

**PROCEDURES FOR
LICENSING
ORDINATION
PRIVILEGE OF CALL
RECOGNITION OF NON-ABC ORDINATION
AND MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE
IN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MICHIGAN
COMMISSION ON ORDINATION AND STANDING
OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES TEAM**



American Baptist
CHURCHES *of* MICHIGAN

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, ordination in Baptist churches has been recognized as a function of the local church. This document is based on an affirmation of this historic Baptist principle. However, because those who are ordained by a local church may, during the course of their ministerial career, serve a number and variety of churches, there is a need to apply common standards for the ordination of all persons whose call to the ministry has been affirmed by an individual congregation.

This document contains the standards which are applied by the American Baptist Churches of Michigan.

A local church, when seeking to license or ordain a member to the ministry, should begin by reviewing Appendix II with the candidate. Specific questions or concerns may be addressed to the chair of the Commission on Ordination and Standing.

A candidate for licensing or ordination should become familiar with the standards that will be applied to her/his candidacy, should they seek to have their ordination recognized by the American Baptist Churches of Michigan. Recognition by the American Baptist Churches of Michigan automatically confers recognition and standing within the American Baptist Churches in the USA. Questions concerning interpretation and/or application of standards may be directed to the chair of the Commission on Ordination and Standing.

The names, addresses, and phone numbers of the chairs of the Leadership Ministries Team and the Commission on Ordination and Standing may be gained through the Region office of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan. All candidates should be aware that the Commission on Ordination and Standing meets only three times annually: in January, May, and September.

**The American Baptist Churches of Michigan
Commission on Ordination and Standing**

STANDING RULES

I. Commission on Ordination and Standing

A. Membership

1. The Commission shall consist of nine members.
2. The Commission shall nominate its members for confirmation by the Leadership Ministries Team. Members of the Leadership Ministries Team may recommend nominations to the Commission.
3. Commission members shall serve for a term of three years, and a member's term may be renewed three times to serve a maximum of twelve years.
4. When nominating its members, the Commission shall consider issues of ethnicity, gender, geography, lay/clergy status, and theological perspective.
5. The Commission shall be responsible for electing its officers.
6. The Region Executive Minister, or his/her representative, shall serve ex-officio.
7. The President of the Region Ministers Council shall serve ex-officio.

B. Responsibilities

This Commission shall:

1. Interpret the requirements and procedures for the granting of local church licenses to preach (license to do ministry in the local church), and preordination licenses (cf. Appendix II).
2. Maintain a registry of those who have been granted preordination licenses.
3. Interpret the requirements and procedures for ordination, recognition of ordination, ministerial standing, and privilege of call.
4. Maintain a registry of professional church leaders in Michigan, using the system of symbols adopted by the *Directory of the American Baptist Churches in the USA*.

5. Receive from and review with each candidate for ordination, documents stipulated by the Leadership Ministries Team and approved by the Region Board in Appendix II, and inform the Leadership Ministries Team regarding the candidate's ordination process.
6. Interview persons whose standing as a professional church leader is in another denomination or church who desire privilege of call under the rules established for the granting of privilege of call (Appendix V).
7. Interview persons who are members of ABCUSA churches and who are already ordained by a non-ABCUSA denomination or church, who desire recognition of ordination under rules established for the granting of recognition of ordination (Appendix VI).
8. Conduct, where indicated, an inquiry into any case where discipline may possibly require the temporary or permanent withdrawal of ministerial standing by the American Baptist Churches of Michigan, under the rules established for the conduct of such inquiry (Appendix IV).
9. Issue Certified Lay Pastor certificates in accord with the requirements of Appendix VII.
10. Recognize the ordination of pastors in dually aligned churches in accord with the requirements of Appendix VIII.

APPENDIX I

DEFINITIONS

- I. Privilege of call** is granted by the Commission on Ordination and Standing and entitles a person to seek a position of professional church leadership within the ABCUSA. Such privilege of call may be granted to:
- A. A person holding a preordination license who, in the judgment of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, has met the standards and whose ordination is contingent upon the opportunity of a place to minister (cf. Appendix II, III A. 4).
 - B. A person ordained by another denomination who desires to affiliate with the ABCUSA and who, in the judgment of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, meets the standards for ordination in the ABCUSA. Such persons shall complete any requirements regarding American Baptist polity and practice as stipulated by the Commission on Ordination and Standing; and shall, prior to or upon accepting such a position of ministry, unite in membership with an ABCUSA church.
- II. Standing** is the accreditation a person has been granted within the professional church leadership of the ABCUSA. In the American Baptist Churches of Michigan, the Commission on Ordination and Standing is the accrediting agency. A person's standing may be designated as:
- A. **Ordained:** entitled to all the rights and privileges of the professional ministry within the ABCUSA, having satisfied the standards established for ordination. (In some documents, this may be referred to as "being in full standing.")
 - B. **Licensed:** entitled to function within the ministry of the ABCUSA with appropriate rights and privileges, having met the prerequisites for a pre-ordination license or a local church license as stipulated in the Standing Rules of the Commission on Ordination and Standing.
 - C. **Privilege of Call:** entitled to seek a position within the ministries of the ABCUSA in which to serve.
- III. Recognition of ordination** is the process by which a person who is a member of an ABCUSA church, and already ordained by a non-ABCUSA church may request standing as "ordained" within the professional ministry of the ABCUSA. It is the responsibility of the Commission on Ordination and Standing within the Leadership Ministries Team to stipulate such conditions as may be required for such person(s) to meet the standards of ordination within the ABCUSA.
- IV. Area** in this document refers to Area or Association.

APPENDIX II

LICENSING AND ORDINATION

I. Local Church License to Preach

- A. A person seeking to be granted a license to preach by a local church shall:
 - 1. Be a person who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
 - 2. Be a person of good reputation in the community, emotionally stable, a proven leader in his/her church, and have the ability to communicate the Word of God.
 - 3. Be an active member in good standing of an American Baptist church in Michigan.
- B. A local church license to preach shall be valid only in the church granting the license.
- C. The license shall be validated annually by the church.
- D. The Commission on Ordination and Standing (hereinafter "Commission") shall be notified in order that such licensing may be properly recorded in the Registry of Professional Church Leaders of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan (hereinafter "ABC-MI").

