

**MINISTERIAL ORDINATION**  
In the  
**MISSOURI STATE ASSOCIATION  
OF FREE WILL BAPTIST**



**ADOPTED JUNE 7, 2023**

# **MINISTERIAL ORDINATION**

## **IN THE MISSOURI STATE ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTIST**

### **I. Rationale for and Benefits of Ordination**

- A. Recognition of God's calling to and gifting for vocational ministry (Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; Acts 6:6; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9);
- B. Accountability to and alignment with the local church and denomination, both doctrinally and morally;
- C. Basic consensus and clarity of process across the state;
- D. Recognized legal status and protections, by the IRS through MOFWB and NAFWB.

### **II. Scriptural Concept and Basis of Vocational Ministry**

- A. Free Will Baptists have historically used the term "minister" and "pastor" interchangeably. However, the New Testament uses the word "pastor" in a more specific sense to describe those called to teach, lead, and shepherd a congregation. Related terms include, "elder", "bishop", and "overseer".
- B. Every believer has been given a grace-gift(s) to serve our Lord and His Church (Eph. 4:7). Some believers have received the call of God upon their lives for vocational ministry and have been gifted for the task of preparing God's people to carry out ministries that build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).
- C. "Vocation" refers to the fact that ministry is a calling, not merely chosen and pursued at will. It would include all ordained individuals in good standing with a local FWB church and engaged in a ministry. It doesn't refer primarily to one's present status (whether employed, in a ministry transition or retired) nor to one's source of income, as this may differ significantly according to God's provision and an individual church's ability to support their pastor(s) (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 9:9-10).
- D. The sense of calling to and gifting for vocational ministry receives confirmation through ordination. An Ordination Council licenses men in the recognition that they have been admitted into the ordination process. Ordination refers to the setting aside and recognition of those men, gifted and called by God, to serve as pastors (Titus 1:5). It shall be conferred for life, so long as the man continues to meet the qualifications of the office.
- E. In addition to pastoral ministries, there are others that are also eligible to pursue licensure for ministries outside the local church: evangelists, seminary professors, chaplains, church planters, missionaries, parachurch ministries, etc. This license is renewable with a one-year minimum term. The license is designed for those who desire to affiliate with and be accountable to the FWB denomination.

### **III. Authority in Ordination to Vocational Ministry**

- A. We recognize the authority of the local church in the selection or presentation of candidates for ordination to the ministry. However, local churches have historically requested the involvement of their district association in the examination and preparation process. Thus, the candidate becomes accountable to this local church, as well as the local association.
- B. These individuals are affirmed by their local church after a recommended period of preparation and examination and subsequently should be examined by the district association's ordaining body (Acts 13:3, 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6, Titus 1:5).

- C. The local Association's ordaining body shall have the liberty to refer to themselves as they desire. (*i.e.*, Ordination Council, Credentials Committee, Presbytery Board, etc.) For the purposes of this document, this body will be referred to as the Ordination Council.
- D. Those ordained are thus credentialed in the Free Will Baptist denomination and are therefore standing members of their district association and the state association, entitled to all the rights and privileges of being a delegate.
- E. A FWB credential ("being licensed or ordained") is granted to candidates "in trust." This means the candidate is accountable to the denomination through the local church and local association. Therefore, if there is a disciplinary matter, the local association's Ordination Council may deem it necessary to suspend or revoke the license or ordination credential. All disciplinary procedures should follow the admonitions given in Matthew 18:15-20, Galatians 6:1, and other relevant passages. As members of their local church, pastors are subject to the discipline of their congregation as well as the association which has recognized their ordination.

