

GUIDELINES – HOW TO ORGANIZE AN ORDINATION COUNCIL

Ordination is carried out by a local church. To the extent that the action of the local church is with the advice and consent of the wider fellowship of the church, its ordination is accepted by other churches. Acceptance by the wider fellowship of American Baptists is obtained by referring the candidate to the Committee on the Ministry of ABCOM and to an associational Council on Ordination. After referral of the candidate to the Committee, and upon its recommendation to do so, the local church calls such a Council to examine the candidate and abides by its decision.

The Council is called upon by vote of the local church, by its clerk inviting each active church in the association to send its pastor and two delegates, plus one delegate for each hundred resident members or major fraction thereof above the first hundred, to form such a Council. A valid Council should have representation from more than half of the active churches in the association. Any church which reported to the association or to the ABCOM Yearbook within three years is considered active. The Council should include at least five ordained and ABC/USA recognized ministers.*

To assure the requisite number of ordained ministers a church in a small association may include churches in an adjoining association in the invitation. In such a case, all the churches of the nearby association shall be invited. It is not an acceptable American Baptist practice to select particular churches from an area.

Invitations should go also to the church's Association Resource Minister (if applicable) and its associational representative on the Committee on the Ministry. Delegates comprise the voting membership of the Council. It is acceptable to invite a few guests who are especially meaningful to the candidate and might be granted delegate status by the Council.

The invitation should name the church and guests being invited. It should clearly state the business of the Council, the identity of the church calling the Council, and the time and place of meeting.

At the time and place designated, the clerk of the church calling the Council, or someone representing it calls the meeting to order, and calls the roll of the invited churches and guests to ascertain a quorum. A quorum is present if a majority of the churches invited are represented with at least five ordained ministers included. To be represented a church must have at least one delegate present. A quorum having been ascertained the church's representative calls for the election of a moderator and turns the conduct of the meeting over to that person.

The moderator leads in prayer or invites another to do so and calls for the election of a clerk for the Council. The clerk reads the letter of invitation and registers the delegates. With all in order, the moderator declares the meeting to be a valid Council of Ordination and calls for the records pertaining to its business, which should include a report from the Committee on the Ministry of its recommendation and a report from the church of its action in presenting the candidate to the Council for examination.

The candidate presents a statement of Christian experience, call to the ministry, and views of Christian doctrine. Whether to deal with the statement by segments or as a whole is within the jurisdiction of the

Council. Thereafter, the Council may seek such explanation, elaboration or defense of the statement as it sees fit, directing questions through the moderator. When the delegates are so far satisfied with the presentation as to terminate the interview, they should vote to go into executive session. The ordinand should not be present for the following conversation. After discussion, the Council should make a motion recommending to the church what action it should take with respect to the proposed ordination of the candidate. The function of the Council is to make the definitive determination of the acceptability of the candidate for ordination. The vote may be taken by calling the roll of the delegates or after open discussion by secret ballot.

Following the vote, the ordinand should be escorted back into the meeting and told the outcome of such vote.

The clerk should then be instructed to notify the church of the action of the Council. If it is a recommendation to ordain, the Council should appoint a representative to act with the association resource minister as counsel to the church and candidate in establishing a time, place, and program for the service of ordination. ** If it is otherwise than to ordain, the council should appoint a committee to confer with the church and the candidate as to any further action.

The clerk should record the business of the Council as it progresses and be prepared to present that record for correction and confirmation before the conclusion of the meeting. The clerk should forward the records of the meeting to be filed with the Committee on the Ministry of ABCOM and make final report of the action of the Council and church in ordaining the candidate, to the administrative offices of ABCOM and to such other parties a may be concerned, to include the clerk of the association.

Upon the conclusion of its deliberations, the Council should vote to dissolve, there being no continuing body to adjourn to another day.

**These ministers may be in person or via video link.*

*** Suggestions:*

- A. It is advisable for the state staff members, the association member on the Committee on the Ministry, and senior pastors in the area, to be considered by the church and candidate as resource advisors on program and arrangements for the ordination proceedings.
- B. The church, through its clerk, shall provide a certificate of ordination.
- C. The following items are included for reference:
 - 1. A Form for the Call to an Ordination Council
 - 2. An Order of Business for An Ordination Council
 - 3. The Service of Ordination: A Suggested Order of Service
 - 4. A Sample Vows of Ordination
 - 5. A Sample Proclamation of Ordination
 - 6. The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches