

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

**SECTION 4: GENERAL REGULATIONS REGARDING RECOGNIZED  
CONVENTION LAY PASTORS**

**4.1 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 lay pastoral 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 a person for the important work of a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* (see Section 5.1).

**4.2 The Role of the Association**

The granting of an *Association Lay License to Minister* is an expression of confidence in a person's call to lay pastoral ministry, their academic progress, and their 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 a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* (see Section 5.4).

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

A. The Board of Ministerial Standards and Education interviews only those prospective ministerial Candidates who are experiencing a call to become a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* and who are intending to have their name circulated among churches for possible service as a lay pastor upon completion of the Lay Pastors Training Program. Prospective Candidates must hold a *Church License to Minister* from a Baptist church in fellowship with The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches or an *Association Lay License to Minister* prior to meeting with the Board. The Initial Interview is usually held during their third year of the Lay Pastors Training Program, and the Recognition Interview usually takes place once the Candidate has graduated from the Lay Pastors Training Program and has accepted a call to serve as a lay pastor of a Baptist church in fellowship with The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches.

B. In the Initial Interview, the Board will determine if the individual is to be accepted as a *Candidate for Lay Pastoral Ministry* based upon their fitness for lay pastoral ministry including conversion, call to ministry, life and ministry experience, theology, overall suitability for lay ministry in The Convention, and alignment with the Convention's core values (see Section 5.3).

C. In the Recognition Interview, the Board will examine the Candidate to determine if the individual is to be accepted as a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* based upon the completion of the academic requirements, their concept of ministry, their

statement of faith, and their giftedness and suitability for lay pastoral ministry (see Section 5.5 B).

- D. The Board may receive and process appeals regarding Board decisions from persons previously interviewed.
- E. The Board will respond to allegations of professional misconduct (see Ministerial Standards Document, Sections 5-6). Decisions of the Board relating to professional misconduct may be appealed (see Ministerial Standards Document, Section 7).
- F. The Board may receive and process letters requesting the renewal of lapsed recognition (see Section 5.5 H).

## **SECTION 5: CANDIDATE'S PROCESS TOWARD APPROVAL AS A RECOGNIZED CONVENTION LAY PASTOR**

### **5.1 Church License to Minister for Persons Preparing for Lay Pastoral Ministry**

- A. The first step on the part of persons desiring to be considered as a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* is to secure a *Church License to Minister* from the church where they are a member.
- 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 lay 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 lay pastoral ministry and basic Baptist beliefs.
- C. A *Church License to Minister* should not be granted until the person has been a member of the church for at least one year.
- D. A *Church License to Minister* must be renewed annually. It remains valid as long as the church that grants it considers it valid, but may be rescinded by the church for just cause. It is the responsibility of the recipient to request an annual endorsement by the church until such time as an *Association Lay License to Minister* is granted.

### **5.2 Educational Standards for Acceptance as a Recognized Convention Lay Pastor**

- A. Those wishing to become a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* shall successfully complete the requirements for the Lay Pastor Diploma in the Lay Pastors Training Program. If comparable course work has already been completed then the individual shall be required to complete those portions of the Lay Pastors Training Program recommended by the Lay Pastors Training Program Committee. Up to one-third of the courses offered in the Lay Pastors Training Program may be completed through other educational programs.

### **5.3 Acceptance as a Candidate for Recognized Convention Lay Pastoral Ministry**

- A. A person proceeding toward becoming a Recognized Convention Lay Pastor shall normally apply to appear before the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education for an Initial Interview during the third year of their Lay Pastors Training Program. At this Initial Interview the person will be considered for acceptance as a *Candidate for Lay 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 for an Initial Interview, the applicant shall have a current *Church License to Minister* from a Baptist church in fellowship with the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches or a current *Association Lay License to Minister*.

### **5.4 Association Lay License to Minister**

- A. A person who as a first step has held a *Church License to Minister* for at least one year and is sensing a call to prepare for lay pastoral ministry, whose intention is not set toward ordination, and who has some ministry experience as a supply preacher, interim minister, youth director, or in some other similar ministry, may apply to obtain an *Association Lay License to Minister*.
- B. The *Association Lay 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 lay 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 lay pastoral ministry and basic Baptist beliefs.

- C. Such a License may be granted on the following conditions:
  1. One year has passed 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; and
  3. The applicant has given evidence of satisfactory lay ministry, including their ability to lead a worship service.
  
- D. The Licensing Committee of an Association will examine all applicants for an *Association Lay License to Minister* according to the standards and requirements contained in the above paragraphs and their commitment to the aims, core values and activities of the Association and the Convention.
  
