

The Myrtle Baptist Church of West Newton

21 Curve Street | West Newton, MA | 02465

Ministerial Pre-Ordination Packet

A Pastoral Outline and Timeline for Elevation in the Local Body

What is an Ordained Baptist Minister?

An ordained minister is a person specifically called upon to perform certain duties of the Christian ministry. Persons entering the ministry need to be sure that their personal beliefs are similar to those of the church in which they want to serve.

1. Called to Serve

Ordained ministers have been spiritually called into Christian service. Their primary purpose is to minister by serving the needs of the local church **body** and surrounding community. This service is manifested in various forms--spiritual, physical, and practical.

2. Called to Comfort

Ordained ministers often are asked to be a comforter to their congregants and families during times of bereavement, sickness or crisis. This comfort may be given by being present during these hardships to pray for and with the ones experiencing the ordeal.

3. Called to Counsel

The service of counseling is often asked of ordained ministers. Being ordained does not necessarily mean that a minister has undergone formal training, but they can be used as a confidante who will not share personal information.

4. Called to Mediate

Ordained ministers may have to be called upon to act as an intermediary to help solve church conflicts among individual members or groups within the church. The minister is expected to be impartial and unbiased and only seek reconciliation of the issue.

5. Called to Teach

Ordained ministers do not have to be licensed teachers, but they act as teachers when they deliver sermons from the pulpit or when they lead Bible study classes. They are called upon to help congregants understand the meaning of scripture in the Bible as well as tenets of Christian living.

The Different Pathways to Ordination

Historically, Baptists have followed the practice of setting apart certain individuals for special roles as leaders of local churches. This act is called ordination. Circumstances of individuals and of churches are quite different, and because of this, there are varying pathways leading to ordination within the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA). The usual path is to attend an accredited seminary, graduate with a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree, be called to minister to a local church or other ministry, and be ordained by a local church following the approval process prescribed by the Ministerial Leadership Committee of ABCUSA. View the different paths below.

1. **Standard Ordination**

During the time of preparation, the person is usually licensed to preach as a candidate for ordination. This route is called “Standard Ordination” and the status as an ordained American Baptist minister is recognized nationally throughout the denomination.

2. **Equivalency Ordination**

In exceptional cases, relevant ministry experience may be substituted for a portion of the educational requirements. This process is called “Equivalency Ordination.”

3. **Recognition of Ordination from Another Denomination**

Ministers who have been ordained in other denominations and who wish to serve in an American Baptist church or ministry may seek to have their ordination from another denomination recognized. In order for the ordination to be recognized as standard, the educational requirements must be met. Those seeking recognition who do not meet the standard educational requirements may be regionally recognized.

4. **Regional Ordination**

There are cases in which a person gifted for ministry wishes to serve in an ordained position within the certain regional branches of the ABCUSA, but is unable to meet the educational requirements of Standard Ordination. The Region has provided a process whereby such a person may obtain educational training through a series of classes taught within the Region. Satisfactory completion of these classes and other requirements may lead to a “Regional Ordination.” Such an ordination will be recognized by churches throughout the regional branch, but may not necessarily be transferred to churches outside the Region. This is rare.

5. **Local Ordination**

Finally, because ordination is a function of the autonomous local church, a church may recognize the gifts for ministry and the call of an individual within that church and

ordain that person without participation by the TABCOM. In some cultural settings, because one has not met the qualifications and call of the ordained minister through the ABC, it is assumed that their ordination will not be validated by the larger American Baptist family. Such local ordination is generally not a problem in the black community and is transferable to all other African American Baptist denominations.

The Myrtle Baptist Working Definition of Local Ordination

As the pastor of Myrtle Baptist Church I define local ordination as the following:

Ordination is an act of worship by which the congregation, representative of the people of God, acclaims the one being ordained as chosen and empowered by the Holy Spirit to exercise gifts for ministry within the church. For us as Baptists, ordination is a function of an individual church, not of the denomination. In this, is the embodiment of our true autonomy personified. Although other churches or denominational entities may be asked to participate, a church is the body that actually ordains. Ordination is the recognition by the church of one called by God into the Christian ministry as a professional vocation.

