

October 23, 2009

**STANDARDS OF RECOGNITION
FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
IN THE
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MAINE (ABCOM)**

INTRODUCTION: Each of the Master's followers is called to be His minister. Some of His followers are called to minister in specific ways. Responsibilities which require training and devotion of time and talent beyond the ordinary are delegated to them through a process by which the Church recognizes their specific call and preparation.

The purpose of this document is to outline the way that the AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MAINE through their COMMITTEE ON THE MINISTRY designate and recognize such special ministers. Three designations will be described along with requirements for recognition. The designations are: LOCAL CHURCH LICENSING, ABCOM COMMISSIONING AND ORDINATION.

For granting wider than ABCOM recognition of ordination, ABCOM will seek to review and observe the standards adopted by the Ministerial Leadership Commission and Ministers' Council of the American Baptist Churches/USA.

Any recognition of ministry must begin with the acknowledgement that it is neither the right nor privilege of the Committee nor of any other denominational agency to summon anyone to that service nor to deny any the opportunity to so serve. It is God who calls. Any affirming action which the church may take is its recognition of a call which God has made. Any standardizing qualifications which the church may adopt is but its prudential action seeking to protect itself from the irresponsible individualism of self-appointed ministers. With that understanding, and in that spirit, the Committee presents this document as its guide in exercising oversight in the matter of the recognition of ministerial standing among the American Baptist Churches of Maine.

Any standards established by the Committee shall be referenced by the historical Baptist concerns to ascertain a candidate's CONVERSION EXPERIENCE, CALL TO MINISTRY AND PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. Any standards established for granting of recognition will be always in line with current policies and resolutions of the American Baptist Churches of Maine. All candidates for recognition must declare their acceptance and support of the current Code of Ethics prepared by the Ministers' Council (Appendix G), and must complete and sign a Self-Disclosure and Release Form (Appendix H).

Guidelines and application forms are available from the ABCOM office by requesting them according to the listing below:

- Appendix A - Local Church License
- Appendix B - ABCOM Commissioning
- Appendix B1 - Reference Form for ABCOM Commissioning
- Appendix B2 - Renewal of ABCOM Commissioning
- Appendix C - Ordination
- Appendix C1 - Local Church Request for Ordination Review
- Appendix D - Recognition of ABC Ordination
- Appendix E - Recognition of Non-ABC Ordination
- Appendix F - Process for Appeal and Board of Review
- Appendix G - Covenant and Code of Ethics
- Appendix H - Self-Disclosure and Release Form
- Appendix I - ABCOM Policies and Resolutions Concerning Ordination

I. TYPES OF RECOGNITION:

A. A LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE is the recognition by a local church of a call to ministry at that local church. It is designed to make one available for service in whatever capacity that local church may authorize; and gives assurance to neighboring churches that here is one to whom they may turn with confidence for occasional service.

A local church license is granted by the church to which one belongs, where he/she is well known, and whose personal qualifications for ministry are readily discernable. The license should be granted for a specific amount of time - no more than three years - and renewed by the church when qualifications and signs of growth are readily manifest. The local church and subsequent renewals should be validated by a vote of the church and attested by the church clerk.

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AS APPENDIX A.

The church will do well to test the qualifications for ministry by giving the candidate opportunity to preach and/or serve in whatever other capacity is appropriate.

Should the person holding a valid local church license seek wider recognition of her/his ministry among American Baptist Churches, appropriate avenues are noted below through commissioning and ordination procedures.

B. ABCOM COMMISSIONING* is designed to make known and available to the churches of Maine those who meet the standards determined by ABCOM as requisite for ministry in Maine.

Commissioning certifies that the credentials of the candidate have been examined and approved by the Committee on the Ministry. A commissioned minister may become involved in pastoral ministry (as pastor, chaplain, administrator, counselor, or other pastoral ministry) or in specialized ministry (in Christian education, youth work, music or some other specialty). Commissioning may lead to ordination, should the candidate desire.

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AS APPENDIX B.

