Rd.
Rochester, NY 14626
sandyh@abcrgr.org**

APPENDIX E: Reference Form

Please respond to all questions below. This form is available on DocuSign at the link sent to you by the candidate. If you prefer, you may print this and mail the completed form back to the Executive Minister.

REFERENCE FORM ABCRGR Ordination Candidacy

Name of Candidate: _____

Name of Referrer: _____

Address: _____
Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Position/Title: _____

The ABCRGR Ordination Process seeks to assess the candidate in the following areas:

- Commitment to Christ and the Christian gospel
- Ability to articulate clearly a call to ministry
- Concern for people and a commitment to their needs
- Ability to communicate with others effectively
- Evidence of and commitment to maintain emotional stability, maturity, and competence
- Commitment to maintain a high level of intellectual discipline
- Evidence of competent formation of pastoral leadership
- Adherence to professional standards regarding ethical behavior

How long have you known the candidate, and in what context(s)?

How would you describe the nature of the candidate's involvement in the life and service of the church?

In what areas of personal and pastoral ministry have they given evidence of competence?

In what areas do you feel they need to grow and improve?

To the best of your knowledge (circle or check your response): Has the candidate been reprimanded or disciplined by church leaders for any form of ethical or sexual misconduct?

Yes No

Comments:

How would you describe the candidate's fitness and readiness for ministry? Please write a short general statement (under 500 words) as your personal recommendation for this candidate for ordination through ABC Rochester/Genesee Region.

Signature _____ Title _____
Date _____

**THE SIGNED AFFIRMATION MUST BE RETURNED
via email or mail to:**

**Rev. Dr. Sandra Hasenauer, Executive Minister
ABCRGR
1230 Long Pond Rd.
Rochester, NY 14626
Sandyh@abcrgr.org**

APPENDIX F: Minister's Council Code of Ethics

(Review and file this print form and complete the online Docusign form emailed to you by the Executive Minister)



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 God to serve Christ and the Church, 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 the 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 wellbeing 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 _____