The Pastor's Requirements for Local Ordination at Myrtle

- 1. Ordination is the recognition by the church of one called by God into the Christian Ministry as a professional vocation. The evidences of such a call are:**
 1. A confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
 2. A good reputation and character of moral integrity and responsibility
 3. sufficient grasp of doctrine and polity to be entrusted with the pastoral oversight of a church
 4. a sufficient preparation for adequate performance of requisite ministerial functions.
 5. Understanding of Christian ministry as a professional vocation
 6. A commitment of life to Christian discipleship.
 7. An inner conviction which the one called identifies as from God.
 8. An endowment of such abilities as are obligatory for a Christian minister.
 9. An opportunity to render a Christian ministry consistent with the character of the Jesus Christ

- 2. A person seeking to be ordained should present evidence of the following:**
 - A call to the vocation of a professional Christian minister.
 - A dedication to the cause of Christ.
 - A Character of moral integrity and responsibility.
 - A sufficient grasp of doctrine and polity to be entrusted with the pastoral oversight of a church.
 - A sufficient preparation for adequate performance of requisite ministerial functions.

Candidate Requirements to Be on Ordination Track at Myrtle Baptist Church

The candidate must:

1. Be a Christian
2. Be a giving member in good standing at Myrtle Baptist Church
3. Have been fully submerged in the Baptist tradition
4. Have been licensed in a church with similar theological standings as Myrtle (*This is to be determined by the senior pastor.*)
5. Present one letter of recommendation from his or her previous pastor, if the candidate was not licensed at Myrtle.
6. Have graduated from or be enrolled in a fully accredited seminary and completed one full year of classes.
7. Submit an official transcript from seminary (*if graduated then just provide a copy of diploma*)
8. Submit one letter of recommendation from the Diaconate Board of the Myrtle Baptist Church. The letter should be addressed to the Myrtle Ordination Council.
9. Submit one letter of recommendation from a lay person.
10. Turn in a completed fasting prayer journal.

The Myrtle Ordination Process

Phase 1 – Summer Classes (4 to 6 classes to be determined)

Description: These classes will begin by exploring the religious history of African Americans in order to understand the role of the black experience in the theology of the black church. After which, the class will explore the history of the historically white Baptist movement and then end with role of the Black Baptist Church in the African American Experience.

- Albert J. Raboteau *Canaan Land: a religious history of African Americans* Oxford University Press, 1999. (Whole Book)
- James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 1997. (Chapter 2 Only)
- Torbet, Robert G. *A History of the Baptists*, Judson Press, 1950. (Chapter 1 / chapter 18 / Appendices A&B)
- Lincoln, Charles E. And Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990. (Chapter 2 only)

Phase 2 – Fall Classes (Monthly Meetings TBD)

Final paper prep and review of catechism questions. Monthly topics will be determined by the ordinate(s) in conjunction with the Ordination council representative leading the class.

- September
- October
- November
- December

Phase 3 – Spring Classes (Monthly Meetings TBD)

Final paper prep and review of catechism questions. Monthly topics will be determined by the ordinate(s) in conjunction with the ordination council representative leading the class.

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May

Phase 4 – Catechism and Ordination (TBD for the month of June 2014)

The Final Ordination Paper

1. Final paper should include and be emailed in PDF form in the following order:
File name: [lastname_firstname_year_MyrtleBaptistChurch_Ordination]
2. Your paper should include:
 - a. Your application.
 - b. Autobiographical Sketch: Please include your conversion experience, call to ministry, and personal mission. (5-6 pages)
 - c. The nine catechism preparation reflections (Each paper submission should be 3-4 pages, double spaced and is due on the 1st of the month.)
 - d. A previous paper you submitted in seminary
 - e. Ministry Project: 3 page summary of an activity held at Myrtle Baptist Church in which the candidate was heavily involved that illustrates their calling/ministerial capabilities and a 1 page addendum for theological reflection on the activity
3. All pages should be numbered and formatted uniformly with subheadings with appropriate titling. They should also have sections with cover pages (papers, project, etc.).
4. All papers should be fully cited in MLA format with footnotes and bibliography.

The Application for Ordination

Applicant Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Postal Code:

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Marital Status: Married Divorced Re-Married Widowed

Spouse's Name: _____

Birth Date: _____

Children (*If applicable, name & birth dates*):

Employment (*Present*):

Education: __High School ___College/University __Bible College __Other _____

Last Degree (*if any*) and granting institution:

Ministerial History Please share briefly about the last five (5) years of your ministry to date. Include places and dates.

