



American Baptist Churches of New Jersey Ordination Standards and Procedures

Introduction

Ordination is the act of the church by which, in the name of God, it delegates to a qualified person who has responded to the call of God a wide range of ministerial functions and responsibilities.

Baptists have both celebrated the autonomy of the local church and joined in voluntary association with each other for mission endeavors best accomplished by the wider Christian community. Thus the local Baptist church retains the right to decide for itself in matters of faith and polity, but also recognizes interdependence with other Baptist churches and organizations as beneficial to full ministry.

Historical Perspective

One of the commonly held convictions of churches today is that all Christians are ministers who participate in Christ's own ministry. This is evidenced in the baptism of the individual Christian and in the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers," where within faith communities individuals inspired by the Holy Spirit are both competent and responsible for approaching God on behalf of themselves and others.

Baptists further asserted that any member of the church could be called upon to exercise all ministerial functions and responsibilities, even though this did not ordinarily happen. When a radical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was combined with a strictly independent concept of the local church, with each congregation directly responsible to Christ, and its officers having no standing outside its membership, there seemed to be little practical or doctrinal foundation for a special order of ministry, the ordained ministry.

But the actual situation was not that simple. Baptists have long possessed a "separate" or "set-apart" ministry that has served a constituency wider than the local congregation. Ordination has tended to be the setting apart (by the call of God and the action of the church) of one of the many ministers to perform special functions of ministry on behalf of the community of faith.

Ordination historically has been understood by many American Baptist congregations as affirming that an individual has had a call to this specialized ministry and has met the necessary qualifications for carrying it out. Although most often a local congregation has taken the initiative in ordaining that individual, it did so in cooperation with other congregations. This participation of a group of churches

in ordination has given the rite much more than merely local significance. In fact, if the ordination was carried out according to the standards of the American Baptist Churches, it represented a denominational recognition of the individual's call and qualifications for the ordained ministry of Christ's universal church.

In the primitive church, the rite of ordination climaxed in the act of "laying on of hands." This act indicated that the person so ordained was not only consecrated to God's service and thus made holy, but also was commissioned to serve on behalf of those who laid on hands (see Acts 6:6 and 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). In addition, the act and the accompanying prayer, which invoked God's grace upon the ordained, implied the ordinand's authority to share the functions and responsibilities of those who laid hands upon the individual.

This meaning has continued to be central to ordination. Today, the act of laying on of hands signifies and focuses in one person the ministry of many persons who in themselves represent the wider church of Jesus Christ.

Prerequisites And Standards For Ordination

CALL FROM GOD TO MINISTRY

The most important prerequisite for ordination, the call of God to a specialized ministry, does not yield itself to particular standards which a denomination or local congregation might establish. This is why the call must be tested by other prerequisites or standards, especially those having to do with licensing as first step toward ordination, meeting educational standards, and a prior call to a specific place of service in which the candidate intends to serve as an ordained minister. In these three areas it is quite appropriate that the local and the wider church (in case of the denomination, American Baptist Churches in the USA) establish standards for ordination.

Membership

The candidate for ordination must be a member in good standing of an American Baptist church, preferably the ordaining church.

Licensing

A local church may grant a license to preach (or otherwise engage in representative ministry) to those who believe themselves (and are believed by others) to be called to the pastorate or other forms of ministry, but are not yet fully prepared to exercise that ministry. It confers no rights and imparts no authority, but is simply an approval by the church of the course which the person is pursuing, and expresses the conviction that the person possesses gifts and capabilities which indicate a call to representative ministry

and a promise of usefulness in it. A candidate seeking ordination should be licensed by their church at least six months prior to ordination.

Significance of Being Licensed by a Local Church

A local church, well acquainted with the candidate, is making public the fact that the individual apparently possesses the ability and the spiritual and emotional qualities necessary for ministry, and that the academic training required for ordination is being received. The local church is expected to give ongoing counsel in regard to vocation and professional training. The pastor, or appropriate board and committee of the church, should perform such counseling.

Procedure for Licensing by a Local Church

The candidate makes known the desire to be licensed to the pastor and the appropriate committee of the church where he or she is a member. The candidate then will be interviewed to determine eligibility for licensing. Upon affirmative vote of the local church, recognition as a licensed candidate for ordination will be granted to the candidate. The local church then notifies in writing the ABCNJ Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations of its action.

