

GENERAL BAPTIST MINISTRIES



National Ordination Standards Report

General Association of General Baptists

11/15/2010

Organized in 2006 the Ordination Standards Commission submitted partial reports for review by the Council of Associations from 2007 through 2010. These reports were developed to identify criteria that could be used to assist Presbyteries, Ordaining Councils and churches to maintain the integrity of ordained ministers. Recognizing that ordination is always a local or regional process among General Baptist churches, these reports were designed to be adapted and utilized by each presbytery, ordaining council or local church as they fit their needs.

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Preface

National Ordination Standards Commission Final Report to the Council of Associations November 15, 2010

The General Baptist Council of Associations formed the National Ordination Standards Commission in 2006. The purpose of the Commission has been to develop criteria that will assist presbyteries, associations, ordaining councils and churches in maintaining the integrity of ordained ministers. We recognize and affirm the rich heritage of diversity among the various General Baptist systems of ordination. The standards presented are intended to build alongside existing structures and are made available for those seeking guidance.

In November 2007, the Council of Associations approved the first section of the National Ordination Standards document. It is entitled —Receiving Ordained, Certified, or Commissioned Ministers from outside the General Baptist Denomination.

In May 2008, the Council of Associations approved the second section entitled —Code of Ministerial Ethics of the General Association of General Baptist. The ethical standards set forth are aimed at preserving the dignity, maintaining the discipline, and promoting the integrity of those ministering in the name of Jesus Christ.

In November 2009, the section entitled —Biblical–Theological Foundation of Ordination was approved. The document provides a scriptural and practical pattern for ordained and commissioned servants as leaders charged with overseeing the body of Christ.

The document submitted today is entitled —The Structure and Work of the Presbytery and Ordaining Council. It provides an overview of the purpose and function of organizations that assist churches with ordination. The topics of membership transfer, dealing with improper conduct, and the process of restoration as they relate to ordained servants are also addressed.

The acceptance of this report will conclude the work of the Commission.

We recommend that the approved documents be compiled into a published booklet for use in our denomination.

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National Ordination Standards of the General Association of General Baptists

The General Baptist Council of Associations formed the Ordination Commission in 2006. The purpose of the commission was to develop criteria to assist presbyteries, associations, ordaining councils, and churches in maintaining the integrity of the ordained. We recognize and affirm the rich heritage of diversity among the various General Baptist systems of ordination. The standards that follow are intended to build alongside these existing structures and are made available for those seeking guidance.

Receiving Ordained, Certified, or Commissioned Ministers from Outside the General Baptist Denomination

Ministers coming from other groups should be doctrinally compatible with General Baptists and aware of General Baptist polity and structure while being of sound moral character. The following outline of questions will assist those interviewing the minister who comes from outside the General Baptist denomination. When a face-to-face interview is not possible, it is recommended that the minister give a written response to each question.

Doctrinal Compatibility

The following questions will assist in discovering if the minister endorses the General Baptist Statements of Faith and practices the Social Principles of the denomination. In examining the doctrinal compatibility of ministers from other denominations, certain questions should be addressed to all candidates. These questions should provide general information on both the doctrinal positions of the candidate as well as particular points that need to be explored more carefully.

1. What theological reasons do you have for leaving your former denomination? What did you disagree with? What doctrinal points attract you to General Baptists? What doctrinal differences do you discern between General Baptists and your former denomination?
2. What theological issue(s) do you think the General Baptist Statements of Faith are weakest in and why? How would you characterize the center of General Baptist doctrine? What are the most essential doctrinal points to being General Baptist?

3. What areas included in the *Social Principles of General Baptists* do you disagree with or do you perceive as weak? Areas of strength?

Besides these general questions, several other specific questions should be posed to most candidates. Other questions not listed below might be important to some local associations, ordaining councils, and presbyteries; but the following are important representative questions.

4. How would you characterize your understanding of the trustworthiness of the Scriptures?
5. Describe your understanding of the process of individual salvation.
6. Do you believe that a Christian can “turn away from God and be finally lost”?
7. How would you explain the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the individual and the church?
8. How would you characterize your understanding of the nature of the church?
9. Do you agree with the General Baptist Church Covenant? What uses do you see for the Church Covenant in the life of the local church?
10. How would you describe your theology of ordination?
11. Would you allow the practice of footwashing in your church? (This questions would be important in some General Baptist associations, but not in others. See the note attached to Statement VIII of the General Baptist Statements of Faith.)
12. Do you believe in universal salvation?

Examining committees and ordaining councils should pay special attention to other specific questions based upon the denominational background of the candidate. The following lists distinguish between questions that should be addressed to individuals from other Baptist groups from those coming from non-Baptist denominations. At the end of some questions, representative denominations and specific concerns over their general doctrinal positions are provided in parenthesis along with the rationale for such concerns.

Other Baptist Denominations

13. Who should be welcomed to participate at the Lord’s Supper? (Many other Baptist groups practice either closed or close communion, e.g., Southern Baptists, Primitive Baptists, and many independent Baptists.)
14. Should churches be connected to one another in fellowship? Can a church properly be a church without fellowship with other churches? (In distinction with General Baptist theological emphasis upon the universal church and interdependence, many Baptist groups, as well as a few non-Baptist groups, speak of the local church as the

only place the church exists. Questions under “Polity and Structure” should also prove beneficial here.)

Non-Baptist Denominations

15. Whom do you believe to be the proper candidates for baptism?
16. What do you believe to be the proper mode for baptism?
17. How would you characterize your understanding of the nature of the ordinances? (Many non-Baptist denominations understand the ordinances sacramentally.)
18. What is your understanding about the nature of the Godhead? Relationship between the Father and the Son? The Father, Son, and Spirit? (Some Pentecostal groups deny that God is trinitarian. Instead they speak of three “manifestations” of the Godhead.)
19. How would you describe your position on the practice of speaking in tongues? (This question should probably be addressed to most individuals, because practicing charismatics can be found in almost every denomination; but the question should be particularly emphasized when a candidate comes from a Pentecostal group.)
20. Do you believe in a second definite work of grace or a doctrine of entire sanctification? (Most Wesleyan/Holiness groups such as Methodists, Nazarenes, and some Pentecostals speak of a second work of grace that brings about entire sanctification or “perfection.” Many Pentecostal groups use similar language in their understanding of speaking in tongues or other spiritual gifts.)

Polity and Structure

The following questions will assist in discovering if the transferring minister understands the General Baptist congregational systems of government, the need for interdependence, the need for fellowship, and the importance of denominational involvement.

