

RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION WITHIN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF THE ROCHESTER/GENESEE REGION

Churches and agencies within the American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region may wish to call a person who has been previously ordained through another denomination or affiliation and have that person's ordination recognized through ABCRGR. Recognition does not replace the original ordination. Rather, it allows candidates who are serving as professional clergy in the Rochester/Genesee Region to have a ministerial standing in the American Baptist Churches USA. While respecting and valuing the ordination process of other denominations, it is appropriate that the ABCRGR expects certain criteria to be met by any person who is seeking an American Baptist ordination. Thus, the Ordination Review Committee and the delegates of the region have approved the following guidelines.

If the Candidate Holds a Local Church Ordination:

A candidate who holds a local church ordination and wishes to be ordained by the American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region is ineligible for the recognition process and must follow the **"Guidelines for Ordination in ABC Rochester/Genesee Region."**

Some denominations/church affiliations follow ordination practices which, while sometimes including elements of an ordination process beyond the local church, do not necessarily require a larger associational or clerical body to affirm a local church ordination (such as The Alliance of Baptists). On a case-by-case basis, a candidate for recognition and the Ordination Review Committee will work together to review what procedures were undertaken by the candidate in their ordination process and how those procedures compare with ABCRGR ordination standards.

Guidelines for Recognition of Ordination:

In order to be eligible for recognition of ordination, the candidate must be a member in good standing of a church within ABCRGR for at least one year before recognition can be granted. The other elements of the recognition process may be completed within that year.

Additionally, the candidate must provide the following:

- An official transcript from an ATS-accredited seminary with a M.Div. or equivalent.
- A copy of the original ordination document
- A letter of good ministerial standing from the ordaining body (see "Exceptions to This Process" below)
- Documentation of participation in a comparable examination process to the ABCRGR Permanent Council in which the candidate is evaluated by credentialed (ATS-equivalent) ordained clergy and laity along the following criteria:
 - Possession of gifts and attitudes that qualify the candidate for ministry
 - A basic knowledge of the Bible, understanding of the gospel, and ability to articulate and defend their theological understandings
 - An understanding of church history, practice and beliefs
 - A stance of openness before God, one's community, and the world
- A signed ABCRGR Ministerial Code of Ethics (sent to candidate upon entry into process)
- A completed Background Check Authorization (sent to the candidate upon entry into the process)
- Documentation of a seminary course in American Baptist polity and history or its equivalent.
- Complete a Ministerial Boundaries training through ABCRGR or provide documentation of attendance of one in another region or denomination within the last three years.
- An evaluation from a comprehensive career- and candidacy-assessment program at an ABCRGR-approved Center for Ministry within the last three years (or completed within the timeframe of the recognition process)

- Written reflection following participation in one of the following: the ABCUSA Orientation to American Baptist Life, an ABCRGR gathering approved by the executive minister for this purpose, or an ABC Biennial Mission Summit (see requirements for reflection paper below)
- A written statement of faith (see requirements for statement of faith below)

Mentor

All candidates for recognition of ordination are assigned a mentor by the Ordination Review Committee, after discussion with the candidate the candidate's ministry interests and needs. The mentor assists in shepherding the candidate through the process, helping the candidate become familiar with ABCUSA foundational beliefs and practices, and making connections with the candidate's colleagues in ABCRGR. The mentor helps the candidate in sharpening the statement of faith paper and will need to approve it to be sent to the ORC when the mentor deems it is ready.

Timeline for Recognition Process

Candidates for recognition have **two-year period** from the date of entry into the process to complete the process, providing that the candidate remains in active communication with mentor and the executive minister during this time.