Candidacy Assessment

Ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and consistent Christian character. Following their licensing by the local church, candidates for ordination will complete a comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored by or in consultation with an American Baptist related Career Development Center. The Center's evaluation shall be forwarded to the Executive Minister. In cases where candidates have completed at least three years of full-time professional ministry experience in New Jersey, this requirement may be waived by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.

Education And Experience

The educational standard of four years of college and three years of seminary (the B.A. and M.Div. Degrees or their standard equivalents, such as a Ph.D. in Religion) are the normative educational prerequisites for the recognition of ordination by the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey.

1. This will include functional knowledge of American Baptist history and polity. This can be satisfied by a seminary-level course on both the history and polity of American Baptists or by a regionally approved course of study.

2. The candidate's professional ethics and intention of cooperation must be affirmed by signing the Covenant and Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches. All persons seeking ordination will have completed a course in professional ethics offered either by a seminary or ABCNJ. This course will consider areas such as professional boundary issues, relationships, confidentiality, ethics in financial matters, and other related issues, which can dramatically affect the relationship between pastor and people.
3. At least six months practical experience in the Christian ministry (field education) as certified by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations is required. The fieldwork of graduates of recognized seminaries fulfills this requirement.
4. Exceptions to the educational prerequisite are not encouraged, but individuals may apply for ordination without having received their B.A. and/ or M.Div. degrees on the following condition. Experience as an equivalent to educational preparation may be granted on the basis of two years of satisfactory professional growth (such as a lay pastor program from a seminary or an ABC region) or ministerial service (minimum of twenty hours per week) for every one year of academic preparation that is lacking in the candidate's background, eight years of higher education being the norm.

Example 1

A candidate has a B.A. degree, and has completed a two year lay pastor program. She or he will need four years of ministerial service in order to be eligible for ordination.

Example 2

A candidate has a B.A. degree, but no lay pastor's program. She or her will need six years of ministerial service in order to be eligible for ordination.

Example 3

A candidate has two years of college credit and has completed a two year lay pastor program. He or she will need eight years of ministerial service to be eligible for ordination.

Other Requirements

Candidates who are avowed practicing homosexuals will not be recommended by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.

Progressing Towards Ordination

The Committee On Professional Ministry And Church Relations

When a licensed candidate for ordination has completed the above prerequisites and standards for ordination, his or her local church should notify in writing the ABCNJ Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations, indicating its support of the candidate's readiness for consideration for ordination. The licensed candidate should complete the committee's Candidates for Ordination or Recognition of Non-American Baptist Ordination application and forward all required prerequisites and standards documentation to the committee (via the regional office).

1. On the recommendation of the local church committee, the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations will meet with the candidate prior to ordination.
2. The Committee will ascertain:
 - Whether the candidate meets the standards for ordination.
 - Whether the candidate understands the nature of an Ordination Council and will be prepared to meet with one.
 - Whether the candidate has given proper attention to the preparation of the ordination paper.
 - Whether the candidate understands and subscribes to the Covenant and Code of Ethics developed by the Ministers Council.
 - Whether the candidate has a call to vocational ministry.
3. The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations, if it judges it appropriate, will recommend that the candidate's church move forward with its Association toward calling an Ordination Council.
4. The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations will make it clear to the candidate and the candidate's church that a date for the proposed ordination service will not be set until after the Ordination Council has met and voted to recommend the candidate for ordination.

Types Of Service

Although examination for Ordination may occur, the act of ordination will not take place until the candidate has a specific call to a position in one of the following fields of service:

- parish ministry, including all staff who exercise ministerial functions;

- mission service on home or foreign field in which ministerial functions will be exercised;
- specialized ministries (e.g., institutional, military, academic chaplaincy, seminary faculty, pastoral counseling, or staff membership in a church-related institution, where preaching, teaching and/or pastoral work is required);
- staff service involving education or pastoral functions in an American Baptist agency, a council of churches, or some other ecumenical ministry appropriately related to the American Baptist Churches. Any candidate whose proposed type of service does not fall into one of the above categories (e.g., a full-time evangelist) must consult with the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.