#### IV. Ordination Procedures and Preparedness

- A. Ordination procedures vary from one district association to another, depending on the traditions of the various areas. However, in most cases, the following takes place:
  - 1. The candidate for ordination must be licensed for a period prior to ordination, often for a least one year.
    - i. **Licensure** is a provisional status recognized by an Ordination Council that affirms the candidate (1) is a true believer, (2) evidences a clear testimony of a divine call, (3) demonstrates character and gifts for ministry to the local church which has recommended ordination or consents to his pursuit of ordination, and (4) is in agreement with Free Will Baptist doctrine and practice.
    - ii. The local church submits a written request with a petition for examination of the candidate by the Ordination Council.
    - iii. If the candidate is affirmed by the Ordination Council, a license shall be granted. It is recommended that a mentor be assigned to the candidate who will provide counsel, guidance, and accountability.
  - 2. After having completed the prescribed licensure period and before ordination, the candidate will be once again examined by the Ordination Council which will require a more in-depth examination based on the qualifications as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Such examination should consist of written and oral questioning of the candidate by the Ordination Council. Examinations ensure the candidate for **ordination**:
    - i. is convinced of God's calling and gift upon him, and if married, his wife shares his sense of calling and gifting;
    - ii. has demonstrated consistent Christian character and biblical/theological competence;
    - iii. subscribes to and is willing to uphold the *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptists*;
    - iv. has been affirmed by his local church and is directly involved in a local church ministry. (Some exceptions may apply – see IV.B.);
    - v. demonstrates a basic knowledge of FWB history and denominational ministries;
    - vi. demonstrates a cooperative spirit with the purposes and policies of FWB;
    - vii. completes all requests of the Ordination Council.
  - 3. Given the level of Divine expectations, spiritual commitment, personal discipline, and intellectual challenges associated with pastoral ministry, candidates are urged to complete a prescribed course of study on FWB church history, doctrine, theology, and polity as recommended by the local Ordination Council in cooperation with the MOFWB Christian

Education Board (James 3:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:21-22). Our three Free Will Baptist colleges also offer online and residential education opportunities that would be highly beneficial and desirable for all prospective and current pastors to consider.

4. The Ordination Council usually makes recommendations directly to the delegates of the association which vote to ordain, or in some cases, makes a recommendation to the local church before proceeding to ordain. Upon a majority vote to ordain, the local church will be informed that the candidate may begin preparing for his ordination service.
5. The ministers of the association are expected to attend and help to administer the actual ordination ceremony.
6. The ordination service generally includes a sermon by another pastor, the presentation of the Bible, and a formal charge. The service usually concludes with the laying on of hands by all the ordained present and a prayer of consecration.

**B. For candidates serving in distant areas or non-FWB ministries.**

1. While we do not normally offer credentials to those who are not serving in the MOFWB State Association of churches, a local association may approve an exception from time to time. Examples of such exceptions might be individuals who are serving non-ordaining bodies, such as a parachurch ministry; or living in an area without a FWB church in proximity. In such instances, credentials may be granted through a local association upon meeting the Ordination Council's requirements.
2. Those already credentialed in the FWB denomination who move to remote areas or join with a non-FWB ministry, but wish to retain their credentials must fulfill the following requirements:
  - i. hold membership in a church of like faith;
  - ii. remain accountable to the original association that granted his credentials or the closest district association;
  - iii. provide an annual written ministry report to the association holding his credentials;
  - iv. attend district, state, or national meetings when possible. Exceptions to this may be military personnel, missionaries, and other personnel who by virtue of service and location may be unable to fulfill these requirements.

**V. Revocation of Credentials**

- A. Credentials shall be revoked by the Ordination Council if the ordained individual chooses to withdraw from vocational ministry, deviates doctrinally from the *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of FWB*, or ceases to be a member in good standing of a FWB church.
- B. Should this person re-enter the ministry later, he may request re-examination with the possibility of having the credential returned. It is highly recommended that the process of revoking one's credentials be well documented by the local association and should inform the MOFWB Executive Director.

## **VI. Transfer of Credentials**

- A. If a person leaves a local ministry area and accepts a call to ministry in a church of a sister association, he may ask the new church to request that his credentials be ratified or accepted by the association of which the new church is a member.
- B. While the Ordination Council of the receiving association will most likely receive a minister's credentials from another FWB association, there should be a meeting to examine and affirm the minister's beliefs and understanding of that local association's business and meetings.
- C. In cases where a minister is transferring his credentials from a non-FWB association, the Ordination Council should follow the same or modified examination protocols as outlined in IV. A.2.