Exceptions to Recognition Process

The ORC is empowered to waive the requirement of a letter of good ministerial standing from the ordaining body when a candidate's:

- Ordination has been withdrawn solely due to his/her sexual orientation or gender identity
- Ordination has been withdrawn solely due to a commitment to welcome and affirm all individuals without regard to their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Ordination has been withdrawn when the ORC determines that an ordination was done in good faith, under the existing judicatory guidelines of the region (or denomination); where the ORC has not identified integrity concerns or violations of the principles consistent with the ABCRGR Code of Ethics; and where the candidate has a clean Criminal Background report
- Documentation of the ordination cannot be substantiated due to extraordinary circumstances (i.e. refugee status, catastrophic event that destroyed files, etc.)
- The waiver of the requirement of a letter of good standing will also apply to candidates who have had their ABC ordinations withdrawn for the above-noted reasons. (Voted in February 8, 2009)

Requirements for Reflection Paper

When the candidate attends the ABCUSA Orientation to American Baptist Life (OTABL), an ABCRGR gathering approved by the executive minister for this purpose, or an ABC Biennial Mission Summit, the candidate must submit a reflection paper to the executive minister of ABCRGR within 30 days of the participation. This reflection paper should be no more than five (5) pages long (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font).

It must include:

- A brief description of the event
- At least three aspects of American Baptist life the candidate learned more about during the event, such as elements of polity, the "four fragile freedoms," American Baptist views on ordination, communion, or baptism, etc,
- A reflection upon the candidate's experience of the event in relationship to her or his recognition of ordination

Requirements for Statement of Faith

Format

- Approximately 8-10 double-spaced typed pages.
- Include line numbering for easier reference during ORC meeting.
- Use 12-point font Times New Roman, 1" margins, and include page numbers.
- Ensure your name appears in a header on the paper.

Please have your mentor sign off on it prior to submitting it. Send completed faith statement as a PDF document via email to the Executive Minister. The Executive Minister will ask your mentor to confirm her/his approval via email prior to distributing it to the ORC.

Content

Please include in your statement of faith:

- A concise statement of your personal journey (1-2 pages)
- Key moments in your Christian experience (1-2 pages)
- Your call to ministry (1 page)
 - Include both your experience of being called to ministry and your understanding of the particular ministry to which you have been called.
- A scriptural passage that "got you through" an experience and a theological reflection upon that passage. (1-2 pages)
- The description of a challenge you've encountered in your ministry vocation and what you learned from it. (1 page)
- The description of a particular joy you've experienced in your ministry vocation and why it was so meaningful to you. (1 page)
- An explanation of why you are pursuing recognition in ABCUSA (1 page)

The Recognition Review

The Ordination of Review Committee of ABCRGR shall have the final responsibility for assessing the calling and readiness of the candidate for ordination. This assessment will happen via an in-person meeting or video conference call with the candidate. The candidate's mentor will also be invited to the meeting, and the candidate may also invite one other person of support if s/he chooses. Although the candidate is required to answer all questions of the ORC her/himself without input from the mentor and other person of support, the mentor and other person of support will be invited to share their comments at the end of the review session, before the ORC deliberates.

The ORC shall assess the candidate along the following criteria:

- Possession of gifts and attitudes that qualify the candidate for ministry
- A basic knowledge of the Bible, understanding of the gospel, and ability to articulate and defend the theological assertions in the paper
- A stance of openness before God, one's community, and the world
- An understanding of Baptist history, polity and beliefs

Upon Completion

The candidate's standing in ABCUSA will be updated by the ABCRGR executive minister to reflect his or her changed status in the denomination. The candidate will receive a letter and certificate of recognition from the executive minister to serve as additional documentation. It is expected that the candidate will make any notifications necessary to her or his previous denomination or ordaining body.

Appendix C: Mentoring Materials

Career in Ordained Ministry Mentoring Guide for Ordination/Recognition

By Dr. Gaya Shakes and Rev. Dr. Peter Grinion

The process of preparing candidates for ministerial leadership in the church requires that much attention is given to ministerial formation. Through ministerial formation, the candidate grows in the acquisition of knowledge, religious identity, discipleship, ministerial skills, and spiritual maturity expected of church ministers. One of our roles as the Ordination Review Committee is to help ministerial candidates hear their calling most clearly and answer it most faithfully. As a consequence, we recommend reflective coaching conferences between mentors and candidates.