The areas of inquiry included below are designed to assist the examining committee as it explores the transfer candidate’s understanding of congregational systems of government. Not every question or request for information will be appropriate for every candidate. Thus the examining committee will want to choose those elements that are most pertinent to each situation.

The examining committee will do well to craft this section of the interview based on the personal background of the minister who is transferring. For example, those coming from a denomination very similar in polity and structure to General Baptists may already share a broad understanding of congregational government. Pastors coming from a more independent structure may need to explain more thoroughly their views on congregational government, congregational interdependence, and congregational connection to the denomination.

Since congregational government among General Baptists continues to develop new facets (as illustrated in the increasing use of the board of elders), it is important that the examining committee evaluate appropriately those candidates who choose to transfer their credentials to determine if their levels of understanding and their goals for ministry fit within the structures within which they are preparing to work.

1. Please describe your understanding of congregational government.
2. Congregational government may be either pure democracy or representative democracy. Please describe occasions when a pure democracy would be preferred.
3. Please describe occasions when a representative democracy would be preferred.
4. Baptist congregations are traditionally independent. How would you foster that local independence without moving into isolation?
5. What advantages do you see to a denominational system that promotes interdependence rather than isolation?
6. How would you see interdependence becoming part of local congregational life?
7. In what ways do you believe a local General Baptist church should demonstrate its connection to the denomination?
8. Suppose our General Association takes a stand on a particular moral or social issue. How would you address that issue?
9. Suppose our General Association recommends specific actions by its member churches. How would you react to those recommendations?
10. In most congregational decisions at least a few members will generally disagree with the direction chosen by the congregation. What steps would you take to preserve the rights of such a minority?
11. In some congregations disgruntled members may move to become disruptive of the congregation's life. In what ways would you deal with disruptive members?
12. Describe your concept of a pastor as a leader.
13. Leadership often develops as a result of holding a position. At other times leadership comes from earned trust or permission to lead. Leadership also results from the competence to lead. Which of these dimensions of leadership would you prefer to be displayed in your ministry? Why?
14. How do you see these dimensions of leadership demonstrated in your current ministry setting?
15. In your opinion how long does it take to earn the trust of a congregation?
16. In your experience what elements are involved in earning the trust of a congregation?

17. What involvement do you believe local General Baptist churches should have in world missions through Unified Giving? How would you implement this in the local church you serve?
18. In your previous ministry experience with _____ denomination, how have you led the congregations you served to support denominational missions?
19. General Baptists offer several options for involvement in national meetings. Do you intend to participate personally and will you lead your congregation to participate in them?

Moral Character

The moral and ethical behavior of an ordained minister is paramount for an effective ministry. The following questions will assist in discovering the personal history of the minister.

Anyone desiring to serve in ministry in the General Baptist denomination will be expected as a leader to maintain the highest of moral standards. Because some types of misconduct, such as sexual misconduct involving children or of a homosexual nature or repeated marital infidelity, are rarely the result of a one-time moral lapse, individuals who are guilty of sexual misconduct that involves a high probability of repeated misconduct should not be restored to good standing unless those issues that led to the misconduct have been fully resolved. Such full resolution indicates that in the view of all concerned, the likelihood of such repeated misconduct no longer exists. Pending full resolution of these behaviors, such individuals should not be permitted to serve in any position of leadership, trust, or ministry in the local church.

Conversion Call and Preparation

1. When were you saved and baptized?
2. What was your denominational affiliation when you were saved and baptized?
3. In what denomination did you first pastor? In what denomination/s have you most recently served?
4. When did you begin preparing for ministry?
5. Describe any formal education for ministry you have undertaken? What other preparations have you made for ministry?

Family and Marriage

6. How do you feel divorce and remarriage impacts the minister?
7. Have you verbally, physically, or sexually abused your spouse, children, or any other person either in your congregation, your vocational setting, or your family?
8. How do you balance the time demands of both family and congregation?
9. Do you share confidential information with your spouse?
10. Have you or your spouse been previously married?

11. If you are currently married, how would you rate the strength of your marriage?

Financial and Personal Accountability

12. Have you ever taken bankruptcy or failed to pay your debts?
13. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or served time in jail or prison for any crime?
14. Have you ever been guilty of taking funds or equipment from any church of which you have been a part?
15. Are you willing to submit to a legal background check before assuming the role of a General Baptist minister?
16. Have you experienced church conflict while you served in a church? Did you generate such conflict?

Social Issues

17. Please describe your stand on the social issues of
 - a. abortion,
 - b. alcohol use,
 - c. illegal drugs,
 - d. the lottery and gambling.

Sexuality

18. Please describe your view of homosexuality.
19. What is your belief regarding sex outside of marriage and children born out of wedlock?
20. How do you deal with cohabitation?
21. In what ways do you protect yourself from charges of sexual misconduct?

Personal References

The personal integrity of the minister should receive careful attention from those conducting the interview process. The minister should provide two reference letters in each of the following areas: moral, ministry, and financial. Those conducting the interview process should follow up on each reference letter and invite further comments and/or observations.

Code of Ministerial Ethics of the General Association of General Baptists

These standards are set forth in an effort to preserve the dignity, maintain the discipline, and promote the integrity of our chosen profession—the ministry of Jesus Christ.

My Person

- I will endeavor to pray daily; to read, study, and mediate upon God's Word; and to maintain extended times of contemplation and communication with God.
- I will plan time to be with my family, realizing my special relationship to them and their importance to my role in the family of God.
- I will seek to keep my body physically fit through proper eating habits and planned exercises, renewing myself through a weekly Sabbath and an annual vacation.
- I will try to keep myself emotionally fit, keeping in touch with my feelings and growing in healthy control of them.
- I will strive to grow through reading widely and participating in ministry training.
- I will be a servant of God seeking to maintain a life of purity, integrity, and truthfulness.

My Calling

- I will seek to conduct myself consistently with my calling and commitment as a servant of God.
- I will give fair service to my congregation, and I will accept other responsibilities only if they do not interfere with the overall effectiveness of my ministry in the congregation.
- I will consider a confidential statement made to me as a sacred trust not to be divulged without consent of the person making it.
- I will responsibly exercise the freedom of the pulpit, speaking the truth of God's Word with conviction in love, and I will acknowledge the use of material prepared by someone else.
- I will candidate at only one church at a time and respond promptly and definitely to a call.

My Finances

- I will be honest in my stewardship of money, paying my bills promptly, asking no personal favors or discounts on the basis of my ministerial status.
- I will give tithes and offerings as a good steward and example to the church.