## FREE WILL BAPTIST CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

One of the requirements of FWB in our credentialing process is to have a clear letter of recommendation from the local church of which the minister in question is serving or attending. We passionately believe that recognition of a minister's call to service begins in the local church. We ask the congregation to affirm the following in your letter for recommendation for a ministry credential, whether it is for a Vocational Ministry License, Ministry Ordination, or Transfer of Ordination. Believing that the local church is best suited to recognize a person's character and call to ministry, we are looking for a recommendation that confidently affirms this call of God.

Your recommendation should include statements to each of these points:

- that this individual is a member in good standing of your church and that this person is engaged in a ministry that qualifies for a ministerial credential.
- that this individual currently demonstrates the church leadership qualities found in the pastoral epistles of Titus and 1 Timothy and that your local church body affirms God's call on this individual life for Christian vocational or non-vocational ministry and can recommend them with confidence to other churches in the FWB family. (If you desire a tool to aid in this recommendation, please contact your local associational moderator or the MOFWB Executive Office)
- that to your understanding this individual's doctrinal beliefs and practices would fit within the boundaries established by the Treatise of the Faith and Practices of Free Will Baptists and clear orthodox evangelical theology.
- that to your understanding, this person has demonstrated that he will actively support the local and state associations, both with his attendance at meetings and through support of local, state, national and international ministries as well as the COOP plan of financial support.
- that your leadership board is sufficiently aware of this person's ministry history and character to state they are not aware of any moral failure in this individual's past that would, if revealed, bring dishonor to the local church being served or to FWB as a denomination.
- reference letters are welcomed.

A clear letter of recommendation is required to be sent to the Local Association before a date can be set for this individual's oral credentialing examination. This letter should be **sent by the chairman of your primary leadership board and signed by each member of the leadership board**. Some might view this as a perfunctory duty but believing in the importance of the local church and its authority, we ask you to take the responsibility very seriously. We wish to remind you that this letter or recommendation is of vital importance in the credentialing process. Your understanding of and confidence in this individual's call to ministry will be part of the initial basis upon which a credential is given. When a credential is eventually issued, the name of our denomination will be on the credential in addition to that of the local FWB association. It will be a recommendation to all others that we have together affirmed this person's call to ministry as an approved FWB pastor. If you have any questions about this required letter of recommendation, please contact the chairman of your local associational credentials committee.

## FWB MINISTER'S PROFILE

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ dd/mm/yy \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Married \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

Single \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_\_\_

If divorced, please indicate the date and reason.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Children - Number of Children and ages: \_\_\_\_\_

Licensed with: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ordained previously with: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Presently serving (list church or organization and location: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Present Church Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

### Education:

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Most Recent Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Military Service: Active \_\_\_\_\_ Reserves \_\_\_\_\_ Current Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Air Force \_\_\_\_\_ Army \_\_\_\_\_ Navy \_\_\_\_\_ Marines \_\_\_\_\_ Air National Guard \_\_\_\_\_ Army National Guard \_\_\_\_\_

Civil Air Patrol \_\_\_\_\_

## CERTIFICATE OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY LICENSE APPLICATION

*Before completing this application, please contact your local association moderator for full info about the credentialing process. Send this application and the materials on the checklist to your local association clerk or the chairman of the association credential board chairman to initiate the credentialing process.*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENTLY SERVING (CHURCH OR OTHER MINISTRY): \_\_\_\_\_

MINISTRY ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPLICANT CHECKLIST OF MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- ☐ Letter of intent from you indicating your desire and reason to hold a certificate of License for Christian Ministry from the FWB Association.
- ☐ Letter of recommendation from the church of your membership or a letter from the church or ministry you are serving.
- ☐ Written questionnaire provided by the local examining committee.

**Final Step: Send this application and all the above to your local associational clerk or credentials committee chairman.**

**CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE CHECKLIST:**

(to be completed by the Credentials Committee with a copy sent to the associational moderator.

