

## BC Association Ordination Process

1. The call, giftedness and character of the individual pastor are witnessed and affirmed by the Congregation.

Believing that ordination is the privilege and responsibility of the church, it is not the prerogative of the pastor to call for or initiate the process of ordination. Rather it is the church that initiates the process. Likewise, because ordination is the act by which the church affirms publicly what God has done in and through the individual pastor, the process which leads to ordination should only be engaged after the church has had the opportunity to observe and witness the pastor in ministry. Such observation may take an extended period of time and in most cases would require a minimum of one to two years of witnessing and working with the pastor.

Within this period of observing and witnessing the pastor in ministry, it is not unreasonable for the leadership of the church to engage a conversation regarding the pastor's call to ministry. Within this conversation, it may be helpful to ask the following:

### Questions for Reflection and Clarification on Call (Source unknown)

- Describe your original call to ministry. What key experiences formed your sense of call?
- How old were you? How did you feel?
- Was there a special experience that was significant? (worship, service, project, prayer, Scripture, sermon)
- Who affected your call significantly? (pastor, layperson, writer, teacher, mentor)
- Is there is significant place associated with your sense of call?
- How did you experience the presence of God?
- When and how did you first use the word *call* to describe or understand your experience?
- Who did you first tell of your call? How did you express what had happened?
- How did friends or family members respond when you told them of your call?
- What have been the greatest barriers to pursuing your call?
- Would you describe your call as vocational or contextual, or both?
- What have you done as specific steps toward fulfilling your call?

Regarding giftedness and character it is important that the church, and particularly the leadership, have some objective means of supporting a move toward ordination. Whereas anecdotal observations may prove to be informative and meaningful, a more formalized means of evaluation is invaluable. Such means may include an annual performance review and a character and competency inventory. In the end, it is this period of observation that will significantly determine if engaging the process of ordination will be a viable effort.

2. The Congregation, through its designated leaders communicates to the pastor, the desire to exercise its privilege and right to ordain one of its own.

Having worked most closely with the pastor and having engaged a means by which both subjective and objective evaluation is collected, it is the privilege of the church leadership to initiate the process that leads to ordination. If the leadership is convinced as to the call, giftedness and character of their pastor, and if there is confidence as to Congregational support for ordination, the leadership will define and engage an effort to discuss the matter with the pastor. Usually this conversation will take place in an executive session of the board or designated authoritative leadership body. Because of the need for both confidentiality and candor, it is important that the only record of this conversation be in the form of a motion to proceed. If for some reason the decision is not to proceed, it would seem clear that some issue of weakness or limitation has been identified. Even here however is the opportunity for the pastor and leadership of the church to work together in a positive for the health and growth of both the Congregation and the pastor. In any event this is seen as a positive and encouraging gesture on behalf of the leadership to the pastor.

3. The pastor is invited to prepare for ordination.

On behalf of the leadership of the church the pastor is invited to engage the process that will lead toward ordination. In the event that the pastor does not wish to proceed the process will end, however if the pastor responds positively the process continues.

4. The Congregation asks that the denominational ordination process be initiated.

Given the fact that it is the Congregation that ordains, it is also the Congregation that asks for the process to be engaged. At this point an official recommendation must come from the Congregation to the Regional Ministry office. At this point the pastor officially becomes a candidate for ordination.

5. The Ordination Candidate will prepare for the ordination process.

The following are suggestions about ways to prepare:

- A. Read: *Credentialing Guidelines for Ordination and Licensure* (NAB Conference, 1985)
- B. Read: *Ordination, A Biblical-Historical View*, by Marjorie Warkentine
- C. Read: Sample ordination papers from a similar denominational context (x3)
- D. Interview: Two ordained pastors from a similar denominational perspective, ordained within ten years

#### **Pastoral Interview re: Ordination**

1. Who did you interview?
  2. What attitude/impression did the pastor leave regarding ordination?
  3. What did you learn about the process which led to ordination?
  4. What advice did you receive regarding ordination?
  5. What are the strengths of the ordination paper you collected?
  6. What are the weaknesses?
  7. How would you write differently than this candidate did?
- E. Early drafts of an ordination paper in preparation for submission to the Credentials Committee (See: *Part Two* as attached). Ordination paper should include the following:

#### **Ordination Paper Basic Outline**

1. Biographical Sketch (1 to 2 pgs.)
2. Testimony of Conversion (1 pg.)
3. Call to Ministry (1 pg.)
4. Preparation in Ministry (half pg.)
5. Participation in Ministry (half pg.)
6. Theology of Ministry – Optional (2 pgs.)
7. Doctrinal Statement (12-15 pgs.)
  - God
    - Father
    - Son
    - Holy Spirit
  - Scripture
  - Man
  - Salvation
  - Church
    - Ordinances
    - Governance
  - Last Things
  - Current Issues (x3) (1 pg. each)

8. Signed copy of the North American Baptist Conference Pastoral Code of Ethics

**Note:** Clarity is more important than length

6. The candidate's credentials, as expressed in the paper, are examined by the denominationally appointed Credentials Committee who makes recommendations for improvement (See: *Part Two* as attached).
7. An Ordination Council is called and convened to examine the candidate's credentials (See: *Order of Procedure for an Ordination Council* as attached). Although proceeding is dependent upon the recommendation of the Credentials Committee, it is the privilege and responsibility of the church to call the Ordination Council. Communication to Association churches may be worded as follows:

We, the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_, believing \_\_\_\_\_ has been chosen by God for Gospel ministry, will convene an ordination council for the purpose of evaluating the candidate's call, testimony, character and doctrinal positions. As a sister church in this Association, you are invited to send your pastor (s) and two delegates to be seated as members of the Ordination Council.

