

Ordination Guidelines of the Committee on Standards and Ordination of the



EVERGREEN ASSOCIATION

—OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA—

TRANSLATING OUR UNITY TO THE WORLD

Adopted 9/18/24

Last Updated 9/18/24

Welcome to the Ordination Process!

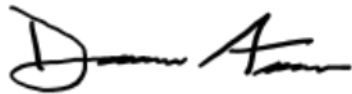
Blessings to you,

It is a joy for me to welcome you to the next step in your journey to answer God and your community's call to ministry.

You have been called to serve God's children in the fullness of how we have been created. Therefore, this process is not for us to make sure you are good enough or to make sure you check the correct boxes. Rather, our call is to help us all make sure those among us who have been called have also received the tools, support, and training they need to carry out God's call to their lives. We are here to walk with you through the process of preparation for your ordination into ministry.

As Baptists we know the regional role is not to verify you have the "correct" theology. But we are called to make sure that you have received proper training and have the tools necessary to translate that training into the tools you will need to support and guide those God will entrust to your care. It is in that spirit that we have crafted the process you have now received. A process to help us all make sure you have been given the support, guidance and resources to give you the best possible chance to carry out God's call to ministry well.

Welcome and blessings to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Avilesbernal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "A".

Rev. Doug Avilesbernal

Executive Minister

Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches

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Introduction

As members of the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches Committee on Standards and Ordination, we seek to uphold and maintain the high standards of the diversity of Christian ministry that has historically been associated with the American Baptist Churches USA (ABC). For that purpose, we mostly adhere to the document, “Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches,” Adopted by The Professional Ministries Team & The Ministers Council of the ABC. Throughout this document we adopt and adapt these recommended procedures to establish the trajectory that candidates will undertake in their process of ordination within our association. We will subscribe to the ABC “Recommended Procedures” (RP) regarding the three different educational tracks toward ordination (RP, section II.3), including the requirements for each case.

We recognize that the call to ministry takes and must take place within the community of the local church and yet admission to the professional registry of the ABC requires recognition from the wider denominational family. Therefore, the Evergreen Association ordination recognition process affords entry into the professional registry of the ABC. According to the RP document, “the local Baptist Church retains the right to decide for itself but in matters of faith and polity also recognizes interdependence with other Baptist churches and organizations as beneficial to full ministry.” (RP, section I). Based on this Baptist polity principle, the Evergreen Association affirms that the local congregation accompanies candidates in their discernment of their call from God and ordains them to the Christian Ministry. The candidates will endeavor to appropriately prepare to respond to their call by seeking satisfactory education and support in their journey. They will also seek to maintain high ethical standards throughout their careers (RP, I.1, 2).

Evergreen Association Standards and Procedures for a Regionally Recognized Ordination

Recognizing that the process of ordination always begins with God's call on a candidate's life and their church's acknowledgement and affirmation of that call, the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches recommends the following procedures and standards for ordination. We recommend these standards and procedures for those seeking ordination and those who already have local church ordination and are seeking regional recognition (which adds one to the professional registry of the ABC).

1. Congregation's Response to a Candidate's sense of call:
 - a. A candidate who has a sense of call to ministry should first confer with their pastor.
 - b. We suggest that the candidate and their pastor select a mentor to guide the candidate through the ordination process (the pastor may be that mentor). This mentor will help the candidate focus on their readiness, call, theology, self-understanding, approach to ministry, and leadership style. The mentor should assess and help the candidate achieve each level of readiness as they proceed down this path.
 - c. The church licenses the candidate. (See Appendix A – Suggested Licensing Process)
 - d. The candidate and mentor should thoroughly review the list of documents and materials required for ordination and establish a plan and realistic timeline for completing and gathering all of the required materials. See #2 below.
 - e. Once the candidate has gathered all of the necessary documents and materials, the pastor or mentor will act on behalf of the candidate's congregation and notify the Evergreen ABC Committee on Standards and Ordination that the candidate is seeking ordination.
2. The candidate submits the following documents and materials to the Committee on Standards and Ordination:
 - a. Ordination application form (fillable PDF form found on the Evergreen website under [Ordination Resources](#), which also includes a fillable letter of endorsement [see item d]).
 - b. CV or resume.
 - c. at least 3 written reference letters including your (1) pastor, (2) mentor (if different than pastor), and/or (3) an academic instructor, professional supervisor, or colleague who can speak to your previous experience and readiness for ordination (the Committee will be contacting all references).

