



CONVERGE

G R E A T L A K E S

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES
FOR
ORDINATION**

Table of Contents

Preamble1

Definition1

The Authority to Ordain1

Norms by Which Candidates Are to Be Examined2

The Procedure for Ordination.....3

The Continuation of Ordained Status7

The Validation of Ordained Status8

Converge Great Lakes Ordination Guidance Committee9

Constituents9

Purpose.....9

Agenda.....9

APPENDIX A

Suggestions for Writing a Statement of Faith in Preparation for Ordination11

Purpose.....11

Suggested Areas to be Covered11

Format.....12

APPENDIX B

Sample Letter Calling An Ordination Council13

APPENDIX C

Sample Credentials14

APPENDIX D

Suggested Ordination Council Procedures15

APPENDIX E

Sample Ordination Service.....17

APPENDIX F

Suggested Ordination Vows.....18

CONVERGE GREAT LAKES POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR ORDINATION

Preamble

We assume that ordination of clergy is good polity. With very few exceptions in its history the church has found it expedient to have a group of pastors set apart for its institutional welfare and the spiritual care of its people. The biblical precedents for ordination are found in the examples of God's call to special ministry among His people as priest, prophet, apostle and disciple.

Definition

The practice of ordination comes from the term "laying on of hands to appoint to an office," as in Acts 6, Titus 1:5, II Timothy 1:6, I Timothy 4:14.

While there are variations in Baptist definitions of ordination, several common denominators seem to prevail:

1. It is an act of the local church for the whole church
2. It recognizes that the ordained person is especially gifted among the church's leaders to equip the saints by:
 - a. Preaching and teaching the Word
 - b. Presiding at the ordinances
 - c. Shepherding
 - d. Administration
3. It is the church's public recognition and confirmation of God's call and gifting of a person for ministry in the act of the prayer, accompanied by the laying on of hands.
4. It carries with it society's legal and social recognition that a person has the professional functions of minister.

The Authority to Ordain

Without exception the authority to ordain belongs to the local church. In ordination, however, each church should proceed with careful regard for the concerns and expectations of her sister churches. That is why ordination policies and procedures are a matter for churches to espouse mutually.

1. Historically, Baptists, while seeking independence of established church or state authority, were not independent of one another. They were strongly interdependent. The strength of denominational life was enormously important to early Baptists who needed strength and fellowship of other churches.
2. Churches today should not insist on the 'rights' of the local church in terms of ordination because if ordination were performed solely by the local church without the calling of a council, the minister would need to be re-ordained whenever he moved to another pastorate.

Norms by Which Candidates are to be Examined

Each candidate for ordination shall fulfill the following expectations:

1. Hold membership in the ordaining church.
2. Hold a formal call to ministry within the ordaining church, or the public recognition by that church of the candidate's call to some other form of Christian ministry.
3. Give a clear testimony of personal experience of conversion through faith in Jesus Christ.
4. Give a clear testimony of response to the inward call of God to the ministry of the church.
5. Give evidence of adequate preparation to fulfill that call.
6. Have attestation by the ordaining church as to the fruitful manifestation of his personality, character and spiritual gifts in ways edifying to that congregation.
7. Provide satisfactory demonstration of an emerging understanding of his leadership role, his personal and vocational goals, his philosophy of ministry and his place in the life of the church.
8. Provide a satisfactory demonstration of adequate levels of skill in the understanding and interpretation of the Bible, in the comprehension of general church doctrine and history, in the understanding of and adherence to the Baptist General Conference Doctrine, and in oral and written communication.
 - a. Standards, as adopted by the Baptist General Conference, should be closely followed. Refer to BGC ANNUAL. The local church and the candidate for ordination should study Ordination of Ministers statement with extreme care before planning for the calling of an ordination council. As a matter of good conscience and consistency it would seem that the following statement on "Denominational Standard" would be given particular attention.

