

ORDINATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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Preamble

We assume that ordination of clergy is good polity. With very few exceptions in its history, the church has found it expedient to have a group of pastors set aside for its institutional welfare and the spiritual care of its people. The Biblical precedents for ordination are found in the examples of God's call to special ministry among his people as priest, prophet, apostle, and disciple.

Definition

Ordination is a process by which the church, in the light of established norms and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, examines candidates to recognize and validate the call and gifts of God, acknowledges those who fulfill such expectations, and inducts them into the ranks of its clergy.

The Authority to Ordain

Without exception the authority to ordain belongs to the local church. In ordination, however, each church must proceed with careful regard for the concerns and expectations of its sister churches. That is why ordination policies and procedures are a matter for churches to espouse mutually.

Norms By Which Candidates Are To Be Examined

Each candidate for ordination shall fulfill the following expectations:

1. Hold membership in the ordaining church.
2. Hold a formal call to conventional ministry from the ordaining church, or, the public recognition of that church of the candidate's call to some other form of conventional ministry.
3. Give a plain **testimony of personal experience of conversion** through faith in Jesus Christ. (c. 1-2 pp.)
4. Give a plain **testimony of response to the inward call of God to the ministry** of the church. (c. 1 page)
5. Give evidence of adequate educational preparation to fulfill that call. (Include with call - #4)
6. Have attestation by the ordaining church as to the fruitful manifestation of his personality, character and spiritual gifts, in ways edifying to that congregation. (Personal statement given at the Council by church leadership)

7. Provide satisfactory written demonstration of an emerging understanding of his leadership role, his personal and vocational goals, his **philosophy of ministry** and his place in the life of the church. (c. 2-4 pp.)
8. Provide a satisfactory written demonstration of adequate levels of skill in the understanding and interpretation of the Bible, in the comprehension of **general church doctrine and history**, in the understanding of and adherence to Baptist General Conference doctrine (see BGC Affirmation of Faith), and in oral and written communication (Statement of Faith). (c. 8-12 pp.)

The Procedure for Ordination

In order to accomplish the ordination of a candidate, a church will normally proceed as follows:

1. The church board makes a formal decision to initiate ordination procedures on behalf of a specific candidate.
2. It is customary for the candidate to be referred to the District Conference Pre-Council Review Team to examine his preparation documents and statements. That Team assists the candidate in refining his presentation and advises him on his fitness and readiness to be presented to an Ordination Council. On the basis of its findings, the Team advises the ordaining church as to the apparent fitness and readiness of the candidate.
3. Upon receiving notice that the candidate appears fit and ready, the ordaining church calls an Ordination Council. An Ordination Council consists of clergy and lay delegates from a representative group of Conference Baptist churches.

4. The procedure for convening an Ordination Council is as follows:

- a. In conjunction with the District Office, the church shall set the date for the Ordination Council.
- b. At least four weeks prior to the date of the Council, the convening church shall send a written invitation to each church selected for participation, requesting that the pastor and two other delegates be sent. The convening church shall authorize three of its leaders to also be delegates.

Note: The Ordination candidate may invite selected guests (family members, faculty mentors, etc.) to observe the Council proceedings. They will not be seated as members, will not have privilege of participation in examination of the candidate, and will not be included in the closed session, but are welcome for all other parts of the Council activities.

- b. At the same time, the convening church shall send each invited church a set of the written materials prepared by the candidate. Those written materials shall at least consist of the candidate's materials as described in items 3-5, 7 and 8 (above).
 - c. The district shall provide a chair of the Council, who shall have opportunity to adequately prepare for leadership of the Council, and shall serve as Chair. The convening church shall invite and provide someone to serve as clerk of the Council.
 - d. The District office will use its resources to encourage participation by the invited churches.
5. The procedure for conducting an Ordination Council is as follows:

- a. Opening Activities

- 1.) Opening activities may include singing, a prayer of invocation, a Bible reading and a welcome to delegates and guests.
- 2.) Organizing the Council by calling for affirmation of chair and secretary of the Council.

- 3.) Calling for the reading of the Board Minutes authorizing the Council.
- 4.) The host church leadership shall introduce the candidate.
- 5.) Calling for the report of the Pre-ordination Review Team.
- 6.) Requesting a written listing of all delegates to the Council with sending church.

b. Examination by the Council of the Candidate:

- 1.) Reminding the delegates of the nature and the procedure of the task.
- 2.) Presenting the candidate so that the Council has opportunity to determine how he fulfills the norms for ordination.
- 3.) Providing opportunity for the Council to ask questions of the candidate for clarification of the views expressed or experiences described.
- 4.) Hearing appropriate testimony by one of more representatives of the convening church as to the fruitful manifestation of the candidate's personality, character and spiritual gifts in ways edifying to that congregation.
- 5.) Conducting a closed session in which the Council shall determine the candidate's fitness and readiness for ordination. (All guests dismissed)
- 6.) Informing the candidate of the decision of the Council, making appropriate comments and affirmations.
- 7.) Instructing the Clerk to provide the convening church with the Minutes of the Council. The Minutes shall include information as to the composition and leadership of the Council and a verbatim record of the Council's actions.
- 8.) Adjourning and dissolving the Council

c. Concluding activities

The Chairman of the convening church concludes the meeting of the Council with the appropriate words of gratitude, announces any plans for the Service of Ordination and leads in prayer.

The host church may want to provide refreshments or a light lunch if delegates have traveled significantly to attend the Council.

6. The procedure for conducting a Service of Ordination is as follows:

- a. An Ordination Service is a complete expression of worship and praise to God including singing, prayers, Bible readings, a sermon and exhortations to both the ordaining church and the candidate.
- b. If the service includes a sermon, the candidate may be given the opportunity to invite a guest speaker of his choice, at the expense of the sponsoring church, to deliver the

sermon. (e.g. - significant faculty member, family member/pastor, home church pastor, mentor, etc.)

c. The specific act of ordination involves the following elements:

- 1.) The affirmation of ordination vows by the candidate. A sample of such vows is attached.
- 2.) The laying-on-of-hands by the leaders of the ordaining church, as well as any other ordained persons present.
- 3.) The prayer of ordination.
- 4.) The presentation of the Certificate of Ordination to the ordained.

The Continuation of Ordained Status

1. When an ordained person accepts the call of another church, the responsibility for supervision of his ordination is transferred to that church. When an ordained person accepts a call to a form of ministry that does not in itself provide for church membership, the church of which the ordained is a member shall be responsible for the supervision of his ordination.
2. When an ordained person does not have a call from the church of which he is a member, or the church of which he is a member does not recognize the validity of his call to some other form of ministry, his ordination is in a state of lapse.
3. Ordained persons who become disabled or who enter full vocational retirement shall continue with full recognition of their ordained status.
4. Ordination may be revoked only by the church of which the ordained is a member. Revocation shall be done only after serious deliberation requiring the consent of a Council made up of delegates from sister churches. Revocation requires a vote by the church. The Certificate of Ordination shall be taken and burned.
5. Ordination may be renounced voluntarily. Such renunciation shall require that the ordained declare such desire to the board and that the Certificate of Ordination be given for burning. The church shall vote to recognize such a renunciation.

The Validation of Ordained Status

1. Since these policies and procedures assume that the call of a church is fundamental to ordination, it is expected that in the process of issuing a call each church shall satisfy itself as to the validity of the ordination of the candidate being called. The issuance of a call in and of itself validates previous ordination.
2. When a church issues a call to a person ordained in another denomination, it is appropriate for that church to call an Ordination Review Council. The purpose for such a Council is to confirm the fact that this person fulfills ***these*** norms for ordination.