- d. a letter of endorsement from the ministry that is calling you (if you are seeking employment that requires ordination, to a specific place of service [e.g. chaplaincy], please reach out to the committee, for guidance and instruction). (See item a for fillable PDF letter of endorsement).
- e. transcripts for all higher education degrees, (See #5 for Education and Experience Requirements).
- f. proof of pastoral ethics course, (the [ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning](#) offers these courses regularly).
- g. proof of Baptist polity course, (the [ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning](#) offers these courses regularly).
- h. comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored an ABC related Career Development Center (we recommend the [Midwest Ministry Development's Candidate for Ordination Individual Assessment](#)) (assessment cannot be older than five years).
- i. signed copy of current [Covenant and Code of Ethics](#) from the ABC Ministers' Council.
- j. a criminal background check for the local state, and any state where you lived previously, as well as an Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search and DOJ Sex Offender search. We recommend [Oxford Document Management Company](#).
- k. Ordination Paper: (Please submit your paper using the following formatting: 1.25" margins, double spaced, 12-14 point font, number each line of the text). Please share honestly about the following (utilizing headers to separate each section):
 - i. Your call to ministry and where you feel God calling you to serve now.
 - ii. Why you are pursuing ordination or recognition of your ordination.
 - iii. Your Christian experience, including your spiritual heritage, your faith journey, experience of baptism and your current spiritual practices.
 - iv. Your academic and field preparation.
 - v. Please reflect theologically on the following topics. There are some prompts included in parentheses below, but you are by no means limited to them. This is not a theological test. However, we do need to know you have thought about these matters theologically and can speak on them cogently by grounding them in Scriptures, and other theological sources.
 - 1. God (reflecting on who God is, God's nature, how we know God, and God's relationship with humanity, etc.) Jesus Christ (who Jesus is, what is important about Jesus' life, ministry, death, resur-

rection, what Jesus' relationship to God and the Holy Spirit means, etc.) and the Holy Spirit (who is the Holy Spirit, how does it show up in the world, etc.)

2. Humanity, Sin, and Salvation (what is humanity's purpose, what do you believe about sin, what do you believe about salvation, etc.)
3. the purpose and place of the church in today's world (what obligations does the church have to social issues, what does it mean for a church to have "a ministry", etc.)
4. the role of the minister including your understanding of the [Covenant and Code of Ethics](#) of the Minister's Council (how would you handle criticism and conflict in your ministry, what are some important boundaries for a pastor, what is the role of a pastor in the church, etc.)
5. and the relationship of the local congregation to the American Baptist Churches and to its ecumenical witness (what is the role of the laity in the church, what does "priesthood of all believers" mean to you, why is congregational polity important, etc.)

vi. What is your understanding of Baptist polity?

1. Reflect on the four historic Baptist Freedoms (Soul Freedom, Bible Freedom, Church Freedom, Religious Freedom)
2. What is your understanding of the freedom of the local church with regards to the role of women and LGBTQIA+ persons in ministry?
3. Understanding of Ordinances (Baptism and Communion – what is a Baptist understanding of these ordinances)

vii. What is your understanding of the Evergreen approach to ethnic caucuses and consensus decision making?

3. Meeting with the Committee on Standards and Ordination. Once the Committee has had the chance to review your documents, they will schedule a meeting with you to ask any clarifying questions, gain a sense of your background, experience, and call to ministry, and determine if you are prepared to meet with an Ordination Council. The Committee will meet privately to discuss their recommendations and notify you within two days of their decision to either:

- a. recommend the church hold an Ordination Council,
- b. require updated paperwork or clarification of your ordination recognition paper,

and an additional review, or

- c. recommend that the Evergreen Association not recognize your ordination.

4. Requirements for Education and Experience (RP, section II.3)

a. Track I – the Preferred Standard

- i. Graduation from a four year-accredited college or university.
- ii. Graduation from a three-year seminary program, M.Div. or equivalent, accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. In cases where seminary education takes place in other than North American settings, refer to Track II. The credentials of persons holding international degrees who have not yet been ordained should be reviewed using Track II requirements.