II. Pre-Ordination License

- A. A person planning to become an ordained minister shall first secure a pre-ordination license from the church of which he/she is a member. To obtain such a license, the candidate shall:
 - 1. Be a person who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
 - 2. Be a stable person of good reputation.
 - 3. Be preparing for the Christian ministry as a professional vocation.
- B. The candidate's church shall counsel with the candidate regarding Christian ministry and shall provide an opportunity for the candidate to preach and/or conduct public worship. After favorable action by the church, suitable preordination license shall be presented to the candidate.
- C. The license shall be validated annually by the church.

- D. The Commission shall be notified in order that such licensing may be properly recorded in the Registry of Professional Church Leaders of ABC-MI. Such a candidate for the ministry shall contact the Commission so that supportive communication may be established in initiating a watch care program.

III. Ordination

- A. Ordination is the recognition by the church of one called by God into the Christian ministry as a professional vocation. Among American Baptist Churches, the service of ordination is conducted by a local church following consultation with other congregations of like faith and order. The evidences of such a call are:
 - 1. A commitment of life to Christian discipleship.
 - 2. An inner conviction which the one called identifies as from God.
 - 3. An endowment of such abilities as are requisite for a Christian minister.
 - 4. An opportunity to assume a position of professional church leadership consistent with the character of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- B. A person seeking to be ordained shall present evidence of the following:
 - 1. A call to the vocation of a professional Christian minister.
 - 2. A dedication to the cause of Christ.
 - 3. A character of moral integrity and responsibility.
 - 4. A sufficient grasp of theology and polity to be entrusted with a position of pastoral oversight.
 - 5. A sufficient preparation for adequate performance of requisite ministerial functions.
- C. Such evidence shall be gathered, presented and transmitted as outlined below. The candidate will be provided with copies of any recommendations made by the Commission.
 - 1. At least three (3) weeks before the interview the candidate shall present to the Commission in documentary form:
 - a. Evidence that instruction at the seminary level has been completed satisfactorily. It is required that the following areas of study be covered:

Bible, Preaching, Theology, Church History, Educational Ministries, Church Administration, Pastoral Care.

- b. The candidate must have a sufficient understanding of Baptist history and American Baptist polity and practice in order to function effectively within the denomination by completing one of the following: 1) a seminary level course (preferred), 2) the course as offered by the Region Ministerial Institute (or its current entity), or 3) a Commission approved alternative.
- c. Evidence that the candidate holds (or will hold by the anticipated date of the ordination council) a Master of Divinity or equivalent degree from a theological seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).^{*} If such degree cannot be presented, the Commission shall ascertain if the candidate qualifies under standards for “equivalence” as outlined in Appendix III of the Standing Rules of the Commission.

^{*}A candidate pursuing or possessing a Master of Divinity (or equivalent) degree from a seminary *not* accredited by the ATS may apply to the Commission for consideration of such a degree as equivalent to one granted by an ATS accredited seminary.

- d. A current preordination license certifying the church's concurrence in the candidate's undertaking to prepare for and to exercise a vocation of professional ministry.
- e. Satisfactory completion of at least one year of supervised field education and/or internship or a satisfactory equivalent.
- f. Vocational and/or psychological assessment relative to the candidate's aptitude for ministry, through the Midwest Ministry Development Service, the candidate's seminary, or some other recognized professional in the field.
- g. Authorization for the Commission to do a criminal background check at the expense of the candidate.
- h. An opportunity to assume a position of professional church leadership consistent with the character of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- i. The action of the local church, proposing to be the ordaining church, requesting certification on behalf of the candidate.
- j. A cooperative attitude toward the ABCUSA and subscription to the Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the ABCUSA.

- k. A copy of the ordination paper which the candidate proposes to present to the ordination council. The paper shall not exceed 3,000 words in length. Lines of type on each page shall be consecutively numbered in the left margin. The paper shall include the candidate's:
 - 1) Christian commitment and growth
 - 2) Call to the ministry
 - 3) Academic and field preparation
 - 4) Reasons for seeking ordination within the ABCUSA
 - 5) General comprehension of Christian theology and practice of ministry, outlining the candidate's own views on the central matters of faith and practice of ministry, as he/she understands them.
- D. The candidate will meet with the Commission at a time and place designated by the Commission chair, to review the documents which he/she has submitted, and to be interviewed concerning the same.
- E. The Commission shall determine the candidate's general readiness for ministry.
- F. The Commission shall provide in written form to the candidate, the ordaining church, the Area, and the Leadership Ministries Team, its recommendation. If that recommendation is to proceed with ordination, the ordaining church and the appropriate officers of the Area, including the Executive Minister or his/her appointee, shall:
 1. Work with the candidate to insure his/her readiness for examination by an ordination council;
 2. Work together to ensure that an ordination council is duly constituted for examination of the candidate, and in the subsequent act of ordination all is done regularly and in order.
- G. The ordaining church, having the recommendation of the Commission, shall request in writing that an ordination council convene.
- H. Subsequent to the examination of the candidate, the ordination council shall provide to:
 1. The ordaining church
 2. The candidate

3. The clerk of the Area
4. The Commission Chair
5. The Executive Minister of ABC-MI

A written record of its action and recommendation relative to the candidate's readiness for ordination. Upon receiving the recommendation to proceed, the ordaining church and the candidate shall arrange a Service of Ordination.

- I. After the service of ordination, the ordaining church shall:
 1. Provide the candidate with an ordination certificate (available from Judson Press).
 2. Notify the Executive Minister of ABC-MI that the candidate has been ordained.
- J. In the event that the Commission recommends that the local church not proceed to call an ordination council, the church may, appeal that decision to the Leadership Ministries Team through its chair.

IV. Ordination Council

- A. Calling of the Council
 1. An ordination council shall be called on a date set by the local church in consultation with the Executive Minister or his/her appointee.
 2. Written notification of the council shall be sent at least thirty days in advance of the council meeting to:
 - a. The clerk and/or pastor of every American Baptist Church in the Area.
 - b. Ex officio delegates as specified in subsection 6 below.
 3. The notice shall state the place, time and date and purpose of the council. A copy of the candidate's ordination paper shall be included with the notice sent to each church clerk and/or pastor.
 4. In exceptional cases and upon the request of the church calling the council, the requirement of the thirty-day notice may be waived by the chair of the Commission, but in no case, shall the notice be less than fourteen days.

5. The delegates shall include:
 - a. The pastor and two other delegates from each invited church.
 - b. Other ordained persons who are members of area churches and who have standing in ABC-MI.
6. Ex officio delegates who shall be invited shall be the:
 - a. Area chair
 - b. Area clerk
 - c. Commission Chair
 - d. Executive Minister of ABC-MI.

