



NORTH  
AMERICAN  
BAPTISTS, INC.

# **CREDENTIALING GUIDELINES ON ORDINATION AND LICENSURE**

NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## SECTION ONE

Ministerial Credentialing in the North American Baptist Conference	Page 3
I.    Value of NAB Ministerial Credentialing:	3
II.   Types of NAB Ministerial Credentials	3
III.  Minimum Requirements for NAB Credentialing (Ordination or Licensure)	4
IV.   Recognition of a Non-North American Baptist Conference Ordination	4
V.    NAB Credentials of Those Retiring From Active Ministry	4
VI.   Suspension and Revocation of NAB Ministerial Credentials	4
VII.  Restoration and Reinstatement of NAB Ministerial Credentials	5
VIII. Maintaining Records of NAB Ministerial Credentials	6
IX.   Process Requirements for NAB Ordination Credentialing	6
X.    Process Requirements for NAB Licensure Credentialing	6

## SECTION TWO

Ordination Guidelines in the North American Baptist Conference	8
I.    The Biblical Background for Ordination	8
II.   Historic Development and Practice of Ordination	10
III.  Purpose of Ordination	12
IV.   Prerequisites for Ordination	13
V.    The Scope of Ordination	14
VI.   Process for Ordination	15
VII.  Procedure for Ordination Council	15

## SECTION THREE

Policy on Moral Failure and Restoration in the North American Baptist Conference	16
I.    Goal	16
II.   Definition of Moral Failure	16
III.  Steps in Dealing with Moral Failure	16
IV.   Steps Toward Restoration	18

## SECTION FOUR

Statement of Beliefs of the North American Baptist Conference	19
A Christian Affirmation of Marriage	22

## SECTION FIVE

Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference	25
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## SECTION ONE

# MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALING IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

*It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up.*

*Ephesians 4:11-12*

As North American Baptists, we affirm from our history that each church is self-governing, and each church calls its own pastors and leaders to carry out the Lord's mission in building His kingdom. While recognizing each church's autonomy, we are also committed to cooperate as an association of churches to the advancement of that kingdom. In order to maintain a high standard for all of our churches, it is prudent to adopt a uniform standard for credentialing pastors and full-time staff for vocational ministry.

### I. Value of NAB Ministerial Credentialing:

A. The value of NAB ministerial credentialing is:

1. To affirm God's call upon a person's life for vocational ministerial leadership.
2. To verify that this person has met the biblical qualifications and standards for ministry.
3. To verify that this person has the training and competence needed for the ministry role.
4. To approve this person for ministerial service in the NAB.
5. To provide transferable legal status in the exercise of that person's ministry.

Even though God calls and gifts each person for ministerial service, the Scriptures affirm that it is the community of faith that ultimately determines the legitimacy of that call (*1 Timothy 4:14*) and our cultural system requires that an ecclesiastical body affirms that call. This credentialing means entrusting the person to a life of service in leadership of Christ's body.

### II. Types of NAB Ministerial Credentials:

We affirm the call of both men and women to ministry. According to our understanding of Scripture, the role of the Senior Pastor/leading elder is limited to men (*1 Corinthians 11:2-6, 1 Timothy 2:8-14*).

- A. Ordination - This credentialing designation is viewed as an act of the local church in recognition of the call of God upon a person's life, which is recognized by the association/region representing the entire conference. It is designed specifically for those involved in pastoral ministry as Pastor/Leading Elder, Associate Ministers, Vocational Directors of various ministries within the church, Chaplains, Counselors, Evangelists, Missionaries, Seminary Professors and Denominational Executives

where applicable. It is conferred by the local church working in fraternal cooperation with the association/region of the conference.

- B. Licensure - This credentialing designation is viewed as an act of the local church and association in recognition of the call of God upon a person's life. It is applied in those situations where the local church, in cooperation with the association, deems ordination as unneeded or inappropriate. In order to comply with IRS/Revenue Canada Standards, the ministerial license must be both conferred by the local church and affirmed within the association/regional leadership structure.

### **III. Minimum Requirements for NAB Credentialing (Ordination or Licensure):**

- A. Must be a member in good standing of a local NAB congregation or a member of an evangelical church if transferring into the North American Baptist Conference.
- B. Must subscribe to the NAB Statement of Faith and Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference.
- C. Must be one who has heard and answered the divine call, first to personal salvation, and then to the call of the Gospel ministry and be actively engaged in ministry.
- D. Must have completed training, theological preparation and be able to demonstrate theological reflection appropriate for their ministerial role as determined by the local church in cooperation with the association's process.
- E. Must demonstrate a cooperative spirit and support for the purposes and policies of the NAB and demonstrate a lifestyle consistent with biblical standards of Christian conduct, such as honesty, integrity, moral purity, etc.
- F. Must be committed to ongoing personal growth and development.

### **IV. Recognition of a Non-North American Baptist Conference Ordination**

Those who intend to transfer ordination credentials into NAB from another conference shall:

- A. Be called to serve in North American Baptist ministry context.
- B. Willing to commit to the NAB Statement of Faith and Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference.

### **V. Credentials of Those Retiring From Active Ministry**

Those retiring from active ministry, or those that are permanently disabled, may retain their NAB ministerial credential status so long as they shall be found living and teaching in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, and continuing to follow the regulations defined in this document.

### **VI. Suspension and Revocation of NAB Ministerial Credential Status**

- A. Suspension and/or revocation of NAB ministerial credentials (ordination or licensure) shall be a safeguard for the abuse of the ministerial privilege. Suspension and/or revocation shall apply to:

1. A person who is no longer engaged in a qualifying ministry and has entered another occupation, or who no longer wishes to serve in the ministry.
  2. A person whose moral and ethical conduct has violated the biblical standard, or has broken the Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference. A policy on moral failure and restoration is found in Section Three of this document.
  3. A person who teaches contrary to the doctrinal statement, principles, or practices of the NAB.
  4. In a situation where divorce or divorce and remarriage occasion a question of qualification for ministry, the association Executive Committee, or its designee, in cooperation with the local church, shall review the circumstances of the divorce and determine whether the credentials shall be continued or revoked.
- B. For those situations where suspension or revocation of credentialed status is called for, the minister shall surrender such status. If the person refuses to do so, the appropriate leadership board/committee of the association where the individual is serving will take action to either suspend or revoke the credentials.