Reflection involves how we think about our work, the decisions we make about it and the impact of those decisions on our students and our profession. Being reflective means valuing inquiry and the continuous consideration of what we do know as well as what we do not yet understand (Shakes, 1998). A reflective coaching conference is appropriate in a mentor-candidate relationship when the candidate has the knowledge, skills and dispositions to think through the decision making process. With coaching, the candidate arrives at his or her own conclusions about what needs to be done to cultivate the integration of that knowledge, skill, moral integrity and religious commitment. Reflective coaching, therefore is a set of strategies, ways of thinking, and interacting that invite reciprocity in shaping thinking and problem solving (Lipton and Wellman, 2001). In this process, mentoring and coaching are inextricably linked as partnership concepts. They are powerful and inspirational tools that can be appropriately used to help our candidates realize their dreams and become the best they can be in ministry.

A coach/mentor should help the candidate to:

- Increase knowledge of subject matter and foster an ability to analyze the world of the church
- Envision and construct learning events
- Form theological habits of mind
- Understand historical traditions of clergy
- Increase knowledge about diverse religious communities
- Develop nurturing relationships with his/her congregation
- See the relationship between certain teaching practices and enhanced congregational engagement
- Use theological standards and rubrics to create a context of shared values and definitions
- Foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction (Foster, Dahill, Goleman, and Tolentino, 2006)

In a reflective coaching situation, a mentor/coach:

- Is non-judgmental and evaluative
- Encourages self-awareness
- Encourages self-reflection and "pastoral imagination" (Dykstra, 2001)
- Uses data appropriately

Benefits of Coaching:

- Supports the candidate on his/her journey
- Enhances intellectual capacities of both mentor and candidate
- Provides candidate feedback on collaboration
- Builds positive interpersonal relationships
- Supports and makes successful theological learning communities
- Informs the relationship between theory and praxis, between intellect and commitment (Adapted from Barkley,

2005)

Areas of Mentoring and Coaching:

- Communication/Correspondence
- Personal and professional development
- Acquisition of knowledge
- Pastoral skills/Spiritual maturity (Adapted from Barkley, 2005)

Components of the Reflective Coaching Conference

- The candidate explains issues or situation
- The coach/ mentor checks for understanding
- The coach/ mentor clarifies and probes for specificity and/or to identify real problems (i.e., What exactly do you want to occur? What do you think could be the cause?)
- The candidate identifies the problem or concern and considers options as the mentor facilitates thinking
- The candidate decides what to try and makes an action plan
- The coach/mentor verifies plan and sets follow-up meeting (Adapted from Barkley, 2005)

Empowering Questions for Theological Coaching:

Empowering questions can and should motivate and challenge a candidate to stretch for excellence—realizing that his/her greatest performance is yet to come. Candidates grow when they are involved in thinking about their performance" (Barkley, 1985).

Empowering coaching questions are evaluative, creative, and personalized (Barkley, 2005).

Evaluative questions encourage the candidate to make a weighed decision, which indicates the candidate's value structure.

Creative questions serve two purposes: 1) to remove the candidate from present, up-close issues and allow the candidate to see the evaluative component from the outside. When this occurs, a new perspective often emerges; 2) to generate new ideas, combinations, and ways of doing and being.

Personalized questions show that the mentor is listening to the candidate. These questions are asked to connect to something that *he/she* said earlier. The use of these personalized questions indicates that the coach/ mentor is truly interested and wants to know more.

Sample Questions that Support Reflective Coaching:

- Where in your studies and ministry are you most satisfied? Why? Where are you least satisfied?
- How do you know when you are successful as a congregational leader?
- How do you know when you have appropriate assessments?
- What do you understand now about the role of professional clergy that you did not understand before? How did this occur?
- What are your indicators for a need to grow?
- How do you see the relationship between learning in seminary and the culture of a particular religious community? How does this impact your approach to ministry and the professional work of clergy? (Adapted from the Rochester City School District's Career in Teaching Mentor/Intern Handbook for Interns, 2008)

A helpful metaphor for reflective coaching is a mirror through which the candidate constantly sees him/herself (Grinion, 2012). The conferences with candidates should be consistent and unpredictable: consistent in that acceptance of responses is assured by a safe environment; and unpredictable in that, the questions are new, fresh, and thought provoking.