References: (By listing references I give permission for a Myrtle Administrative Office representative to make confidential contact with the persons named below.)

Someone who provides you with leadership:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Relationship: _____ Email: _____

Someone who serves on a peer level with you:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Relationship: _____ Email: _____

Someone who looks to you for leadership:

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Relationship: _____ Email: _____

Your Ordinand Advisor who is sponsoring this application:

(The Ordinand Advisor must be a deacon of Myrtle Baptist Church to whom the candidate is not related or married or with whom the candidate is not close friends.)

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Relationship: _____ Email: _____

Applicants, please answer the following questions:

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, please provide details on a separate attached sheet.

____ Yes ____ No 1. Have you ever been refused a professional license?

____ Yes ____ No 2. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a felony, misdemeanor or crime other than minor traffic violations?

____ Yes ____ No 3. Have you now or ever had problems with the use of alcohol, stimulants or habit forming drugs?

____Yes ____No 6. Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary action by an employer licensing organization alleging sexual or ethical misconduct?

____Yes ____No 7. Have you ever been the subject of discipline by a church or denomination?

____Yes ____No 8. Do you currently hold credentials with any other organization? If yes, name and address of the organization and describe your expected future relationship with that organization.

____Yes ____No 9. Have you ever been denied credentials by any organization. If yes, please describe.

____Yes ____No 10. Have you ever had ministerial credentials revoked/suspended. If yes, please describe, including the resolution of the matter.

By your signature below you understand and agree that an investigation of any or all of these matters may be conducted by the Myrtle Baptist Church to determine your eligibility to pursue credentialing within the local church. You also understand and agree that you will be subject to removal from the credentialing process if it is later determined that your answer to any of the above questions was false.

Signature

Date

Article #1

The Meaning of Baptist Ordination

by William. Loyd Allen

Wm. Loyd Allen is professor of church history and spiritual formation at McAfee School of Theology of Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia.

Baptists believe ordination does not endow a person with any special powers or authority. It is a means of indicating to churches and to the world in general that a person has been accredited as worthy to be a pastor or deacon. In recent years, Baptists have extended ordination to include other persons in ministry, such as chaplains, missionaries and church staff members.

Not all Baptists agree that ordination is necessary or even appropriate. However, ordination is practiced by most Baptist churches and is considered valid for a lifetime. Thus, when a person moves from one church to another as pastor or deacon, there is no need to be re-ordained.

For Baptists, ordination is a function of an individual church, not of the denomination. Although other churches or denominational entities may be asked to participate, a church is the body that actually ordains.

In the case of pastors, ordination is usually preceded by licensing the person to the gospel ministry. Licensing ushers in a period when the church and the individual can evaluate whether the person is indeed suitable for pastoral ministry. If the person testifies to an internal calling by God through the Holy Spirit to the gospel ministry, evidences the biblical qualifications for the office and demonstrates the gifts necessary for effective pastoral ministry, the church proceeds with ordination.

Baptists look to Christian beginnings for the meaning of ordination. Early Church Christians gave us the New Testament, established orthodox doctrines, and regularized ecclesiastical practices, including ordination. Baptist views of ordination are linked to this ancient Christianity, which looked to the New Testament as its standard.

The New Testament witnesses to a variety of gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon individuals. Certain gifts are given to equip believers for “the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 3:12). Over time, the Christian church developed the ordination service to acknowledge the continuation of God’s mission in Christ to the church and the world through Spirit-called and Spirit-gifted ministers. Baptists hold these views about ordination in common with the rest of the Christian tradition.

Baptist ordination, however, is not an exact reproduction of any New Testament or Early Church practice. The New Testament gives no comprehensive instructions for ordination. The doctrine and practice of ordination has continued to evolve over the centuries, resulting in a variety of forms with a multiplicity of meanings.

From the New Testament to the end of the Middle Ages, the meaning of ordination moved toward an ever more exclusive and hierarchical rite designed to establish the primacy of the clergy over the laity. By the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic tradition viewed ordination as an indelible mark granted by God and conferred by ordained clergy upon those whom the clergy approved for entry into elite ministerial society.