#### **VII. Restoration and Reinstatement of NAB Ministerial Credentials**

- A. A person whose credentials have been suspended for conduct unbecoming of a servant of Jesus Christ may seek restoration of the credentials by the following process:
1. A spirit of contrition and repentance has been manifested.
  2. Where others have been defrauded, a full and complete restitution must have been attempted.
  3. Healing and restoration of broken relationships, to the extent possible, must be established and verified.
  4. A proper program of treatment and therapy must be undertaken where recommended.
  5. Recommendations for restoration and reinstatement must come from a church, from an appropriate group, or from a professional counselor, and other valid witnesses who can attest to the completeness of the subject's personal recovery.
  6. After the above qualifications have been fulfilled, the Executive Committee of that particular association/region, or its designee, will interview the individual and make the final determination as to whether or not reinstatement should be granted.
  7. The process should be given a span of time appropriate in length to provide for evidence of contrition repentance and new healing of the individual. This span to be determined by the local church and the Association Executive.
- B. If suspension was resulted from issues as defined in paragraph VI (above) of this document, a request for reinstatement must be given to the appropriate board or committee within the association leadership structure. Reinstatement policy must comply with the NAB policy on "Moral Failure and Restoration."

- C. A person who desires to re-enter vocational ministry after having served in another occupation must have a recommendation from the sponsoring church and be interviewed by the appropriate board in the association leadership structure of that particular association, giving reasons for desiring re-entry in writing and commit to NAB Statement of Faith and Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference.

### **VIII. Maintaining Records of NAB Ministerial Credentials**

- A. A record of ordination credentials for currently active ministers shall be kept by each association, with a master record maintained at the international office.
- B. A signed copy of the Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference shall accompany the credential copy.

### **IX. Process Requirements for NAB Ordination Credentialing**

- A. In the case of ordination credentialing, the individual seeking ordination shall submit an ordination paper to the leadership within the association/regional leadership structure. This paper (submitted in such a manner as to allow the committee the needed time for review ) shall explain items including but not limited to the following:

The individual's Christian experience; The individual's call to ministry; Education; Previous Christian service; Doctrinal statement; Current ministry position and duties; Signed copy of Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference

- B. Upon review, the leadership committee shall either vote to recommend the church call an ordination council, refer the paper back to the individual for further development, decline to proceed with ordination credentialing, or recommend with qualifications.
- C. Upon a favorable recommendation from the committee, the church shall call an ordination council. The council shall examine the individual concluding its deliberation with a vote to recommend that the local church proceed with ordination, recommend that the individual undertake further study, or recommend the individual not be ordained.
- D. Upon the favorable recommendation of the council, the church shall conduct an ordination service and inform the International Office of NAB of the ordinant's new status.
- E. Forward signed copy of Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference to Association/Regional and International offices.

### **IX. Process Requirements for NAB Licensure Credentialing**

- A. The church where the person is serving shall initiate the process of licensure credentialing. This process shall include:
- A request from the church to the leadership of the association/region supporting this desire to license the individual;
  - A brief description of the individual's role in the local church ministry;
  - The submission from the individual of a signed copy of the NAB Statement of Faith and Code of Ministerial Ethics of the North American Baptist Conference.

- B. Upon review, the association/regional leadership shall vote to affirm license credential, deny licensure credential or seek clarification of information.

## SECTION TWO

# ORDINATION GUIDELINES IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

Sections I-V Approved by the General Council, June 7, 1985 as a revision of the 1971 General Council approved guidelines

### I. The Biblical Background for Ordination

(Where does ordination come from?)

The current practice of ordination of the churches of Christ is the result of the blending of biblical precedent with historical developments. No one-to-one correspondence can be assumed between the contemporary practice and any one act found in Scripture.

Nevertheless, ordination does arise out of a biblical background. Scripture indicates a variety of practices of selecting, appointing, and recognizing leaders. For this reason, those biblical texts which refer to, or describe these acts, are useful in helping to form an understanding of what ordination ought to signify in Christ's body today.

- A. The laying on of hands apparently symbolized Moses' transference of leadership to Joshua (*Numbers 27:23*). Laying on of hands in this case was performed by the former leader (Moses) and included the transfer to Joshua of the Spirit's empowerment for this task (*Deuteronomy 34:9*).
- B. The delegation of the priestly role to the Levites, likewise, was symbolized by the laying on of hands. Here, however, the people of Israel themselves, not just one leader, were involved in this symbolic rite (*Numbers 8:10*). The Baptist emphasis on the congregation as the ordaining body is motivated in part by this Old Testament incident.
- C. Anointing with oil was the consecration for the office of a prophet (*1 Kings 19:16*), the office of a king (*1 Kings 1:39*), and an Aaronic priest (*Exodus 29:7*).

The anointment of the king was not merely a part of the ceremony of enthronement; it was of decisive importance, for it conveyed the power for the exercise of royal authority.

By strength of anointment, the king became a theocratic vessel of the Lord, as texts like 1 Samuel 9:16 and 16:3 indicate.

Anointing with oil symbolized the conveying of the Holy Spirit, and the individual who were anointed were thus set apart and empowered for a particular work in the service of God.

- D. The mantle (robe) was passed from Elijah to Elisha, and in doing so, Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me" (*2 Kings 2:8-9; 13-14*).

- E. The laying on of hands was used by Jesus and the early church for several forms of ministry. Both Jesus and the early church employed the act in their healing ministries (*Mark 5:23; 6:5, 8:23,25; 16:18; Acts 9:17, 8:18*). Laying on of hands was also linked with the reception of the Spirit (*Acts 8:17,18,19; 19:6*). It is, however, the use of this act by the early church to set apart persons for ministry which is most significant for the contemporary practice of ordination.
- F. Seven Spirit-filled men were selected by the Jerusalem church to assist the apostles in leadership and service (*Acts 6:6*). These were installed by the apostles through the laying on of hands.

