

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF METRO CHICAGO

7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102

Chicago, Illinois 60707

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES OF
THE COMMISSION ON ORDINATION
AND MINISTERIAL STANDING

This document outlines ordination recommendation procedures of the Commission on Ordination and Ministerial Standing (Commission), which is part of the Ministry Committee, a standing Committee of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago (ABC of Metro Chicago). Practices outlined are in conformity with the American Baptist Churches USA (ABC/USA) document, "Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches."

Revised March 8, 1997

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A PERSONAL WORD

TO A CANDIDATE FOR ORDINATION AND THE SPONSORING LOCAL CHURCH:

Entering the ordination process is a wonderful and powerful moment in the life of a person and the church that has nurtured and encouraged that person to consider and prepare professionally to enter the ministry of Jesus Christ.

You who are the Associated Church of ABC of Metro Chicago involved in the ordination process have been authentic enough to cause one of your own to enter the ministry. You rightly can feel a sense of pride and satisfaction in the experience because people do not enter vocations which have been modeled negatively. When a local church has one or more of its people called by God into church ministry, the process outlined here suggests a responsible way of affirming the call and preparing the candidate for ministry.

But it doesn't end there. Like having a child, a Local Church whose member has given her or his life into professional Christian service has accepted an obligation of nurturing and encouraging that person to fulfill ministry in the most adequate way. Whether that person grew up in your church or was a member for a short time, such as a seminary student, that person needs to know that your church cares about and prays for his or her ministry.

To you who are entering the ordination process, this is the culmination of a life commitment and years of serious academic preparation. This outline is not intended to be coldly institutional, but to indicate the seriousness with which the ABC of Metro Chicago takes this calling.

The process is intended to affirm the call of God to which you have responded with preparation. The process also is intended to see how the Spirit is at work within you. Readiness for ministry will be evaluated, including your competence and the appropriateness of your gifts for ministry. When you have satisfactorily completed all these steps you will be ordained, recognized by ABC/USA and affirmed as you fulfill the ministry to which you have been called.

We hope and pray that the process, although rigorous, will recommend itself to you, the Candidate, and you of the Local Church as a time of spiritual growth and affirmation. Through the Commission your partners in ministry will share with you the serious recognition that the service of God uses our best skills and training. May God guide and bless the Local Church, the Candidate and the Commission throughout the process.

THE PROCESS OF ORDINATION

A Word of Introduction

This document is designed to interpret and explain the process of ordination as practiced in the ABC of Metro Chicago in cooperation with its Associated Churches. Responsibility for this process within the ABC of Metro Chicago is assigned to the Commission on Ordination and Ministerial Standing, a Commission within the standing Committee on Ministry or the ABC of Metro Chicago.

A Word of Explanation

Within American Baptist life, ordination has been understood in the light of certain theological assumptions:

An individual within the community of faith articulates a personal call from God to ministry and presents himself or herself as a Candidate for ordination.

The authority and right to ordain is vested in a specific community of faith (the Local Church) which affirms the individual's call to and gifts for ministry.

The ordination activity of a Local Church is affirmed and recognized by the larger community (the denominational family) by the action and recommendation of an association of sister churches (in this case the ABC of Metro Chicago). Once the ABC of Metro Chicago recommends a Candidate for Standard Ordination, the Local Church ordination then is recognized as valid throughout the whole of the ABC/USA.

The initiative throughout the ordination process is the responsibility of the Local Church and the Candidate.

The historic assumptions for ordination presume a cooperative venture with three participants: the Candidate, the Local Church, and the ABC of Metro Chicago (the latter represented by the Commission).

I. PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS

A. THE CANDIDATE

The Ordination Process requires that the Candidate:

1. be a member of an Associated Church of the ABC of Metro Chicago;
2. has met, or is in the process of meeting, the accepted educational standards for ordination in the ABC/USA:
 - a. the completing of a four-year college degree and a three-year seminary degree (the B.A./B.S. and the M. Div. Degrees, respectively, or their standard equivalents) for candidates ordained after and including January 1, 1965 (as adopted by the American Baptist Convention, 1961 Yearbook, pp. 37-38);
 - b. the completing of a seminary level course or its equivalent on the history and polity of American Baptists;
3. can express and defend orally and in writing his or her faith, call, gifts for and vision of ministry;
4. has demonstrated in some kind of ministry setting, verifiable by references, his or her gifts and abilities for ministry;
5. has provided references which can be used to verify previous experience and commitment;
6. has provided a Midwest Ministry Development Service candidacy assessment summary report. This requires the candidate to schedule the assessment and release the report, dated within the previous five years, to the Executive Minister of ABC of Metro Chicago;

7. sign the Ministers Council Code of Ethics and the Ministry Committee's Disclosure Statements;
8. has definite plans to enter any of the following fields of service;
 - a. LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY within the ABC/USA, which includes all staff positions which minister in a Local Church.
 - b. MISSION MINISTRY within the ABC/USA, in a national or international arena, in which pastoral functions will be exercised.
 - c. SPECIALIZED MINISTRIES where ordination is required, e.g.: institutional, military or academic chaplaincy; pastoral counseling; or staff membership in a church-related institution (where preaching, teaching and/or pastoral work is performed and required for any of these specialized ministries).
 - d. STAFF SERVICE where ordination is required. Involving educational, administrative, or pastoral function of an American Baptist agency, a council of churches, or some other ecumenical ministry appropriately related to the ABC/USA.
9. evidences a lifestyle appropriate for ordained ministry.*

B. THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Local Church to which the Candidate belongs is the institution that ordains upon the recommendation of the Commission.

The ordination process requires that the Local Church:

1. understands and affirms the Candidate's call to and gifts for ministry and, in some proper way, satisfies itself that the Candidate is suitable for ordination. It is assumed that the Local Church has determined that the Candidate's lifestyle is appropriate for ordained ministry. If the Candidate self-declares his or her sexual orientation during the Local Church's review process, the Local Church must determine if the Candidate's lifestyle is appropriate for ordained leadership in the churches;
2. initiates, supports, and sponsors the intention of the Candidate for ordination;
3. creates an Ordination Committee for the Candidate;
4. participates in the ordination process with the Commission through a representative who is a member of the Commission during the process of interviews with the Candidate;

*There is no ABC of Metro Chicago policy regarding an individual's call to ministry based upon the Candidate's sexual orientation.

5. prepares and monitors the Candidate through a Watch-Care period;
6. provides a Service of Ordination for the Candidate.

C. THE COMMISSION

The ABC/USA is comprised of Local Churches which are members of Regions. Each Region is responsible for its own ordination and credentialing procedures. Our Region is the ABC of Metro Chicago and its process of recommendation of ordination is represented in this document. The ABC of Metro Chicago has the responsibility and authority for processing and recognizing ordination only for persons who are members of Associated Churches of the ABC of Metro Chicago.

Article 8 of the Family Document of the ABC of Metro Chicago

provides for a standing committee on MINISTRY, as follows: “This Committee shall recommend to the Family Cabinet methods and procedures for examination of ordination candidates...” The Ministry Committee has established the methods and procedures set out in this document which have been adopted by the Family Cabinet.

The ordination process requires that the Commission:

1. provide an outline of the process, all necessary information and forms, and a schedule of available dates when interviews may be scheduled;
2. assign a representative from the Commission to work with the Candidate and the congregation’s Ordination Committee to interpret the requirements and procedures of the ordination recognition process prior to the first interview with the Commission. The representative will have no vote on the Ordination Committee;
3. assist the Candidate, if requested through the Regional Office, in finding sources to help meet the fee of Midwest Ministry Development Service for the candidacy assessment;
4. examine and interview the Candidate to determine that the standards for ordination are met and to evaluate the Candidate’s general competency and preparation for ministry;
5. refer the Candidate back to the Local Church for review of its recommendation for ordination recognition if the Candidate’s sexual orientation is self-declared to the Commission without prior disclosure to the Local Church or if the Candidate has failed to fully disclose to the Local Church appropriate information as required by this document;
6. communicate openly and promptly with the Candidate regarding the recommendations and decisions of the Commission;

7. participate with the Local Church in providing Watch-Care;
8. exercise Spirit-led discernment with the Candidate on fitness for ministry and seek a consensus decision.