In this system, ordination served as certification for the clergy, the sole representatives of the body of Christ able to mediate divine grace to the laity. The belief that ordination bestows some special and sacred status beyond that of the ordinary Christian still has currency among many Christians today.

The Protestant Reformation refuted this claim, emphasizing the doctrine of the priesthood of believers over against the hierarchical medieval view of ordination. Martin Luther called all Christians priests, some of whom are ordained to publicly minister and teach. Comparing ordained ministers to Christian cobblers, blacksmiths and farmers, Luther wrote in 1520 that priests, bishops or popes “are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the Word of God and the sacraments.” Most Baptists believe ordination recognizes a particular calling to ministerial service without indicating a higher spiritual status than that of other Christians.

The original Baptists in the first decade of the seventeenth century defended the equality of each member of the body of Christ against the historic claims of clergy privilege made by the bishop led Anglican Church. These earliest Baptists formed congregations of baptized believers who covenanted to share equal authority and responsibility in the body of Christ.

These Baptist churches, governed by congregational polity as dictated by the equal status of each baptized member, chose and authorized congregational leaders not as lords over them, but as servant ministers. Divine authority in Baptist beginnings did not trickle down from ordained clergy to the common Christian, but flowed upward through the members of the congregation to its chosen leaders. The very term ordination was avoided for several decades in the two original Baptist groups, Generals and Particulars, in favor of terms such as ‘set apart,’ ‘called,’ and ‘appointed.’

Eventually, with considerable influence from Calvinist sources, the majority of Baptist churches standardized and promoted ordination practices. The institutionalization of Baptist life intensified the regularization of ordination. The Philadelphia Baptist Association’s 1742 Confession, for example, harking back to the ordination article of Congregationalist’s 1658 Savoy Declaration, describes Baptist ordination in a form familiar to us Baptists two and a half centuries later: Christ-called, Spirit-gifted pastors and deacons chosen by church vote and set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands.

The similarities within Baptist ordination views should not be allowed to obscure the great variations played upon the theme. Indeed, some Baptists have refused to play along at all, referring to ordination as a ritual rendered null and void by the priesthood of believers. Charles Spurgeon, the most celebrated Baptist pastor of the nineteenth century, is popularly believed to have said that ordination consisted of “laying idle hands on empty heads.”

The diversity of Baptist views on ordination is hinted at by the many questions answered either yes or no depending upon which group of Baptists is asked. Who may properly be ordained: Women? Divorced persons? Twice married widowed candidates? What is the place of the ordination council; is it only a formality? What is symbolized by the laying on of hands, and should only previously ordained members be invited to do it? What academic credentials are necessary, if any? What ministers other than pastors and deacons are eligible? This list can and does go on and on within the Baptist tradition.

In spite of this diversity, where a Baptist ordination takes place one can be fairly confident of the following meanings: Ordination is an act of worship by which the congregation, representative of the people of God, acclaims the one being ordained as chosen and empowered by the Holy Spirit to exercise gifts for ministry within the church. Ordination is not to a holier ministry than those given to other baptized believers. The laying on of hands with prayer invokes God’s blessing upon the one ordained and signifies that he or she is set apart as a

servant to the servants of God. Ordination is a gift to the church as well as recognition by the church of the minister's inward call. In the ordination service, the church receives the ministry of Christ in its midst through the grace of the Holy Spirit in the calling of the ordinand. Ordination for Baptists is a service of thanksgiving for God's love revealed in the minister's calling, a service of petition for God's continued blessing upon the one called, and a service of submission to God's authority revealed in the gifted one set aside for ministry.

Article #2

Baptist Leader Raises 10 Questions About Ordination

By: Robert Parham

Nearly 400 years after the founding of the first Baptist church in Amsterdam by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, Baptists are still debating the meaning of ordination, a topic that will be considered during six hours of formal presentations and discussions at the Baptist World Alliance meeting this week in Prague, Czech Republic. In a document outlining the three sessions of the Church Leadership Commission, Brian Winslade, commission chair, noted that one Baptist distinctive is egalitarianism expressed in principles such as "priesthood of all believers" and "soul competence." These principles set Baptists apart from other historical Christian communions which held to "systems of ecclesial hierarchy." Yet over the centuries, "most Baptist Unions/Conventions have developed (or adopted) systems of credentialing Ministers that appear similar to other historical denominations," wrote Winslade, national ministries director for the Baptist Union of Australia.