Although this incident may well have been the beginning of what later developed into an office of “helper” (deacon), the term “deacon” is not used in the text. Actually, certain of the seven later engaged in evangelism and other activities not generally included with the tasks of deacons (Stephen: *Acts 6-7; Philip: Acts 8*). Nevertheless, some Baptists and other Christian faith groups conclude from this text that contemporary deacons ought to be ordained.

- G. The Antioch church employed the laying on of hands in commissioning Paul and Barnabas for missionary service (*Acts 13:3*). Here, ministry within a local congregation was not in view. Rather, two persons who would serve as extensions of the ordaining church were set apart for ministry. No indication is given as to how the act was administered. However, prayer and fasting accompanied ordination.
- H. Paul’s assistant, Timothy, received this act at the hands of certain “elders” (*1 Timothy 4:14*), perhaps the leaders of his home church, prior to being sent out to accompany Paul (*Acts 16:1-3*). Paul, too, it seems, participated in the act (*2 Timothy 1:6*). Laying on of hands was linked with the reception of a divine gift for ministry.
- I. The appointment of the elders seems to have been Paul’s standard practice (*Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5*). Note that it in no way interfered with the emergence of gifted leadership of other types, for example, the prophets and teachers of *Acts 13:1*. Note furthermore, that in both references, the ordaining of elders took place at a subsequent meeting, allowing for individuals to emerge and prove themselves. Finally, the close link between the terms elder and bishop, at least in the Titus context, seems to show that the terms are virtually synonymous.
- J. Timothy was cautioned against being “hasty in the laying on of hands” (*1 Timothy 5:22*). The context indicates that the ordination of local leaders (*hence “elders” in vv 17-20*) may be in view here. If this is the case, then the command suggests that ordination ought to occur only after careful consideration of the candidate.
- K. In studying Paul’s call to the ministry, one discovers a number of references that suggest “self-authentication” (*Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 3:7-11; 1 Timothy 1:11*). However, one must not overlook the fact that it was Ananias that laid hands on Paul (*Acts 9:17*); that it was Barnabas who brought Paul to Antioch to minister (*Acts 11:25- 26*); and finally, that it was the church at Antioch that publicly set Paul apart for the ministry (*Acts 13:1-3*).

- L. Jesus' selecting of the apostles (*Mark 3:13-19; 6:7-13*) suggests an official act. It is not merely reported that they were preaching, but that they went out at a specific moment with a specific message. Moreover, the commissioning of the seventy (*Luke 10:1*) suggests that Jesus foresaw the time when many would be ordained "to do the work of an evangelist." Finally, the educational preparation should not be overlooked; they were with Jesus for some time before He sent them out. Indeed, the idea of "field education" with a supervisor evaluating their work is very strongly emphasized (*Mark 6:30-31; Luke 10:17-21*).

## II. Historic Development and Practice of Ordination

Ordination developed from New Testament practices of church leadership. During the first generations, as the biblical material reviewed above shows, the role of overseer/elder/pastor was not as official as it became later.

While some influence from pagan religious practice may be imagined, the determinant for church structure came from Gentile Christian understanding of the Old Testament. Christian practices were built on various New Testament passages which so solemnly explain the responsibilities of the bishop/presbyter/shepherd and of the congregation. But the Old Testament was the only Bible the Church had for generations. Early in the second century, therefore, the pattern of the priesthood was transposed into Christian practice. The office which in the New Testament was given interchangeable titles (overseer, elder, pastor) became two offices: a bishop who oversaw the churches of a municipal or rural region and a presbyter who was the priest of the local church.

By identifying him as priest, the emphasis in his ministry shifted to corporate worship. The focus of congregational life increasingly became the celebration of baptism and the Lords' Supper. With this, the function of the priest as mediator between God and His people gained prominence.

The responsibility for teaching the truth and for rightly guiding the congregation in worship and Christian living was solemnly undertaken in an act of ordination. Initially, congregational affirmation was required along with the assent of fellow clergy. In time, ordination, particularly the practice of other clergy laying hands on them, came to be understood as an act which infused spiritual graces that distinguished clergy from laity and which empowered the priest to preach, to celebrate the ordinances of Christ, and to care for the people's physical and spiritual welfare.

Centuries passed during which the Christian church developed a fixed structure and sacramental practice. By the end of the Middle Ages, Western (Latin, Roman) Christianity tended to emphasize only the role of the priest as mediator in ritual celebration. During the Reformation, Lutheranism and Anglicanism recovered in principle the importance of the priest as preacher and pastor as well as sacramental agent. But even these reforms were not satisfactory in the eyes of all.

In Elizabethan England, a conflict arose within the Anglican Church between those who wished to purge all traces of Roman tradition and those who felt it sufficient to remove only what was obviously false in ritual and doctrine. The Anglican view finally prevailed in 1689. In the interim, however, the anti-Episcopal dissenters (Nonconformists) had developed definite principles of church and ministry which differed from the Anglican norm.

Baptists were among those who felt the minister was not a priest but a preacher-teacher, a shepherd for the welfare of the congregation, and a leader in the worship, ordinances, discipline, and deliberations of the church. They no longer defined the ordinances in a sacramental manner which required a priest to perform them, but they gave them a spiritual interpretation which had its roots in Holland even before the Reformation. The pastor possessed no special powers by virtue of

ecclesiastical rites and succession. His was a moral authority which derived from God's endearment and the knowledge and spirituality he had developed by God's grace.

In New England at the time of the Great Awakening (1740-75), zealous new Christians in the established church charged that the Protestant clergy had become a special class which perpetuated itself by mechanical procedures. Education, morality, and approval by (mostly unspiritual and, therefore, unfit) ministers, in their opinion, could not qualify a person for Christian ministry. They felt that Christ, as head of the Church, called and endowed a person for ministry. A congregation was responsible to test these persons' spiritual credentials as well as their ministerial skills.

Many who held this view left the established Congregational churches and joined the languishing Baptist fellowship. They inspired afresh the Baptist understanding of the importance of spiritual qualifications for the ministry and of congregational decision in installing a pastor.

The view that each local church enjoyed the fullness of spiritual authority for Christian life and ministry relocated responsibility for ordination from the hands of the clergy or a supra-congregational administrative structure. On the other hand, Baptists did not operate in isolation from one another. They felt the need of mutual discussion among congregations to decide important issues. On its own authority, a local church could license someone to preach and "improve one's gifts" among them or wherever one could find opportunity. A church likewise ordained this person into full ministry as a pastor.

