



Steps to Ordination



Preface

A message to our churches and candidates for ordination:

These documents are purposely entitled "Steps to Ordination." They are meant to serve as helpful guidelines during a process which requires much soul searching and labor for the candidate and diligent care by the ordaining church.

Ordination is the recognition of the pastor's gifts and calling by the ordaining church-not something to be taken lightly. Yet, it is an event to be celebrated enthusiastically and appropriately.

Special thanks are due to the Task Force of the Minnesota Pastors' Council and especially Rick McKinniss and Rick Sturm, who have been the major writers of the revision of these policies for ordination. Thanks as well to Clarence Bass, Bruce Petersen, Jim Spickelmier and Jeff Stewart who led a second revision in 2009.

I urge Converge North Central churches to closely follow the guidelines suggested in these pages.

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction....But you keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and discharge all the duties of your ministry.
2 Timothy 4:2 & 5 (NIV)

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Introduction:

Ordination of clergy is good polity. With few exceptions in its history, the church has found it expedient to formally set apart persons for leadership positions within its ministry. (See Appendix 1)

Ordination implies recognition by the local church, in consultation with a body of like-minded churches, that an individual has received both a calling and gifting of God to vocational ministry. Vocational ministry includes pastoral leadership ministry in a local church, chaplaincy, missionary service and teaching at the seminary level.

The churches of Converge North Central expect that those who are ordained should have prepared themselves for ministry through rigorous training in theology and leadership skills. Ordination should only be sought by those whose calling and giftedness has been tested by experience in ministry, enhanced by education and confirmed by those to whom and with whom they have ministered.

We believe that it is desirable to maintain a distinction between licensure and ordination. While the civil authorities make no distinction between the two in granting certain privileges and responsibilities, we believe that licensure should be granted to those who fall under the following categories:

1. Are taking preliminary steps toward ordination.
2. Are serving in a probationary or interim ministry capacity.
3. Are serving for a specified period of time.
4. Are serving in a ministry capacity limited to the special needs of a particular church or organization.

While licensure does not require the candidate to appear before the Minnesota Iowa Baptist Ministerial Guidance Committee, nor to be examined by a council of representatives from like-minded churches, it is strongly recommended that all licensed personnel should undergo a careful examination by the licensing church as to their doctrine, lifestyle, and character as well as their capabilities concerning their specific ministry responsibility.

These Steps to Ordination describe the process by which the churches of Converge North Central, in light of established and accepted norms and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, have agreed to examine candidates to recognize and validate a call to ministry.

Steps to Ordination:

1. **Call.** The candidate for ordination shall be able to:
 - A. Give a clear testimony of personal experience of conversion through faith in Christ Jesus.
 - B. Give a clear testimony of response to the call of God to the ministry of the church.
 - C. Give a clear testimony of the confirmation of the call to ministry through effective ministerial experience and the affirmation, response, and support of the body of Christ (see Appendix 2)
 - D. Give a clear Statement of Faith
2. **Preparation.** The candidate for ordination shall give evidence of appropriate educational preparation to fulfill the candidate's particular call. Seminary training or comparable rigorous training in theology and leadership is expected. Churches are to take seriously their collective and individual responsibility in assisting candidates to prepare for ministry through offering appropriate experiences of ministerial responsibility and evaluation of the character, call and giftedness of the individual. In this process, the seminary is clearly to be regarded as the servant of the churches.
3. **Placement in a local church.** The candidate for ordination shall fulfill the following expectations:
 - A. Hold membership in the ordaining church.
 - B. Hold a formal call to ministry within the ordaining church, or the public recognition by that church of the candidate's call to some form of Christian ministry (see Appendix 2).

- C. Have received confirmation by the ordaining church that the candidate's personal qualities, character, and spiritual gifts are suitable for an ordained ministry.
 - D. Demonstrate skills in
 - 1. The understanding and interpretation of the Bible
 - 2. The comprehension of theology and church history
 - 3. The understanding of and adherence to the Converge (Baptist General Conference) statement of faith
 - 4. The distinctives of Baptist theology and practice
 - 5. Oral and written communication (see Appendix 2).
 - E. Demonstrate an understanding of the candidate's leadership role in the life of the church, style of ministry, and personal and vocational goals (see Appendix 4).
4. **Initiation of the Ordination Process.** The authority to ordain belongs to the local church. This authority is exercised when the local church makes a formal decision to initiate ordination procedures for a candidate. It is the responsibility of the church to communicate this decision to Converge North Central and to request that the Ministerial Guidance Committee meet with the candidate.
5. **The Recommendation of the District Ministerial Guidance Committee.** The purpose of the Ministerial Guidance Committee is to assist the candidate in refining the candidate's presentation to an ordination council and to advise the candidate on the candidate's readiness to be presented to such a council. On the basis of its findings, the committee advises the ordaining church as to the apparent fitness and readiness of the candidate.

In ordination, the local church should proceed with careful regard for the concerns and expectations of its sister churches in Converge (Baptist General Conference). An ordained minister of one of our churches represents the entire Conference. The candidate shall be referred by the ordaining church to the Ministerial Guidance Committee for a preliminary review of the candidate's preparation. The Committee will be assembled by the CONVERGE NORTH CENTRAL office after having received all the written materials from the candidate. (See Section 6C below.) The Committee shall examine the candidate's testimony of Conversion and Call (see Appendix 2) and Statement of Faith (see Appendix 2), recognizing that a personal call and understanding and commitment to Baptist theology make up the foundations for ministry within Converge (Baptist General Conference).

Since there is much more to the practice of ministry than personal experience and orthodox theology, the pastor's ability to motivate people, manage conflict, communicate a vision, and handle crisis are essential to an effective ministry. The Committee shall also review the candidate's "Statement of Pastoral Leadership" (see Appendix 4). Since self-understanding and issues of personhood are so central to pastoral ministry, the candidate should review the test results and interpretations which the candidate would have received in Seminary in connection with field education experience. If this process did not occur, the candidate should seek the help of a career counselor who is familiar with pastoral ministry issues and skilled in testing and interpretations (e.g., North Central Ministry Development Center). The Committee will examine the candidate's statement of pastoral leadership, which should reflect the results of the above process and include the candidate's theology of ministry, professional goals, and goals for the candidate's present ministry (see Appendix 2).

6. **Calling the Ordination Council.**
- A. Upon recommendation of the Ministerial Guidance Committee, the ordaining church shall call an ordination council. An ordination council consists of clergy and lay delegates (at least 10) from at least four CONVERGE NORTH CENTRAL churches. It is important that the council be scheduled to allow for maximum participation by both lay and clergy delegates.
 - B. At least four weeks prior to the date of the council, the convening church shall send a written invitation to area Converge (Baptist General Conference) churches, requesting that the pastor and two other delegates be sent. It is recommended that these churches be called and a commitment secured to assure a good attendance at the ordination council. The convening church shall authorize three of

its leaders to be delegates. The District office and Seminary shall be notified and a representative invited.