To facilitate the commission's deliberations, Winslade distributed a paper titled "Ordination: Does It Fit?" "By definition, 'ordination' comes from the Latin root *ordo* or order, meaning literally to arrange in order or rank. In its historical development the word came to mean the taking of office or orders. In Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions ordination is considered a sacrament, by which special grace is imparted. Clearly Protestant traditions do not hold to such a high view," wrote Winslade. "So what do Baptists mean when they use the term?" Winslade said that his paper was not an attempt to answer his own question but to raise 10 questions that Baptists need to consider:

First was a doctrinal question: "Does the concept of ordination conflict with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers?"

"In Baptist thinking there is no theoretical or practical distinction in status between a pastor and any other member of the church," wrote Winslade. "The question arises, therefore, whether the concept of separate 'orders' for those appointed as pastors or ministers militates against the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers."

Second was a theological matter: "To what extent does the institutional model of church, with distinctions between clergy and laity, reflect the movement Jesus began?"

Identifying Jesus' leadership style with servanthood, Winslade questioned if Jesus would have favored a community with hierarchical authority or participatory involvement.

Third was a pneumatological question: "Did Pentecost alter the paradigm for Holy Spirit empowerment for ministry?"

Winslade asked if the experience of Pentecost replaced the "elite priestly class" found in the Old Testament.

Fourth was an historical question: "How significant do we hold the dissenting views of the earliest Baptists who argued against a clergy dominated church?"

Here Winslade noted that early Baptists "held a low view of clergy ministry."

Thomas Helwys thought "there was no special authority for the ordinance vested in the person administering it. This was a defiant challenge to the view that holy ordinances or sacraments could only be performed by ordained clergy, as representative of apostolic succession," concluded Winslade.

Fifth was an ecclesiological question: "To what extent does ordained ministry conflict with the Apostle Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts?"

Citing Paul's comparative functioning of the church to the human body, Winslade pointed out the necessity of each part of the body and wondered if limiting certain "ecclesial functions to a select few with special 'orders'" created wider passivity.

Sixth was a nomenclature question: "Have we confused ordination with credentialing of ministers and the establishing of best-practice standards?"

Readily acknowledging that good things come from higher levels of ministerial competence, Winslade wondered if other language such as accreditation would be better than ordination.

Seventh was a vocational question: "Is ordination a life calling or is it delimited to function?"

Winslade noted that ordination is a lifelong concept for priests in the Catholic tradition. But he questioned whether in an age of multiple careers if pastoral ministry should be lifetime commitment or "an episode" in one's life.

Eight was a local church question: "Is ordination a local church function or a denominational ordinance?"

"[I]t behooves Baptist Unions and Conventions to think through where the place of ordination or credentialing best fits. If the answer is at the wider denominational level this would imply a set of common or core competencies that are measurable and acceptable, so as to allow a recognized pastor to move ministry location within the movement," said the Australian Baptist leader.

Ninth was a missiological question: "Does the model of ordination and distinction between clergy

and laity tend towards a passive missiology?"

Winslade pressed again the issue of whether "priestly elitism" hurt the mission of the church.

Ten was a postmodern question: "To what extent is organized religion and the institutional models of church being deconstructed by the generations that follow?"

Given the nature of post-modernity, Winslade said that everything is being questioned, including ordination. "Younger members of the church are less likely to blindly accept tradition as valid reason for keeping practices going. Inherent respect for honorific roles and offices are less assumed than they once were. Churches built around systems of hierarchy may not fare as well in the years ahead than those that are more hierarchically flat or inclusive," wrote Winslade. "That means the Baptists have a great opportunity within a post-modern world."