But ordination came after delegates from invited sister churches had given their agreement that the pastor was suited for public ministry. In asking a council to examine their pastor for ordination, a congregation declared that the pastor was demonstrating among them gifts and skills required for the office. The task of the sister churches, then, was to assess the candidates' doctrinal fitness and to evaluate their church's testimony as to their pastoral effectiveness.

Baptists developed their understanding of ordination in response to the practices others formalized centuries earlier and amidst the arguments of English Protestants about the nature of the church. They intentionally attempted to recover New Testament principles of church and ministry which through history seemed to them to have been forgotten or only partially remembered by other Christian bodies. As a result, their view deliberately runs at a tangent to the interpretations of the Church and its ministry and to the ordination practices prevalent in other churches and often codified in civil law.

### **III. Purpose of Ordination**

(Why should anyone be ordained? What does ordination mean?)

The official act of ordination, carried out by a local congregation, has three purposes.

#### **A. Acknowledgment and Confirmation of God's Call**

Through the act of ordination, the community of believers both acknowledges and confirms the fact that God has indeed called a certain individual to the Gospel ministry (*1 Timothy 4:14*). This formal act is necessary on the one hand, to avoid any individualistic and purely subjective understanding of the call. Although the call of God comes to an individual, it is the community that ultimately determines the legitimacy of a personal experience of calling.

On the other hand, the formal act of ordination is necessary in order that the community may publicly and in an official manner acknowledge the special role that the ordained person will be fulfilling in the church of Christ.

## B. Commissioning

Through the act of ordination, the community of believers commissions into service one who has been called of God (*Acts 13:3*). This commissioning encompasses three related aspects. First, the act entails committing or entrusting this person to God for ministry. A prayer of commitment is, therefore, appropriate in connection with ordination.

Secondly, as was the case in the biblical era, the act of laying on of hands is a bestowing or imparting of a blessing on the individual. This is linked to the divine blessing, the bestowal of God's gift, and God's Spirit on that person for the task entrusted to the minister of God (*1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6*). A prayer for divine empowerment is, therefore, appropriate.

Thirdly, this commissioning entails entrusting the person with a specific task. At ordination, a servant of God is embarking on a lifelong service to Christ's body, a service that body officially entrusts to that person through ordination (*Acts 13:3* and, in some sense, *Acts 6:6*).

## C. Declaration of Ministerial Status

Ordination is a public declaration that a specific person has been entrusted with ministerial status. This is important today, because clergy are acknowledged in the civil and social realms as well as in the ecclesiastical. Clergy are called upon to function in certain ways in the wider society. Ordination is a declaration to society in general that this person is to be looked upon as a member of the clergy.

This aspect of ordination has no specific rootage in the first century. That this is the case is understandable, for ancient Roman society had no place for the leaders of what was in their eyes a small religious sect.

## IV. Prerequisites for Ordination

(Who may be ordained?)

With this understanding of the purpose of the act in mind, certain prerequisites for ordination can be cited. These constitute specific features which should be true of, or present in, the candidate before that one may be ordained.

### A. Called of God

Since ordination is an acknowledgement and confirmation of God's call, the call of God must be present. Specifically, the candidate for ordination must be one who has heard and answered the divine call, first to personal salvation, and then, to the Gospel ministry. Evidence of this in both word and life ought to be scrutinized prior to ordination by the ordaining church and be the ordination council (*Acts 13:2*).

### B. Gifted and Prepared for Ministry

An effective ministry requires both a divine endowment (ministry gifts) and personal diligence in developing certain ministry skills. For example, ministry gifts may include the ability to teach (*1 Timothy 3:2; Ephesians 3:9*) or to preach (*1 Timothy 4:13; Ephesians 4:11-13*). To these could be added skills in areas such as counseling and administration.

It is recommended that persons have completed a recognized course of theological study or its equivalent, that they demonstrate an appropriate level of Biblical knowledge, and that they have had their effectiveness in ministry tested through practical, “in the field” experience.

### C. Sound in Doctrine

One who is ordained is looked to as a teacher. Therefore, to this end, such a person must be knowledgeable in the Christian faith, committed to truth, and able to apply the truth to concrete situations. Soundness in doctrine is a prerequisite for ordination.

Theological education is important. Such training encourages the future minister to explore doctrinal issues, draw personal conclusions based on an understanding of viable options, and apply doctrine to life.

The candidate’s ability as a teacher of the church, i.e. that person’s grasp of doctrinal questions, ought to be tested before ordination. This is the responsibility of both the ordaining church and the council.

### D. Exemplary in Life-style

One who is ordained is looked to as a model of Christian maturity. The fruit of the Spirit should be evident in that one’s personal life. Personal convictions must be evidenced in personal conduct and interpersonal relations.

As with other prerequisites, maturity ought to be tested prior to ordination. The qualifications in the Pastoral Epistles (e.g. *1 Timothy 3:1-7*) provide a guideline for the candidate for ordination.

### E. Affirmation by a Body of Believers

An individual may be called to the Gospel ministry, be gifted with ministry gifts, and may be well trained and experienced, but ordination includes the affirmation of a body of believers, who acknowledge that God indeed has called and prepared that individual for Christian ministry.

As committed believers exercise their gifts and abilities within the Body of Christ, it will become evident to the church, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that God has called one in their midst to a unique spiritual leadership among them. The church will then, in agreement with the candidate, initiate the steps toward ordination. Through the act of ordination, a church declares that an individual has been called and gifted by God for the Gospel ministry and accepts that individual’s role as a spiritual leader.

A body of believers’ affirmation of an individual’s gift and calling to the Gospel ministry is a prerequisite for ordination.

## V. The Scope of Ordination

(What functions are appropriate for ordination?)

Ordination is linked to certain roles within or on behalf of the church of Christ. Rather than being a “status” with which one is endowed, it is, in part, a call to serve in a certain role or fulfill some specific function on behalf of the people of God.

### A. General Principles

Not all roles or ministries in or for the church include ordination. However, certain general principles taken together can serve to delineate the “ordainable roles” from others.