In the event that the Commission chair, and/or the Executive Minister cannot attend, he/she may designate an appointed representative to attend in his/her stead.

B. Organization of the Council

1. The Executive Minister or his/her appointed representative shall convene the council at the stipulated time and place. If a region staff representative is not present, the pastor of the ordaining church or his/her designee shall convene the council.
2. The roll of churches shall be called. The names of other region churches represented shall be noted.
3. Non-delegates may be seated, and may at the discretion of the council, participate with voice but without vote.
4.
 - a. A quorum shall consist of representatives from at least six (6) Area/Association churches. If representatives from at least six are not present, representatives from other region churches (outside the area/association) may be seated and included in the quorum count if the established council agrees.
 - b. If a “good faith effort” has been made to gain a quorum of six churches (by following the document “Establishing an Ordination Council”), and a quorum cannot be established, the council may proceed, noting however, that a quorum was not present.
5. When a council has been established, the moderator and secretary of the meeting shall be elected from among the delegates.

6. The recommended agenda for the council shall be:
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Statement by the clerk or pastor of the church calling the council concerning:
 - 1) the granting of the candidate's preordination license;
 - 2) the vote of the church requesting the calling of the council;
 - 3) any pertinent information relative to the candidate's professional experience.
 - c. Statement of the recommendation of the Commission on Ordination and Standing of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan.
 - d. Introduction of the candidate who shall present a paper, copies of which shall have been mailed to the Area Churches. The paper shall follow the outline stipulated in Section III, C, 1, j. of this appendix.
 - e. Examination of the candidate.
7. The task of the Council is to determine the candidate's fitness for ordination. The council moderator shall have the responsibility to ensure that the council confines itself to ascertaining the facts concerning the candidate's experience, ability, attitudes and viewpoints. The moderator shall have the right to declare out of order, any questions or comments which are not relevant to this task.
8. When the examination of the candidate has been completed, the council may dismiss the candidate and all non-delegates from the room and then convene in executive session.

C. Actions of the Council

1. The council may recommend that the church:
 - a. Proceed to ordain the candidate;
 - b. Postpone action pending clarification of some stipulated contingency;
 - c. Not ordain the candidate.
2. Suitable opportunity for discussion should be allowed.

3. The vote should be taken by roll call, with each delegate casting his/her vote, and briefly stating the reason if he/she chooses.
4. The candidate shall be informed of the vote of the council.
5. The minutes of the council shall be read and approved.
6. Unless the council must adjourn to another date for the continuance of the business under consideration, the final action is to dissolve the council.

D. Records of the Council

1. The clerk shall have the minutes sufficiently in order by the conclusion of the council that they may be read and accepted, subject to the addition of a motion to adjourn and dissolve the council.
2. The clerk shall put the records in order and submit copies to:
 - a. The ordaining church;
 - b. The candidate;
 - c. The area clerk;
 - d. The Commission chair;
 - e. The Executive Minister of the ABC-MI.

V. Appeal Procedures

- A. In the event of a vote by an ordination council that a church should 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 the calling of a new ordination council to examine the candidate.
 2. The church, if it considers the decision of the ordination council to have been arbitrary and unfair, may appeal to the Commission for a hearing.
- B. The Commission, upon such an appeal, shall arrange for a meeting of its members, to which shall be invited the following:
 1. The Moderator and Clerk of the council in question;

2. The candidate;
 3. The delegates to the council in question from the candidate's church;
 4. The Executive Minister of ABC-MI.
- C. The Commission, augmented as provided for above, shall:
1. Be convened and presided over by the chair of the Commission;
 2. Review the records of the ordination council;
 3. Receive reports relative to the action of the council;
 4. Decide whether the evidence warrants the calling of a Council of Review.

VI. Council of Review

- A. A Council of Review shall be composed of the following with the power to vote:
1. The pastor and two lay delegates from each church in the Area;
 2. Other ordained persons from the Area who are in full standing in ABC-MI;
 3. Members of the Commission on Ordination and Standing of the ABC-MI;
 4. The Executive Minister of ABC-MI.
- B. The Council of Review shall be called and organized to examine the candidate in the manner customary for ordination councils.
- C. The Council of Review may recommend that the church:
1. Proceed to ordain the candidate;
 2. Postpone action pending clarification of some stipulated contingency;
 3. Should not ordain the candidate.
- D. When the decision of a Council of Review is favorable, a suitable Service of Ordination shall be held, preferably not sooner than two weeks after the date of the Council of Review.
- E. Should a church ordain a candidate contrary to the recommendation of the Council, the ordained shall be without standing in ABC-MI.

- F. The minutes of the Council of Review shall be furnished to:
 - 1. The Commission, which shall make it a part of its permanent records;
 - 2. The church of the candidate;
 - 3. The candidate;
 - 4. The Region office.

VII. The Service of Ordination

- A. The date of the ordination service shall be set only after the ordination council has recommended that an ordination take place.
- B. The office of the Executive Minister of ABC-MI may be consulted for sample orders of service and vows.

APPENDIX III

GUIDELINES ON EQUIVALENCY

I. Introduction

The most important prerequisite for ordination is experiencing the call of God. A denomination only establishes such standards as it deems desirable to equip a person for professional leadership. The customary expectation is that a candidate for ordination will possess four years of college plus three years of seminary from accredited institutions as the minimum educational background for professional church leadership. The following is intended to offer an orderly process by which certain individuals may apply for ordination or the full recognition of their ordination by virtue of experiential and educational equivalencies to the normal educational standard.

II. Experiential and Educational Equivalencies

- A. The educational prerequisite for the full recognition of candidates for ordination within the American Baptist Churches is reaffirmed to be four years of post high school education from a recognized college or university, and three years of seminary education from an ATS accredited institution (the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees or their equivalents). Such study must (or shall) have been done for credit while enrolled in a degree program.
- B. "Equivalency" means experience or education which the Commission accepts pursuant to the following provisions:
 1. Experience as an equivalent to educational preparation is granted on the basis of three years of satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance for every year of academic preparation that is lacking in the candidate's background, seven years of higher education being the norm. The maximum experiential equivalency which may be granted is six (6) years, the equivalent to two years of higher education.
 2. Education as an equivalent may be granted for seminary education from non ATS accredited seminaries or for relevant non- seminary education. The maximum educational equivalency is two (2) years.
 3. The maximum combined experiential and educational equivalency is two (2) years.
 4. To merit consideration as an exception to the educational prerequisite the candidate's professional experience must meet the following criteria:
 - a. It must have been within the broad range of professional leadership categories recognized by the American Baptist Registry of Professional Leadership.