Article #3

LAYING ON HANDS: Ordination practices vary widely among Baptists

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor Taken from the online journal: The Texas Baptist News Journal at

Renowned 19th century British Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon rejected the practice. Texas Baptist statesman George Truett surrendered to it only at his church's insistence. Christian ethicist T.B. Maston accepted it as a deacon but not as a minister. Even so, most Baptist churches—not to mention the Internal Revenue Service and the United States Armed Forces—continue to value ordination. And many ministers see the laying on of hands as a vitally important affirmation by God's people of their calling. But how Baptists practice ordination—who initiates the process, serves on the ordaining council and lays hands on the person being set aside—varies widely. "Ordination was a part of Baptist history from the beginning," said Charles Deweese, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist History & Heritage Society in Nashville, Tenn. Many historians trace Baptist roots to the radical Reformation, but most Baptists weren't so radical that they rejected ordination. John Smyth wrote in 1609 about each congregation's authority to "elect, approve and ordain" its own leaders, Deweese noted. But unlike some Christian traditions, Baptists have rejected the notion of apostolic succession—an unbroken line of ordained clergy dating back to the apostles—as well as the idea that ordination conveys grace, he said. "The normative position in our Baptist heritage is that ordination is a symbolic recognition of an individual's giftedness. It does not convey it; it simply acknowledges it," Deweese said. Because of that understanding, some Baptists have rejected the practice altogether—most noticeably Spurgeon, pastor of London's Metropolitan Tabernacle.

"Not only was he never ordained; he saw ordination as a form of ritualism that could easily lapse into popery. He detested the dogma of apostolic succession and refused to endorse the delegation of power from one minister to another," said Bill Brackney, professor of church history at Baylor University. "Further, he thought every church ought to have the right to select its own ministers, with no assistance from others in appointing him to the office." Some prominent Baptists—such as seminary ethics professor Maston—have rejected ordination for

themselves but accepted it for others. “He really saw his calling as a teacher rather than as a preacher or pastor. He was not opposed to ordination for others, as far as I know, but he did not feel it was appropriate for him. And he wore—with great delight—the cape of ‘layman,’” said Bill Pinson, executive director emeritus of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and a student of Maston.

For the most part, Baptist churches have viewed ordination as a healthy—if not essential—way to affirm an individual’s sense of calling into vocational ministry, church historian Leon McBeth said. “Most Baptists have seen it as a recognition of God’s calling. It’s an acknowledgement on the part of a congregation they have seen evidence of that calling and way of affirming the person (being ordained) in that call,” said McBeth, retired distinguished professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In recent years, the ordination process typically has been initiated by a person who requests a church set him—or her—apart for vocational ministry, he noted. “But in the past, churches took more initiative,” McBeth said. He pointed to Whitewright Baptist Church, whose members voted to ordain Truett against his wishes because they were so convinced God had called the young man—who aspired to become a lawyer—into the gospel ministry.

The role and composition of the ordaining council also has changed considerably over the years, McBeth observed. The council—sometimes called a presbytery—typically asks the candidate to tell about his Christian conversion and call to ministry and then answer some doctrinal questions. “The ordaining council in recent years has been more of a rubber stamp,” he said, noting the questioning of the candidate often is scheduled just an hour or so before the announced ordination service. “For a council now to reject anyone is almost unheard of—but that wasn’t always the case.”

For instance, when William Carey—the shoemaker who sensed God’s calling to missions in India and became known as the father of the modern missions movement—initially appeared before an ordaining council, “the council recommended he go back to his cobbler’s shop,” McBeth noted. Composition of the ordaining council in the United States—whether a mixed group of laity and ministers from the ordaining church, a group of deacons from within the church or a group exclusively of other ordained ministers from churches in the association or area—has varied widely from time to time and place to place, he added.

White Baptists in the South generally have emphasized local authority in ordination more than African-American Baptists or American Baptists elsewhere in the United States, Brackney noted. “Most mainstream Baptists outside the Southern Baptist family today ordain candidates to the ministry using both local church and associational resources,” he said. “Frequently, an accrediting list is maintained by a regional or national organization.” Outside the United States, practices differ even more.

In Atlantic Canada, for instance, a convention wide ordination council appointed by the associations meets annually and interviews all candidates for ordination. “Each must receive a two-thirds majority vote to be recommended to their local church,” said John Boyd, pastor of First Baptist Church in Halifax. “The local church would ordain the candidate at a service dedicated to that purpose.” British Baptist historian John Briggs noted that in the United

Kingdom, “we would expect the local church to do the ordaining but with representatives of the wider church taking part.”