### *Church Mission*

Ordination must relate to the mission of the church. The church exists to glorify God as it fulfills the mandate given to it by Christ. This mandate includes the worship of the Triune God, the edification of the people of God, and outreach in evangelism and service to the world. Only persons serving in those functions which grow out of this mandate ought to be considered for ordination.

### *Church Setting*

Ordination must relate to functions that find their setting within the local church or as extensions of the church. Ordained ministers function primarily as models and “enablers” to the people of God in the fulfillment of the common mandate (e.g. *Ephesians 4:11-12*). For this reason, such persons find their places of service either within the local church context (*1 Timothy 5:17-22*) or as those commissioned as ministers serving on behalf of the people of God beyond the boundaries of a local congregation. (*Acts 13:1-3*).

### *Centering on the Word of God*

Ordination must relate to roles and functions which center on handling the Word of God. The ordained person is one whose major task in life is to “minister the Word of God” (*Romans 15:16*). Often this is primarily in the form of preaching and/or teaching (*1 Timothy 2:7*, *Ephesians 3:7*; *2 Timothy 1:11*); although applying and bringing the Word in other ways will also be included. In any case, the primary resource of the ordained person is the Word, and that person’s primary concern is its application to the lives of people.

## B. Accountability

Ordination must require accountability to the people of God. Ordination is not a permanent status with which a person is endowed, but rather the confirmation of a call to serve in certain ways in or for the church. For this reason, ordination must include ongoing accountability. Accountability for ordained persons serving in local churches lies naturally with them. Persons ministering beyond the local congregation must be tied either to a church, to a group of churches, or, in certain cases, to a denomination as a whole through its designated officials. Chaplains, counselors, and others involved in ministering outside the local church are also accountable to the church where they are members, to their association, and to the denomination.

## **VI. Process of Ordination**

(See Section One, IX. *Process Requirements for NAB Ordination Credentialing* on page 6 of this document. )

## **VII. Procedure for Ordination Council**

1. The local church representative or the chair of the ordination credentials committee or the regional minister shall chair the meeting until a moderator and secretary of the council are

elected.

2. The delegate list is determined.
3. A moderator and secretary are selected to lead council and record minutes.
4. The candidate shall present statements on Christian conversion, call to the ministry, preparation for the ministry, Christian service, relationship to the North American Baptist Conference and doctrinal beliefs.
5. After the candidate's statement has been presented, the members of the council shall have opportunity for cross-examination.
6. After cross-examination and the vote by the council to conclude the public examination, the council shall withdraw into executive session for voting delegates only.
7. The council shall vote to recommend to the church that it proceed with the ordination service, or to proceed with qualifications (listing options) or to not proceed with ordination at that point in time.
8. The candidate is brought back in to hear the decision/recommendation of the council.
9. The moderator of the council and/or Regional Minister will confer with the candidate and delegate of the ordaining church to make plans for the ordination service.
10. The moderator and secretary of the council shall be responsible to provide the minutes of the meeting. A copy of these minutes is to be given to the candidate, the local church, the Regional Minister, and the North American Baptist Conference International Office.
11. A certificate of ordination shall be properly signed and prepared for presentation to the candidate at the public service.
12. The council shall vote to dissolve and adjourn.

## SECTION THREE

# POLICY ON MORAL FAILURE AND RESTORATION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

### I. Goal

Matthew 18:15 - 20 to clarify the truth, confront sin, and call for repentance Galatians

6:1 to restore the fallen

1 Timothy 5:19 -22 to protect the integrity of the church and the reputation of innocent parties to apply appropriate penalties for wrongdoing

### II. Definition of Moral Failure

For the purpose of this policy, moral failure is defined as sexual or ethical misconduct. Sexual misconduct is defined as any form of sexual intercourse, contact to the breasts, genitals, or other intimate parts, requests for such activity, sexual innuendo, sexually suggestive speech, with anyone other than one's spouse, regardless of whether such activity is consensual.

Ethical misconduct of other kinds, as defined by Scriptural standards (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5, 6; 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1) as interpreted by a local congregation or association/region, may also be addressed using this policy.

### III. Steps in Dealing with Moral Failure

#### A. Clarify the Facts and Establish the Truth

An accusation against a leader comes to light either through accidental discovery or direct accusation. According to Baptist polity the local church bears the primary responsibility for dealing with the situation. In the interests of fairness and impartiality the church may wish to call on leaders from the association/region for help. The following procedure is strongly recommended:

1. Any individual who suspects or becomes aware of sexual misconduct against a leader in the church should first follow the steps of Matthew 18:15 - 17. If the accused makes a confession and repents, the process may move immediately to the venue of the church leadership, which shall strive to meet the objectives outlined under (4.) in this section, and then follow through with Section B.
2. If the allegation meets with denial or attempts to minimize the offense (a common response) the direction of Matthew 18 to bring in one or two others should be followed using the leaders of the church. The church leadership should appoint an impartial investigation team which will be responsible for discovering the truth relating to the allegations and dealing with the accused and the accusers. Care should be taken that this team will be viewed as impartial by any and all sides in the situation. Full disclosure of the nature of the allegations is not appropriate at this point, only the request for and appointing of an investigative team. The exception to this is

alleged child abuse; most jurisdictions require immediate reporting of such allegations to the appropriate local authorities.

3. If the investigation team determines that the allegations are NOT true, it is responsible to deal with the source and intent of the incorrect information or false allegations in order to provide full exoneration of the accused.
4. If the investigation team determines that the allegations are true, it needs to establish the precise nature and scope of the offense and confront the guilty party with its information, with these goals in mind:
  - a. that the guilty individual and the investigative team agree on the precise nature of the offense (with the focus being on what was done, not why);
  - b. that the guilty individual express sincere repentance toward God;
  - c. that the guilty individual sincerely ask for forgiveness from all injured parties, including spouses and the church leadership;
  - d. that the reputations and feelings of innocent parties be kept in mind;
  - e. that any inappropriate conduct cease immediately, inappropriate relationships be severed, and a system of accountability be established.
5. The investigation team reports its findings and the results of its confrontation with the accused to the church leadership.