- b. "All ministers in the Baptist General Conference should be convinced Baptists who accept historic Baptist distinctives in all matters pertaining to church order and practice. Men coming from non-Conference backgrounds, and especially non-Baptists, are advised to take some recommended courses from Bethel Theological Seminary or complete certain prescribed reading" (e.g. Tarbet, "A History of the Baptists"; Johnson, "My Church"; Olson, "A Centenary History.")

The Procedure for Ordination

In order to accomplish the ordination of a candidate a church will normally proceed as follows:

1. Licensing of an individual for a least one year (no more than five) to satisfy the matter of recognized credentials e.g. weddings, funerals, IRS, etc.
2. A minimum of one full year of service as pastor or associate prior to request for ordination.
3. The church board makes a formal decision to initiate ordination procedures on behalf of a specific candidate.
4. It is customary for the candidate to be referred to the District Pre-Ordination Guidance Committee for a preliminary review of his preparation. The composition of this committee will consist of the CGL Executive Minister, the senior pastor of the church that will be ordaining the candidate, two to three CGL pastors in good standing, and one or two elders/deacons from the ordaining church.
 - a. Upon completion of the candidate's preparation, an appointment is made with the Pre-Ordination Committee
 - b. The committee assists the candidate in refining his presentation and advises him on his fitness and readiness to be presented to an Ordination Council.
 - c. On the basis of its findings the committee advises the ordaining church as to the apparent fitness and readiness of the candidate.
5. Upon receiving notice that the candidate appears fit and ready, the ordaining church, by congregational vote, calls an Ordination Council. An Ordination Council consists of clergy and lay delegates from a representative group of **Conference Baptist churches.**
6. The procedure for convening an Ordination Council is as follows:
 - a. At least four weeks prior to the date of the meeting of the council, the convening church shall send a written invitation to each church selected for participation, requesting that the pastor and two other delegates be sent. The convening

church shall authorize three of its leaders to be delegates. The district office shall be notified and a representative invited.

- i. Discretion should be used as to how far away one invites delegates. The invitations should be sent to the neighboring Conference churches, representatives from the Baptist General Conference, the District, Bethel Seminary, or other schools the candidate has attended, pastors and laypersons who may have had a significant role or influence in the candidate's life.
 - ii. The letter of invitation would ask for the pastor and two other delegates. The same limitations would be given to any organization that would be represented, whether a school, para-church organization, even relatives that would be involved. Other guests would be acknowledged as guests or as honorary members of the council without voice or vote.
 - iii. All invited to the council and ordination service are guests of the church. Any invited speaker should receive an honorarium and expenses from the church. At the discretion of the church, expenses of the delegates may be considered. However, in most situations, delegates come at their own or their own church's expense as an encouragement to the fellowship.
- b. Along with the invitation, the convening church shall send each invited church a set of written materials prepared by the candidate. Those written materials shall consist of:
- I. The candidate's Testimony of Conversion
 - II. The candidate's call to the ministry
 - III. Statement of Faith
 - IV. Philosophy of Pastoral Leadership
- c. The convening church, responding to suggestions from the Pre-Ordination Committee, shall invite someone from one of the anticipated council churches to serve as a Chairman of the Council, shall provide that person with the opportunity to adequately prepare himself for leadership of the council, and shall nominate that person to be elected chairman by the assembled delegates. The convening church shall also invite and nominate someone to serve as Clerk of the Council.
- d. The District office will use its resources to encourage participation by the invited churches. It is expected that invited conference pastors assume their responsibility to be present together with delegates from their churches.