My Congregation

- I will seek to regard all persons in the congregation with equal love and concern, undertake to minister impartially to their needs, and refrain from behavior that will be divisive.
- I will seek to be friends with all members.

- I will exercise confidence in local church leaders by assisting in their training and mobilizing their creativity.
- I will seek to lead the church in a positive direction to achieve the goals upon which we have mutually agreed. I will remain open to constructive criticism and suggestions intended to strengthen our common ministry.
- I will seek to deal fairly with the church I am presently serving when considering God's call to another church or ministry.

My Colleagues

- I will not perform services such as funerals, weddings, baptisms, counseling, visitation, or activities in other areas that are the responsibilities of my colleagues in the Christian ministry except by their request and/or consent.
- Upon my departure from a pastorate, I will sever my pastoral relations with the congregation, recognizing that all pastoral functions should henceforth rightfully be conducted by my successor.
- Upon retirement or withdrawal from the ministry, I will refrain from engaging in pastoral functions within the church fellowship of which I am a member unless requested by the pastor.
- I will seek to maintain supportive, caring relationships with my colleagues in the ministry, particularly with General Baptist pastors in my area.

My Denomination

- I will cooperate with the vision, goals, objectives, and leadership of the General Association of General Baptists by responsible involvement in order that our common service in the kingdom of God might be more effective.
- I will use my influence to affirm and edify the fellowship of my church by partnering with the General Association of General Baptists and other General Baptist churches.

I, _____, covenant in the sight of God with my colleagues in the ministry to strive to keep the Code of Ministerial Ethics of the General Association of General Baptists.

Date _____

The Biblical-Theological Foundation of Ordination

The New Testament is clear on the nature of ministry within the church. Ministry, broadly defined as service, belongs to the entire church rather than to a few. Traditionally this concept is described as the priesthood of the believer. Priesthood, the function of representing another before God or being a visible representative of God, is given to all members of the Church with no special calling or status required beyond that of being a member of the Body of Christ. Thus each member functions as his/her own priest, and any believer may function as a visible representative of God.

Over against the general ministries of the church, when ministry is specifically defined as leadership, proclamation, and specific acts of service, it belongs to those who are individually called. A call to specialized ministry within the church is recognized by ordination. These specialized roles of ministry relate to leadership or oversight of the Body of Christ, proclamation and teaching in the Body of Christ, and specialized service for the Body of Christ.

The Priesthood of the Believer

The common ministry of the church finds significant biblical support. The clearest can be found in Paul's discussion of the phrase "body of Christ" (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4). As Paul explains this image, the unity of the body is not diminished by the diversity of gifts for ministry, nor by social and ethnic diversity. At the same time that unity does not force uniformity. There are a variety of gifts (utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, teaching, exhortation, giving, etc. [1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Romans 12:6-8]) and functions (such as apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors [1 Corinthians 12:28-30, Ephesians 4:11-13]) within the body that are unified and given expression within the body itself. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12). Thus, each member of the body is significant and useful in his/her gifted area (1 Corinthians 12:14-20, Romans 12:6a), and no one member (or gift) is unimportant (1 Corinthians 12:21-26), though significance is given to the gifts of leadership and proclamation (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Thus, the ministry of the church is accomplished as each member of the body functions to fulfill the calling of general ministry. This way of conceiving of ministry has significant implications for official leadership. When one is called to function in a leadership role, the person is not being set apart "from and above" the Body of Christ into a new distinct category of "minister," but instead is being called from among the people to serve with them and to equip them in a common ministry. Leadership within the church is to "equip the saints for

ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Thus, individuals functioning in an ordained leadership role are giving opportunity for the entire church, and individuals within it, to become what Christ has called them to be.

With regard to the selection of individuals for these leadership positions, a variety of methods are used in the New Testament. The apostles cast lots to determine the successor to Judas (Acts 1:24-26). Seven individuals are selected by the church in Jerusalem by some sort of popular approval to help feed the widows (Acts 6:1-6). Barnabas and Saul are selected to become missionaries by some direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every town (Titus 1:5).

In the Scriptures, there are two clear points with regard to the choice of individuals for leadership positions in the church. First, the selection for specialized roles of ministry is a function of the church. Individual callings to leadership are prevalent in the Scriptures; however, the church confirms the calling of individuals. For instance, Barnabas and Saul were selected directly by the Holy Spirit, but the church is then called to commission them, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

Second, the process of selection of individuals for positions of leadership requires that the person be measured against a standard. By affirming an individual in such a position, the church affirms the qualification of the person (against that standard) to fulfill that function. In Acts 6, the church is given specific standards for selecting individuals to serve the widows of the church (v. 3). In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gives specific standards for selecting ordained leadership. Similar standards are also given to Titus.

Ordained Servants

Within most General Baptist fellowships two groups are generally ordained or set apart to specialized roles or tasks within the church. These ordained individuals are generally labeled ministers and deacons. Among some General Baptists, however, service in additional offices of the church warrants ordination. Thus ordination is a unique event informed by the task/role assigned by the church.

Deacons are set apart/ordained to serve within the local church. Deacons are recognized as ordained servants only within the context of the local church that calls them and authorizes or requests their service. Should a deacon transfer membership into another church, the recognition as a deacon does not automatically transfer. The receiving church may choose to select the newly transferred member to serve as a deacon in keeping with the selection process authorized by the local church.

Ministers are set apart/ordained to serve the broader Church. Thus ministers are generally recognized as ordained within the context of the denomination that provides the arena for their larger service to the Church. If a minister transfers from one congregation to

another, recognition as a minister is also transferred in keeping with the procedures laid out by the regional presbytery or ordaining council.

Commissioned Servants

Alongside those ordained for some aspect of ministry, other individuals are recognized or selected by the church for specialized roles of service. This recognition or selection may or may not be part of an ordination process, depending on the nature of the task being assigned and the needs of the congregation. Three groups meet these criteria.

Missionaries are commissioned. This commissioning, though similar to ordination, is a more specialized recognition of the gifts, graces, and call of God to a special field of service. Although the commissioned missionary carries the endorsement of the Church-at-large to undertake a broader ministry as a church planter, teacher, ministry director, etc. in a pioneer work or in a cross-cultural setting, the missionary thus commissioned may or may not be ordained.

In some General Baptist churches elders are selected to serve as a management team or leadership team for the congregation. The elders thus selected serve alongside the pastor to provide leadership to the congregation. These elders may or may not be ordained, though in the congregational polity of General Baptist churches they will be selected by the congregation either individually or in keeping with the process of their selection as approved by the congregation.