Other Requirements

Candidates who are avowed practicing homosexuals will not be recommended by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.

The Ordination Paper

The ordination paper is a major reflection on theological and ecclesiastical ideas and how they relate to your life and ministry. This paper is not intended to be an exclusively academic paper, though it definitely requires theological reflection. This paper is a tool that will enable the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations and Association ordination council to understand your theological process. It is also intended as a tool to help you integrate theology and doctrine in your life and ministry, including how these inform and shape your own spiritual formation and practices. It is not, however, a restatement of your personal faith history.

The candidate should confer with the Association committee and mentor about the ordination paper. The candidate is encouraged to develop this paper according to the following basic outline, or to prepare it in their own way, adding those elements felt to be important but being sure that all these areas are covered:

Introduction

- Christian Commitment and Growth Call to the Ministry
- Academic and Field Preparation Present Field of Service

General Comprehension of Christian Doctrine

- The Doctrine of God
- The Person and Work of Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- The Authority of Scripture
- The World to which the Gospel Speaks: Doctrine of Humanity and Sin The Nature of the Gospel and Salvation
- The Christian Hope: The Meaning of Death and Eternal Life
- Christian Eschatology

General Comprehension of the Church

- Definition of the Church
- The Place of the Church in History
- The Purpose and Place of the Church in the World
- The Ordinances
- The Church in its Ecumenical Relationships
- The Role of the Minister
- The Ministry of the Laity
- The Movement of the Gospel to the World
- Understanding of Mission and Evangelism
- Understanding of Justice in the Life of Society
 - (Candidate should choose one or more social issues as example.)

Denominational Commitment

- Reasons for seeking ordination within the ABC/USA
- Relationship to the ABC/USA and to the Christian Church as a whole

The Association – The Community Of Churches Providing The Ordaining Council

1. There should be a standing committee to ensure that, before the Ordaining Council is called to examine the candidate, all basic requirements have been met including a preliminary, informal conference based on the ordination paper, raising points for clarification, showing the candidate where there may be questions, pointing out deficiencies in the paper, and answering procedural questions. It shall report to the Moderator of the Association and the sponsoring church its recommendation concerning the candidate's readiness for examination. The sponsoring church should arrange for distribution of the ordination paper to each congregation in the Association not less than two weeks prior to the meeting of the Ordaining Council.
2. In those cases where the standing committee considers the candidate unprepared to face the Ordaining Council, it may take any of the following actions:
 - Delay its decision until the deficiencies have been removed, and invite the candidate to reappear before the committee.
 - Decline to recommend the calling of the Ordaining Council, reporting to the candidate and the local church the reasons for such action. In cases where the Association refuses to call an Ordaining Council and has given its reasons in writing to the candidate and the local church, the candidate and church can appeal that decision to the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.

3. The Association moderator shall be responsible for encouraging churches to send delegates to the Ordaining Council. The moderator shall either convene the Council or see that the proper chairperson and secretary are secured, in keeping with procedures adopted by the Association.

The Ordaining Council

The Call

The call to convene the Ordaining Council shall come (preferably with at least 3 weeks notice) from the local church after favorable recommendation by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations and the appropriate standing committee of the Association.

Membership Of The Ordaining Council

The membership should include the pastor and at least two lay persons from each of the Association churches and at least one officer or staff member from the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey. The number of representatives from each member church shall be determined by the Association.

Quorum and Vote

The quorum shall be set by the Association. It is recommended that representation from at least two-fifths of the member churches be the quorum. It is also recommended that a two-thirds majority of those present and voting shall be required to vote affirmatively on the candidate's fitness and the recommendation to the church for ordination.