- b. It must have been full time experience (20 hours per week or more).
 - c. It must be verified as to length and satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance by the Commission on Ordination and Standing. "Satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance" is understood to include:
 - 1) satisfactory learning through the work experience.
 - 2) satisfactory growth in self-understanding and in understanding the nature and work of ministry.
 - 3) satisfactory competence in interpreting the Christian gospel.
 - 4) satisfactory competence in understanding the forces shaping Church and society.
 - 5) satisfactory competence in leading the Church community.
 - d. Evidence concerning the individual's periodic involvement in professional continuing education experiences is required. The number and extent of such experiences will be weighed by the commission and utilized as one index of the candidate's seriousness in his/her pursuit of professional competency.
 - e. The candidate's professional ethics and cooperative intention must be affirmed.
5. To merit consideration as an exception to the educational prerequisite the candidate's education must meet the following criteria:
- a. Must generally follow the MDiv course work required from a typical ATS accredited seminary.
 - b. For an MDiv completed mostly online, the candidate must submit letters of recommendation from two professors or seminary administrators who have some educational experience with the candidate.

III. Procedures

A. Equivalency as a basis for ordination.

1. The candidate seeking to be ordained on the basis of experiential or educational equivalency shall request an application form from the chair of the Commission.

2. The candidate shall complete the application and return it to the chair of the Commission.
 3. The Commission shall meet with the applicant and review with him/her to evaluate the application.
 4. The Commission will either determine that all criteria have been met or that additional educational or experiential work needs to be done. If all criteria have been met, the Commission will recommend the church to proceed with the ordination.
- B. Equivalency as a basis for recognition of ordination or privilege of call
1. The candidate seeking to have his/her ordination recognized on the basis of experiential or educational equivalency shall request an application form from the chair of the Commission.
 2. The candidate shall complete the application and return it to the chair of the Commission.
 3. The Commission shall consider the application on the basis of the criteria listed above.
 4. The Commission will either determine that all of the criteria have been met or that additional educational or experiential work needs to be done. If all criteria have been met, the Commission will inform the Executive Minister that they have fully recognized the ordination of the candidate.

APPENDIX IV

MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE

PREAMBLE: In the context of the ongoing care for the churches and their professional church leaders, there are occasions in which allegations may be raised about a professional church leader. Frequently, these allegations are handled within the ongoing service and care of the Region. In those rare instances in which a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, it may be necessary to have a more formal process of review of recognition of ordination with professional church leaders. This review must be seen as part of an ongoing process of care in which a concern for justice, reconciliation, and healing, for both the congregation and the individual(s), is a primary goal of the process.

One of the reasons for which a Region exists is to strengthen the spiritual health and vitality of its constituent churches and their professional leadership. Personal, professional, and pastoral care for professional church leaders is an ongoing process. One aspect of that process is the whole area of recognition of ordination, by which the whole denominational family gives affirmation and support to clergy.

The Leadership Ministries Team oversees the recognition of ordination and the church's review of ordination (Standing Rules Section 1 C). This process is guided by the biblical mandate of Matthew 18:15-17. The goals are, first of all, to deal directly with the person (verse 15), then with a small, more informal group (verse 16), and only when the process has failed to bring resolution to move before the church, represented by a Hearing Council (verse 17).

I. WRITTEN ALLEGATIONS

- A. When allegations about a professional church leader have not been resolved in the ongoing process of service and care through the Region, formal allegations may be addressed to the chair of the Leadership Ministries Team. Allegations do not include issues of compatibility between a professional church leader and congregation. They must be related to one or more of the following categories:
1. Delinquency of a moral, ethical, or financial nature which brings the church into disrepute.
 2. Violation of the expectation the church has for ethical behavior as articulated in the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Professional Church Leadership of the American Baptist Church, USA.
 3. Notice from Region staff that a professional church leader has accepted a call from, or continues to serve, a church which has withdrawn from the American Baptist Churches, USA.

- B. Allegations must be made in writing, specific in content, and signed by two or more persons. Written allegations may come from Region staff, other professional church leaders or from laypersons.
- C. If written allegations are made against a professional church leader who is a member of the Region staff, the Leadership Ministries Team, or the Commission on Ordination and Standing, that person shall be required to relinquish their leadership role as it relates to the procedures described in this document (Appendix IV), until such time as the process is complete.

II. NOTIFICATION AND PASTORAL INTERVENTION

- A. The chair of the Leadership Ministries Team shall inform the following persons in writing of the allegation(s):
 - 1. The person about whom the allegation(s) is addressed (a letter is to be sent by certified mail, the return receipt kept in the chair's file).
 - 2. The Executive Minister of the Region.
 - 3. The chair of the Commission on Ordination and Standing.
 - 4. The President of the Region Ministers Council.
- B. The chair of the Leadership Ministries Team shall request a meeting with the above listed parties for a preliminary exploration of the allegations(s). If the person against whom the allegation(s) has been made does not appear, the process may proceed. At this point in the proceedings, the allegation(s) shall be kept confidential to the parties listed above.
- C. Effort shall be made to resolve the issue(s) and to provide pastoral care for the professional church leader in question, his or her family, if any, and the congregation being served. Resolution of the issue(s) at this stage may include one or more of the following decisions:
 - 1. Dismiss the matter because the allegation(s) is unfounded or does not meet the requirements as noted in section I (Written Allegations).
 - 2. Develop a plan for addressing the issue(s) short of requesting the one against whom allegations have been made to voluntarily relinquish recognition of ordination.
 - 3. Request that the one against whom allegations have been made voluntarily relinquish recognition of ordination.

A restoration plan may be developed. The plan will be presented to the Commission on Ordination and Standing for their approval, and only when the approved restoration requirements have been completed will the Commission consider restoration of recognition of ordination.

If the person against whom the allegations have been made agrees to voluntarily relinquish recognition of ordination:

- a. The chair of the Commission on Ordination and Standing shall inform the Commission of this and any requirements for restoration.
- b. The Region Executive Minister shall notify, in writing:
 - The appropriate denominational agencies (including the ABPS and all Region Executive Ministers);
 - The Region Commission on Ordination and Standing;
 - The Region Ministers Council;
 - The original ordaining church (if known);
 - The church being served or in which membership is held;
 - Those who made the written allegations.