7. The procedure for conducting an Ordination Council is as follows:
 - a. Opening activities shall be led by the chairman of the convening church and should include congregational singing, a prayer of invocation, a Bible reading and a welcome to delegates and guests. The church chairman shall also introduce the candidate.
 - b. The church chairman shall organize the council by:
 - i. Calling for the reading of the church minutes authorizing the council.
 - ii. Calling for the reading of the report/recommendation of Ministerial Guidance Committee.
 - iii. Nominating the convening church's candidates for the offices of Chairman and Clerk of the Council.
 - iv. Conducting the election of the chairman and clerk and installing same.
 - c. The chairman of the council shall conduct the business of the council by:
 - i. Validating the credentials of the delegates.
 - ii. Having the council's delegates recognize and seat other appropriate people as official delegates (i.e. CGL, BGC and Bethel representatives).
 - iii. Reminding the delegates of the nature and procedure of the task and that the council's decision shall not be predisposed by announced plans for an Ordination Service.
 - iv. Presenting the candidate so that the council has opportunity to determine how he fulfills the norms for ordination.
 - v. Providing opportunity for the candidate to present his statements:
 - His conversion and call to ministry
 - Doctrinal Statement
 - Philosophy of Ministry
 - vi. Providing opportunity for the council to ask questions of the candidate for clarification of the views expressed or experiences described.
 - vii. Eliciting appropriate attestation by the convening church as to the fruitful manifestation of the candidate's personality, character, and spiritual gifts in ways edifying to that congregation.

- viii. Conducting a closed session in which the council shall determine the candidate's fitness and readiness for ordination.
 - If the council is not satisfied, the church would be advised to withhold or postpone ordination until certain remedial steps are completed to the satisfaction of representatives designated by the council.
 - If the motion is affirmative, but the council feels there are areas of weakness, a separate motion to encourage the candidate to do further study may be made. (It may be done privately.) This motion should be shared with the candidate along with the motion to ordain but should not be shared at the ordination service.
 - ix. Informing the candidate of the decision of the council, making appropriate comments and affirmations.
 - x. Instructing the clerk to provide the convening church with the minutes of the council. The minutes shall include information as to the composition and leadership of the council and a verbatim record of the council's actions. Recommendations for media announcements can be made.
 - xi. Adjourning and dissolving the council.
- d. The chairman of the convening church concludes the meeting of the council with appropriate words of gratitude and leads in prayer. He may also announce plans for the service or ordination. Ideally, to enhance the involvement of the local church, there are many good reasons to hold the ceremony on a later date. However, for expediency, it may also be held the same day as the council to take advantage of the impact of guests already present.
8. The procedure for conducting a service of ordination is as follows:
- a. An ordination service is a complete expression of worship and praise to God, including singing, prayers, Bible readings, a sermon, and exhortations to both the ordaining church and the candidate.
 - b. The specific act of ordination involves the following elements:
 - i. The affirmation of ordination vows by the candidate (A sample of such vows is attached).
 - ii. The laying-on-of-hands by Deacons/Elders, ordained pastors, and other appropriate persons.
 - iii. The prayer of ordination.

- iv. The presentation of the Certificate of Ordination to the ordained.

The Continuation of Ordained Status

1. When an ordained person accepts the call of another church, the responsibility for supervision of his ordination is transferred to that church. When an ordained person accepts a call to a form of ministry that does not in itself provide for church membership, the church of which the ordained is a member shall be responsible for the supervision of his ordination.
2. When an ordained person does not have a call from the church of which he is a member and the church of which he is a member does not recognize the validity of his call to some other form of ministry, his ordination should be considered inactive.
3. If the pastor holding ordination from a Baptist General Conference church moves to another group, denomination or fellowship, his ordination papers in the Baptist General conference will be considered inactive.
4. Ordained persons who become disabled or who enter full vocational retirement shall continue with full recognition of their ordained status.
5. Ordination may be revoked only by the church of which the ordained is a member. Should such action be necessary, due to the neglect or abuse of his calling or some serious deviation from sound doctrine and godly conduct, the following steps are suggested to the church in which he is serving.
 - a. No action should be taken without first:
 - i. Following proper guidelines within the churches own constitution and by-laws (which ought to include provisions for pastoral-church relations)
 - ii. Consulting with its District Executive Minister
 - b. Some offenses are of such a character that no delay is advised or necessary, but usually the act of being deposed from office and subsequent revocation of ordination would be preceded by suspension from office.
 - c. Revocation shall be done only after serious deliberation requiring the consent of a council made up of delegates from sister churches. Revocation requires a vote by the church.
 - d. Written notification of this action should go to Baptist General Conference headquarters, all District Executive Ministers, and the individual involved.