Agenda

1. Convening of the Ordaining Council by the chairperson of the Association or the person designated by Association procedures.
2. Invocation.
3. Scripture (consider asking the candidate for their favorite scripture)
4. Song/Hymn

5. Reading of the letters from the local church, the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations, and the standing committee of the Association which authorizes the calling of the Ordaining Council.
6. Roll call of the churches.
7. Appointment of a chairperson and secretary. The secretary of the Association shall be secretary of the Ordaining Council unless otherwise designated by Association procedure.
8. Examination of the Candidate
 - Presentation of prepared statements (Ordination Paper section)
 - Questioning of the candidate (The purpose of the Ordaining Council is to examine and affirm the candidate's preparedness for ordination. The candidate should be able to articulate how they integrate theology and doctrine in their life and ministry, including how their theological and ecclesiastical ideas inform and shape their own spiritual formation and practices.
7. After excusing the candidate and others who are not members of the Council, the Ordaining Council goes into executive session to discuss the candidate's eligibility for ordination.
8. The Council votes to recommend to the local church that:
 - Ordination should proceed; or
 - Ordination should be deferred for stated reasons; or
 - Ordination should not take place for stated reasons.

Minutes and Records

The secretary shall keep minutes of the Ordaining Council meeting and shall file records of the Ordaining Council's action with the local church, with the Association and with the ABCNJ Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations. Following the ordination, the secretary shall report the ordination to the office of American Baptist Churches of New Jersey, which in turn is responsible for the inclusion of ordained persons in the Registry of Ministerial Leaders of the ABCUSA.

The Ordination Certificate

The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey will provide the ordination certificate. The Association Moderator, Associate Regional Pastor and the Secretary of the Ordination Council are responsible for obtaining the necessary signatures.

Appeal Procedures

In the event that the Ordaining Council recommends that a church should defer or not proceed with the ordination of a candidate, the following courses of action are open:

1. The church may wait until the conditions which caused the adverse recommendation change sufficiently to warrant a renewal of the request for examination of the candidate.
2. The church may appeal to the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations for a hearing if it considers the decision of the Ordaining Council to have been arbitrarily unfair. Upon receipt of such a request, the committee shall arrange for a meeting of its members to which shall be invited:
 - the chairperson and secretary of the Ordaining Council in question;
 - the candidate, his or her sponsor and two delegates from his or her church;
 - the Associate Regional Pastor.
 - Convened and presided over by the chairperson of the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations, this group shall review the records of the Ordaining Council, receive reports relative to its action, and decide whether or not the evidence presented warrants the calling of a Council of Review.

The Council of Review

Membership

A Council of Review shall be composed of:

- One ordained minister and two lay delegates from each church in the Association;
- The members of the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations;
and
- The Associate Regional Pastor

The Call

The meeting of the Council of Review shall be called by the state Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations. The above mentioned persons shall be voting delegates to examine the candidate and make a recommendation to the church. A quorum shall consist of representation from at least two-fifths of the member churches, plus one representative from the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.

Appropriate Actions

Should the decision of the Council of Review be negative, any further action taken by this church to ordain its candidate shall be considered unilateral and without standing in the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey. When the decision of the Council of Review is favorable, a suitable service of ordination shall be held no sooner than two weeks after the date of the review proceedings.

The Ordination Service

1. The date of an ordination service will be publicly announced only after the ordination council has recommended that an ordination take place, and there has been a call to a specific place of service.
2. Churches of the association shall be invited to send representatives to the ordination. The staff of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey shall be represented by the Executive Minister and/or the appropriate Associate Regional Pastor.
3. A recommended order of worship for the ordination service is given below. Sample vows and charges are available from the Ministerial Leadership Commission or ABCNJ.

Recommended Order Of Service Of Ordination

- Prelude/Processional
- Doxology
- Invocation and Lord's Prayer
- Statement from the Ordination Council
- Hymn
- Reading from Scripture
- Special Music
- The Sermon
- The Vows of Ordination
- The Ordination Prayer with Laying on of Hands The Charge to the Minister
- The Charge to the Church
- The Presentation of the Certificate of Ordination Hymn of Consecration
- The Benediction
- Postlude/Recessional

Recognition Of American Baptist Ordination

Recognition

Upon ordination, a report of the ordination service will be forwarded by the ordaining church to ABCNJ who will notify the Registry of Ministerial Leaders of the American Baptist Churches, USA.