- C. The convening church shall send each responding church a set of written materials prepared by the candidate. These written materials shall consist of the candidate's Testimony of Conversation and Call, Statement of Pastoral Leadership, and Statement of Faith (see Appendix 2).
 - D. The convening church shall invite an appropriate person from among the delegates to serve as chair of the council, shall provide that person with the opportunity to adequately prepare for leadership of the council, and shall appoint them as chair. The convening church shall appoint someone to serve as clerk of the council.
 - E. The District office is expected to use its resources to encourage participation by the invited churches. Further, the assistance of the District office and the Area Ministerial Fellowship should be sought by the ordaining church as necessary.
7. **Conducting the Ordination Council.** The procedure for conducting an ordination council is as follows:
- A. The church chair shall organize the council by:
 - 1. Calling for the reading of the church minutes authorizing the council.
 - 2. Calling for the reading of the report of the Ministerial Guidance Committee.
 - 3. Validating the credentials of the delegates.
 - 4. Nominating the convening church's candidates for the offices of chair and clerk of the council.
 - 5. Conducting the election of the chair and clerk and installing same.
 - B. The chair of the council shall conduct the business of the council by:
 - 1. Presenting the candidate to the council to provide opportunity for determining how the candidate fulfills the norms for ordination.
 - 2. Providing opportunity for the council to ask questions of the candidate for clarification of the views expressed and the experience described in the written materials.
 - 3. Eliciting appropriate testimony from members of the convening church as to the fruitful demonstration of the candidate's personality, character, and spiritual gifts in edifying that congregation.
 - 4. Conducting a closed session in which the council shall determine the candidate's fitness and readiness for ordination.
 - 5. Informing the candidate of the decision of the council and communicating the decision to the CONVERGE NORTH CENTRAL office.
 - 6. 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.
 - 7. Announcing the date of the Ordination Service. It would be preferable that this date be at least 2 weeks after the Council has met.
 - 8. Adjourning and dissolving the council.
8. **The Ordination Service.** The procedure for conducting a service of ordination is as follows:
- A. An ordination service is a service of worship and praise to God and includes 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:
 - C. The affirmation of ordination vows by the candidate (see Appendix 3).
 - D. The laying on of hands by the leaders of the ordaining church and ordained persons present.
 - E. The prayer of ordination.
 - F. The presentation of the Certificate of Ordination to the ordained which is issued by the CONVERGE NORTH CENTRAL office.
9. **Transfer/ Recognition of Ordination.** When an ordained minister moves from one Conference church to another:
- A. The responsibility for the supervision of the candidate's ordained status is transferred to that church. When an ordained person accepts a call to a form of ministry that does not itself provide for church membership (e.g., chaplaincy), the church of which the ordained is a member shall be responsible for the supervision of the candidate's ordination standing.
 - B. It is recommended that a service of installation shall be held shortly after the new minister begins

his/her duties. This service is to formally recognize the minister's call to the new congregation and to celebrate that event. In addition to the home church, representatives of neighboring sister churches and representatives of other local churches in the community should be invited to attend. At this service the newly-called minister may wish to symbolically hand over the candidate's certificate of ordination to the chairperson of the church. This action symbolizes that ordination remains a function of call. Responsibility for an ownership of ordination continues to be jointly held by the ordained and the local church. Supervision over the minister's ordination then rests with the church he/she currently serves.

- C. When an ordained Conference minister accepts a call to a non-Conference church, they should transfer their ordination to the new denomination or fellowship in accordance with the policies of that body. If they are serving a ministry other than a church and transfer their membership to a non-Conference church, they should seek the blessing of that new church and denomination upon their ministry and subscribe to any policies regarding ordination that are part of their participation in a new fellowship.
- D. We encourage churches which call ministers who have not been ordained in the Conference to examine the candidates to determine that their doctrine and practice is in accordance with the doctrine and practices of Converge North Central. We encourage churches to either receive or affirm a previous ordination or to encourage such staff to seek ordination through Converge North Central procedures.

Attached Appendixes include:

- 1. Biblical Basis for Ordination
- 2. Documents to be prepared for the Ministerial Guidance Committee
 - a. A statement on your conversion and call to ministry
 - b. Your statement of faith
 - c. A statement on your understanding of pastoral leadership
- 3. Ordination Vows
- 4. Converge (BGC) Affirmation of Faith
- 5. Affirmation of Ministerial Ethics in Converge/CONVERGE NORTH CENTRAL
- 6. Sample Letter Calling an Ordination Council
- 7. Sample Credentials
- 8. Sample Ordination Service

Appendix 1

A Biblical Basis for Ordination

This manual, *Ordination Policies and Procedures*, begins with the statement: "Ordination of clergy is good polity." This is a confessional statement, an affirmation of belief. Since Baptists seek to ground their beliefs upon the Bible, it is appropriate to establish a Scriptural basis for the practice of ordination.

ANTECEDENTS, NOT PRECEDENTS

At the outset, we acknowledge that no specific precedents for the modern practice of ordination are to be found in Scripture. That is to say, in the Bible we find no explicit reference to a formal service of ordination. There are, however, some definite Biblical antecedents to ordination as we practice it.