In England and Canada, Baptists place great emphasis on ministers being included on the Baptist Union’s or regional convention’s accredited list. “To appear on the accredited list, a candidate has to have his call tested first for training, and this would be by the local church, the ministerial recognition committee of the association and the appropriate college council. “At the end of training, the candidate has to be commended by the college principal concerned to the Union’s ministerial recognition committee for settlement. The whole process is only completed when a local church issues a call to the pastorate; all is in suspense until this happens,” Briggs said. When it comes time for the candidate to be ordained, the laying on of hands involves not only Baptists, but also the larger Christian community, he noted. “Ordination is to the Christian ministry, and for many years, laity and representatives of other Christian churches have taken part in ordinations,” Briggs said. The matter of who lays hands on the person being ordained has changed through the years, McBeth said. “In the beginning (of Baptist churches), all Christians present could lay on hands,” he said. Later, the practice evolved into having only other ordained people—ministers and deacons—participate in the ceremony. “More recently, there’s been a recovery of the old tradition, where any Christian present can take part,” he said. “It’s never been seen as conveying any special ecclesiastical power. It’s just an intense form of prayer.”

Robert Creech, pastor of University Baptist Church in Houston, agrees the laying of hands conveys no special grace, but he takes one additional step. He maintains ordination is not instructed in the New Testament, and early churches represented a variety of practices—not one prescribed way—for recognizing leaders. “Despite Baptist claims to root faith and practice in biblical teachings, an honest self-appraisal raises questions about the degree to which we look to Scripture to dictate the practice of ordination versus the degree to which we have assumed a practice and then sought biblical precedence for it,” Creech said.

The Apostle Paul insisted his authority came from God, not from men, and he ministered for about a decade and half before the church at Antioch laid hands on him, he noted. “Baptists have retained a ceremony by which those who have a vocation and evidence of some ability for the ministerial office are set apart by the believing community for the work of their calling,” Creech said. “We have been less clear about how such a ceremony fits into our doctrine of the priesthood of the believers. We have thus maintained a clergy/laity distinction whose consistency with our doctrine is difficult to explain without sounding like doubletalk.” The distinction between clergy and laity becomes even greater when a presbytery composed exclusively of ordained ministers from other churches examines candidates and has the authority to recommend or reject them, he insisted.

“Such a practice contradicts our Baptist belief in the autonomy of the local church and of the priesthood of all believers,” Creech said. “Having ordained people determine who gets ordained smacks of the Roman Catholic practice of apostolic succession. When only ordained people determine who is ordained, one struggles to maintain that ordination bestows no special grace or authority. The cleft between clergy and laity is widened.” Allowing every Christian in the congregation to participate in the laying on of hands rather than restricting it to only ordained people helps narrow the gap, Creech maintained. “Since the congregation ordains the candidate, the laying on of hands should be open to every person present at the service,” he said. “To have only ordained persons lay on hands seems backwards to me.” Rather than

looking for biblical proof-texts to support ordination, Creech wishes Baptists would just be honest and admit it is “a kind of ‘union card’ allowing other churches of like faith and practice to know that someone who knew the person has placed their blessings on their ministry.”

When ordination is viewed as that kind of pragmatic practice and as strictly a local church decision, the issue of women’s ordination becomes a moot point, he insisted. “The question of whether a woman should or can serve as the senior pastor of a congregation is a question settled by a local church when they call a senior pastor. The only question (for a church that ordains a woman) is: Do we believe after observing and examining the candidate that their theology is sound—that their calling, gifts and character are line with the gospel ministry? If so, then are we prepared to lay hands on the candidate in prayer and bless their pursuit of their calling?” At University Baptist Church, “we have by practice and precedent already determined that we are supportive of women pursuing the calling God places upon their lives in fulltime vocational ministry,” he continued.

“The question of ordination is only the further step of what we have by practice and precedent already established. When the call of God to a particular place of ministry comes along for one who has been following that calling, we have always proceeded with ordination. That should be our practice whether the candidate is male or female.” Most staff members at University Baptist Church are not ordained, and the church has chosen to ordain only a few people during his tenure—usually for roles such as military chaplaincy in which ordination is required, Creech said. So, even many critics of ordination practice it and acknowledge its practicality. And some Baptists applaud the practice without reservation. “I personally favor ordination,” McBeth said. “It’s a good thing to recognize God’s call on a person’s life. It’s a way to say: ‘We recognize God has called and gifted you for ministry. Amen, and more power to you.’”