Change of Status

Voluntary Change

Any ministerial leader may request that recognition of his or her ordination be withdrawn by writing to the Executive Minister of ABCNJ, and/or the Registry of Ministerial Leaders of the ABCUSA. Restoration of this person to active recognition may be accomplished only by the recommendation of the ABCNJ Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations, after examination and proof of the individual's continued call, skill and aptitude for ministry.

Withdrawal of Recognition

The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations of ABCNJ has responsibility for the recognition of ordination, as well as for the review and the withdrawal of recognition. A process for review and withdrawal has been adopted by ABCNJ. Request a copy of ABCNJ's Ecclesiastical Process for Review of Ministerial Standing.

Appeal

A person whose recognition of ordination has been suspended or withdrawn may appeal the decision to the executive committee of ABCNJ. If there is no action by the executive committee of ABCNJ within sixty (60) days, the person may appeal to the the Office of the General Secretary, ABCUSA, or to the body it designates, provided that the appeal is filed within one hundred twenty (120) days of the receipt of the notice of the decision. All appeals will be conducted to determine the appropriateness of the process used by ABCNJ to reach its final decision. An appeal is not to determine an individual's fitness for ministry; rather it is to determine if a fair and just process was used by ABCNJ. The decision of the executive committee of ABCNJ or the nationally designated body will be final.

Reinstatement

A person's ordination subsequently may be recognized again, if there is a desire to be reinstated. The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations will meet with the person to review the original action, subsequent history and present qualifications for ministry. In the event that the Committee on Professional Ministry

and Church Relations is not the one which withdrew recognition, appropriate documentation may be secured about the prior action so that full information will be available to the department considering reinstatement.

Inactive List

When a person no longer is functioning in ministry in a recognized part of the American Baptist Churches mission and structure, the name of the individual will be placed on an inactive list in the Registry of Ministerial Leaders of the ABCUSA. The person may be restored to active recognition within a five-year period upon appropriate review by the regional Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations after determining readiness for continuing ministry and after call to a place of service.

The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations should review the inactive list annually. If at the end of the five-year period the person still is unrelated to the structure and function of American Baptist ministry, his/her name will be removed from the published inactive list.

Restoration to active recognition in this event will take place only after thorough review by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations to determine the person's qualifications for ministry in view of the prolonged period of inactivity.

Procedure For The Recognition Of Non-American Baptist Ordinations

1. The congregation, agency or organization which desires to call a person who has been previously ordained by another denomination initiates the process by communicating with the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations of ABCNJ. The person, the agency, the congregation, or organization indicates its desire to have the person's previous ordination recognized.
2. For persons ordained by and in good standing with a member Convention or Union of the Baptist World Alliance: The individual upon his/her own request, or the request of the local congregation or agency, appears before the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations. The committee undertakes the following functions at this meeting:
 - A review is made of the "letter of ministerial standing" which the individual has secured from his/her present denomination.

- Proof of completion of Baptist History and Polity Course: The committee determines the adequacy of the person's understanding of Baptist history and American Baptist polity. If inadequate, the committee shall make specific recommendations to the individual in this regard.
 - Signed Covenant and Code of Ethics: The committee also should determine whether the candidate understands and subscribes to the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Professional Church Leaders of the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., developed by the Minister's Council.
 - Candidacy Assessment: Ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing formation of pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and Christian character. Therefore, candidates for ordination or recognition of non-ABC ordination shall complete a comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored by an American Baptist related Career Development Center within five years prior to examination by the regional committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations. In cases where candidates have completed at least 3 years of full time or 5 years of part time professional experience, this requirement may be waived by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.
3. For persons not ordained by a member Convention or Union of the Baptist World Alliance:
- A review is made of the "letter of ministerial standing" which the individual has secured from his/her present denomination.
 - An ordination paper, as outlined in our Ordination Standards and Procedures, and stating their reasons for desiring to enter ABC/USA.
 - Completion of Baptist History and Polity: The committee determines the adequacy of the person's understanding of Baptist history and polity. If no polity and history course has been completed, the committee shall make specific recommendations to the individual in this regard.
 - Signed Covenant and Code of Ethics: During the discussion the candidate should state his/her reasons for entering the ministry of the American Baptist Churches and his/her intention to participate in its life. The committee also should determine whether the candidate understands and subscribes to the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Professional Church Leaders of the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., developed by the Minister's Council.
 - Ethics Course: All persons seeking ordination recognition will have completed a course in professional ethics offered either by a seminary or ABCNJ. This course will consider areas such as professional boundary issues, relationships, confidentiality, ethics in financial matters, and other related issues, which can dramatically affect the relationship between pastor and people.

