

Updated August 2009
REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE MINISTRY
Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches

SECTION 1: GENERAL REGULATIONS REGARDING ORDINATION

1.1 The Role of the Local Church

The issuing of a *Church License to Minister* is an expression of confidence in a person's call to ordained ministry, and their suitability for ministry. It is important that the church exercise the utmost care and be thoroughly satisfied as to the qualities of mind, character and Christian experience which would fit the person for the important work of an ordained Christian minister. (See Section 2.1)

1.2 The Role of the Association

The granting of an *Association License to Minister* is an expression of confidence in a person's call to ordained ministry, academic progress, and suitability for ministry. It is important that the Association exercise the utmost care and be thoroughly satisfied as to the qualities of mind, character and Christian experience which would fit the person for the important work of an ordained Christian minister. (See Section 2.4)

1.3 The Role of the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education (“the Board”)

- A. The Board of Ministerial Standards and Education interviews prospective ministerial Candidates who are experiencing a call to ordained Christian ministry and who hold a Church License to Minister from a Baptist church in fellowship with Canadian Baptist Ministries or an Association License to Minister. The *Initial Interview* is usually near the conclusion of their first year of theological studies, and the *Exit Interview* is normally during the last year of theological studies.
- B. In the *Initial Interview*, the Board will determine if the individual is to be accepted as a *Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry* based upon their fitness for the pastoral office including conversion, call to ministry, educational background, theology, overall suitability for ministry in this Convention, and alignment with the Convention's core values. The Board determines the appropriate standard of academic training applicable to the Candidate; considers with them the financial obligations involved; and assists in any way that lies within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- C. In the *Exit Interview*, the Board will determine if the individual is to be recommended to proceed to a year of *Internship* and then appear before the *Examining Council for Ordination* based upon the completion of the academic requirements, their personal and pastoral readiness, their style of leadership, their theology, and their spiritual gifts.

- D.** The Board:
1. may review the progress of the preparation of an applicant or a Candidate from time to time and report the same to the appropriate Association committee;
 2. will receive and process appeals regarding Board decisions from persons previously interviewed.
- E.** The Board will receive applications from pastors seeking Recognition of a Prior Ordination. (See Section 3)
- F.** The Board will respond to allegations of professional misconduct in accordance with its protocol in the Ministerial Standards Document. Decisions of the Board relating to professional misconduct may be appealed as outlined in the Ministerial Standards Document.
- G.** If for a period of three or more consecutive years an Accredited Ordained Minister is no longer engaged in vocational ministry with a church, Association, or agency affiliated with the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches; or a recognized chaplaincy or interdenominational ministry; or actively pursuing further ministerial/theological studies, that individual's accreditation will no longer be held by the Convention. This three-year rule does not normally apply to Accredited Ordained Ministers who are retired or on long-term disability. Accredited Ordained Ministers nearing the three-year deadline who fall in this category who believe their circumstances warrant the retention of their accreditation may submit a written request to the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education to consider an extension of their accreditation.

If an Accredited Ordained Minister accepts a call to serve in a church (other than on an interim basis) that is not affiliated with the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches that individual will be expected to transfer his/her credentials to the new church or its denomination. If a process of transferring credentials to a new church or its denomination has been initiated by the Accredited Ordained Minister, their credentials will continue to be held by the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches until notified by the Accredited Ordained Minister that the transfer is complete. In any case, the Accredited Ordained Minister's credentials will be held for no longer than three years.

Previously accredited Ministers who wish to renew their accreditation may apply to the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education.

- H.** The Board shall include nine elected members, together with the Executive Minister of the Convention and/or designate, the President of Acadia Divinity College or designate, the President of Atlantic Baptist University or designate, and the Director of Atlantic Baptist Mission or designate. The Board shall also include the Regional Ministers who shall be members without vote.

1.4 The Role of the Examining Council for Ordination of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (“the Examining Council”)

A. Function of the Examining Council

1. The Examining Council shall convene at such a time and place as appropriate at the call of the President of the Convention with at least six months notice being given to the churches. Candidates shall be scheduled for a specific time and to appear at stated intervals.
2. At the opening session of the Examining Council, a Chief Examiner shall be appointed from members of that Council.
3. It shall also be made clear at the opening session of the Examining Council to the members of that Council, that the Bible is authoritative, and the 1905/06 Basis of Union is the foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity for the Convention.
4. Following the examination by the Examining Council and the presentation by the representatives from the Candidate’s church, an *in-camera* session will be held.
5. A two-thirds majority of Examining Council members voting shall be required to recommend a person for ordination and accreditation. Persons with a conflict of interest shall so declare it and subsequently remove themselves from the voting process. All votes shall be by secret ballot.
In considering the evidence, Council members will make a free decision under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Examining Council may recommend that a Candidate be ordained; it may recommend that a Candidate be deferred pending further training and/or counselling; it may recommend that a Candidate not be ordained, as being unsuited for the ministry at this time.
6. Each Candidate will be informed by the Examining Council of the results of their examination immediately after the vote is taken and will be provided with appropriate guidance and direction.
7. The names of those Candidates recommended by the Examining Council for ordination by their churches shall be reported to the Convention.
8. The vote of the Examining Council and its recommendation shall be reported both to the church requesting the examination and to the Candidate. A copy of the Candidate’s written statement to the Examining Council shall also be forwarded to the church.
9. The Examining Council at its Annual Meeting shall elect members to an Appeal Board. (See section 7.1 of the Ministerial Standards Document).