II. THE PROCESS OF ORDINATION

A. AN OVERVIEW

The process leading to ordination consists of three Phases:

PHASE ONE: Application, First Interview, and Recommendation of the Commission regarding entry into the ordination process.

PHASE TWO: Enrollment, Watch-Care and Growth Period.

PHASE THREE: Second Interview and Recommendations of Commission as to Ordination.

Following is an outline of these three phases and the entire process so that all participants can have a common understanding of the responsibilities involved.

The interviews of the Candidate by the Commission are an integral part of the process. In regard to these interviews, the Candidate and the Local Church should note that:

1. The Commission meets for interviews six days a year, one day each of January, March, May, June, September and November.
2. Interview dates shall be requested in writing by the Local Church and may be scheduled according to the date the letter is received.
3. Interview dates are confirmed with a Candidate only after

compliance with the requirements for that interview. All documentation for that interview must be in the ABC of Metro Chicago office no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled interview so that members of the Commission will have sufficient time to review the material in a prayerful and thoughtful manner. It is for this reason that failure to meet this deadline will require rescheduling of the interview. It should be recognized that preparation and completion of the documents required for each interview may take a Candidate two or three months.

4. The process includes a minimum period of six months for Phase Two.

In the event the Second Interview with a Candidate is not held within three years after his or her First Interview, the Candidate's Application is deemed withdrawn.

B. PHASE ONE: Application, First Interview and Recommendations of the Commission

1. Steps Before the Interview

- a. The Candidate must make his or her desire to enter the ordination process known to the pastor and the appropriate decision-making body of the Candidate's Local Church. In a manner appropriate to that church, the Local Church 1) satisfies itself as to the validity of the Candidate's call to and gifts for ministry, 2) the congregation votes to recommend the Candidate for ordination to the Ordination Commission and 3) the Local Church creates an Ordination Committee to interpret the requirements and procedures of the ordination recognition process and to support and sponsor the Candidate in the ordination process. The Ordination Committee must review the Disclosure Statement with the Candidate.

- b. The Candidate or the Church contacts the Executive Minister of the ABC of Metro Chicago to notify the Commission that the Candidate wishes to initiate the process, consider possible interview dates, and to receive the necessary forms and instructions for the first interview.
- c. The Candidate and the Local Church familiarize themselves with all instructions and forms.
- d. A congregational representative, usually the Pastor, is selected by the Local Church as an advocate representing the Candidate the Local Church in the ordination process. This person becomes an ad-hoc member of the Commission, attends all interviews with the Candidate and has full discussion and voting privileges in the recommendations of the Commission.
- e. The Candidate prepares for the first interview. All necessary documentation for this interview is to be received in the ABC of Metro Chicago office at least 30 days in advance of the interview date. This documentation includes:
 - i. The application form.
 - ii. A statement in writing from the Local Church indicating the action taken that affirms, supports, and sponsors the Candidate in the ordination process.
 - iii. A statement in writing from the Candidate's seminary indicating and certifying that the Candidate has met (or is in the process of meeting and by what date) the school's academic requirements for graduation and the degree awarded (or to be awarded).

- iv. The Candidate's statement in writing describing his or her spiritual journey and giving his or her responses to the other questions for the interview.
 - v. Documentation of satisfactory practical ministerial experience.
 - vi. Midwest Ministry Development Service Candidacy assessment summary report. (This report will be presented to the Commission Members only at the time of the first interview and for their use in that interview. At the end of that interview all copies passed out will be turned in and destroyed as well as all copies of the office of ABC Metro Chicago.)
- f. The attendance of a representative from the Local Church at the interview is a necessity for an interview to take place. This requirement insures that the Commission will be informed of the Candidate's current ministry and performance.