If resolution cannot be gained, the following procedures shall be initiated:

III. PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

- A. The Commission on Ordination and Standing shall explore the allegation(s) by discussion and/or correspondence and/or personal interviews with all parties involved. If the person against whom the allegation(s) has been made fails to respond, the Committee may proceed.
- B. The Commission shall preserve full and complete records of its exploration, including audio or video tape recordings of interviews in cases where permission to tape has been granted by the person being interviewed.
- C. All information gathered in the investigative process will be held in confidence and will be shared only with those persons as necessary to evaluate the charges and to conduct any subsequent hearing.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

- A. Upon conclusion of its exploration, having determined the facts as best they can, the Commission on Ordination and Standing may recommend by majority vote, in writing, to the Leadership Ministries Team any of the following courses of action:
 1. The Commission may discover that the allegation(s) is unsubstantiated and may

exonerate the person with no need for a hearing.

2. The person may acknowledge the truth of the allegation(s), in full or in part, and work with the Commission on Ordination and Standing in deciding which of the actions listed under Section V. H. below may be followed.
 3. The person may dispute the allegation(s), in full or in part, and yet work out with the Commission on Ordination and Standing a plan to deal with the situation without utilizing the full process of a hearing.
 4. The Commission on Ordination and Standing may, in the event of an unusually grave or emergency situation, recommend the temporary suspension of recognition of ordination for a period of not more than ninety (90) days. During this period of temporary suspension, the Leadership Ministries Team shall create a Hearing Council to consider the matter fully. Full notice of this decision shall be given in writing to the person in question and to the appropriate Region and denominational bodies.
 5. The person may dispute the allegation(s), in full or in part, and request a hearing as outlined below.
- B. A copy of the Commission's recommendation shall be sent to the following:
1. The professional church leader about whom the allegation(s) has been made and investigated (a letter shall be sent by certified mail, the receipt kept in the Leadership Ministry Team chair's file).
 2. Those persons who made the allegation(s).
 3. The Executive Minister.
 4. The Leadership Ministries Team chair.
 5. The President of the Region Ministers Council.

V. HEARING

- A. **Hearing Council:** If, after hearing the recommendation of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, the Leadership Ministries Team decides by majority vote that a hearing is indicated, the Leadership Ministries Team chair shall call for a hearing council. The Council's composition shall include one member from:
1. The Administrative Ministries Team
 2. The Congregational Ministries and Missions Team

3. The Leadership Ministries Team

4. The Family Ministries Team

5. The Ministers Council

Once the members have been selected by the above-designated groups, the chair of the Leadership Ministries Team shall appoint a chair for the Hearing Council from the Council's membership. The Region Executive Minister or his/her representative shall be considered an ex officio member of the Council (with vote).

- B. **Date:** If, after hearing the recommendation of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, the Leadership Ministries Team decides by majority vote that a hearing is indicated, the Leadership Ministries Team chair in consultation with the chair of the Hearing Council shall set a date for a hearing not less than thirty (30) days nor more than ninety (90) days after such decision is made.
- C. **Notification:** When a hearing is scheduled, all parties involved are to be notified and informed about the process and how to prepare for it. The Council chair shall send written notice by certified mail, not more than seven (7) days after the Leadership Ministries Team decides that a hearing is to be held. Return receipts shall be preserved in the file.
- D. **Notification Details:** Notice of a hearing to any professional church leader whose ministerial standing may be affected through the hearing, shall include:
1. A written copy of the allegation(s).
 2. A copy of this appendix.
 3. Notice that the professional church leader has the right to be present at the hearing.
 4. Notice that the professional church leader has the right to invite an advocate to the hearing (either lay or ordained), or legal counsel, or both. If an attorney is present, the attorney should be informed that this is a church matter, and is not a civil or criminal proceeding.
 5. Notice that the professional church leader has the right to invite witnesses, including character witnesses, to be present at and to testify at the hearing.
 6. Notice that the professional church leader may submit to the Council prior to the hearing and at the hearing, written documentation and other materials relevant to the issue at hand.

E. Council Chair's Duties and Responsibilities:

1. The Council chair shall preside at the hearing, and may establish additional rules of procedure which help to facilitate an orderly and timely process, so long as they are not in conflict with procedures listed in this document.
2. The Council chair shall cause to be made, a stenographic and/or audio or video tape recording of the hearing.
3. The Council chair may appoint members of the Council to attend to specific duties related to the just and orderly handling of the hearing and related proceedings.
4. The Council chair may permit cross-examination of witnesses, or examination of witnesses by one or more members of the Council, or both.
5. The Council chair shall have the right to require departure from the hearing, any person or persons who become disruptive, unruly or abusive, or who may, in the opinion of the chair, violate the confidentiality of these proceedings.
6. The Council chair may recess the hearing from time to time as circumstances may in his/her judgment warrant.
7. The Council chair may, with the concurrence of the Executive Minister, retain legal counsel to advise and assist the Council in its conduct of the hearing and related matters.
8. The Council chair shall take whatever steps may be necessary to assure a fair, impartial and confidential hearing for the person in question, the persons making the allegation(s), and the wider church family. No disclosure to the public or the church at large shall be made until the hearing process has been completed.

F. Hearing Format: The hearing format shall include:

1. Introductions.
2. Statement of rules and procedures which will guide the hearing.
3. Prayer.
4. Reading of the allegation(s).
5. Presentation of information by the chair or a designated member of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, summarizing the fact-finding process to

date, as designated and recognized by the Council chair.

6. Presentation of information or testimony by those responsible for the allegation(s) and/or other witnesses who wish to affirm the allegation(s), as designated and recognized by the Council chair.
7. Presentation of information or testimony by the professional church leader whose ministerial standing is involved, his or her advocate, and/or legal counsel. If the person against whom the allegation(s) has been made does not appear, the process may continue.
8. Presentation of information or testimony by additional witnesses who wish to refute the allegation(s), as designated and recognized by the Council chair.
9. Presentation of information or testimony by other responsible parties as the chair may recognize.
10. Submission of additional documents and other relevant materials by the responsible parties who wish to submit the same, in an order to be determined by the Council chair.
11. Questions by the Council to any offering of information, testimony, refutation, or response, as recognized by the chair.
12. Closing statement by the chair and/or member of the Commission on Ordination and Standing totaling not more than ten minutes in length.
13. Closing statement by those making the allegation(s), as designated and recognized by the chair, totaling not more than ten minutes in length.
14. Closing statement by the professional church leader whose ministerial standing is involved, his/her advocate, and/or legal counsel, totaling not more than ten minutes in length.
15. Prayer.
16. Executive session of the Council.