#### B. Apply Appropriate Discipline

1. The church leadership shall determine the gravity of the offense. Relatively minor offenses (for example those not involving overt or characteristic behavior) might be dealt with through establishing accountability and counseling.
2. Sexual misconduct and major ethical offenses should be met with stringent discipline, in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19 - 22: immediate loss of employment and recommendation to the Association/Region credentials committee of the disciplinary action taken and the reasons for such action.
3. The Association/Region Credentials Committee shall remove its recognition of the accused individual's credentials, and notify the International Office of its action and the reasons for its action.
4. The church leadership should also take responsibility to see that an already injured spouse is not punished along with the accused.
5. The church leadership should extend to the sincerely repentant forgiveness and love, and offer steps towards restoration.
6. In the event that the accused refuses to repent, the direction of Matthew 18 is to *"tell it to the church."* Even this should be done in such a way as to protect the identity and integrity of

innocent parties.

#### **IV. Steps Towards Restoration**

- A. If the guilty party is sincerely repentant and factors that led to the moral/ethical failure have been sufficiently treated so that genuine progress against relapse has been seen, the individual may request the opportunity to be restored to ministry. This request may be made to the Regional Minister, Regional Executive Team, or the local church.
- B. The process of restoration should involve the following steps and considerations.
1. The process should be given a time span of appropriate length to provide for the contrition, repentance and healing of the individual. This to be determined by the local church and the Association/Regional Executive Committee.
  2. The church leadership shall appoint an impartial restoration team to oversee the process of restoration. This team should be made fully aware of the nature of the offense, and shall be given full authority by the church to devise an appropriate course of recovery, including such considerations as the need for repentance before the church (again bearing in mind the dignity and needs of innocent parties), professional counseling, payment of reparations, and regular accountability.
  3. If in the judgment of the restoration team the requirements of the restoration process are not being fulfilled by the guilty party, this shall be reported to the church leadership so that it may determine whether or not to terminate the process and close the door to restoration to ministry.
  4. If in the judgment of the restoration team the requirements of the restoration process have been fulfilled by the guilty party, it shall recommend that the church leadership meet with him/her to determine fitness for further ministry.
  5. If the church leadership is satisfied that the guilty party has met the requirements for restoration it shall recommend to the Association/Regional Credentials Committee that its recognition his/her credentialed status be restored.
  6. If the Association/Regional Credentials Committee agrees with the recommendation of the local church leadership, it shall inform the International Office that it has restored recognition of the accused's credentials.
  7. The local church and the Association may plan and conduct a formal service of restoration to recognize the completion of the restoration process and to re-affirm the restored individual in his/her call to ministry.

## SECTION FOUR

# STATEMENT OF BELIEFS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

### Preface

Baptists, since their beginnings, repeatedly have composed confessions, which expressed the doctrinal consensus among related churches. In principle, however, Baptists always have insisted that no statement of faith can be considered creedally binding, even upon concurring congregations. The purpose of their doctrinal summaries was to explain to other Christians and to the larger society what Baptists believed and practiced. Within and among Baptist churches, statements of faith also provided a standard for instruction, counsel and fellowship.

We, as the North American Baptist Conference, presently feel the need to state more fully our Baptist understanding of the Christian faith. The purpose that guided us in writing and the use that we intend for this declaration are to:

1. further the sense of identity and the spirit of unity within our North American Baptist Conference by declaring our common doctrinal understanding
2. provide a basis for doctrinal instruction within our conference
3. provide a basis for doctrinal discussions in the hiring of conference personnel
4. serve as a reference point when opinions differ
5. provide a basis for doctrinal discussion in admitting new churches and new pastors into our various associations
6. provide a doctrinal guide for new churches
7. give a doctrinal witness beyond our conference

In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout history, we seek to practice and propagate by God's grace the following convictions:

**1. We believe the Bible is God's Word given by divine inspiration, the record of God's revelation of Himself to humanity** (II Timothy 3:16). It is trustworthy, sufficient, without error— the supreme authority and guide for all doctrine and conduct (I Peter 1:23-25; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16-17). It is the truth by which God brings people into a saving relationship with Himself and leads them to Christian maturity (John 20:31, I John 5:9-12; Matthew 4:4; I Peter 2:2).

**2. We believe in the one living and true God, perfect in wisdom, sovereignty, holiness, justice, mercy and love** (I Timothy 1:17; Psalm 86:15; Deuteronomy 32:3-4). He exists eternally in three coequal persons who act together in creation, providence and redemption (Genesis 1:26; I Peter 1:2; Hebrews 1:1-3).

**a. The Father** reigns with providential care over all life and history in the created universe. He hears and answers prayer (I Chronicles 29:11-13; Matthew 7:11). He initiated salvation by sending His Son, and He is Father to those who by faith accept His Son as Lord and Savior (I John 4:9-10; John 3:16; John 1:12; Acts 16:31).

**b. The Son** became man, Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18). Being fully God and fully man, He revealed God through His sinless life, miracles and teaching (John 14:9; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:23-24). He provided salvation through His atoning death in our place and by His bodily resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-4; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:23-25). He ascended into heaven where He rules over all creation (Philippians 2:5-11). He intercedes for all believers and dwells in them as their ever-present Lord (Romans 8:34; John 14:23).

**c. The Holy Spirit** inspired men to write the Scriptures (II Peter 1:21). Through this Word, He convicts individuals of their sinfulness and of the righteousness of Christ, draws them to the Savior, and bears witness to their new birth (James 1:18; John 16:7-11; I Thessalonians 1:5-6; Romans 8:16). At regeneration and conversion, the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit indwells, seals and gives spiritual gifts to all believers for ministry in the church and society (Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 12:5-8; I Peter 4:10). He empowers, guides, teaches, fills, sanctifies and produces the fruit of Christlikeness in all who yield to Him (Acts 4:31; Romans 8:14; I Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 5:18; II Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 5:16; 22-23).

**3. We believe God created an order of spiritual beings called angels to serve Him and do His will** (Psalm 148:1-5; Colossians 1:16). The holy angels are obedient spirits ministering to the heirs of salvation and glorifying God (Hebrews 1:6-7; 13-14). Certain angels, called demons, Satan being their chief, through deliberate choice revolted and fell from their exalted position (Revelation 12:7-9). They now tempt individuals to rebel against God (I Timothy 4:1; I Peter 5:8). Their destiny in hell has been sealed by Christ's victory over sin and death (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).