- ☐ Minutes of the credentials committee meeting
- ☐ Recommendation from the credentials committee

## CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION APPLICATION

Send this application and the materials on the checklist to your local association clerk or ordination board chairman to initiate the credentialing process. Items may be sent electronically.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ mm/dd/yy \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENTLY SERVING (CHURCH/MINISTRY): \_\_\_\_\_

MINISTRY ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ POSITION HELD: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICANT CHECKLIST OF MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Certificate of Ordination Application.
- Letter of intent from you indicating your desire and reason to hold a certificate of ordination from the FWB Denomination. Letters of recommendation are welcomed.
- Letter of recommendation from the church of your membership or the ministry you are serving.
- Complete the written questionnaire provided by the local examining committee.
- Updated profile if there have been any changes.
- Thoroughly read the FWB Treatise
- Final Step: Send this application and all the above to your association clerk or ordination board chairman.

## Appendix 1: Suggested Study Resources

At some point in the examination process, be prepared to discuss the following items with a candidate:

- Personal prayer and bible reading
- Family prayer and devotional time
- The practical application of spiritual disciplines

It is recommended that the candidate submit to a mentoring relationship. The following items listed below are areas of development with book suggestions. An ideal setting would be for the newly licensed/ordained person to read through the majority of these books over approximately two years. Discussion of these books with a mentor throughout those two years would prove to be a valuable contribution into the candidate's philosophy of ministry. If the candidate chooses, he could report to the local association some of the lessons learned and principles that shaped his understanding of the ministry. The local association could provide different or additional reading for each area of development as needed. It also might be a helpful idea for each association to invest in a lending library for candidates/ordained persons.

### 1. Spiritual Development

- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney

### 2. Doctrine, Theology, and Church History

- *Free Will Baptist Doctrines* by J.D. O'Donnell
- *The Quest for Truth* by F. Leroy Forlines
- *Free Will Baptist History* by Robert Picirilli

### 3. Bible Study and Preaching

- *Preaching That Changes Lives* by Michael Fabarez
- *Reading the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* by Norman Geisler
- *An Introduction to the New Testament* by D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo

### 4. Pastoral Care

- *Stan Toler's Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry*
- *Discipleship* by Robert Picirilli

### 5. Leadership and Administration

- *Understanding Church Leadership* by Mark Dever
- *Spiritual Leadership* by J. Oswald Sanders
- *Mastering Conflict and Controversy* by Edward Dobson, Leas & Shelley
- *The Autopsy of a Deceased Church* by Thom Rainer
- *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman
- *I Am A Church Member* by Thom Rainer

## **Appendix 2 - Other miscellaneous considerations:**

Other considerations as deemed necessary by the local ordaining council.

- Credit Report
- Police report—criminal background check
- Testimony of approval from family members, co-workers, and neighbors

### **Counsel to Ordaining Committee**

These suggestions may seem to be a bit invasive, excessive, or demanding. The purpose is not to make the process more difficult, although it would most likely be just that. As each local association voluntarily includes these guidelines with their existing process, we can accomplish the following:

1. Encouraging the candidate to enroll in a ministry preparation program or plan of study through one of our FWB Colleges such as Welch or Randall Univ. (See the MOFWB Scholarship Plan)
2. Is it possible to appoint someone to provide guidance and accountability to the candidate during the ordination approval process to assure that established goals and expectations are being met?
3. Should the association consider a minimum two-year preparation period prior to ordination to assure that the candidate can complete with the expected initial preparation and present themselves prepared to begin their life of continual preparation?
4. Interview the spouse and children of the candidate as to their perceptions and thoughts of the ministry and life.
5. Does the candidate presently have a solid reputation for supporting the local church in every aspect?
6. How does the candidate deal with criticism, opposition, and anger? (same questions for the spouse)
7. Candidates know that they have the backing, support, and encouragement of both the local and state associations.
8. Candidates know who we are as FWB and what distinguishes us from other denominational groups.
9. Candidates are given the opportunity to sharpen their skills with a minimum of impact upon their family.
10. Candidates may decide to continue their preparation and seek an online degree from one of our colleges.
11. Candidates are more informed about what FWB's are doing in our state and around the world.
12. Local ordination councils know that pastoral candidates that may transfer to their assn. from another part of Missouri have been thoroughly prepared and examined through much the same process that is used locally.