- e. Suspended ministers who are proven not guilty should receive public exoneration in their church.
 - f. A deposed minister should not be re-instated unless he gives sufficient evidence of genuine repentance.
 - i. The judgment as to whether a deposed minister shall be subsequently re-instated should be made by the church that desires to call him, together with the concurring advice of denominational leaders
 - ii. Upon acceptance of a call, the deposed minister's ordination should be re-instated.
6. Ordination may be renounced voluntarily. Such renunciation shall require that the ordained declare such desire to the church board and that the Certificate of Ordination be given to be destroyed. The church shall vote to recognize such a renunciation.

The Validation of Ordained Status

1. Since these policies and procedures assume that the call of a church is fundamental to ordination, it is expected that in the process of issuing a call, each church shall satisfy itself of the validity of the ordination of the candidate being called. The issuance of a call in and of itself validates previous ordination.
2. When a church issues a call to a person ordained in another denomination, it is appropriate for that church to call a council "to review his ordination." The purpose for such a council is to confirm the fact that this person fulfills these norms for ordination.
3. When a church issues a call to a person with an inactive BGC ordination, such a call activates the pastor's previous ordination.

Converge Great Lakes Ordination Guidance Committee

Constituents:

CGL District Executive Minister (when possible) and three pastors from the area of the candidate's ministry. One from each of the following: CGL Board of Overseers, Church Planting, and Ministry Resource Committees.

Purpose:

1. To review, discuss and make suggestions to the candidate relative to his written statement on his:
 - a. Conversion and call to ministry
 - b. Doctrine
 - c. Philosophy of ministry
2. To advise the candidate and the church as to his apparent readiness for ordination.
3. To assist the candidate and the church in making preparation for the Ordination Council and the Ordination Service.

Agenda:

1. Prayer for guidance in counseling the candidate and the church.
2. Discuss with the candidate his view of the meaning of ordination.
 - a. Degree or diploma?
 - b. Covenant with the church?
 - c. Recognition of God's call to ministry?
 - d. Rite of initiation?
3. Review and discuss with the candidate his views on "the continuation of the ordained status". (See CGL Policy & Procedures for Ordination)
4. Review the candidate's written statement on his "Conversion and Call to Ministry". Make any appropriate suggestions for improvement.
5. Review the written "Doctrine" statement. Make suggestions for improvement or clarification.

6. Review the written "Philosophy of Ministry" statement. Discuss and make any appropriate suggestions.
7. Remind the candidate to keep his written statement personal, brief (not more than 12 pages) and understandable to lay people.
8. Formulate recommendations to:
 - a. The candidate as it relates to his personal preparation.
 - b. To the ordaining church as to the propriety of proceeding to call an Ordination Council. (Some member of the committee should be designated to write this letter.)
9. Procure from the candidate the name and address of the person who should receive this letter from the Ordination Guidance Committee.
10. Arrangements:
 - a. The dates and times of the Ordination Council and service should be sent to the CGL office as soon as they are determined.
 - b. Review the "CGL Policy and Procedures for Ordination" with the candidate as it relates to arrangements to be made by the local church.
 - c. Have a prepared list of newspapers, magazines, etc. together with addresses for the council clerk for publicity purposes.
 - d. Certificate of Ordination will be provided by the district office well in advance of the council so that special printing can be ready for the Council Officers.
 - e. Prepare a table, chair, and writing materials for council's clerk.
 - f. Plans should be made to provide meal for the Ordination Council.

APPENDIX A

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A STATEMENT OF FAITH IN PREPARATION FOR ORDINATION

Purpose:

1. The paper is given as a public declaration of what you believe regarding the classic theological tenets of the evangelical Christian faith.
2. It should, therefore, be your own work, in your own words, with quotations from theological sources at a minimum.
3. The paper should present positively what you basically believe, generally avoiding statements about what you do not believe.
4. In addition to presenting your theological understandings of the faith, the paper should demonstrate your ability to communicate in clear, concise thought patterns, words, and style.