- **Candidacy Assessment:** All candidates shall participate in the Candidate Assessment Program of an ABC related Center for Career Development and Ministry, with a report to be made by the Center to the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.
- Receive from any candidate who has not experienced believer's baptism a written statement of their understanding of the meaning of baptism. This statement should also indicate whether the candidate is willing to consider the importance of personally experiencing believer's baptism, and their practice as a pastor with respect to the baptism of candidates for church membership.

The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations will use its office to strongly encourage the candidate who has not been baptized by immersion to carefully consider being immersed as a symbol of:

- personal faith that Jesus is Lord.
 - identification with a Baptist congregation and the denomination's customary mode of baptism and setting an example of the believing response to the Gospel which they will be inviting others to make.
1. Candidates who are avowed practicing homosexuals will not be recognized by the Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations.
 2. If the vote of the Committee is positive, the chairperson will inform both the candidate and the congregation that their ordination has been recognized, and recommend that an appropriate service of recognition, installation or welcome be held.
 3. If the vote of the Committee is negative, the chairperson shall write a letter to both the candidate and congregation, stating the reasons.
 4. ABCNJ forwards certification of the recognition of this ordination to the denominational office which has issued the notice of good standing.
 5. The Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations provides the candidate with a letter signed by the Executive Minister stating that their previous ordination has been recognized and indicating the date of this action.
 6. Following recognition, the person will be listed in the Registry of Professional Leaders in the ABCNJ by the appropriate symbol. An asterisk will be added if the person is recognized but not immersed.

Commissioned Missionaries And Commissioned Ministers

Commissioning in the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. will be recognized in the following two categories:

Commissioning of Missionaries

In the act of commissioning of missionaries, men and women are validated for designated ministries across lines and barriers of culture, ideology, race, geography, or nation. In their service as missionaries they represent the ABC. The boards of National and International Ministries appoint missionaries on behalf of ABC. Under certain circumstances, the regional boards may desire to commission persons for missionary recognition. As a basis for denominational recognition, the definition and standards for missionary commissioning by any board should be those outlined.

Commissioned Ministers

The recognition of commissioned ministers provides validation to lay men and women who respond to the call of God to serve in ministries other than those of a commissioned missionary. Such commissioning will apply to ministries of non-ordained persons expressly performed as assignments of regions and national boards in fulfillment of aspects of their Christian witness and mission. These boards commission ministers on behalf of the ABC. As a basis for denominational recognition, the definition and standards for commissioning by any board should be those outlined.

Commissioning recognized by the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. (herein the "ABC") may be conducted by national boards and regional boards (herein "commissioning boards") according to the following standards for commissioning:

Qualities expected

1. Vital spiritual experience, a growing Christian faith, and commitment to the church's world mission;
2. Evidence of strength of character and personality
3. Experience of a call to Christian service
4. Membership in an American Baptist Church and support of the Statement of Purpose of the ABC.

Task requirements

1. The service for which the candidate is commissioned must be full-time employment in ABC-related work.
2. The candidate will be commissioned for a specific task or type of service. Commissioning ends when the task or service is terminated.
3. The candidate will be required, in the task, to be responsible for program administration and interpretation of the Christian faith.

Education requirements:

1. Formal Education
 - Graduation from a member seminary of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States or Canada, or
 - Graduation from an accredited four-year college with a bachelor's degree, plus the specified level of graduate work required to qualify for the vocational task.
2. A directed course of study in the areas of the theological disciplines is required for all candidates who do not have a recognized theological degree, applying under A-2 (above) prior to commissioning; such course is to be determined by the Commissioning Board.
3. In the case of missionary appointees, when both husband and wife are commissioned, it is recognized that either husband or wife may fulfill the task description for which the couple is recruited. In such situations, college education is the normative minimum requirement for the spouse.
4. Additional qualifications as determined by the Commissioning Board.

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