B. Composition of the Examining Council

1. The Examining Council shall consist of the representatives of each Association on the following basis: one representative for each Association and a further representative for each Association having a total resident membership of 3,000 or more, except for Prince Edward Island, which has 2 representatives, the same privilege to be granted to Newfoundland and Labrador when the church membership reaches 2,000. Where there are two members from an Association, preferably one shall be male and one female. Each elected representative shall be elected for a period of three (3) years and shall not be eligible for re-election at the close of that period. A retiring member shall be eligible for re-election after a

- lapse of one (1) year. Associations are to name official alternates to act in the event of the unavoidable absence of the appointee.
2. No ordained minister shall be eligible for appointment to the Examining Council until at least three years after their own ordination, nor shall any licensed person proceeding to the ordained ministry be eligible to serve.
 3. No lay person shall be eligible for appointment to the Examining Council until they have served for at least three (3) years in a leadership position in a local church and/or Association.
 4. In addition, the President, the Past President, the Vice-President and the Executive Minister of the Convention, plus the President of Acadia Divinity College, the President of Atlantic Baptist University, the Regional Ministers and the Chair of the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education shall be *ex-officio members*, entitled to speak but not to vote.
 5. Normally the Past President and the Ministry Secretary of the Convention shall be respectively Chair and Secretary of the Examining Council. In case of either not being able to act, the Examining Council shall appoint a replacement.
 6. Up to two church members, appointed by the church requesting the examination, are expected to attend the examination of their Candidate by the Examining Council. They should present a letter of recommendation for their Candidate from their church. They shall be expected to speak on behalf of the church regarding the ministry of the Candidate.
 7. Observers may attend, but will not have the privilege of questioning, discussing, or voting on any Candidate.
 8. Fifteen voting members shall constitute a quorum for a regular meeting. A special meeting can only be called with the permission of a two-thirds majority of the members.
 9. The Board of Ministerial Standards and Education serves as the Ministerial Credentials Committee for the Examining Council.

SECTION 2: CANDIDATE'S PROCESS TOWARD ORDINATION

2.1. Church License to Minister for Persons Preparing for Ordained Ministry

- A. The first step on the part of persons desiring to enter the ordained ministry of the Church is to secure from that church of which they are a member a *Church License to Minister*.
- B. The *Church License to Minister* is in effect both an affirmation and a recommendation. It is required that a person being considered:
 1. tell of their conversion, their call to ministry, their faith and life in Jesus Christ and their view of Christian doctrine with reference to the Bible and their understanding and substantial agreement with the 1905/06 Basis of Union, the foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity for the CABC;
 2. give evidence of biblical knowledge and spiritual growth;
 3. have preached, taught and/or given leadership in the ministries of the church to determine their gifts for ministry;

4. demonstrate an ethical lifestyle appropriate to a pastoral leader, including family relationships;
 5. give an account of their ministries in the church, how they have related to people, and how they have honoured their commitments; and
 6. articulate their understanding of pastoral ministry and basic Baptist beliefs.
- C.** A *Church License to Minister* should not be granted until the person has been a member of that church for at least one year.
- D.** A *Church License to Minister* must be renewed yearly. It remains valid as long as the church which grants it considers it valid, but may be rescinded by the church for just cause. It is the responsibility of the recipient to request a yearly endorsement by the church until such time as an *Association License to Minister* is granted.

2.2 Educational Standards for Ordination

A. Prior to appearing before the Examining Council for Ordination of the Convention all Candidates shall be required to complete the course of study entered upon in agreement with the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education. There is a three year statute of limitations for completion of these educational requirements. Each Candidate must demonstrate acceptable progress during this period. If they are unable to complete their program of study in this time frame, they shall report to the Board, or meet with the Board, for consideration of extending their Candidacy and their statute of limitations.