Suggested Areas to be Covered:

1. Your statement should treat major theological themes, i.e.: God, scripture, man, sin, Christology, salvation, the church, eschatology, the Holy Spirit, and the Christian life. You should develop each of these doctrines as they grow naturally out of your present theological understanding. However, you should bear in mind the traditional approaches and, while expressing them in the categories of your own experience, seek to establish continuity with the experience of your readers (a part of whom will be an ordaining council).
2. Whenever relevant, your statement should reflect your knowledge of the biblical expression of the particular doctrine, its historical development, and its contemporary synthesis. The examples provided below should give you an insight:
 - a. On the doctrine of God:
 - i. Without ignoring the traditional forms, you should attempt to express doctrine in categories which will be understandable to the listener in your congregation today. How do you present the "form" of God to man today? What is the meaning of concepts such as "transcendence" and "immanence" for today's understanding of the world in which we live? Who is the God whom you communicate to modern man?

b. On the doctrine of man:

- i. You should seek to incorporate in your statement the following concepts:
What is the biblical understanding of man? Who is man as a **soteriological** creature in the twentieth century? How does man stand today as the "imaged God" (image of God)? What are the ethical dimensions of man-ness?

c. On the doctrine of the church:

- i. Demonstrate the theological significance for today of the biblical metaphors for the church (body of Christ, habitation of God, etc.) How does the church relate to the Kingdom of God? How is the church related to contemporary society? What is the significance of the church for eschatology, etc.?

3. Before you begin to write each of the separate doctrines, outline the areas you intend to include, develop the procedure for treating these areas, and then ask yourself the question: Does this show my knowledge of the biblical and historical data and does it relate to the man of today?

Format

1. The statement should be ten to twelve pages in length, double spaced.
2. Pay attention to literary style, grammar, and spelling.
3. Use headings, subheadings, and page numbers for easy reference during the questioning period. Break down by paragraph. Use thesis-like margins.
4. Since we Baptists are 'people of the Book," use Scripture. Not more than an average of one quoted reference should be used in support of any given point or statement. (Additional references may be used but only by giving location of chapter and verse.)
5. Remember that two-thirds of a given ordination council are laymen, some with little theological sophistication. Prepare to communicate to them too!

From: ON ORDINATION, Emmet V. Johnson, Minnesota Baptist Conference, 1976

APPENDIX B

Sample Letter Calling an Ordination Council

First Baptist Church
1711 High Street
Anywhere, Wisconsin 54474

Dear Co-workers,

Our church is requesting you to send your pastor and two other delegates to sit in council with us to consider the propriety of ordaining our pastor, John Jones to the work of the Gospel ministry.

The Council will meet in our church facility, on Friday, November 11, 1991 at 1:00pm.

To facilitate the organization of the council, please complete the enclosed credentials, and please mail or send them with your delegates.

You will also find enclosed three copies of the written material prepared by the candidate so that all of your delegates may have time to carefully read it prior to the meeting of the council.

A meal will be served following the completion of the council's work.

By order of the church,

Church clerk/secretary

Enclosures:

1. Credentials for your delegates and an enclosed self-addressed envelope.
2. Written material prepared by the candidate for ordination.

APPENDIX C

Sample Credentials

Date

_____ (Name of church calling Ordination
Council)

_____ (Address of church)

Dear Friends,

Our church is happy to respond to your request to send our Pastor and two delegates to sit in council with you to consider the matter of ordaining your pastor.

Our delegates to the council will be:

1. Pastor _____

2. _____

3. _____

By order of the church,

Church clerk/secretary

APPENDIX D

Suggested Ordination Council Procedures

The Church Chairman or Vice Chairman shall organize the Council by:

1. Having congregational singing
2. Leading in opening prayer
3. Reading (or having read) appropriate Scripture
4. Welcoming delegates and guests
5. Calling for the church clerk to read the church minutes authorizing the council
6. Calling for the reading of the report/recommendation of the Ministerial Guidance Committee
7. Nominating the convening church's candidates for the office of "chairman" and "clerk" of the council
8. Conducting the election of the chairman and the clerk and turning the council over to the newly elected officials.