C. ORDINATION is that institution of the church whereby it identifies one called of God to the ministry and authenticates the qualifications of that one for service. Ordination is by a local church upon recommendation of an associational council. To the extent that the local church acts with the advice and consent of the wider fellowship of the church, its ordination is accepted by that wider fellowship and the ordained minister is acceptable to serve wherever called within that fellowship.

All candidates for ordination among American Baptist Churches of Maine should have verified through the Committee on the Ministry that they have met all qualifications for ministry established by the standards of the committee.

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AS APPENDIX C.

Persons whose ordination is recognized by an organization other than ABCOM may present their credentials through an application process to the Committee on the Ministry for ABCOM recognition.

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AS APPENDIX D OR APPENDIX E, AS APPROPRIATE.

* Commissioning is a replacement for ABCOM Licensing.

II. PROCEDURES FOR CANDIDATES:

A. A candidate seeking a LOCAL CHURCH LICENSE shall:

1. Present to the church of which the candidate is a member a conviction of call and desire to be licensed.
2. Present such evidence of aptitude and fitness for ministry as the local church may require.
3. Enter into covenant with the local church of which the candidate is a member to pursue additional preparation for ministry, and to perform ministry under the watchcare of the church.

B. A candidate seeking an ABCOM COMMISSION to ministry shall:

1. Ask the local church clerk to request from the secretary of the Committee on the Ministry an application form.
2. Present to the secretary of the Committee on the Ministry a completed application form.
3. Meet with the Committee on the Ministry at an appointed time made with the secretary of the Committee; and satisfy through interview that the standards for ABCOM COMMISSION have been met.
4. Upon favorable vote by the Committee, receive an ABCOM COMMISSION that will be valid for five years.
5. In the fifth year after commissioning, ask the local church clerk to request an application for renewal of the commission.

C. A candidate seeking ORDINATION shall:

1. Be prepared to present to the Committee on the Ministry evidence of a current ABCOM Commission; at least one year of satisfactory pastoral ministry; and a vote of acceptance by the ordaining church to endorse the candidate for ordination.
2. Have the ordaining church, through its clerk, request a review and recommendation from the Committee on the Ministry. (APPENDIX C.1)
3. Prepare with her/his Committee representative and Area Minister the application form and related materials for presentation to the Committee on the Ministry. (APPENDIX C)
4. Forward all application materials to the secretary of the Committee on the Ministry, and secure from the secretary a date and time for interview.
5. Upon favorable vote by the Committee, participate with the ordaining church in calling an Associational Ordination Council.
6. Upon favorable vote by the Associational Ordination Council, participate with the ordaining church in preparing a Service of Ordination.
7. Receive from the American Baptist Churches an ordination certificate.
8. Have ordination recognized and recorded according to the standards in operation at the time by American Baptist Churches of Maine and American Baptist Churches/ USA.

III. CANDIDATE OPTIONS TO NEGATIVE DECISIONS BY COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE

- A. Make sufficient changes in the conditions prompting the negative decision to warrant a renewal of the request or application;
- B. Accept the decision of the council or committee; or
- C. Appeal the action by using APPENDIX F.

IV. RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE COMMITTEE ON THE MINISTRY

- A. The Committee is constituted according to the existing Bylaws and Rules of Procedure of the American Baptist Churches of Maine, and shall be responsible to the organization through the ABCOM Board.
- B. The Committee shall be convened by its chair and organized with a secretary and such subcommittees as from time to time it deems necessary.
- C. The Committee shall meet quarterly and at such other times as called into session by its chair or as it shall designate.
- D. The Committee shall seek to collaborate with related agencies and Area Ministers to provide adequate training and discipline of ABCOM ministers.
- E. The Committee shall have definitive authority in granting ABCOM Commissions to ministry. It shall have advisory authority in the process of ordination, except in the matter of determining the type of recognition (ABCOM or ABC/USA) where its decision is definitive.
- F. When an appeal is registered by a candidate to a negative a decision by an ordination council or the Committee on the Ministry, the president of the American Baptist Churches of Maine shall be requested to appoint a Board of Review to be convened and chaired by the candidate's Area minister, plus one person each from the candidate's local church, association, the Ministers' Council, Committee on the Ministry and a personal advocate for the person making appeal (APPENDIX F).