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THE COVENANT AND CODE OF ETHICS

for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region

Having accepted God's call to leadership in Christ's Church, I covenant with God to serve Christ and the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit and to deepen my obedience to the Two Great Commandments: to love the Lord our God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself.

In affirmation of this commitment, I will abide by this Code of Ethics and I will faithfully support its purposes and ideals. As further affirmation of my commitment, I covenant with my colleagues in ministry that we will hold one another accountable for fulfillment of all the public actions set forth in our Code of Ethics.

- I will hold in trust the traditions and practices of our American Baptist Churches; I will not accept a position in the American Baptist family unless I am in accord with those traditions and practices; nor will I use my influence to alienate my congregation/constituents or any part thereof from its relationship and support of the denomination. If my convictions change, I will resign my position.
- I will respect and recognize the variety of calls to ministry among my American Baptist colleagues, and other Christians.
- I will seek to support all colleagues in ministry by building constructive relationships wherever I serve, both with the staff where I work and with colleagues in neighboring churches.
- I will advocate adequate compensation for my profession. I will help lay persons and colleagues to understand that ministerial leaders should not expect or require fees for pastoral services from constituents they serve, when these constituents are helping pay their salaries.
- I will not seek personal favors or discounts on the basis of my ministerial status.
- I will maintain a disciplined ministry in such ways as keeping hours of prayers and devotion, endeavoring to maintain wholesome family relationships, sexual integrity, financial responsibility, regularly engaging in educational and recreational activities for ministerial and personal development. I will seek to maintain good health habits.
- I will recognize my primary obligation to the church or employing group to which I have been called, and will accept added responsibilities only if they do not interfere with the overall effectiveness of my ministry.
- I will personally and publicly support my colleagues who experience discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, physical impairment or disability.
- I will not proselytize from other Christian churches.
- I will, upon my resignation or retirement, sever my ministerial leadership relations with my former constituents, and will not make ministerial contacts in the field of another ministerial leader without his/her request and/or consent.
- I will hold in confidence and treat as confidential communication any information provided to me with the expectation of privacy. I will not disclose such information in private or public except when, in my practice of ministry, I am convinced that the sanctity of confidentiality is outweighed by my well-founded belief that life-threatening or substantial harm will be caused.
- I will not use my ministerial status, position or authority knowingly to abuse, misguide, negatively influence, manipulate, or take advantage of anyone, especially children.
- I will report all instances of abuse of persons to the appropriate agency. In any case involving persons working in ABC ministry, I will also report the circumstances to the appropriate regional and/or national denominational representative.
- I will show my personal love for God as revealed in Jesus Christ in my life and ministry, as I strive together with my colleagues to preserve the dignity, maintain the discipline and promote the integrity of the vocation to which we have been called.

Signed _____ Date _____

Adapted from Ministers Council, ABC-USA, April 2005

**AFFIRMATION OF SPONSORSHIP
for Recognition of Ordination**

ABC R/GR Sponsoring Church _____

Candidate's Name _____

Date of Local Church Membership _____

Note: The candidate must be a member in good standing of an ABCRGR church for at least one year prior receiving recognition of ordination. The church must also be a member in good standing of ABCRGR for at least one year prior to having a candidate's ordination recognized.

Note: As an authorized representative of the church my signature affirms that the church will comply with the noted requirements and expectations of an ABC R/GR church sponsoring a candidate for ordination/recognition.

Signature _____ Title _____

Date _____

THE SIGNED AFFIRMATION MUST BE RETURNED TO

**The Rev. Dr. Sandra L. DeMott Hasenauer, Executive Minister
ABCRGR
1230 Long Pond Rd.
Rochester, NY 14626
Or scanned and sent by email to sandyh@abcrgr.org**