

GUIDELINES FOR THE ADMITTANCE OF CHURCHES INTO THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MICHIGAN

1. Any local church interested in admission to membership in the American Baptist Churches of Michigan shall communicate its interest in a formal letter addressed the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan. This letter should include the following information:
 - a. Reason(s) for seeking admission,
 - b. A statement that this interest comes as a result of formal action as a body or through appropriate boards, according to custom of the local church,
 - c. A pledge to fulfill the “expectations for member congregations,” should the church unite with the American Baptist Churches of Michigan.

2. ABC-MI will send an informational packet and required forms from the Executive Minister. An initial meeting will be held to discuss church membership in the Region, arranged by the Executive Minister or his/her designee. The document describing expectations for member churches and an explanation of Cooperating Members and Affiliating Members shall be shared with the church.

3. Once the Executive Minister, or his/her designate, has received the application for membership, he/she shall notify a Mentor Pastor or ABC-MI Consultant who will schedule a meeting between church leaders and a small team of nearby ABC-MI pastors and/or leaders to...
 - a. Familiarizes the applicant church with our ABC-MI mission and priorities
 - b. Ascertains the church’s commitment to fulfill the expectations for member congregations
 - c. Recommends appropriate fellowship meetings with an ABC-MI congregation to help the applicant church get to know the denomination.
 - d. Connects the pastor/s with the Commission of Ordination chair to explore ABC-MI recognition of ordination.

5. The investigating team may forward a recommendation to the Region Board to admit the applying church to our Region.

6. Upon formal approval by the Region Board of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan, the local church shall be received into full membership and an appropriate ceremony of recognition shall take place: (1) at a special service of the local congregation; (2) at an area/association meeting; and (3) at the Annual Gathering of the region.

The above guidelines are in keeping with the Region Bylaws, Article V, and Standing Rules, Article 2. (Approved October 2024)

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**CHECKLIST FOR ADMITTING A CHURCH INTO
THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MICHIGAN**

Name of Church: _____

Church Pastor: _____

Date Church began the affiliating process: _____

- ____ Letter of interest sent by the local church to the Region Executive
- ____ Meeting of the Region Executive or Designee with pastor and/or appropriate church representatives for sharing of information.
- ____ Application for membership completed by the church.
- ____ An Investigative Team is established by the Region Executive or Designee.
- ____ The Investigative Team meets with the Pastor and other church leaders.
- ____ The Investigative Team reports to the Executive Minister and makes a recommendation concerning membership to the Region Board.
- ____ The Region Board accepts the church into membership.
- ____ An appropriate recognition of membership shall take place at a service of the local congregation and at the annual gathering of the Region.

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**ADMITTANCE OF CHURCHES INTO THE
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MICHIGAN
THE ROLE OF THE INVESTIGATIVE TEAM**

When a local church seeks to affiliate with the American Baptist Churches, USA, through the American Baptist Churches of Michigan, the point of entry is through the ABC-MI Region. Upon receipt of “application for membership,” the Region Executive Minister or designee will establish an investigative team to work with the church.

The Investigative Teams role is to...

- a. Provide information about the Region and ABC-USA,
- b. Ascertain if the church is committing herself to the Expectations of Member Churches as stated in the Standing Rules,
- c. Facilitate for the church to learn more about our denomination fellowship by connecting them to an area/association,
- d. Communicate the distinctive beliefs commonly held by Baptist Churches
 - a. Sola fide
 - b. Sola scriptura
 - c. Soul competency or freedom
 - d. Believers’ baptism by immersion
 - e. Autonomy of the local church
 - f. Congregational leadership
 - g. Separation of church and state or church freedom
 - h. Associational principle
 - i. Two ordinances: baptism and communion
- e. Connecting the pastor to a Ministry Leadership Group,
- f. Connecting the pastor to the Chair of the Commission on Ordination and Standing to begin the process of ordination recognition,
- g. Arrange some fellowship activities with near-by ABC-MI churches,
- h. Encourage the church seeking admittance to participate in Regional and Area/Associational events,
- i. Report periodically to the Region Minister on their progress, and
- j. Bring a recommendation to the Region Board for admittance of the church to ABC-MI.

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EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBER CHURCHES

Membership within a fellowship of churches is an important matter. The American Baptist Churches of Michigan diligently seeks to serve its churches by helping them fulfill the mission of the Kingdom of God. For churches to be faithful in this relationship the following expectations have been enumerated:

1. Share in and support the life, vision, and goals of ABC-MI.
2. Communicate to their constituency the vision and values of ABC-MI.
3. Contribute to the financial support of ABC-MI at a responsible level (defined as at least 2% of the Operational Budget each year). Additional financial support to ABC-MI can also happen with giving through any of these means: A dedicated, ongoing and/or periodic giving to ABC-MI, ABC-USA's United Mission Budget and offerings, and Specific Ministry Giving directed to ABC-MI. If aligned with more than one denomination, a proportionate share of the congregation's mission funds shall be given to these groups.
4. Consult with ABC-MI staff personnel in pastoral search process.
5. Communicate with ABC-MI regarding the mission and ministry of the Church through annual reports requested by ABC-MI.
6. Encourage pastoral leaders to attend a Ministry Leadership Group.

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AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MICHIGAN MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

The American Baptist Churches of Michigan is a fellowship of churches. The leadership serving these churches is committed to furthering the advancement of the kingdom of God through renewing churches and establishing new churches.

The American Baptist Churches USA is a conglomeration of Regions. They provide several organizations to serve the churches and pastors. These include:

1. Office of the Secretary General
2. International Ministries – sending missionaries around the globe
3. Home Mission Society – serving the United States and Puerto Rico
4. Ministers and Mission Board – serving pastors’ needs and retirement
5. And others...

ABC-USA ministry is more widespread and theologically diverse.

Some churches prefer to focus solely on participating in the mission of our Region, while other churches choose to embrace the larger fellowship. Two types of churches are welcomed into our Region’s fellowship:

1. Cooperating Churches: a member of ABC-USA and ABC-MI
2. Affiliated Churches: a member of ABC-MI, but not ABC-USA

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