B. Basic Educational Requirements

1. A Bachelor of Arts degree (or its equivalent) from Atlantic Baptist University or other recognized university, followed by a Master of Divinity degree obtained from Acadia Divinity College or from another seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.
2. For those seeking to be ordained to Church Music/Worship Ministry, the minimum standard shall be the completion of a recognized undergraduate degree plus a minimum of 30 semester hours of theological education at the masters-level selected in consultation with the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education to be completed at Acadia Divinity College or another seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The Candidate must also show competence in church music, normally demonstrated by the successful completion of a minimum of 30 semester hours of post-baccalaureate education in church music or by some other means acceptable to the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education.
3. Any exception to these requirements may be considered only when the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education regards such action as warranted and in the best interest of the local church and the broader Convention life.

C. Exceptions to the Basic Educational Requirements

1. On occasion the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education may deem it appropriate to allow a modification of the basic requirements of study leading toward ordination. Under special circumstances such as inadequate educational preparation, age, family circumstances, and qualifications for professional ministry, one of the following exceptions to the basic educational requirements will be acceptable:

i. Approved Candidates who are a minimum of 35 years of age at the time of their first application to the Board may, on the recommendation of the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, be considered for entry into the Bachelor of Theology program at Acadia Divinity College, which requires 30 semester hours of Arts courses plus 60 semester hours of theological study.

The Board of Ministerial Standards and Education may deem a Bachelor of Theology or Bachelor of Religious Education degree from a Bible College in good standing with the Association for Biblical Higher Education that is comparable to the Acadia Bachelor of Theology degree an appropriate qualification for ordination. Candidates may also be required to complete up to 30 semester hours of theological studies (normally taken at Acadia Divinity College), or up to 30 semester hours in Arts and Sciences (normally taken at Atlantic Baptist University). The Board will evaluate each academic transcript on its own merits and recommend the manner in which any educational deficiencies may be addressed. The Board will require Candidates to complete a course in Baptist History and Polity, with specific emphasis on Canadian and Atlantic Baptist History and Polity.

ii. Approved Candidates who are 55 years of age or older may be admitted, with the approval of the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, to a two-year non-credit, non-graduating program at Acadia Divinity College leading to a Certificate of Ministerial Studies.

2. If a Candidate fails to take advantage of time and opportunity to complete the basic educational requirements for ordination and reaches an age at which lower academic demands may be allowed for ordination, they need not expect that their age will necessarily qualify them for the reduced educational requirements.

2.3 Acceptance as a Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry

A. A ministerial student proceeding toward ordination shall apply to appear before the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education for an Initial Interview normally near the conclusion of the first year of their theological education to be considered for acceptance as a *Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry*. (For application forms, please contact the Executive Minister's office.)

B. In order to appear before the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, the applicant shall have a current *Church License to Minister* from a Baptist church in

fellowship with Canadian Baptist Ministries or a current *Association License to Minister*.

2.4 Association License to Minister for Persons Preparing for Ordained Ministry

- A.** A person who is commended by a church to prepare for ordained ministry and has held a *Church License to Minister* for at least one year may apply to obtain an *Association License to Minister*.
- B.** The *Association License to Minister* is in effect both an affirmation and a recommendation. It is required that a person being considered:
1. tell of their conversion, their call to ministry, their faith and life in Jesus Christ and their view of Christian doctrine with reference to the Bible and their understanding and substantial agreement with the 1905/06 Basis of Union, the foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity for the CABC;
 2. give evidence of biblical knowledge and spiritual growth;
 3. have preached, taught and/or given leadership in the ministries of the church to determine their gifts for ministry;
 4. demonstrate an ethical lifestyle appropriate to a pastoral leader, including family relationships;
 5. give an account of their ministries in the church, how they have related to people, and how they have honoured their commitments; and
 6. articulate their understanding of pastoral ministry and basic Baptist beliefs.
- C.** An *Association License to Minister* may be granted when:
1. one year has elapsed since the applicant was granted an un-rescinded *Church License to Minister*;
 2. the applicant is a member of a church in fellowship with the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches;
 3. the applicant has given evidence of satisfactory ministry; and
 4. the applicant is making progress toward the completion of the academic requirements required for ordination.
- D.** A Committee appointed by the Association shall examine the applicant personally on all the above and concerning their commitment to the aims, core values and activities of the Association and the Convention.
- E.** Application for renewal of an *Association License to Minister* is to be made annually until the applicant has been ordained. Application for either the granting or the renewal of an *Association License to Minister* may be made to the Association in which the applicant received a *Church License to Minister* or to the Association where the applicant is residing at the time of application. Failure to renew the *Association License to Minister* will require that a person secure a letter of commendation from the Deacons of the church of which one is a member. Before being interviewed for the purpose of having the *Association License to Minister* reinstated, this letter must be presented to the Association Licensing Committee.