b. Track II – For other than M.Div. or North American Educational Accreditation

- i. This track is the “equivalency track,” in which an equivalent degree or years of experience may be substituted for up to three years of higher education. “Their equivalent” may mean an experiential equivalent verified by the appropriate committee of the region as provided in this document. It may also mean another educational sequence (e.g., Th.M. or Ph.D. in religion) or include international degrees which may be approved by the Committee on Standards and Ordination of the Evergreen Association.
- ii. Exceptions to the educational prerequisite are not encouraged, but in certain instances individuals may apply for the recognition of their ordination without having completed four years of college and three years of seminary on the following conditions:
 - 1. Experience as an equivalent to educational preparation is granted on the basis of two years of satisfactory professional growth and ministerial performance for every one year of academic preparation that is lacking in the candidate's background, seven years of higher education being the norm.
 - 2. The maximum experiential equivalency which may be granted is six (6) years, the equivalent to three (3) years of higher education.
- iii. To merit consideration as an exception to the educational prerequisite, the candidate’s professional experience must meet the following criteria:
 - 1. It must have been within the broad range of professional leadership categories recognized by the registry of professional leaders

of the ABCUSA. Any requests to consider paraprofessional experiences must include substantiating evidence from third parties. (See page 3 of the following document: [ProfessionalRegistry.MinisterialLeadershipCommission.pdf \(abc-usa.org\)](#))

2. It must have been significant experience (twenty hours per week or more).
3. Evidence concerning the individual's periodic involvement in professional continuing education experiences is required. The number and extent of such experiences will be weighed by the committee and utilized as one index of the candidate's seriousness in pursuance of professional competency.

c. Track 3 – Regional Training Track to Ordination

The Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches does not currently recommend or recognize this track. The standards of education required within this track do not meet the professional ministerial needs of the Evergreen Association at this time.

5. The Ordination Council

- a. The Ordination Council will be composed of clergy and laity from at least five Evergreen Association member-churches in addition to the candidate's church, and at least one representative of the Committee on Standards and Ordination.
- b. The local church will call the Ordination Council upon recommendation from the Evergreen Association Committee on Standards and Ordination.
- c. Conducting the Ordination Council should include:
 - i. Roll call of Evergreen Association member-churches
 - ii. Election of a Moderator if necessary
 - iii. Appointment of a Recording Clerk
 - iv. Presentation of prepared statements and questioning of the candidate
- d. After excusing the candidate, a discussion of eligibility for ordination should follow
 - i. The Council will decide by consensus, and recommend one of the following options to the local church:
 1. Ordination should proceed. Should always include specific recommendations for the candidate to continue strengthening their ministry practice, spiritual growth, and theological understandings.
 2. Ordination should be deferred to some future date, stating the

reasons

3. Ordination should not take place

- e. Records: The recording clerk will keep minutes of the council meeting, will file records with the local church, with the Evergreen Association, and with the Evergreen Association Committee on Standards and Ordination. The Committee on Standards and Ordination will report the ordination to the Professional Registry of the ABCUSA.
6. Ordination Service: Please see Appendix B for a possible order of service for this wonderful event.

Evergreen Association Standards and Procedures for Recognition of Non-ABC Ordination

A person who has already been ordained through an organization recognized as a constituency of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) should be accepted as a person with a Track I ordination with no additional review required, recognizing that eligibility for call is a separate issue. If you have an ordination recognized by a mainline denomination, the process for recognition by Evergreen is as follows:

1. The candidate submits the following documents and materials to the Committee on Standards and Ordination:
 - a. Recognition of non-ABC Ordination application form (fillable PDF form found on the Evergreen website under [Ordination Resources](#), and also with a fillable letter of endorsement [see item d]).
 - b. CV or resume.
 - c. at least 3 ministerial written references (we will be contacting these references).
 - d. a Letter of Endorsement from the Ministry which is supporting or calling you (if you are seeking employment that requires ordination, to a specific place of service [e.g. chaplaincy], please reach out to the committee, for guidance and instruction). (See item a for fillable PDF letter of endorsement).
 - e. documentation of their recognition by the other mainline denomination.
 - f. transcripts for all education for all higher education degrees (See Evergreen Association Standards and Procedures for a Regionally Recognized Ordination #5 for Education and Experience Requirements [pg 6]).
 - g. proof of pastoral ethics course, (the [ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning](#) offers these courses regularly).
 - h. proof of Baptist polity course, (the [ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning](#) offers these courses regularly).
 - i. most recent psychological evaluation (if longer than 5 years, please refer to ABC related Career Development Center) (we recommend the [Midwest Ministry Development's Candidate for Ordination Individual Assessment](#)).
 - j. signed copy of current [Covenant and Code of Ethics](#) from the ABC Ministers' Council.
 - k. a criminal background check for the local state, and any state where you lived previously, as well as an Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search and DOJ Sex Offender search. We recommend [Oxford Document Management Company](#).
 - l. Ordination Recognition Paper: (Please submit your paper using the following

formatting: 1.25" margins, double spaced, 12-14 point font, number each line of the text). Please share honestly about the following (utilizing headers to separate each section):