As we work together to assure local associations and ministry candidates that our desire is to help them in any way we can, may God grant us many more well-prepared ministry candidates.

# SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: The following questionnaire did not form part of the above document when originally approved and adopted. It is included solely as a sample that district associations may use in addition to their current questionnaire if they so choose.

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## ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

Questions to be used in examining candidates for license or ordination to the Gospel Ministry.

Each candidate should be given a copy of these questions by his pastor and instructed to prepare an answer sheet, answering all the questions listed below. A written copy of answers should be presented to the Examining Committee one month before the candidate is to be examined so that the committee may prepare any pertinent questions and serve to guide the committee as they consider recommendations.

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS COMPLETELY USING YOUR OWN WORDS (Use scripture references where possible)

1. How would you define faith.
2. Please briefly explain the doctrine of inspiration and that the Bible is infallible.
3. Please share your thoughts on progressive or continuing revelation.
4. What is your concept of the deity vs humanity of Jesus Christ?
5. How would you define "good preaching?"
6. Please define biblical marriage.
7. What are your views on the following:
  - a. cohabiting as a couple prior to marriage.
  - b. homosexuality or lesbianism.
  - c. transgenderism.
  - d. an unmarried retired couple living together to avoid losing Social Security or retirement benefits.
8. What doctrines and practices distinguish Free Will Baptists from other Baptist denominations?
9. Briefly explain the following:
  - a. Conditional eternal security (the possibility of a believer becoming apostate)
  - b. Feet washing & why it should be practiced.
  - c. Open vs closed communion
10. How does a person who is a Christian find forgiveness should he/she sin?
11. Do you believe in a second definite work of Grace? (Explain)
12. Do you believe in "speaking in tongues" as taught by the Pentecostal denominations? Why or why not?
13. What is the purpose of the "Lord's Supper?"
14. What is the purpose of water baptism? When should baptism preparation classes begin for a new convert?
15. What is the proper mode of water baptism? (Explain your answer)

16. How would you receive a member into your church? (Explain each step beginning with the first contact with the prospective member until he is received into the Church)
17. Why is a new member's class important and what should be taught?
18. Would it be permissible to have worship services on a day other than Sunday? Why and for whom?
19. How strict should we be on the FWB Covenant restriction on the sanction of the sale and use of intoxicating beverages? Should this sanction apply to the use of cannabis and the misuse of prescription drugs?
20. Explain sanctification. What is it and when do we receive it?
21. Do you feel tithing is God's plan for the support of His Church?
22. In your own words, explain what Jesus meant in Matthew 28: 19 and Acts 1:8.
23. How does the Bible tell us to handle matters of discipline within the church?
24. Do you feel that a pastor's duty to the lost is just preaching or do you feel he should involve himself in personal soul-winning? Why? Have you ever led another person to faith in Christ?
25. Please answer the following with scripture references:
  - a. Do you believe Jesus was God's Son, born of a virgin?
  - b. Do you believe in the New Birth?
  - c. Do you believe Jesus is coming again, literally?
  - d. Do you believe in a literal, burning, eternal hell?
26. Briefly describe your call to the ministry.
27. Why do you want to be ordained?
28. Describe your daily devotional and prayer habits.
29. Are you currently using prescription medications for mood or behavioral needs that the ordination committee should be aware of? (depression, anxiety, bipolar, etc)
30. Would you be willing to submit to a personality/psychological evaluation if this committee requests one?
28. Are your wife and children (if applicable) in agreement and supportive of your calling?

You must bring two credit references along with two personal references written and signed by persons acquainted with you.

It is understood that the Examining Committee may ask any other question they feel led to ask when examining a candidate, even if the question is not included in this questionnaire.

It is highly advisable that the candidate's wife (if applicable) be present during the examination process and be prepared to respond to any questions directed to her.