**4. We believe God created man in His own image to have fellowship with Himself and to be steward over His creation** (Genesis 1:26-28). As a result, each person is unique, possesses dignity and is worthy of respect (Psalm 139:13-17). Through the temptation of Satan, Adam chose to disobey God; this brought sin and death to the human race and suffering to all creation (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12-21; 8-22). Therefore, everyone is born with a sinful nature and needs to be reconciled to God (Romans 3:9-18, 23). Satan tempts people to rebel against God, even those who love Him (Ephesians 4:27; II Corinthians 2:11; Matthew 16:23). Nonetheless, everyone is personally responsible to God for thoughts, actions and beliefs and has the right to approach Him directly through Jesus Christ, the only mediator (Romans 14:12; I Timothy 2:5).

**5. We believe salvation is redemption by Christ of the whole person from sin and death** (II Timothy 1:9-10; I Thessalonians 5:23). It is offered as a free gift by God to all and must be received personally through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (I Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 20:21). An individual is united to Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27). As a child of God, the believer is acquitted of all guilt and brought into a new relationship of peace (Romans 5:1). Christians grow as the Holy Spirit enables them to understand and obey the Word of God (II Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:15; I Thessalonians 3:12).

**6. We believe the Church is the body of which Christ is the head and all who believe in Him are members** (Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 12:4-5). Christians are commanded to be baptized upon profession of faith and to unite with a local church for mutual encouragement and growth in discipleship through worship, nurture, service and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world (Acts 2:41-42, 47; Luke 24:45-48). Each church is a self-governing body under the lordship of Christ with all members sharing responsibility (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28). The form of government is understood to be congregational (Matthew 18:17; Acts 6:3-6; 15:22-23).

The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's identification with the death, burial and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-5). The Lord's Supper is the partaking of the bread and of the cup by believers together as a continuing memorial of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. It is an act of thankful dedication to Him and serves to unite His people until He returns (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

To express unity in Christ, local churches form associations and a conference for mutual counsel, fellowship and a more effective fulfillment of Christ's commission (Acts 15; I Corinthians 6:1-3).

**7. We believe religious liberty, rooted in Scripture, is the inalienable right of all individuals to freedom of conscience with ultimate accountability to God** (Genesis 1:27; John 8:32; II Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21; Acts 5:29). Church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other (Matthew 22:21). Christians should pray for civil leaders, and obey and support government in matters not contrary to Scripture (I Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-16). The state should guarantee religious liberty to all persons and groups regardless of their religious preferences, consistent with the common good.

**8. We believe Christians, individually and collectively, are salt and light in society** (Matthew 5:13-16). In a Christlike spirit, they oppose greed, selfishness and vice; they promote truth, justice and peace; they aid the needy and preserve the dignity of people of all races and conditions (Hebrews 13:5; Luke 9:23; Titus 2:12; Philippians 4:8-9; I John 3:16-17; James 2:1-4).

We affirm the family as the basic unit of society and seek to preserve its integrity and stability (Genesis 2:21-25; Ephesians 6:1-4).

We believe the Bible teaches that marriage refers to the covenant relationship exclusively between one man and one woman, as instituted by God in the beginning (Genesis 2:20b-24; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4).

**9. We believe God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring all things to their appropriate end and establish the new heaven and the new earth** (Ephesians 1:9-10, Revelation 21:1). The certain hope of the Christian is that Jesus Christ will return to the earth suddenly, personally and visibly in glory according to His promise (Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; John 14:1-3). The dead will be raised, and Christ will judge mankind in righteousness (John 5:28-29). The unrighteous will be consigned to the everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:10). The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and dwell forever with the Lord (Philippians 3:20-21; II Corinthians 5:10; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

*Adopted by the North American Baptist Conference delegates, August 10-15, 1982, Niagara Falls, NY. Section 8 amended by the delegates, July 15-19, 2009, Winnipeg, MB.*

# A CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE

## NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

The ministers of our North American Baptist Conference welcome the privilege that our respective civil governments give to solemnize marriages as part of their Christian ministry. However, the same Biblical authority that informs all our teaching and ministry governs our convictions about the nature of marriage. Therefore, our ministers will in good conscience only perform weddings consistent with the view of marriage expressed in the following “Christian Affirmation of Marriage:”

### **From the Bible we believe . . .**

#### **That God’s intention for marriage is established throughout the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments**

This is expressed in creation and the creation story,<sup>1</sup> the Law of Moses,<sup>2</sup> the wisdom literature,<sup>3</sup> and in the prophetic tradition.<sup>4</sup> The Divine establishment of marriage is confirmed by the words of Jesus<sup>5</sup> and the New Testament authors.<sup>6</sup> They provide guidance for perfecting marriage, and affirm its spiritual significance. Chaste singleness and marriage are both honored as faithful and holy lifestyles ordained by God.<sup>7</sup>

#### **That God ordained marriage as a voluntary union for life of one man and one woman**

Our creation as man and woman, who are complementary to one another,<sup>8</sup> has significance in revealing aspects of the image of God<sup>9</sup> and His relationship to humanity.<sup>10</sup> The permanence of the marital bond<sup>11</sup> mirrors God’s faithfulness, just as its monogamy reflects God’s singular devotion to his people<sup>12</sup> and his people’s singular devotion to him.<sup>13</sup>

#### **That sexual intimacy is legitimate only within the bounds of marriage**

The commands of God are clear.<sup>14</sup> Sexual activity profoundly affects people emotionally and spiritually.<sup>15</sup> Sexual intercourse outside of marriage, promiscuity, common law relationships, adultery, homosexual acts, exploitation, incest and sexual perversion contradict God’s purpose for human sexuality.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1-2

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 20:14, 17; Leviticus 18; Deuteronomy 5:18, 21

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 5; Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 13:22; Proverbs 14:1; Proverbs 17:6; Proverbs 19:13-14; Proverbs 31:10-31; Song of Solomon

<sup>4</sup> Malachi 2:14-15

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 19:1-9; Mark 10:6-9

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13: 4; 1 Peter 3:1-7

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 19:10-13; 1 Corinthians 7

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 2:7, 18-23

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10: 7-9

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 5: 25

<sup>13</sup> Deuteronomy 6:13; Joshua 24:24; Matthew 4:10;