- i. Your call to ministry and where you feel God calling you to serve now.
 - ii. Why are you pursuing recognition of your ordination with the ABC?
 - iii. What is your relationship to your previous denomination?
 - iv. What is your understanding of the freedom of the local church with regards to the role of women and LGBTQIA+ persons in ministry?
 - v. What is your understanding of the Evergreen approach to ethnic caucuses and consensus decision making?
 - vi. What is your understanding of Baptist polity?
 1. Reflect on the four historic Baptist Freedoms (Soul Freedom, Bible Freedom, Church Freedom, Religious Freedom)
 2. Understanding of Ordinances (Baptism and Communion – what is a Baptist understanding of these ordinances)
2. Meeting with the Committee on Standards and Ordination. This meeting will be a chance for the committee to ask any clarifying questions on the documents already received and gain a sense of the candidate.

After meeting with the candidate, and reviewing all documents, the Committee on Standards and Ordination will either:

 - a. recognize the candidate's ordination,
 - b. require updated paperwork or clarification of the candidate's ordination recognition paper, and an additional review, or
 - c. deny recognition of the candidate's ordination.

Evergreen Association Standards and Procedures for Reinstatement of ABC Recognized Ordination

If a minister has previously had a recognized ordination by another ABC Region that was subsequently withdrawn, the process for reinstatement is as follows:

1. The candidate submits the following documents and materials to the Committee on Standards and Ordination:
 - a. Reinstatement of ABC Recognized Ordination application form (fillable PDF form found on the Evergreen website under [Ordination Resources](#), and also with a fillable letter of endorsement [see item d]).
 - b. CV or resume.
 - c. at least 3 written references (we will be contacting these references).
 - d. a Letter of Endorsement from the Ministry which is supporting or calling you (if you are seeking employment that requires ordination, to a specific place of service [e.g. chaplaincy], please reach out to the committee, for guidance and instruction). (See item a for fillable PDF letter of endorsement).
 - e. transcripts for all education for all higher education degrees (See Evergreen Association Standards and Procedures for a Regionally Recognized Ordination #5 for Education and Experience Requirements [pg 6]).
 - f. proof of pastoral ethics course, (the [ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning](#) offers these courses regularly).
 - g. most recent psychological evaluation (if longer than 5 years, please refer to ABC related Career Development Center) (we recommend the [Midwest Ministry Development's Candidate for Ordination Individual Assessment](#)).
 - h. signed copy of current [Covenant and Code of Ethics](#) from the ABC Ministers' Council.
 - i. a criminal background check for the local state, and any state where you lived previously, as well as an Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search and DOJ Sex Offender search. We recommend [Oxford Document Management Company](#).
 - j. Ordination Reinstatement Paper: (Please submit your paper using the following formatting: 1.25" margins, double spaced, 12-14 point font, number each line of the text). Please share honestly about the following (utilizing headers to separate each section):
 - i. your call to ministry and where you feel God calling you to serve now.
 - ii. Why are you pursuing reinstatement of your ordination with the Evergreen?

- iii. Please share reason for withdrawal of recognition by previous region.
 - iv. Did any legal proceedings result in your withdrawal of recognition?
Please provide details.
 - v. Please share any conditions for reinstatement given by the region that withdrew recognition.
 - vi. What is your understanding of the freedom of the local church with regards to the role of women and LGBTQIA+ persons in ministry?
 - vii. What is your understanding of the Evergreen approach to ethnic caucuses and consensus decision making?
2. Meeting with the Committee on Standards and Ordination. This meeting will be a chance for the committee to ask any clarifying questions on the documents already received and gain a sense of the candidate.
- After meeting with the candidate, and reviewing all documents, the Committee on Standards and Ordination will either:
- a. reinstate the candidate's ordination,
 - b. require updated paperwork or clarification of the candidate's ordination reinstatement paper, and an additional review, or
 - c. deny reinstatement of the candidate's ordination.