- E. Application for renewal of an *Association Lay License to Minister* is to be made annually unless the applicant has been approved as a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*. Failure to renew the *Association Lay License to Minister* will require that the person secure a letter of commendation from the Deacons of the church of which they are a member. Before being interviewed for the purpose of having the *Association Lay License to Minister* reinstated, this letter must be presented to the appropriate Association committee.
  
- F. Upon renewal by an Association, the *Association Lay License to Minister* is to be signed again by the Moderator and Clerk of the Association.

## **5.5 Becoming a Recognized Convention Lay Pastor**

- A. A person within the Convention who has been accepted by the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education as a *Candidate for Lay Pastoral Ministry* may seek approval by the Convention through the Board as a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*. This recognition of an essentially part-time, bi-vocational ministry should not be confused with accredited ordained ministry and should not be regarded as a stepping stone to ordained ministry. Ordained ministry requires more extensive training and higher levels of demonstrated professional competency than is required of people who complete the Lay Pastors Training Program.
  
- B. A church whose pastor has successfully completed the requirements for the Lay Pastor Diploma in the Lay Pastors Training Program, following a vote of the members or appropriate board, may make application to the Board for their pastor to be granted a Recognition Interview with a view toward becoming a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*. The Candidate, who must have served as the church's pastor for a period of at least six months, shall complete a Recognition Interview Application Form that includes a written statement (maximum 2,500 words, excluding Scripture references from the word count) setting forth their Statement of Faith, including Baptist beliefs (supported by references to the Scriptures), and their relationship to the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches whose foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity is the 1905/06 Basis of Union. This

application shall be submitted to the Board at least five weeks prior to a second meeting with the Board. This Recognition Interview, which will normally take place within the first year of a Candidate being called to pastor the church, will include both an examination of the Candidate's statement as well as an assessment of the Candidate's giftedness and suitability for ministry based on their service in their current congregation.

- C. In the event that a person has successfully completed the Lay Pastor Training Program and feels called to serve in a Convention recognized ministry setting other than as the lay pastor of a local church (i.e. nursing home chaplaincy, itinerant preaching, interim pastoral ministry etc.), the church of which that person is a member, following a vote of the members or appropriate board, may make application to the Board for the person to be granted a Recognition Interview with a view toward becoming a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*. The Candidate, who must have served the equivalent of six months pastoral ministry, shall complete a Recognition Interview Application Form that includes a written statement (maximum 2,500 words, excluding Scripture references from the word count) setting forth their Statement of Faith, including Baptist beliefs (supported by references to the Scriptures), and their relationship to the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches whose foundational statement of agreed doctrine and church polity is the 1905/06 Basis of Union. This application shall be submitted to the Board at least five weeks prior to a second meeting with the Board. This Recognition Interview, which will normally take place within the first year of the Candidate serving in the ministry setting, will include both an examination of the Candidate's statement as well as an assessment of the Candidate's giftedness and suitability for ministry based on their service in their current ministry setting.
- D. In order to appear before the Board for a Recognition Interview, the Candidate shall have a current *Association Lay License to Minister*.
- E. Both male and female Candidates will be eligible to become a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*.
- F. 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 become a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*.
- G. Following the Recognition Interview the Board will determine whether or not the Candidate qualifies to become a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor*. The decision of the Board shall be sent to the Candidate in an official letter from the Executive Minister with a copy to the church in which the Candidate is serving as a lay pastor.
- H. The names of those whom the Board approves shall appear on the Convention's list of *Recognized Convention Lay Pastors*, and they shall be commended to the churches of the Convention as a person approved for lay pastoral ministry, including preaching,

the administration of the ordinances and the carrying out of pastoral or other kinds of ministry.

- I. If, for a period of five or more consecutive years, a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* is no longer engaged as a lay pastor, interim pastor, or supply preacher, or other forms of lay ministry (cf., 5.5C) that individual's credentials shall no longer be held by the Convention. Those who have formerly been *Recognized Convention Lay Pastors* who reengage in lay pastoral ministry may apply in writing to the Board to have the recognition reinstated. This five-year rule does not normally apply to *Recognized Convention Lay Pastors* who are retired or on long-term disability.

*Recognized Convention Lay Pastors* nearing the five-year deadline who believe their circumstances warrant the retention of their recognition may submit a written request to the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education to consider an extension of their credentials.

If a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* 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's credentials will no longer be held by the Convention.

- J. A *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* will be held accountable to comply with the *Ministerial Professional Standards* adopted by The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (see *Ministerial Professional Standards* within *The Regulations Concerning the Ministry*).
- K. An allegation of professional misconduct against a *Recognized Convention Lay Pastor* will be dealt with by the Board in accordance with *Section 5: Protocol for Cases of Alleged Professional Misconduct* found in its Ministerial Standards Document.