**That marriage is more than a contract between two persons: It is a covenant before God**

God is committed to every marriage between a man and a woman.<sup>17</sup> In the covenant of marriage, God joins a man and a woman together “in one flesh,” and forbids anyone to break it.<sup>18</sup> This covenant is unique among human relationships.<sup>19</sup> God intends the married couple to recognize and celebrate His call to an irrevocable commitment to love, to cherish and remain faithful which transcends the quid pro quo of contracts.<sup>20</sup>

**That in Christian marriage, the Church acts as an agent of God’s blessing, as a primary witness and as a supportive community**

The church declares the blessing of God but does not create that benefit.<sup>21</sup> Therefore the church cannot confer the spiritual blessing of marriage on other relationships.<sup>22</sup>

**That a healthy marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children**

The practical benefits of marriage are inherent to its form. A healthy marriage is a unique source of benefits for children including the stability of the family and the access of children to a mother and a father.<sup>23</sup> God intended that children should receive nurture from male and female parents, and in turn learn to honor both.<sup>24</sup> Neither the church nor anyone else can confer the innate benefits of marriage on other forms of relationships or unions.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7-8

<sup>15</sup> Proverbs 6:32; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 4:19-24

<sup>16</sup> Leviticus 18:6-18; Matthew 5:27-32; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 7:1-2, 9; Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 1:8-11

<sup>17</sup> Malachi 2: 14-15

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 19: 4-6; Mark 10: 6-9

<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 11: 12

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 7: 10-11; Ephesians 5: 21-33

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 1: 22-23

<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 5: 9-13; 1 Timothy 1:6-11

<sup>23</sup> Proverbs 6: 20-23; Colossians 3: 18-21

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 5: 16; Ephesians 6: 1-3

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 19: 4-6; Mark 10: 6-9

**Therefore, we conclude . . .**

**That the Bible teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman only, and to recognize other unions as legitimate marriages would be contrary to our understanding of scripture within the North American Baptist Conference.**

We affirm, in accordance to the North American Baptist Conference Statement of Faith, that each person is unique, possesses dignity, and is worthy of respect.

We also affirm that we are called to introduce each person to the loving, reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ and the life changing transformation described in scripture.

As Christians we seek to demonstrate God's love to all people, but we will not compromise our convictions on marriage as defined by scripture.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

1. As a matter of belief, doctrine and religious practice, the North American Baptist Conference reserves the term "marriage" for the covenant relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.
2. And that the North American Baptist Conference establishes the standard that all individuals, who are licensed to perform marriages, will not officiate, co-officiate or participate as a pastor at any marriage outside of the previously stated definition of marriage.
3. And that in the event that an individual licensed to perform marriages, officiates, co-officiates or participates as a pastor at a marriage that is outside of the previously stated definition of marriage, will be subject to disciplinary review and loss of license.
4. And we recommend that all North American Baptist Conference churches adopt the above as a policy of their individual, local church, and review their "church use policies" to reflect the resolution as stated.
5. And that the facilities of North American Baptist Conference churches will not be used for weddings or receptions where the marriage union is contrary to the provisions of this resolution.

*Adopted by the North American Baptist Conference delegates, July 5-9, 2006, Estes Park CO. Revision approved by the General Council, May 14, 2011, Orlando, FL.*

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## SECTION FIVE

# CODE OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

As a minister of Jesus Christ, called by God to proclaim the Gospel, and gifted by the Spirit, I dedicate myself to conduct my ministry in accord with the Statement of Beliefs of the North American Baptist Conference and the church to which I am called.

I will constantly prepare myself in body, mind and spirit for the task to which God has called me.

I will safeguard the good image of the Christian ministry by living honestly, not seeking special financial privileges or gratuities and avoiding embarrassing debts while giving faithfully to the work of the Lord.

I will, if a full-time minister, confer with church leaders before accepting remuneration for work other than that normally associated with the pastorate.

I will seek to build up the church without discrediting other churches or ministries. I will balance my family commitments and church duties properly.

I will keep all appropriate confidences shared with me in counseling sessions and other ministry contexts except in cases where disclosure is required by law or necessary to prevent an individual from harming himself/herself or another.

I will be truthful in my speech, never plagiarizing another's work or communicating gossip.

I will keep my life morally pure by refusing to engage in any form of pornography or become romantically or sexually involved in any relationship, which is in violation of Biblical standards of morality.

I will exercise the authority of a servant-leader who influences others through love and understanding and who humbly acknowledges dependence upon God, putting the interests of others above my own.

I will, if I serve in an Associate Pastor role, support the leadership of the Senior Pastor and not undermine his ministry in public settings or private conversations with others.

I will, if serving with a multiple staff, show respect for other ministers and staff members and shall encourage and work with them as members of a team.

I will relate to other ministers with the respect that is due fellow servants of Jesus Christ and shall cooperate with them as God leads.

I will seek the fellowship of the pastors of the North American Baptist Conference.

I will encourage participation in the mission and ministry of the Conference and the Region and Association in which I serve.

I will not intentionally cause division within the congregation I serve. If I resign or am asked to resign I will not seek to provide pastoral leadership for any new church that may develop in the same community unless approved by the Region or Association.

Upon my resignation, I will sever my pastoral relations with the church and shall not make pastoral contacts of any kind with the members of the church(es) whom I formally served without the knowledge and consent of the pastor(s).

I will obey the laws of my government as long as they do not conflict with the laws of God and will practice Christian citizenship without engaging in partisan or political activities that would discredit the integrity of the ministry.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am in full and complete agreement with the North American Baptist Statement of Beliefs and Code of Ministerial Ethics and agree to them without reservation. I further covenant and pledge with my colleagues in the North American Baptist Conference ministry to keep the Code of Ministerial Ethics. If at any time I should cease to agree with the Statement of Beliefs or the Code of Ministerial Ethics, I will resign my position as a minister with the North American Baptist Conference. I also acknowledge that, should I cease to agree with the Statement of Beliefs or act in such a manner as to violate the Code of Ministerial Ethics that this will be grounds for the withdrawal of credentials as a minister within the North American Baptist Conference.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(Revised June 2004 GC)*