- F. Each person seeking renewal of an *Association License to Minister* must apply to appear in person before the Association Committee and shall furnish satisfactory evidence of progress in studies, plans to continue them, active participation in the life of a church and continued commitment to the aims, core values and activities of the Association and the Convention.
- G. Each *Association License to Minister* granted or renewed by an Association shall be signed by its Moderator and Clerk.

2.5 Recommendation to Internship

- A. A *Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry* shall apply to appear before the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education for an Exit Interview, normally near the conclusion of their theological education, to seek the Board's approval to proceed to a year of supervised Internship. (For application forms, please contact the Executive Minister's office.)
- B. Subsequent to approval by the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, and a call to full-time ministry (i.e., at least 25 hours/week) the *Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry* may begin the year of supervised Internship. The Internship Supervisor/Mentor shall be an ordained Baptist minister recognized and accredited by the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches and appointed by the Executive Minister or designate.

2.6 Application to Appear Before the Examining Council for Ordination of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (i.e., "the Examining Council")

A *Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry* within the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches must appear before the Examining Council.

A. Eligibility

1. Each Candidate appearing before the Examining Council shall be recommended by the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, having completed the required steps toward ordination.
2. They shall be pastors or pastors-elect of a member church of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches or shall be under appointment for evangelistic, chaplaincy, educational or missionary service within, or approved by, the Convention.
3. Theological students, having completed the requirements for ordination, seeking post-graduate study in another country and likely to be called to a church during this period of studies, may be permitted by the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education to appear before the Examining Council.
4. Each Candidate shall give evidence of having rendered satisfactory service during one year of supervised Internship or acceptable alternative as approved by the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education.

5. Both male and female Candidates shall be examined for ordination.
6. Heterosexuals engaging in sexual activity outside of marriage (as defined in the resolution “Statement Affirming a Christian View of Marriage” adopted by Assembly in 1999) and practicing homosexuals (including lesbians), shall not be eligible to appear for examination for ordination.

B. Application

1. A letter requesting that a Candidate appear before the Examining Council must be submitted to the Executive Minister *by the church* of which the Candidate is pastor, pastor-elect or a member; the letter having been duly authorized by the church. The letter should normally be forwarded to the Executive Minister of the Convention six months before the Examining Council meeting so that the members of that Council can be notified not less than three months before the Examining Council assembles.
2. *The Candidate* shall submit a Candidate Application Form which includes a written statement of not less than 2,000 words and not more than 2,500 words (excluding Scripture references from the word count) setting forth clearly their conversion, their call to ministry, their concept of ministry, their Statement of Faith, including Baptist beliefs, supported by reference to the Scriptures, and their relationship to the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches whose foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity is the 1905/09 Basis of Union. The application is to be forwarded to the Executive Minister at least three months prior to the meeting of the Examining Council.

C. Appearance Before the Examining Council

1. Baptists have always viewed the Scriptures as the sole rule in matters of faith and practice and the norm in questions of doctrine. Therefore in matters of doctrine all Candidates must substantiate their position by primary reference to the Scriptures. The key is “What do the Scriptures say?” Candidates must accept the claims which the Scriptures make with respect to their own inspiration and authority (e.g., 2 Timothy 3:14-17).
2. Candidates shall demonstrate to the Examining Council their understanding and substantial agreement with the 1905/06 Basis of Union, the foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity for the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches.
3. Each Candidate shall satisfy the Examining Council as to their academic preparation and their general fitness for the Baptist ministry.

2.7 The Ordination Service

- A.** The Candidate for ordination is eligible to be ordained to the Christian ministry by the local church upon completion of the year of supervised Internship and the recommendation of the Examining Council for Ordination.
- B.** It is desirable both from the standpoint of the Candidate for ordination and the church that normally the ordination service be conducted at the hands of the local church

from which the letter came. It is recognized that in exceptional circumstances it may be wise, at the discretion of the applying church, to hold the ordination service in some other location.

- C.** Normally, the Candidate for ordination and leaders of the local church, in consultation with the Moderator of the Association, or designate, arrange the ordination service. The Candidate for ordination is free to select the participants, and shall normally include the Moderator of the Association or designate.
- D.** Within the context of worship, the service of ordination normally includes: the reading of the Letter of Recommendation from the Examining Council; inquiries of the Candidate for ordination and the congregation by the Moderator of the Association as suggested in the manual (or exchange of vows); the Laying on of Hands; an Ordination Prayer; and either a charge to the minister and a charge to the church or a sermon containing both elements. A form of service can be found in the most recent edition of *A Manual for Worship and Service* published by Canadian Baptist Ministries.
- E.** It is the responsibility of the newly ordained minister to notify the Executive Minister that the Ordination Service has taken place. Then the Executive Minister will forward a Certificate of Ordination, and place the minister's name in the list of *Accredited Ordained Ministers*.