The Ordination Council will convene \_\_\_\_\_ (name and address) \_\_\_\_\_ on the evening of \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) \_\_\_\_\_.

Please confirm the number of delegates to be sent. Copies of the candidates Ordination Paper will be forwarded.

While all the conferences churches of an area may be invited the composition requirement of an Ordination Council is representation from five churches. Although this requirement may be waived under unusual circumstances, at no time will the number of churches represented on the council be fewer than three.

Although the NAB Conference *Credentialing Guidelines for Ordination and Licensure* indicates that a moderator and secretary for the council be elected from amongst the representatives sent by the participating churches, it is recommended that these positions be appointed in advance. The purpose for advanced appointment is to enable the moderator and secretary to acquaint themselves with respective roles and responsibilities in advance of the council. This will ensure clarity and appropriate adherence to the ordination protocol.

Further to the council procedure guidelines expressed in the conference document, it is the responsibility of the moderator to manage the period of cross-examination in a healthy and productive manner. At times this may require:

- A. Limiting the questions asked by any one council member so as to avoid domination.
  - B. Ruling on inappropriate questions or comments from council members.
  - C. Moving the process along so as to avoid redundancy or deviation from the protocol.
8. A recommendation is submitted to the church by the Ordination Council and may be expressed as one of the following:
    - A. Recommendation that the church proceed with ordination.
    - B. Recommendation with reservation – that the church delay ordination or proceed with ordination with awareness of specific areas of concern to the council. These areas of concern, as specified by the council, should be addressed by the church board.
    - C. Recommendation not to proceed with the ordination process.

A resolution of ordination may be worded as follows:

We, the congregation of '\_\_\_\_\_' with the confirmation of the Ordination Council, do hereby ordain '\_\_\_\_\_' to the ministry of the Gospel.

9. In the event of a recommendation to proceed, an invitation is extended to area churches of the same denominational group to send pastors and/or delegates to engage in the act of ordination. Through ordination the church is affirming that God has set the individual aside for ministry and has called and gifted them for that ministry. The Congregation is saying 'Yes' to what God has done. The ordination service then is a 'Yes' service.

### **Sample Ordination Service**

Prelude  
Invocation  
Opening Song  
Special Music  
Charge to the Church (5-7 min.)  
Congregational Song  
Special Music  
Scripture Reading  
Charge to the Candidate (5-7 min.)  
Report of the Council  
Prayer of Dedication (laying on of hands)  
Presentation of the Ordination Certificate  
Special Offering\*  
Closing Song  
Benediction\*\*

\* The offering traditionally given to the minister for professional supplies and resources.

\*\* The service is traditionally followed by a reception time for the newly ordained minister.

10. Ordination credentials are filed with the Association. The Credentials Committee will hold their credentials and will be responsible to see that the person remains in good standing in the Association and Conference.

11. Areas of concern regarding a pastor's credentials will be directed to the Credentials Committee who will have the authority to administer direction and discipline.

12. Transfer of a pastor's Ordination Credentials to or from another denomination or conference will be handled on an individual basis by the Credentials Committee. In most cases an ordination paper, similar to the one outlined above, will be required by pastors transferring into the BC Association.

13. The Association will keep an accurate record of pastors whose credentials are held by the Credentials Committee. This record will have three designations: A. Accredited Pastors: Ordained pastors presently serving in BC Association churches or recognized Ministries (Chaplain). B. Retired Pastors: Ordained NAB pastors who have retired in BC and are members of NAB churches. C. Other: Ordained pastors no longer serving in a BC Association church but who are seeking placement; Ordained BC Association pastors who have retired in BC but who are not members of a local NAB congregation; Ordained pastors who enter a secular calling or a Christian work outside the Association.

**NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE  
PASTORAL CODE OF ETHICS**

Striving to be a good minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall, with the help of God...

**ACCEPT THE PASTORATE OF A NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE CHURCH ONLY AS I FIND MYSELF BY INNER CONVICTION IN ACCORD WITH THE STATEMENT OF BELIEFS, VALUES, GOALS AND MINISTRIES OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE.**

- Constantly prepare myself in body, mind and spirit for the task to which God has called me under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Safeguard the good image of the Christian ministry, speak the truth in love, live honestly and avoid embarrassing debts.
- Hold as sacred all confidences shared with me.
- Exercise the authority of a spiritual leader who influences others through love and understanding and who humbly acknowledges his dependence upon God.
- Seek the unity and best interest of the church, placing service above personal ambition. Seek to lead the church to accept its full responsibility in mission outreach and community service. Seek to build the church without discrediting other churches or ministers.
- Seek the fellowship of the pastors of the North American Baptist Conference and be of encouragement and blessing to them.
- Encourage participation in the mission and ministry of the Conference. If I cannot continue that support, I will not use my influence to alienate the congregation or any portion thereof from Conference loyalty and support, but rather resign and seek another ministry.
- Carry on correspondence or negotiations to candidate with another church about a possible call with sincere effort to know the will of God and will not knowingly compete with another minister for a call to a pastorate.
- Upon my resignation, sever my pastoral relations with the church which I formerly served and will not make pastoral contacts of any kind with these members without the knowledge and consent of the pastor.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am in agreement with The North American Baptist Statement of Faith and covenant with my colleagues in the ministry to strive to keep the Pastoral Code of Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_