G. Deliberation Toward a Decision:

1. Following the close of the hearing, the Council shall deliberate its decision in executive session. The only record of such deliberations which shall be preserved, shall be the written decision. Confidentiality of discussions shall be maintained.
2. The Council shall arrive at a decision by a two-thirds majority vote.

3. The Council chair shall assign to a member of the Council, the responsibility for drafting the formal announcement of decision, and shall have the final responsibility to assure that the formal announcement fully and fairly represents the majority view of the Council.
4. The Council shall come to a decision within fifteen (15) days of the close of the hearing. No action which adversely affects the ministerial standing of any professional church leader may be taken without a two-thirds majority vote of the Council.

H. The Decision: The Council shall make its decision from the following options:

1. Dismiss the matter and exonerate the person because the allegation(s) is unfounded.
2. Confirm and/or restore the ministerial standing of the professional church leader in questions.
3. Develop a plan for addressing the issue(s) short of censure, suspension of recognition of ordination or withdrawal of recognition of ordination.
4. Censure the person, but allow recognition of ordination to stand.
5. Allow the person to voluntarily relinquish recognition of ordination.
6. Suspend the recognition of ordination for a specified period of time or until specified conditions are met.
7. Permanently withdraw recognition of ordination.

I. Notification of Decision:

1. The Council shall notify all parties in writing of the decision by certified mail within fifteen (15) days after the decision has been made. Return receipts shall be preserved for the file.
 - a. **Exoneration:** In the event a person is exonerated, that person shall receive a letter acknowledging this action, a copy of which shall be sent to those making the allegation(s), and to other interested parties as may be necessary.
 - b. **Suspension or withdrawal of recognition of ordination:** In the event of suspension or withdrawal of recognition of ordination, The American Baptist Personnel Services, the Region Executive Ministers Council, The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, The Ministers Council (Region and National), the original ordaining church, the church being served or in which membership is held, and any other bodies which have relied on American

Baptist recognition for endorsement, approval, or recognition shall be notified.

VI. APPEAL

A. If any of the parties involved in a hearing consider the decision of the Council to have been arbitrary or unjust, they may appeal the decision to the Executive Committee of the Region Board within ninety (90) days after the announcement of the decision. Section V of Appendix IV shall serve as an outline for the appeal process, with the Region Board president and the Executive Committee serving in place of the Council chair and Hearing Council members.

B. The decision of the Executive Committee of the Region Board shall be final.

VII. Pastoral Follow-up: There is a need for pastoral care throughout the process, but particularly following a hearing. Once the hearing is complete, decisions made and actions taken, there needs to be intentional effort made at reconciliation and healing. The church needs to offer ongoing support and concern to those who made the allegation(s) or who were wronged, and find ways to express forgiveness and grace to those who have been accused or disciplined.

VIII. Reinstatement: A person's ordination may be subsequently recognized again, if there is a desire to be reinstated. Application for reinstatement may be made in writing to the chair of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, ABC-MI, not less than one (1) year following permanent withdrawal of recognition. Upon receiving the application, the chair of the Commission shall instruct the Commission on Ordination and Standing to meet with the person to review the original action, subsequent history, and present qualifications for ministry. In the event that the Commission is not the one which withdrew recognition, appropriate documentation will be secured about the prior action so that full information will be available to the Commission. The decision of the Commission on Ordination and Standing shall be considered final.

DEFINITIONS

Recognition of Ordination: In our tradition, ordination is by the local congregation, working with the partner churches. The denomination does not ordain; it recognizes (or chooses not to recognize) ordinations of a local church or in other denominations. A person may voluntarily give up the recognition of his or her ordination. The denomination may choose to withdraw recognition of ordination either for cause or after a period of inactivity.

Suspension of Recognition: The recognition of ordination may be suspended for a specific period of time in order to implement a program prescribed by the Leadership Ministries Team, or in the event of an unusually grave or emergency situation. The conditions of the suspension must be clearly stated. Suspension is intended to interrupt the pastoral selection process while severe allegations are being explored or while a prescribed program is being implemented. Notice of a suspension will be given to the American Baptist Personnel Service, the Region Executive Ministers Council and region staff working with search processes.

The Region: The process of recognition of ordination in the denomination is decentralized; a Region acts on behalf of the whole denomination in recognizing, failing to recognize, allowing a recognition to lapse, or withdrawing of recognition of ordination. There is reciprocity among ABC bodies, with all Regions and National Boards agreeing to accept the process applied in other, partner Regions.

Hearing: The process by which allegations against an individual are reviewed and a decision is rendered either for or against the individual. This is not a criminal or civil process, but is rather a church process by which the churches are seeking to order their life together under the leading of God's spirit.

IMPLICATIONS

There are different kinds of implications of a decision by the Hearing Council to suspend or withdraw the recognition of a person's ordination. It will mean:

- that a person's name will be deleted from the Directory of Professional Church Leaders of the ABCUSA.
- That the American Baptist Personnel Services will seek to deactivate any use of a person's profile, and
- that all ABC Regions will be notified of the action.

Depending on the requirements of other bodies, this decision may directly affect an endorsement, approval, or recognition which was predicated on ABC action; in some instances, this may mean termination of employment. Depending on the laws of the state, this decision may mean that a person will no longer be authorized to perform pastoral functions such as weddings, funerals, and/or pastoral counseling.

APPENDIX V

PRIVILEGE OF CALL

I. General Information

- A. Privilege of call when granted to an applicant, signifies that the applicant has, or will have upon receiving a call to a position of professional church leadership within the ABCUSA, the qualifications to receive ministerial standing within the denomination.
- B. Privilege of call when granted to an applicant, signifies that in the considered judgment of the Commission on Ordination and Standing, the applicant is a fit candidate for positions of professional church leadership within the ABCUSA, and that his/her name may be circulated to churches and agencies within the denomination which may be seeking professional leadership.

II. Privilege of Call for Those Awaiting Ordination

- A. Because ordination is contingent upon "an opportunity to assume a position of professional church leadership consistent with the character of the American Baptist Churches in the USA", and because churches and agencies may wish the assurance that a prospective professional church leader has the proper credentials in hand, the Commission shall issue a letter signifying "privilege of call" for a person who in its judgment, has met all the requirements for American Baptist ordination with the exception of an opportunity to serve.
- B. Any person who has met with an ordination council as stipulated in these Standing Rules and appendices, and whose ordination has been approved contingent on call to a position of professional service, may apply in writing to the Commission on Ordination and Standing for privilege of call.
- C. The Commission shall review the pertinent records and determine if privilege of call is warranted.
- D. If the Commission grants privilege of call, the chair shall cause to be issued, letters to that effect to the candidate and to appropriate persons and agencies within the denomination.