Church staff members (i.e., executive pastor, associate pastor, youth pastor, children's pastor, senior adult pastor, etc.) who serve to extend the ministry of the pastor may or may not be ordained. All church staff, however, will be called and approved by the church. Those staff members who serve as preaching/teaching pastors should be ordained in order to serve on the church staff. Similarly, those staff members selected from within the congregation who do not intend to pursue vocational ministry in other congregational settings, are not required to be ordained in order to serve on the church staff.

The Presbytery

Because ordination involves the ordering of the church—and in the case of ministers the broad endorsement of the Church-at-large—ordination is generally done in cooperation with other churches in the region through a presbytery or an ordaining council. Churches that choose to function independently of the associational structure as direct or affiliate members of the General Association will be well served to develop an ad hoc ordaining council to review the ordination of ministers.

Traditionally General Baptist churches have submitted requests for ordination to the regional presbytery. The associational presbytery will generally be composed of the ministers

and deacons of the member churches, although in some associations only ministers are members and in others the presbytery functions as a committee of the association. The presbytery is thus an auxiliary of the association, and in cases of dispute its decisions may be appealed to the association.

Each presbytery develops its own operational guidelines for how requests from the churches are reviewed and processed. A credentials or examining committee will usually be given responsibility to interview candidates for ordination and to monitor the progress of those pursuing it. Increasingly churches are being given considerable latitude in the selection of deacons as more and more regional presbyteries are allowing ordination of deacons to be scheduled within the local churches they serve.

The Ordaining Council

Some General Baptist associations have moved to an ordaining council format that preserves many of the traditional roles of the presbytery while allowing more freedom and responsibility to be shouldered by the local churches.

In this system the local church deals exclusively with the selection, training, and ordination of deacons. In the ordaining council system, the association selects council members (usually five) who then oversee the preparation of ministers for ordination. The ordaining council is selected from the ordained ministers of the association and develops a partnership with the pastors of the association to oversee the preparation and training of ministers as well as to preserve the integrity of the ministers.

The ordaining council serves under the oversight of the regional association, or the association may delegate that oversight to the senior pastors of its churches. Generally the ordaining council functions with a considerable amount of freedom, since the standards and expectations for its operation are agreed to in advance. The ordaining council reports to the association and functions as one of its auxiliaries.

The Ordination of Deacons

Traditionally, the purpose and the role of a deacon are seen in Acts 6:1-4. In the early church, the apostles were unable to spend adequate time in prayer and the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Seven men were selected by the church to serve the daily needs of the congregation.

The biblical model of deacon is neither that of leader or manager but is rather that of a servant. The word *deacon* comes from the Greek word for servant and derives from the concept of one who hurries through the dust as he carries out his duties. The servant role Jesus Christ assumed during His earthly ministry is the model deacons are to follow. In Philippians 2:5-7, the Apostle Paul stated that Jesus did not cling to His rights but took the humble role of a

servant. As Jesus came into the world to serve (Mark 10:45), so the deacon should seek to serve others. Serving others is the pathway of genuine deacon ministry. According to Jesus, greatness is achieved by taking the lowly role of a servant (Mark 9:35).

The characteristics of those capable of deacon ministry are given in the Bible. Those currently serving as deacons, those seeking to select deacons, and those being considered for ordination as a deacon should carefully study Acts 6:3-5 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. These passages provide the biblical standard for the ordination of a deacon who exemplifies the servant role of the whole church.

Deacons are selected by the local church and asked to serve by the congregation. The pastor and the existing deacons should provide leadership in the selection process. The following outline is provided as a starting point for churches developing, revising, or updating their written procedures for the selection and ordination of deacons.

Qualifications and requirements for a deacon: (1) The candidate must be a Christian for a minimum of three years. (2) The candidate must have been a member of the local church for at least one year. (3) The candidate must meet the spiritual qualifications as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Selection of Deacons: When the pastor, the deacons, and the church membership consider a selection of deacon(s) necessary, the process will be as follows: (1) A notice will be posted in a prominent place in the church for a period of at least three consecutive Sundays and a written or verbal announcement given on each of the three Sundays. (2) Nominations may be submitted from names that appear on the list of eligible members. (3) At the end of the three-Sunday notification period, the pastor and deacons will interview nominees and select candidates for each position to be filled. (4) Once the list of candidates is formulated by the pastor and the deacons, a business meeting will be scheduled to secure approval by the congregation.

General Baptist churches that are members of an associational ordaining council or presbytery might have deacons ordained at a council or presbytery gathering. The leaders of the council or presbytery typically structure the service. Since the local church selects deacons to serve in its fellowship, the pastor of the local church and the existing church deacons should have some role in the ordination service.

Many General Baptist churches, after selecting the deacon and/or having the deacon approved by a presbytery or ordaining council, conduct the ordination service in the local church. This allows the local congregation to witness and participate in the service of the individual it has selected.

The ordination service is a time of celebration and consecration. The local church, acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has asked an individual or individuals to serve. Those thus selected have accepted the servant role. The ordination service celebrates this call. The ordination service sets the deacon apart for a unique function within the local church.

Four key elements underscore the biblical tradition and sacredness of the ordination service: the charge to the church, the charge to the candidate, the prayer of consecration, and the laying on of hands. In the charge to the church, the congregation is reminded that deacons are set apart for servant ministry in the church. In the charge to the candidate, the individual is reminded of the biblical standards under which a deacon is to exercise service. In the prayer of consecration, the guidance and presence of God are sought. In the laying on hands, the individual is set apart and linked to the biblical practice established in 1 Timothy 4:14.

The following order of service illustrates how the ordination service might be structured in a Sunday morning service.

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- A Call to Worship through Music
- Offertory Prayer
- Worship through Giving
- A Prayer for Our Congregation
- Scripture Reading
- Songs of Worship
- Charge to the Church
- Special Music
- Charge to the Deacon(s)
- A Song of Dedication
- Prayer of Ordination
- Closing Song of Worship
- Closing Prayer

The Ordination of Pastors/Ministers

Since General Baptists believe in the priesthood of the believer and that every member can and should engage in ministry, it is fair to ask, “Who should be ordained to the ministry of pastor?” Three criteria, based on the role or function of pastoral ministry, seem to provide answers to this important question.

Very few teaching pastors will answer a call and engage in ministry in only one local setting. Thus ordination, the validation of the Church-at-large, is essential to be fully equipped to serve as a teaching pastor of the church. Because the local General Baptist church functions

in fellowship with other local churches, ordination provides a testimony that the ministry of the local pastor is trustworthy and orthodox.