The elected Chairman of the Council shall conduct the business of the Council by:

1. Working with the clerk to validate credentials and announce the names and churches of all official delegates.
2. Having the council's delegates recognize and seat other appropriate people as official delegates (i.e. CGL, BGC or Bethel representation.)
3. Reminding the delegates of the nature and the procedure of the task and that the council's decision shall not be predisposed by announced plans for an ordination service.
4. Presenting the candidate so that the council has opportunity to determine how he fulfills the norms for ordination.
5. Providing opportunity for the candidate to present his statements on:
 - a. His conversion and call to ministry

- b. Doctrinal Statement
 - c. Philosophy of Ministry
6. Provide opportunity for the council to ask questions of the candidate for clarification of the views expressed or experiences described.
 7. Eliciting appropriate attestation by the convening church as to the fruitful manifestation of the candidate's personality, character, and spiritual gifts in ways edifying to that congregation.
 8. Conducting a closed session in which the council shall determine the candidate's fitness and readiness for ordination
 - a. If the council is not satisfied, the church would be advised to withhold or postpone ordination until certain remedial steps are completed to the satisfaction of representatives designated by the council.
 - b. If the motion is affirmative, but the council feels there are areas of weakness, a separate motion to encourage the candidate to do further study may be made. (It may be done privately.) This motion would be shared with the candidate along with the motion to ordain, but should not be shared at the ordination service.
 9. Informing the candidate of the decision of the council, making appropriate comments and affirmations.
 10. Instructing the clerk to provide the convening church with the minutes of the council. The Minutes shall include information as to the composition and leadership of the council and a verbatim record of the council's actions. Recommendations for media announcements can be made.
 11. Adjourning and dissolving the council.

* A meal should be provided for the delegates following the conclusion of their work.

APPENDIX E

Sample Ordination Service

Song Service

Scripture and Prayer

Reading of resume of minutes of Ordination Council

Special Music

Ordination Sermon

(Speaker selected and contacted by the church candidate's preference)

Special Music

Ordination Vows

(Deacon/Elder/Pastor Assistant administers the vows)

Ordination Prayer

(Candidate kneels on platform while Deacons/Elders/pastoral Assistants and ordained pastors lay hands upon him, Deacon leads in prayer.)

Charge to the church

(Pastor contacted previously)

Charge to the candidate

(Pastor contact previously)

Hand of fellowship

(Church Chairman/Vice Chairman - includes Ordination Certificate)

(Presentation of gifts, if so desired by local congregation)

Benediction by newly ordained man

(Refreshments after are served by local church)

(Local church cares for honorarium for speaker)

APPENDIX F

Suggested Ordination Vows

Moved by your love for God and a sincere desire to proclaim the gospel of His Son among men, are you now ready to take upon you this holy ministry and faithfully serve in it?

(I am ready, the Lord being my helper)

Will you tend the flock of Christ committed to your care, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly, not for worldly gain but that men may be made free in Him?

(I will, the Lord being my helper)

Will you faithfully administer the ordinances in purity; preach the Word of the everlasting God; proclaim the gospel of Christ; lead disciples into the presence of God and his healing Spirit; minister to them in the truth of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures; guide them in the way of life which is Christ, that they may be found in Him and be claimed for service in His kingdom?

(I shall so endeavor, the Lord being my helper)

Do you promise to be diligent in prayer, in the reading of the Scriptures, and in such studies and devotions as will increase your knowledge of God and His kingdom?

(I do so promise)

Will you endeavor in the strength and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord to live a life of sincere discipleship; to be loyal to the call of duty; and to faithfully discharge all the work of the ministry entrusted to you?

(I shall so endeavor, the Lord being my helper)

Do you accept the faith and order of the Baptist General Conference and promise to be loyal to this fellowship that it may be more and more a fruitful branch of the church universal; and while cherishing brotherly love toward all the faithful followers of Christ everywhere, do you engage to labor earnestly that the purity, peace and strength of this, your chosen church, may be increased?

(I do so engage)

From: A Manual of Pastoral Problems and Procedures, Lloyd M. Perry and Edward J. Lias (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967) pg. 10.