III. Privilege of Call for Non-ABC Professional Church Leaders

- A. Any professional church leader in good ministerial standing in another Christian denomination may apply in writing to the Commission on Ordination and Standing for privilege of call.
- B. The chair of the Commission shall set the date and location for an interview of any such applicant by the Commission.

- C. At least three (3) weeks before the interview, the applicant shall provide to each member of the Commission a copy of each of the following documents:
1. Certification of the applicant's status as an ordained person in good standing, in the church or denomination that has ordained him or her.
 2. A paper not exceeding 3,000 words in length, the lines of type of which shall on each page be numbered consecutively in the left margin, and which shall include the applicant's:
 - a. Christian commitment and growth;
 - b. Call to the ministry;
 - c. Reasons for seeking privilege of call within the ABCUSA;
 - d. General comprehension of Christian theology and practice, outlining the applicant's own views on the central matters of faith as he/she understands them.
 3. A summary of educational background, including transcripts or other forms of certification of graduation.
 4. A summary of ministerial and secular work experience, including dates.
 5. Vocational and/or psychological assessment relative to the candidate's aptitude for ministry, through the Midwest Ministry Development Service, the candidate's seminary, or some other recognized professional in the field (supply to Commission chair only);
 6. An affirmation of the Ministers Council Code of Ethics;
 7. A statement of the applicant's long-range vocational goals and plans including expectations regarding future denominational affiliation.
 8. Not less than three letters of reference by persons who are familiar with the applicant's experience as a professional church leader.
 9. Authorize the Commission to do a criminal background check at the expense of the candidate.
- D. At the interview, the Commission shall seek to determine that:
1. The applicant meets the requirements for American Baptist ordination, including requirements regarding education or equivalency.
 2. The applicant is qualified by reason of character, professional skills, and spiritual

depth, to provide effective professional church leadership in an American Baptist-related ministry.

3. The applicant's work history reflects his/her suitability as a professional church leader.
 4. The candidate must have a sufficient understanding of Baptist history and American Baptist polity and practice in order to function effectively within the denomination by completing one of the following: 1) a seminary level course (preferred), 2) the course as offered by the Region Ministerial Institute (or its current entity), or 3) a Commission approved alternative.
 5. The applicant's motivation to affiliate with the ABCUSA reflects integrity and a commitment to ABCUSA-related ministry.
 6. The applicant is now, or upon receiving a call to professional leadership within the denomination will become, a member of an ABCUSA church.
- E. Following the interview, the Commission may:
1. Grant privilege of call;
 2. Grant privilege of call with certain stipulated contingencies to be completed by the applicant either prior to or following the granting of privilege of call; or
 3. Not grant privilege of call.
- F. Upon granting privilege of call (with or without contingencies), the Commission chair shall cause to be issued, letters to that effect to the candidate, the Executive Minister, and to other appropriate denominational agencies and persons as may be required.

IV. Limitations

- A. Privilege of call expires one year after it is granted, but may be renewed upon written request of the applicant.
- B. A person who has received privilege of call will automatically be given the appropriate ministerial standing within the ABCUSA upon call to a position. Privilege of call does not need to be renewed when a professional church leader changes positions within the ABCUSA.

APPENDIX VI

RECOGNITION OF NON-AMERICAN BAPTIST ORDINATIONS

I. General Information

- A. Recognition of ordination is the process by which a person who is a member of an ABCUSA church, and already ordained by a non-ABCUSA church, may request standing as "ordained" within the professional ministry of the ABCUSA.
- B. The normative process for professional church leaders seeking placement in the ABCUSA is that such individuals will seek "privilege of call." Persons who have been granted privilege of call are automatically granted standing upon placement in an ABCUSA-related position of professional church leadership (cf. Appendix V). The process of recognition of non-American Baptist ordinations is designed for those individuals whose situations do not fit the normative process.

II. Process

- A. Any professional church leader who is a member of an American Baptist church, and who has already been ordained by a non-ABCUSA church, may apply in writing to the Commission on Ordination and Standing for recognition of ordination.
- B. The chair of the Commission shall set the date and location for an interview of any such applicant by the committee.
- C. At least three (3) weeks prior to the interview, the applicant shall provide to each committee member the following documents:
 - 1. Certification of the applicant's status as an ordained person in the church or denomination which has ordained him or her.
 - 2. A paper not exceeding 3,000 words in length, the lines of type of which shall on each page be numbered consecutively in the left margin, and which shall include the applicant's:
 - a. Christian commitment and growth;
 - b. Call to the ministry;
 - c. Reasons for seeking recognition of ordination within the ABCUSA;
 - c. General comprehension of Christian theology and practice, outlining the applicant's own views on the central matters of faith as he/she understands them.

3. A summary of educational background, including transcripts or other forms of certification of graduation.
 4. A summary of ministerial and secular work experience, including dates.
 5. Vocational and /or psychological assessment relative to the candidate's aptitude for ministry, through the Midwest Ministry Development Service, the candidate's seminary, or some other professional in the field recognized by the Commission. (supply to Commission chair only)
 6. An affirmation of the Ministers Council Code of Ethics.
 7. Not less than three letters of reference by persons who are familiar with the applicant's experience as a professional church leader.
 8. A letter from the ABCUSA church of which the applicant is a member, affirming her/his application for recognition of ordination.
 9. Authorize the Commission to do a criminal background check at the expense of the candidate.
- D. At the interview, the Commission on Ordination and Standing shall seek to determine that:
1. The applicant meets the requirements for American Baptist ordination, including requirements regarding education or equivalency (cf. Appendix II, section III C 1 b. and Appendix III, section II A).
 2. The applicant is qualified by reason of character, professional skills, and spiritual depth, to provide effective professional church leadership in an American Baptist-related ministry.
 3. The applicant's work history reflects his/her suitability as a professional church leader.
 4. The candidate must have a sufficient understanding of Baptist history and American Baptist polity and practice in order to function effectively within the denomination by completing one of the following: 1) a seminary level course (preferred), 2) the course as offered by the Region Ministerial Institute (or its current entity), or 3) a Commission approved alternative.
 5. The applicant's motivation in seeking recognition of ordination by the ABCUSA reflects integrity and a commitment to ABCUSA-related ministry.
- E. Following the interview, the Commission may determine that:
1. The applicant's ordination be recognized;

2. The applicant's ordination be recognized with certain stipulated contingencies to be completed by the applicant either before or following the granting of recognition;
 3. The applicant's ordination not be recognized.
- F. If the Commission approves recognition of the applicant's non-ABC ordination, the Commission chair shall issue letters to that effect to the applicant, the Executive Minister, and to other appropriate denominational agencies or persons as may be required.