Not all who are called to preach are themselves called to serve as vocational ministers. Some are called to an itinerant ministry of pulpit supply or age-focused ministries that are engaged under the supervision of the teaching or senior pastor and thus do not require ordination. Most, however, who are called to preach will feel compelled to pursue vocational ministry, wherein they will serve a local congregation as a recognized minister. Such vocational ministry, whether fully or partially funded by the local church, warrants ordination.

Still others will find themselves in a leadership role in an institutional or organizational setting where they will consult with or supervise other pastors. Those who serve in such a leadership role should themselves be ordained.

Still other more personal criteria offer answers to the question, “Who should be ordained?”

Very simply put, those who have been called of God to ministry and whose call has been reviewed, validated, and endorsed by the people of God should be ordained to the full work of ministry.

In essence those who intend to be available to serve the larger Church should be endorsed and ordained by the local church(es) in preparation for this service.

What distinction does ordination provide? Ordination as a minister within the General Baptist denomination provides (1) validation of the call of God, (2) permission to engage in a broader ministry of leadership, and (3) legal recognition in those areas that require the state to endorse the work of the church.

Is ordination essential? Ordination is not essential to engage in the tasks of ministry. When ministry tasks, however, require the endorsement of the larger community, ordination is essential. For example, ordination is not required for someone to preach or proclaim from the pulpit. Nevertheless for one to preach or proclaim from the pulpit on a regular basis as the teaching pastor of the church, ordination is essential. Ordination is not required to lead a funeral or memorial service, as this is an act of kindness done for the surviving family. Ordination is required to officiate at weddings, since this is an act done in partnership with the state and thus governed by the expectations and requirements of the state.

What titles are appropriate for the ordained minister? The proper title of respect for the ordained minister is Reverend “Doe.” Licensed ministers and lay pastors should not be referred to as reverend, although the general, functional title of pastor may be used at the discretion of the individual and the preference of the congregation. When the ordained minister has earned academic titles, these titles may be used to replace the label of Reverend _____. Honorary titles should not be used by the minister to replace the customary Reverend _____. Others who are aware of the honorary degree may choose to use the appellation of Doctor _____, but the recipient of the honorary degree should carefully

avoid that label and rely instead on the abbreviations attached to the title as a suffix in a formal signature.

An Ordination Service for Pastors/Ministers

The following elements for an order of service illustrate how the ordination service might be structured when a pastor is being ordained. The general flow of the service will include congregational and special music in keeping with the special nature of the event. Two samples of an ordination service are provided. Recognizing that many regional presbyteries and ordaining councils authorize ordination to occur in a local church, one sample service is designed to help guide the ordination process when it occurs in a local church. The other serves as a guide when the ordination event occurs as a special meeting of the presbytery/ordaining council.

The worship bulletin may include the following (if no printed order of service is used these elements may be expressed verbally):

In recognition of special gifts of service and special needs within a congregation, ordination services are conducted. Today we celebrate the ordination of _____ to serve as a Christian minister. He has been called of God to this task. In this service the church recognizes that call. His Christian commitment, loyalty, and desire to serve have been fully tested. In this special service we shall set apart _____ to the full work of Christian ministry.

The ordination event has four basic parts:

1. A Charge to the Church. This reminds us that the congregation shares the responsibility to be Christian servants. Our responsibilities are not ended when others are chosen to bear special responsibilities.
2. A Charge to the Candidate(s). This reminds the new minister(s) of the commitment being made and the responsibilities being assumed. This portion also reminds the congregation of the responsibility to support and encourage those who have responded to God's call.
3. The Setting Apart. This portion consists of a Prayer of Consecration and the Laying on of Hands. This portion is led by the pastors, deacons, and other ordained members who are present. The Prayer of Consecration asks God's divine blessings, while the Laying on of Hands is a symbolic gesture bestowing the church's blessing on those set apart for service.

4. Presentation of Credentials and Congratulations. To commemorate this special event a Certificate of Ordination has been prepared.

Ordination in a Local Church

Following the charge to the church and the charge to the candidate(s) the following responsive reading may be used to express the permission of the ordaining church or presbytery or ordaining council. This responsive reading also allows the candidate(s) to express a commitment to ministry.

Pastor/Leader: Lift up your eyes and look on the fields that they are white for harvest.

People: Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal, that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

Pastor/Leader: The harvest truly is plentiful, but the workers are few.

People: Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.

Pastor/Leader: The voice of the Lord says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Candidate: Here am I, Lord. Send me.

Pastor/Leader: Have you, _____, prayerfully considered the responsibility of living and preaching the gospel and have you weighed the work involved and the sacrifices you may be called upon to make?

Candidate Response

Pastor/Leader: Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Him?

Pastor/Leader: Do you now in the presence of this church commit yourself to the trust and responsibilities incumbent upon a minister of the gospel? Will you be faithful in prayer and in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures? Will you look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need? Will you do your best to pattern your life in accordance with the teachings of Christ so that you may be a wholesome example to all people? Will you in all things seek not your glory but the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Candidate Response

Pastor/Leader: Congregation of the _____ General Baptist Church, have you carefully considered the qualifications of this candidate (or these candidates) for the work of the ministry?

People: We have.

Pastor/Leader: Are you satisfied that this candidate (or these candidates) will be a worthy messenger and representative of the Lord Jesus Christ?

People: We are.

Pastor/Leader: Will you now commit yourselves to Christian service in partnership with this one who is to be set apart as a minister of the gospel? As a symbol of your partnership, please stand as we make our own commitment known.

People: We will be faithful Christian workers. We will do whatever Christian work comes to hand, shunning no cross, shirking no duty; we will even seek opportunities to do good, glorify God, and save souls; we will study to win our associates, our neighbors, our families, all whom we may influence to become Christians; we will count it more than our meat and our drink, more than all things else, to do the will of our Father in heaven, to lead souls from sin and death, and lead them to God and heaven.

Pastor/Leader: Will you now set apart _____ to the gospel ministry?

People: Recognizing the call of God upon your life, and your gifts for ministry, and your willingness to serve, we now set you apart to the gospel ministry. We do so that you may serve, that our church may continue to grow, and that God's work may be done in our world. We rejoice with you today. We shall pray for you in days to come.

The Prayer of Consecration. (The deacons and honorary deacons and pastors of the home church will represent their congregation by coming forward and kneeling around the candidate(s) for the prayer. Guest pastors and deacons will join in the prayer in a similar fashion.)