2. The First Interview

- a. This interview, usually 1-1 + hours, is based on, but not limited to, the above documents. The purpose of this interview is to determine whether or not, in the opinion of the Commission, the Candidate is ready to enter into the process of ordination.
- b. Following the interview, the Commission will excuse the Candidate, debrief with the Local Church representative present and vote on a recommendation (including any specific instructions). Immediately thereafter, the

Candidate will be recalled and will receive the recommendation orally. The Commission's options are:

- i. Recommend to the Local Church that it PROCEED with the ordination process (an unqualified "yes" vote).
 - ii. Recommend to the Local Church that it NOT PROCEED with the ordination process (an unqualified "no" vote).
 - iii. Recommend to the Local Church that the ordination process proceed WITH QUALIFICATION(S):
 - that some specific area of concern must be met, or
 - that vocational plans be more precise and specific, or
 - that a more acceptable "readiness for ministry" be discernible by the Commission, or
 - that any other clearly stated expectation(s) be met.
- c. If the recommendation is to proceed with the process (whether with or without qualifications):
- i. The Commission will appoint one of its members as a liaison to serve on the Ordination Committee appointed by the Local Church.
 - ii. Within one week following the interview, the Secretary of the Commission will send to the Candidate and the Local Church a letter describing its recommendation(s) and advising of the name of the liaison appointed.

- iii. The Commission will provide the Candidate with the necessary forms and instructions for the Second Interview.

C. **PHASE TWO: Enrollment, Watch-Care and Growth Period**

1. Within 60 days after the Local Church receives a letter recommending that the Local Church proceed with the ordination process (whether with or without qualification), the appropriate body of the Local Church shall enroll the Candidate in Watch-Care for ordination.

(Enrollment in Watch-Care by the Local Church shall be equivalent to “licensing the Candidate for ordination” as provided in the ABC/USA document, “Recommended Procedures for Commissioning and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches”).

2. The Ordination Committee, during Phase Two, shall have such duties and responsibilities as are assigned to it by the appointing body. However, it is intended by the Commission that the Ordination Committee will work closely with the Candidate, setting goals, working on any qualifications and evaluating the same, all for the purpose of supporting the Candidate in the process and strengthening the Candidate’s gifts for ministry.
3. As the Candidate prepares for ordination as a professional church leader of ABC/USA, it is suggested that he or she become acquainted with the support system of our denomination:

--The regional structured and its personnel. The local Ministers Council and local church leaders, and the National Ministers Council which address professional identity and other issues facing the professional church leader and his or her family.

--The American Baptist Personnel Service for professional

placement and/or relocation.

--The Board of Educational Ministries for continuing education opportunities and availability of scholarship assistance to make them possible.

--The Midwest Ministerial Development Service for human resources development, career and life planning.

--The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board regarding medical and retirement benefits.

4. More than 30 days before the date set for the second interview, the Chair of the Ordination Committee shall report its actions and the results in writing to the Commission.

D. PHASE THREE: Second Interview and Recommendations of the Commission

1. Steps before the Interview

- a. The Local Church requests in writing and confirms the date for the interview.
- b. The Candidate prepares for the ordination interview. (Again, all necessary documentation and the written paper responding to the interview questions and the written report of the Ordination Committee must be received in the office of the ABC of Metro Chicago at least 30 days in advance of the interview; otherwise the interview will be rescheduled.)

2. The Second Interview

- a. This interview, usually three hours, is based on, but not limited to, the Candidate's written response to the interview questions and the Ordination Committee's report. The interview is intended to determine the preparedness of the Candidate for ministry, including, among other things,

- i. How well the Candidate translates education into ministerial understandings and activities;
 - ii. How well the Candidate is able to defend theological convictions both orally and in written form;
 - iii. The suitability of the Candidate's concept of and commitment to ministry within the ABC/USA;
 - iv. The Candidate's general readiness for ministry.
- b. Following the interview, the Commission will excuse the Candidate, debrief with the congregational representative present, vote on its recommendation, and then immediately recall the Candidate and report the recommendation orally. The Commission's options are:
- i. Recommend to the Local Church that it PROCEED with ordination (an unqualified "yes" vote).
 - ii. Recommend to the Local Church that it NOT PROCEED with ordination (an unqualified "no" vote).
 - iii. Recommend to the Local Church that the ordination process CONTINUE WITH QUALIFICATION(S):
 - that some specific area of concern be met, or
 - that vocational plans be more precise and specific, or