APPENDIX VII

CERTIFIED LAY PASTOR

I. General Information

- A. In order to provide a pool of Certified Lay Pastors for congregations who cannot afford a seminary-trained pastor, and to strengthen lay leadership in our member churches; the American Baptist Churches of Michigan may conduct a program to provide entry level experiential education for ministry.
- B. This program is not equivalent to a seminary education and will not qualify a person for a denominationally recognized ordination. Persons completing such a program would be considered Lay Professionals and qualify for inclusion in the Registry of Professional Church Leaders under Category IV should they be employed in an American Baptist church for a minimum of 20 hours per week with remunerations.
- C. The Program shall be called the Certified Lay Pastor Program. It shall be managed by the Leadership Ministries Team with certificates issued by the Commission on Ordination and Standing. Those who hold a Certified Lay Pastor Certificate issued by the American Baptist Churches of Michigan shall be called “Certified Lay Pastors.”

II. Requirements

- A. To qualify for participation in the Certified Lay Pastor Program a person:
 - 1. Must be a member in good standing of a congregation affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Michigan;
 - 2. Must submit a written summary of:
 - a. Personal Christian experience
 - b. Professional church experience
 - c. Plans for future ministry;
 - 3. Must provide a letter of recommendation from his or her Pastor or from an authorized local church official;
 - 4. Must sign a release authorizing the American Baptist Churches of Michigan to contact further references from his or her local church;
 - 5. Must have a diploma or a GED;
 - 6. Must be at least 21 years of age or older;

7. Must be a person of Christian character and integrity.
- B. To qualify for the issuance of a Certified Lay Pastor Certificate a person:
1. Must have completed all course work provided by the Ministry Leadership Certification program of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan, or its current equivalent;
 2. Must have completed the Mentor/Student evaluation process provided by the Ministry Leadership Certification program, or its current equivalent;
 3. Must sign a covenant with the Region to continue ministerial education (especially in the areas of Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Self-Care) through conferences, courses, and diploma programs such as those offered by Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS) in Detroit;
 4. Must possess a local church License for Ministry;
 5. Must complete the Registry of Professional Church Leaders form;
 6. Must sign the American Baptist Ministers Council “Code of Ethics”;
 7. Must be interviewed by the Region Executive Minister or his/her designee.
- C. Process
1. Upon completion of all requirements (section IIB), the candidate will convey to the chairperson of the Commission on Ordination and Standing (or his/her designee) verification of completed requirements. The chairperson (or his/her designee) will then confirm that all requirements have been met and will issue a statement to this effect to members of the Commission and to the Region Executive Minister.
 2. A Certified Lay Pastor Certificate shall be issued by the Commission on Ordination and Standing and signed by the Commission Chair and the Region Executive Minister.
 3. The certificate shall be presented at the Annual Gathering of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan.
 4. The Region Office shall keep a list of Certified Lay Pastors.
 5. The list of Certified Lay Pastors shall be reviewed once a year by the Commission on Ordination and Standing.

D. Placement

1. Placement in an American Baptist Church is not guaranteed to a certificate holder.
2. Placement must be upon the recommendation of the Region Executive Minister or his/her designee.
3. Placement is dependent upon the call of a local church.

E. Limitations

1. Certified Lay Pastors must maintain a mentor relationship with an ordained American Baptist pastor.
2. Certified Lay Pastors must be members in good standing with a member church of the American Baptist Churches of Michigan.
3. Certified Lay Pastors must provide a written report to the Commission Chair describing their continued ministerial education once every two years.
4. Any Certified Lay Pastor certificate may be revoked by the Commission on Ordination and Standing with just cause.

APPENDIX VIII

RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION FOR PASTORS IN DUALY ALIGNED CHURCHES

I. General

Pastors who are already leaders in churches, dually aligned with the American Baptist Churches USA and other Baptist groups which are recognized members of the Baptist World Alliance, are eligible to have their ordinations recognized by the American Baptist Churches of Michigan

II. Stipulations

- A. The Professional Church Leader must be previously ordained by a Baptist group recognized by the Baptist World Alliance.
- B. The Professional Church Leader must work at least twenty (20) hours per week with remuneration for a dually aligned church.
- C. The Professional Church Leader must have a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited theological seminary or qualify for Equivalency as outlined in Appendix III. A copy of the Master of Divinity transcript must be sent to the Chair of the Commission from the institution issuing the degree at least two (2) weeks prior to a regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
- D. The Professional Church Leader must fill out an application provided by the Commission on Ordination and Standing and return it to the chair of the Commission at least two (2) weeks prior to a regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
- E. Recent seminary graduates (within two (2) years of graduation) are ineligible from pursuing this option.

III. Approval

After reviewing educational transcripts and the aforementioned application, the Commission on Ordination and Standing is authorized to recognize the ordination of a Professional Church Leader of a dually aligned church.

THE ORDINATION PAPER
A SUPPLEMENT TO THE PROCEDURES FOR ORDINATION
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF MICHIGAN

The Procedures for Ordination document (Appendix II, Section III C 1 j) states that the paper shall:

- Not exceed 3,000 words in length
- Be numbered consecutively in the left-hand margin of each page
- Include the candidate's:
 - Christian commitment and growth
 - Call to ministry
 - Academic and field preparation
 - Reasons for seeking ordination within the ABCUSA
 - General comprehension of Christian theology and practice of ministry as she/he understands them.

While it is important that the paper reflect the candidate's views of central matters of faith and practice, ordination councils generally expect that the "central matters" will include statements in the areas listed below, particularly those listed under General Comprehension of Christian Doctrine and General Comprehension of the Church. The candidate is encouraged to develop the paper according to the basic outline below, adding those additional areas the candidate may believe to be important.

INTRODUCTION

- Christian commitment and growth
- Call to ministry
- Academic and field preparation
- Present field 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 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 purpose and place of the church in the world

- The role of the minister (including support for the code of ethics)
- The role of the laity
- The ordinances
- Understanding of mission and evangelism
- Understanding of justice in society (You may choose one social justice issue as an example)
- The church and its ecumenical relationships

DENOMINATIONAL COMMITMENT

- Understanding of Baptist distinctives
- Reasons for seeking ordination within the ABCUSA
- Relationship to the ABCUSA