The Laying on of Hands

The Hand of Fellowship

The Presentation of Credentials

The Congregational Greeting

The Structure and Work of the Presbytery and Ordaining Council

Each association or direct affiliate church shall organize either a Presbytery or an Ordaining council to assist the churches with ordination. A Presbytery shall be composed of the ordained ministers and deacons who hold membership in an associated church. Though associated with the Presbytery, licensed ministers cannot properly be voting members. An ordaining council shall be established by the authorizing body (usually an association) and shall generally be composed of three to five ordained ministers from the association. In the ordaining council system all ordained ministers who hold membership in an associated church fall under the oversight of the ordaining council while deacons fall exclusively under the oversight of the churches in which they serve.

The objectives of both the presbytery and the ordaining council are the ordination and improvement of their members, the protection of their members, and the purification of their members by the reformation or removal of unworthy members.

The presbytery/ordaining council has exclusive jurisdiction and control over the official standing and character of all its members. For such members to function properly they must remain mutually acceptable both to the presbytery/ordaining council and the church in which they hold membership.

The presbytery/ordaining council is subsidiary and answerable to the association.

In the organization of a presbytery, a constitution and bylaws and regulations consistent with *General Baptist Doctrine and Usage* are adopted by the presbytery and approved by the association.

In the organization of an ordaining council the regional association or the direct affiliate church takes proper action to establish operational guidelines for the ordaining council. Sample organizational guidelines for an ordaining council are included below.

The presbytery/ordaining council meets annually in connection with the association and at such other times as the organizing documents may provide. At each annual meeting, the moral, Christian, and official character of all its members shall be reported by some method acceptable to the presbytery/ordaining council. If the report is satisfactory, a certificate to that effect shall be issued as a Card of Good Standing. If not satisfactory, such certificate shall be withheld. A member without such a certificate is not in good standing and must not be accepted into the membership of another presbytery/ordaining council until such a certificate is presented.

Before license or ordination, the candidate is examined as to gifts, graces, usefulness, personal piety, calling, and general acceptance by the public. Each presbytery/ordaining council sets its own standards for ordination. In the ordination of ministers, special attention should be given to the minimum standard for ordination approved by the General Association of General Baptists.

When a church desires the licensing of a candidate in preparation for the ministry, it requests the presbytery/ordaining council to examine the candidate and act as it thinks proper. Care should be taken to see that candidates meet the standards of the presbytery/ordaining council.

Licensed ministers are not authorized to administer baptism or the Lord's Supper or to perform marriages. In exceptional cases when a church is without an ordained pastor for a prolonged period of time and when guest pastors are not available to administer baptism or the Lord's Supper, the church may take action to temporarily authorize one of its leaders to administer baptism or to preside at the Lord's Supper.

Ordination services may be conducted as part of a regular or called meeting of the presbytery/ordaining council. Deacons may be ordained at the church to be served. The ordination of a minister should be conducted at the regular session of the presbytery/ordaining council unless otherwise requested by the candidate.

Ordained ministers from other denominations, having been first received by a local church and recommended by it, are examined in the usual way, though with special attention to doctrinal sentiments. If ordination has been by an evangelical denomination, it is generally accepted as valid and a certificate to that effect is issued.

In mission settings or when a church in geographic isolation from other General Baptist churches aligns with the denomination, the director of Pastoral Ministries shall recruit a sister General Baptist church to act as a sponsor for those needing ordination. The ordination needs of mission and isolated churches shall be fulfilled through the presbytery or ordaining council of which the sponsoring sister church is a member.

Transfer of Membership

A church transferring from one association to another does not automatically transfer its ordained personnel into the presbytery/ordaining council of the receiving association.

It shall not be permissible for a minister or a deacon to hold membership in the presbytery/ordaining council of one association while holding church membership in some other association. In keeping with the spirit and intent of Paragraph No. 6 of the General Baptist Church Covenant, pastors should transfer their membership to the church in which they serve; and an ordained ministers who serves for a prolonged time (generally one year or more) in non-General Baptist settings should receive special permission from the presbytery/ordaining council to continue in that ministry or should pursue recognition of ministerial credentials in the new setting and surrender General Baptist credentials.

A deacon transferring from one church to another does not automatically exercise the duties of office unless the receiving church so desires. If the church desires such service and if the receiving church is in the same association as that from which membership has been transferred, the church should notify the presbytery of its action. If the receiving church is in an

association other than that from which the deacon comes, the deacon must be referred to the local presbytery for approval. If the association has formed an ordaining council, the status and selection of deacons is exclusively the responsibility of the local church.

The work of a minister transferring from one association to another is generally considered valid by the new association until there has been ample opportunity to submit to the local presbytery/ordaining council and satisfy its requirements for transfer of credentials.

Transfer of membership from one presbytery/ordaining council to another requires the following:

1. A written request for presbytery/ordaining council membership from the local church to the Presbytery in which membership is desired.
2. Action by the presbytery/ordaining council on the request for membership.
3. A letter of transfer from the presbytery/ordaining council in which membership was previously held. Acceptance may be granted upon the promise of a letter; the receipt of which will complete the membership transfer.

A member transferring from one presbytery/ordaining council to another must meet the ordination standards of the presbytery in which membership is requested. The General Association of General Baptists has adopted the following as recommended minimum educational standards for ordination of ministers. Those ministers meeting this minimum standard should meet the educational requirements of all presbyteries.

1. Educational requirements for license: The Presbytery Examining Board Written Test. This test would cover assigned reading from LAMP in areas such as pulpit ministry, pastoral care, church administration, General Baptist history and doctrine, evangelism, and religious education.
2. Educational requirements for ordination:
 - a. Two years with license.
 - b. Completion of LAMP or two years at Oakland City University toward a major in religious studies.

Accusations of Improper Conduct

When an ordained individual is accused of behavior inconsistent with the position, the charges in full are to be presented in written form to the moderator of the presbytery/ordaining council who shall proceed at once to communicate them to the accused and to initiate a process to ensure confidentiality and with discretion to ascertain the validity of the charges. Generally this activity will be conducted by a standing credentials committee or a specially appointed committee of the presbytery/ordaining council. Should the charges be shown to be invalid no further action should be taken except those steps necessary to restore relationships that may have been damaged by the process.

The effectiveness of the General Baptist denomination depends largely upon the spiritual qualifications, character, and the manner of life of its ordained ministers. Ordained ministers aspire to a high calling and function as individuals in whom the church has placed its trust. They accept their calling knowing that they will be held to high personal standards by those to whom they minister. Because of the high expectations placed upon them, their ministries are especially vulnerable to any accusation of misconduct. It is therefore extremely important that these procedures be used with the biblical wisdom and maturity that befits the people of God.