--that a more acceptable readiness for ministry be discernible by the Commission, or

--that any other clearly stated expectation(s) be met, which may necessitate further interviews.

iv. May recommend, where Denomination Educational Standards have not been met, a Regional Ordination, acceptable and recognized in the ABC of Metro Chicago but non-transferable to other Regions.

c. Within one week following the interview the Secretary of the Commission will send a letter to the Candidate and the Local Church describing its recommendation.

d. The Local Church may choose to ordain a candidate not recommended by the Commission for either an ABC/USA recognized or a Regional Ordination. In this case the ordination is a “local church ordination” and has no standing in the Regional or National ABC/USA structures, but simply certifies that person for ministry within that ordaining Local Church.

3. After the Final Interview

If Ordination is to take place, the local church shall set a date for the Service of Ordination. (It is recommended that this date not be set until after the Commission makes its recommendation after the final interview.)

The Local Church is encouraged to invite sister churches of the Region as well as the Ordination Commission to participate in the ordination celebration.

III. THE RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUS ORDINATION

The process for granting recognition of previous ordination by other Christian communions is the same as for a candidate for ordination in Part II above, with the following additions and exemptions:

1. The Candidate must be a member of an Associated Church of ABC of Metro Chicago.
2. The following additional material must be supplied more than 30 days prior to the first interview:
 - a. Official evidence that the Candidate's ordination in another denomination is equivalent to ABC Standard Ordination.
 - b. Evidence of the Candidate's good standing in the other denomination.
 - c. Evidence that the Candidate has fulfilled the educational requirements of ABC/USA.
 - d. Information demonstrating study of or knowledge about the history, polity and current emphasis of American Baptist Churches and a statement fully accepting such polity and emphasis.
3. The Watch-Care period may be less than six months if the Candidate, upon entering such phase, requests that the Commission find that the Candidate meets the educational and information requirements above and so decides.

IV. APPEAL PROCEDURES

Appeal to Ministers Council

If the recommendation of the Commission at either interview is other than an unqualified recommendation to proceed with ordination, the Local Church has the right to appeal the decision. An appeal of such a recommendation of the

Commission must be submitted by the Local Church in writing to the President of the Ministers Council of the ABC of Metro Chicago and received no later than 30 days after the receipt by the Local Church of the written report of the vote of the Commission. Within 60 days after receipt of the appeal letter by the President, the Cabinet of the Ministers Council will hold a hearing on the appeal with notice to all parties, giving them appropriate opportunity for written and oral presentations. The parties include the Candidate, a representative from the Local Church and the Chairperson or a member of the Ordination Commission before whom the Candidate appeared. The Cabinet may affirm the recommendation of the Commission, modify that recommendation or return the matter to the Commission for rehearing subject to the Cabinet's findings. The Cabinet will issue its decision in writing within 30 days after the hearing, with copies mailed to all parties.

Appeal to Family Cabinet

In the event the Local Church is not satisfied with the decision of the Cabinet of the Ministers Council, it may appeal that decision by submitting a written notice of appeal to the President of ABC of Metro Chicago received no later than 30 days after the receipt by the Local Church representative of the written decision. Within 60 days after receipt of the notice of the appeal by the President, the Family Cabinet of ABC of Metro Chicago will hold a hearing on the appeal with notice to the parties at the prior hearing, giving them appropriate opportunity for written and oral presentation. The Family Cabinet may either affirm or modify the decision of the Cabinet of the Ministers Council and will issue its decision in writing within 30 days after the hearing, with copies mailed to all parties. The decision of the Family Cabinet upon such appeal shall be final and binding upon all parties.

V. NOTICES AND MAILINGS

All such correspondence from the Commission to the Candidate shall be mailed to the home address on the Candidate's application form, unless the Commission is notified in writing by the Candidate of a change therein.