Appendix A – Suggested Licensing Procedures (RP Section 2, Sections 1-5)

Licensing

1. As a part of the congregational response to the person's call, the local church may license the candidate to preach the gospel. While confusion has sometimes occurred around this issue, the historic licensing is a "license to preach the gospel" and is a recognition of God's initial call upon the person to serve as an instrument of God's voice and grace in the world. A license to preach does not automatically carry with it permission to conduct weddings or funerals as such practices are governed by state standards and often vary greatly from one state to the next. All such rituals should be performed with the appropriate permission of the state and only in consultation with the pastor of the local church.
2. Any person desiring a "license to preach the gospel" should make known the desire to the pastor and the appropriate committee of the church where he or she is a member. The appropriate committee should then initiate dialogue with the candidate and take action regarding a recommendation for licensing.
3. There are a variety of practices in the denomination which determine whether the Region or Association participates in the particular process of licensing. In any case, a local church licensing should be performed in consultation with the regional Committee on Standards and Ordination.
4. In lieu of a "license to preach the gospel" the congregation may desire to commission the candidate to teach or serve in some way that is more connected to the candidate's ultimate goal of ministerial service.
5. It is made clear to the candidate that the license is granted in anticipation of ordination and that it is valid for a maximum of four years or until such time as the congregation revokes it.

Appendix B – A Possible Service of Ordination

1. The date of an ordination service will be publicly announced only after the ordination council has recommended that an ordination take place, and that there has been a call to a specific place of service. (If you are seeking employment which requires ordination, so that you have that call to a specific place of service, you can reach out to the committee, and we will work with you.)
2. Churches of the association or area and the regional department of ministry will be invited to send representatives to the ordination.
3. A recommended order of worship for the ordination service is included. Sample vows and charges are available from the Ministers Council or your regional office.

Sample Service of Ordination

Prelude

Doxology

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

Statement from the ordination council

Hymn

Reading from Scripture

Special Music

The Sermon

The Vows of Ordination

The Ordination Prayer with Laying on of Hands

The Charge to the Minister

The Charge to the Church

The Presentation of the Certificate of Ordination

The Presentation of Gifts

Hymn of Consecration

The Benediction

Postlude

Appendix C – Historical Perspectives

Ordination historically has been understood by many American Baptist congregations as affirming that an individual has had a call to this specialized ministry and has met the necessary qualifications for carrying it out. Although most often a local congregation has taken the initiative in ordaining that individual, it did so in cooperation with other congregations. This participation of a group of churches in ordination has given the rite much more than merely local significance. In fact, if the ordination was carried out according to the standards of the American Baptist Churches, it represented a denominational recognition of the individual's call and qualifications for the ordained ministry of Christ's universal church.

Appendix D – Checklist for Documents and Procedures

Checklist for a Regionally Recognized Ordination (recognition of Local Church ordination or initial ordination)

Please see page 4 for the specifics on these items.

- ___ Ordinand is Licensed by local church – see Appendix A.
- ___ Applicant submits the following documents:
 - ___ Application for Ordination ___ CV or Resume
 - ___ 3 written references (see pg 4, 2c) ___ Higher Education Transcripts
 - ___ Letter of Endorsement from Ministry which is ordaining you
 - ___ Proof of Pastoral Ethics Course ___ Proof of Baptist Polity Course
 - ___ Assessment from ABC related career development center
 - ___ Signed copy of Current Code of Ethics ___ Criminal Background Check
 - ___ Ordination Paper (see page 5, item 2k)
- ___ Meeting with Committee on Standards and Ordination
- ___ Ordination Council
- ___ Ordination Service

Checklist for Recognition of a Non-ABC Ordination

Please see page 9 for the specifics on these items.

- ___ Applicant submits the following paperwork:
 - ___ Application for Recognition of Non-ABC Ordination ___ CV or Resume
 - ___ Documentation of recognized ordination by other mainline denomination
 - ___ Letter of Endorsement from Ministry which is supporting you
 - ___ 3 written references (see pg 10, 1c) ___ Higher Education Transcripts
 - ___ Proof of Pastoral Ethics Course ___ Proof of Baptist Polity Course
 - ___ Most recent psychological evaluation (see pg 10, 1i)
 - ___ Signed copy of Current Code of Ethics ___ Criminal Background Check
 - ___ Ordination Recognition Paper (see page 10, item 1l)
- ___ Meeting with Committee on Standards and Ordination

Checklist for Reinstatement of an ABC Recognized Ordination

Please see page 11 for the specifics on these items.

- ___ Applicant submits the following paperwork:
 - ___ Application for Reinstatement of ABC Recognized Ordination
 - ___ CV or Resume
 - ___ 3 written references (see pg 12, 1c)
 - ___ Higher Education Transcripts
 - ___ Letter of Endorsement from Ministry which is supporting you
 - ___ Proof of Pastoral Ethics Course
 - ___ Most recent psychological evaluation (see pg 12, 1g)
 - ___ Signed copy of Current Code of Ethics
 - ___ Criminal Background Check
 - ___ Ordination Reinstatement Paper (see page 12, item 1j)
- ___ Meeting with Committee on Standards and Ordination