Those who respond for the church and its agencies must understand that what they say and do may have consequences under civil law. The duty of the Christian to respond is based on Christian concern. No one has the authority to accept financial responsibility for a local church without action by the church. One who is uncertain about what action is appropriate should consider seeking counsel from an appropriate professional.

If upon initial investigation the charges appear to have a basis in fact, then the investigating committee should report such findings and recommend further appropriate action with an emphasis on a process for correction and discipline designed to lead to repentance and forgiveness with the goal of a return to fellowship with God and the church and a restoration, if possible, to active ministry. Full restoration, however, may not be possible in every case.

When an ordained individual is accused of behavior inconsistent with the position, the following options may be pursued.

- In the case of immoral conduct, whether confessed or alleged by verifiable written testimony, any ordained General Baptist minister in good standing within the framework of the denomination shall have authority to suspend the alleged offender immediately and take possession of the ordination credentials to be held in trust while a process for evaluation is followed. This action should immediately be reported to the presbytery/ordaining council in which the suspended minister holds membership. Since credentials are being held in trust, no ministerial functions shall be performed by the accused until the process is completed.
- In a case in which an individual contests the charges brought by the investigating committee, then the individual should be cited to trial by the presbytery/ordaining council under the provisions established below.
- Should the accused admit the truth of the charges, credentials may be surrendered and all relationships with the presbytery/ordaining council shall be severed. This course of action is not preferred in most cases since it eliminates the biblical process of reconciliation and restoration. In the case of conduct resulting in civil action or criminal prosecution and conviction, this may be a preferred course of action.
- Should the accused admit the truth of the charges and seek restoration, the presbytery/ordaining council should establish an oversight group to implement and

pursue discipline commensurate with the offense, along with restoration based on repentance, counseling, restitution, and ongoing accountability.

If the individual is cited to trial the charges in full shall be presented in written form both to the accused and to the members of the presbytery/ordaining council. The time, place, and purpose of the meeting to conduct such a trial shall also be communicated. Ample but not unnecessary time to prepare for the trial shall be allowed. In the trial, any evidence is to be received and evaluated.

In accordance with due process, one of the following actions shall result from the trial.

1. Exoneration of the accused shall result in returning of credentials and restoration to active ministry.
2. Confirmation of the charges shall result in the suspension of ministerial credentials and the establishment of a program of counseling, restitution, and restoration.
3. Confirmation of the charges may result in the surrender of credentials to allow the accused, with approval, to return to non-ordained status.
4. Confirmation of the charges may result in the surrender of credentials and withdrawal of membership from the denomination.
5. Confirmation of the charges may result in the revoking of credentials and the expulsion of the unrepentant member.

If by admission of guilt or confirmation of the charges a restoration process should be found advisable, the following guidelines should be used and an oversight committee should be formed.

Restoration to pastoral ministry requires

1. repentance and request for forgiveness
2. indication of contrition
3. public confession where advised
4. restitution where applicable
5. counseling where advised (1 to 2 years)
6. personal accountability as assigned
7. healing of broken relationships where possible
8. reestablishment of credibility

The presbytery/ordaining council may deem it advisable to form a covenant of restoration that defines the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in the restoration process. The objective of the plan should be to return the individual to a place of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health. Primary responsibility for accomplishing the plan shall rest on the person being rehabilitated.

An ordained individual who is in the process of restoration shall not preach, teach a Sunday School class, or hold any other position of trust or authority in the church or worship services and shall not be given any ministerial role unless sufficient progress toward

rehabilitation warrants allowing the individual to be of service in a position of trust or authority. Those considering such a request shall carefully consider whether or not the individual who is in the process of restoration has appropriately repented of misconduct. True repentance involves a deep sense of personal guilt coupled with a change of conduct that continues for a length of time sufficient to be evidence that the change is likely to be permanent. Approval to serve in a position of trust or authority may be granted with or without restrictions.

Sample Covenant of Restoration

This agreement is entered into as a covenant by and between _____ and the Presbytery/Ordaining Council of _____ Association.

Whereas, we believe that Christians who have willfully sinned and severed their relationship with Christ may by repentance before God be granted forgiveness and restoration of their relationship with Christ and that God has given responsibility and authority to the church to discipline a pastor for conduct unbecoming a Christian and to restore a penitent believer through loving reproof, counsel, and acceptance; and

Whereas, the subject has submitted to the discipline of this body, repented from such conduct that has been confessed to God and this body, and has demonstrated genuine sorrow; and

Whereas, it is the hope and desire of this body to go beyond accepting the repentance and forgiveness of the subject to nurturing full restoration to ministerial service;

Now therefore, in consideration of the foregoing statements, it is hereby covenanted and agreed before God that

1. **Authority.** The subject accepts the authority of the presbytery/ordaining council and understands that growth and reconciliation through the restoration process requires submission to the guidance and counsel of the oversight committee, which retains judgment and discretion to counsel, direct, and determine satisfaction of the goals and agreements in this Covenant of Restoration.

2. **Goal of Restoration.** The parties agree to pursue every effort that love can suggest to assure complete restoration, with the express goal of seeing the subject returned to membership and service in the General Association of General Baptists and the _____ Association.

3. **Restitution for Wrongs.** Where the effects of wrongdoing have touched the lives of others, the parties acknowledge that reconciliation and restitution are required for complete healing to occur. The subject agrees, with guidance and counsel from the oversight committee, to make every effort to seek individual forgiveness and, where appropriate, make restitution for wrongs committed that have caused harm to others.

4. **Personal Growth and Development.** In order to assure continued personal growth and development, the subject agrees to seek out and accept the counsel and guidance of the oversight committee for additional direction and resources that will foster the goals and purposes of this Covenant of Restoration.

5. **Meetings.** To assure the ongoing counsel and guidance of the oversight committee, the subject agrees to meet with its members on a regular basis as agreed by both parties.

While the candidate for restoration is following the prescribed course, a designated supervisor shall assign and oversee such ministerial duties as may prepare the candidate for resumption of ministerial leadership.

Conditions Leading to Restoration of Credentials and Reappointment

1. The regional presbytery/ordaining council shall assess the individual’s progress in spiritual maturity, trustworthiness, moral integrity, and ministerial effectiveness as attested to by references from the designated supervisor, the candidate’s counselor(s), and other persons familiar with the case. The candidate shall be called for a personal interview by the presbytery/ordaining council.

2. Only in exceptional cases will credentials be restored sooner than two years after the initial disciplinary action and only after the process of restoration is completed according to the terms and conditions set forth in this document.