All such correspondence from the Commission to the Local Church shall be mailed to the address of the Local Church for the attention of the pastor.

All such correspondence to the Commission, Executive Minister, President of the Ministers Council or President of ABC of Metro Chicago shall be mailed to American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago.

Receipt of any writing shall be determined by the date the same actually is received.

**GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF WRITTEN EXAMINATION
REQUIRED OF CANDIDATES IN THE
ORDINATION PROCESS OF
THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF METRO CHICAGO**

This document is designed to provide candidates in the ordination process with an opportunity to help the Ordination Commission understand their concepts of ministry, personal emphases, concerns and aspirations.

There are two sets of questions related to the first interview with the Ordination Commission. The first set of questions is mandatory and all must be answered in written form. In the second set are questions which may be asked orally in addition to questions raised about the written responses to the first set. The questions do indicate major areas of concern, but the candidate must be aware that other questions may surface.

There is also a set of questions related to the second interview. They are mandatory and all must be answered in writing.

For help with format and length please refer to the “Guidelines for Format of Written Papers.” The finished paper must be received in the ABC of Metro Chicago office at least 30 days prior to the interview.

Please mail to:

Ordination Commission
American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago
7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102
Chicago, IL 60707

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7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102
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Commission on Ordination and Credentials

Questions for the First Interview

Listed below are the questions to be answered in written form, according to guidelines, and submitted to the office at the above address in time to arrive 30 days prior to the First Interview.

1. Pilgrimage statement: Personal history, conversion, baptism, church experience, call to ministry, etc.
2. Because the Ordination Commission is sensitive to current issues facing the local church and our denominational family, please respond to the following question: Do you feel your lifestyle is a strong and healthy model for members of American Baptist Churches?
3. Why do you seek ordination from the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago/American Baptist Churches in the USA?
4. How would you describe your understanding of and sympathy with ABCUSA?
5. Into what form of ministry do you feel called?

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Commission on Ordination and Credentials

Questions for the Second Interview

Listed below are the questions to be answered in written form, according to guidelines, and submitted to the office at the above address in time to arrive 30 days prior to the Second Interview.

1. In 5000 to 7500 words, please articulate an integrated, comprehensive statement of your theology. It should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following topics:
 - God
 - Creation and Humanity
 - Sin and Evil
 - Revelation and Salvation
 - The Person and Work of Christ
 - The Holy Spirit
 - The Nature and Mission of the Church
 - The Ministry
 - Preaching and the Ordinances
 - Eschatology

2. Write concise answers to the following questions:
 - a. Identify one ethical issue that currently challenges our world. Show how you would bring the testimony of Scripture, and your theology to bear on that ethical issue.

 - b. What is your understanding of the nature of prayer, both personal and public?

 - c. What would you identify as the primary challenge of being an American Baptist today? How will you respond to that challenge in your ministry, given your understanding of Baptist history and polity?

 - d. What do you consider to be the role of the church in relation to society and its structures?

 - e. What do you believe are the strongest gifts you bring to ministry at this time? How will they be useful in the type of ministry to which you feel called?

11-16-2007

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ORDINATION COMMISSION
GUIDELINES FOR FORMAT OF WRITTEN PAPERS

Because papers written for the Ordination Commission are copied and distributed to the Commission members, the following guidelines have been developed to best facilitate that process.

1. Put name, date and any other desired heading information on the top of the first page of answers rather than on a separate cover page.
2. A 1 ½ inch margin on all sides of the test is adequate. Do not double space or type on back sides of the paper.
3. Type the question before the answer.
4. The print should be clean and dark enough to copy easily.
5. Page number, last name and interview date should be typed on one line at the top of each page.
6. Do not start a fresh page for each question.
7. Proofread carefully!
8. Papers for the initial interview should be 3-5 pages; for the second interview, 8-12.
9. Scripture texts can be referenced rather than quoted.
10. It is the candidate's responsibility to see that his/her pastor and/or church representative receive copies of all papers.

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