Article #4

ARTICLES OF FAITH

The *Articles of Faith* which should be adopted by Baptist churches at the time of organization:

I. THE SCRIPTURES.

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

II. THE TRUE GOD.

We believe the Scriptures teach that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is Jehovah, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

III. THE FALL OF MAN.

We believe the Scriptures teach that Man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgressions fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

IV. THE WAY OF SALVATION.

We believe that the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Saviour.

V. JUSTIFICATION.

We believe the Scriptures teach that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

VI. THE FREENESS OF SALVATION.

We believe that the Scriptures teach that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by cordial, penitent and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own determined depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

VII. REGENERATION

We believe that the Scriptures teach that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith, and newness of life.

VIII. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, priest and king, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

IX. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE.

We believe the Scriptures teach that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners; that being perfectly

consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

X. SANCTIFICATION.

We believe the Scriptures teach that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

XI. PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.

We believe the Scriptures teach that such only are real believers as endure to the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XII. THE LAW AND GOSPEL.

We believe the Scriptures teach that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government; that it is holy, just and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts, arise entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the Means of Grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

XIII. A GOSPEL CHURCH.

We believe the Scriptures teach that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its only scriptural officers are Bishops or Pastors, and Deacons whose Qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

XIV. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

We believe the Scriptures teach that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.

XV. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

We believe the Scriptures teach that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath, and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all

secular labor and sinful recreations, by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public, and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

XVI. CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

We believe the Scriptures teach that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth.

XVII. RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED.

We believe the Scriptures teach that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.

XVIII. THE WORLD TO COME.

We believe the Scriptures teach that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day, Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave for final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.

Article #5

The Baptist Church Covenant

"Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, toward its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of

difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance ; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ , and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word."

Questions to think about?

1. What is the history of the church covenant?
2. When did the church covenant originate?
3. What scriptures support church covenant?
4. What is the basis of the Baptist covenant?
5. What are the scriptures that make the covenant?
6. Where did the Baptist church covenant originate?
7. What were the changes made regarding intoxicating drink etc.

Catechism Preparation

Think about the following things as you prepare for your examination.

1. Your Christian experience
2. Your call to ministry
3. Your theological views on:
 - i. God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit
 - ii. The Scripture
 - iii. Scripture
 - iv. Humanity, Sin
 - v. Sanctification
 - vi. Justification
 - vii. Purification
 - viii. Transubstantiation
 - ix. Divorce
 - x. The Church
 - xi. Sexism

xii. Homosexuality

4. Your understanding of Baptist polity, history, and autonomy
5. Can you list and explain the Baptist Articles of Faith
6. The role of the Pastor and laity in ministry
7. Your view of associational, state convention, and convention involvement, etc.
8. Baptist Faith and Message
9. Relationship of pastor and deacons in the work of the church
10. Philosophy of ministry
11. What is the mission of the church?
12. What does the Bible teach about Christian stewardship?
13. Tell of some person you have led to Christ.
14. Present the plan of salvation.
15. Share what you believe about the Bible.
16. Do you believe in scriptural inerrancy, and what do you mean by the use of that word? How does it impact your teaching and preaching?
17. What is your view of creation? How do you relate that view to your viewpoint regarding inerrancy?
18. How do we determine which books really make up the canon?
19. Give your understanding of the term Trinity.
20. How do you understand the expression "true God and true Man" as applied to Christ?
21. State your concept of the atonement.
22. For whom did Christ die?
23. What difference does His death make? Why was it necessary?
24. What is the nature of Christ's resurrection and importance of the resurrection?
25. What is the role of the Holy Spirit today in the church; in the individual; in the world?
26. What is the place of Spiritual gifts in the church?
27. Give your understanding of the following:
 - (1) Man was created in the image of God.
 - (2) Man has a sinful nature.
 - (3) Man is eternally lost.
 - (4) Are all the heathen lost?
28. Define repentance.
29. What does it mean to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"
30. Give us your views on baptism and the Lord's Supper.
31. How do you respond to someone who says you must be baptized to be saved?
32. Can you support a congregational form of church government?
33. What is the basis for membership in the local church?