3. Restoration of credentials does not guarantee resumption of active ministry until such time as a local church shall call the restored individual to a place of ministry.

The subject and the oversight committee acknowledge and accept the introductory statements and agree to abide by the covenants and promises in this agreement, all for the purpose of transcending past disciplinary action, acknowledging repentance and forgiveness of the subject, and seeking full reconciliation within the local congregation and the presbytery/ordaining council of _____ Association and the General Association of General Baptists through the restoration process and procedures detailed in this Covenant of Restoration.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties agree in the presence of God, and through their testament and signatures, to abide by and fulfill this Covenant of Restoration.

Signature: _____ Date _____
Signature: _____ Date _____
Signature: _____ Date _____
Signature: _____ Date _____

An Appeal Process

If in the process of charge and trial a minister or a deacon feels unjustly treated, the case may be appealed to the association. If the matter cannot be brought to a satisfactory conclusion there, it may then be appealed to the General Association of General Baptists. The steps that shall be taken are as follows:

1. The moderator of the General Association shall appoint a committee consisting of the moderators and clerks of four adjacent associations as a court of final appeal. The committee shall elect its own chairman.

2. The committee shall conduct a fair and impartial hearing into the matter, weigh the evidence, and hand down a decision.

3. The decision of the committee shall be considered final, and the General Association shall take no further action. If the decision goes against the presbytery/ordaining council, the individual may then use that decision in making application for membership into another presbytery/ordaining council.

The presbytery/ordaining council has no jurisdiction in cases affecting membership in a church. A presbytery/ordaining council has no power to reverse the decision of a church, nor does it have the right to act in an advisory capacity except in cases that involve the moral, Christian, or official standing of an ordained person. When a presbytery/ordaining council does thus act, its advice must be treated with courtesy and considered in the fear and love of God. In the event that such respect is not given it, the matter should be referred to the local association for formal review.

Sample Organizational Guidelines for an Ordaining Council

The guidelines that follow have been used in a number of regional settings.

Ordaining Council Guidelines

The _____ Association believes ordination is the recognition of those who acknowledge a calling of God to minister the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The _____ Association Ordaining Council shall consist of five (5) members, all being ordained and appointed by the moderator of the association. One member will rotate off this council each year. No member will serve more than five (5) years in succession. The council shall receive, consider, and take action on all petitions and requests from the churches through the association concerning the examining, licensing, and ordaining persons desiring to enter the ministry. The ordained ministers of _____ Association will meet annually to hear the report of this council.

1. The procedures for licensing and ordination of ministers are as follows:

- a. The candidate announces a divine calling to ministry.
- b. After examination by the pastor, the candidate is presented to the local church. If approved, the church acknowledges the call of God on the candidate's life and notifies the ordaining council through a letter of liberation.
- c. The candidate meets with the ordaining council at the next scheduled meeting of the council in a preliminary meeting to discuss the program and requirements that will lead to being licensed and ordained. At this time the candidate will be required to provide a written statement of divine calling.
- d. The candidate will meet with the ordaining council at the next semi-annual meeting of the ordaining council. The candidate at any time may be given a license to begin the work of ministry.
- e. The candidate will meet with the ordaining council every six (6) months for evaluation.
- f. Upon completing the requirements for ordination, the candidate will meet with the ordaining council for a final evaluation. If approved for ordination the candidate will then be presented to the ordained ministers of the association for final action at the annual report meeting of the ministers of the association. A meeting may be called for the purpose of approving the ordination of the minister. A minimum of five (5) ministers from the association must attend the ordination service.

2. Requirements for ordination

- a. A definite sense of divine calling to ministry.
- b. Educational and experience requirements for ordination:

- i. Successful completing of an examining questionnaire.
 - ii. Two years of active service under license.
 - iii. Two years at Oakland City University toward a major in religious studies including study in the areas of pulpit ministry, pastoral care, church administration, General Baptist history and doctrine, evangelism, and religious education; or the completion of all levels of the Leaders Advancing in Ministry Program (LAMP) as administered by General Baptist Pastoral Ministries; or an equivalent to either of these studies that includes the areas of pulpit ministry, pastoral care, church administration, General Baptist history and doctrine, evangelism, and religious education may be considered as a minimum requirement.
 - iv. A request for service from a church or from an organization.
3. Receiving and transferring ministers
- a. Receiving ordained ministers from other General Baptist associations
 - i. A letter of request is to be sent to the ordaining council chairman from the _____ Association church that the minister has joined.
 - ii. A letter of recommendation is to be sent to the ordaining council chairman from the General Baptist presbytery or like body from which the minister is transferring.
 - iii. The ordaining council is to meet with the minister to confirm the minister can be received in good standing. Council has authority to approve acceptance of said minister.
 - b. Receiving ordained ministers from outside the General Association of General Baptists
 - i. A letter of request is to be sent to the ordaining council chairman from the _____ Association church the minister has joined.
 - ii. A letter of recommendation is to be sent to the ordaining council from the body where the minister has had membership.
 - iii. The ordaining council is to meet with the minister to confirm that the minister is in agreement with General Baptist doctrine and practices and has been recommended as being in good standing.
 - iv. If the minister has not been ordained, the ordaining council is to follow regular procedure for ordaining ministers.
 - v. If the minister has been ordained but has not met the educational standards of _____ Association, encouragement is to be given to meet said standards.
 - c. Receiving requests of transfer from associations

- i. When a minister transfers to another region a letter of request is to be sent to the ordaining council from the body in which the minister is seeking recognition.
- ii. Ordaining council is to act on this request and send its decision to the requesting body.

4. Ministers reporting to the ordaining council

- a. Report forms are to be sent to each ordained and licensed minister two months prior to the annual association meeting. Reports are to be returned to the ordaining council by a set date.
- b. Ordaining council is to certify those in good standing who have satisfactorily reported to the council.
- c. Those not having a satisfactory report will not be issued a Card of Good Standing. If a satisfactory report is received within the next year, a Card of Good Standing may be issued. If no report is received within that year, the minister must meet with the ordaining council before receiving a Card of Good Standing. If it is not possible to meet with the council, the ordaining council may accept another form of communication.

5. When good standing is questioned

The ordaining council is to act upon any formal written request questioning the good standing of licensed and ordained ministers in the association. If the council feels it cannot resolve the questions, a committee of ordained members of the association is to be formed to act on the matter. This committee is to follow biblical teachings in working with the minister in question and make a recommendation to the ordained ministers of the association for a final decision regarding a restoration and accountability process.



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