THE CALL OF GOD

In both the Old and New Testaments, we find examples of persons being specifically called to minister in the name of the Lord. Moses was called away from his flock in Midian to shepherd the people of God out of Egypt (Exodus 3). Saul and David were called by God to rule the nation (1 Samuel 9, 16). Isaiah and Jeremiah each describes for us his call to the prophetic ministry (Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1). In the New Testament we read that Jesus called his disciples to follow him. Peter and Andrew, James and John were called from their nets (Mark 1:14-20). Matthew was called from his tax collector's booth (Mark 2:13-17). And, of course, Saul's name and life were changed when he encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). In this encounter, Paul heard a call to "preach Christ among the Gentiles" (Galatians 1:16).

There are various ways to understand just what the divine call entails and how it is received. That is not the focus here. But the pattern of God calling individuals into special service is clearly seen throughout Scripture. We affirm the reality of God's call into special service today. It is this call which the church seeks to recognize and ratify when it formally ordains a person for ministry.

LAYING ON OF HANDS

In both testaments the practice of "laying on of hands" was used as a sign to set one apart for a particular office or ministry.

Three Old Testament cases are instructive. Exodus 29 describes the ceremony by which Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priesthood. One significant part of that ceremony involved the sacrificial offering of one bull and two rams. As the offerings were made, Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of each animal. Here "laying on of hands" involves identification with the consecrating sacrifice.

Similarly, "laying on of hands" was integral to the consecration ceremony of the Levites (Numbers 9). The Levites laid their hands upon the heads of two bulls, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In addition, during the ceremony another "laying on of hands" took place. Representatives of the people laid hands upon the Levites as they were presented before the Lord. Here the people symbolically designated the Levites to take their place in the service of the Lord.

Another "laying on of hands" took place when the Lord instructed Moses to consecrate Joshua to take the place of leader in Israel (Numbers 27). Moses had Joshua stand before the priest Eleazar and the whole congregation while "he laid his hands upon him and commissioned him as the Lord directed." By this symbolic action Moses dramatically expressed a transfer of authority in the presence of the whole congregation.

In the New Testament the "laying on of hands" is also used in ways that provide antecedents to our practice of ordination.

In Acts 6 we read how the seven were chosen to manage the daily distribution of food. The need for this ministry arose because there was a conflict between Greek-speaking Jews and Aramaic-speaking Jews in the Jerusalem church. The congregation was instructed to select seven Spirit-filled men to handle this problem. Before these men took up this ministry, we read: "These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them" (Acts 6:6). So, by the "laying on of hands" these servants were formally consecrated to their new office and ministry.

Similarly, when the church at Antioch was led by the Spirit to set apart Paul and Barnabas for missionary work, it did so by the "laying on of hands" (Acts 13:3). Paul and Barnabas already had been engaged in ministry for some time, but by "laying on of hands" the church consecrated these two to the new task of doing pioneer missionary work. This was not the ordination of novices to ministry, but rather a recognition of God's call to two veterans to new ministry.

In Paul's writings to Timothy, we find two clear references to the "laying on of hands":

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you through prophecy with the laying on of hands of the church council.

1 Timothy 4:14

Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Timothy 1:6

We do not know the exact circumstance or circumstances to which Paul refers. We do not know whether Paul is referring to two occasions or one. We do not know at what point in Timothy's Christian journey hands were laid upon him. We do know, however, that he was equipped for and set apart for the ministry to which God had called him. And we know that hands were laid upon him to symbolize his divine equipping and consecration to the work.

Debate will continue to focus on the various understandings of all that is signified in the "laying on of hands." That is not the focus here. We only affirm that in Scriptural examples of "laying on of hands" there is a formal, symbolic action by which the community of faith recognizes that a person has received a call from God to do the work of the ministry.

To summarize, we believe that the ordination of clergy is good polity because of the Scriptural antecedents that teach the reality of the call of God to special ministry and the symbolic practice of "laying on of hands" to affirm such a call. This is why "we believe the ordination of clergy is good polity."

Appendix 2

Documents for the Ministerial Guidance Committee

Statement of your Conversion and Call to Ministry

Candidates shall prepare a written statement (5-7 pages) in which they will describe their Christian conversion experience, their baptism and subsequent growth in Christian faith and understanding. They shall also describe their call into Christian ministry and leadership and educational experiences that have prepared them to pursue that call. Comprehensive narrative statements should be prepared in each of the four major areas described below.

Your conversion and baptism. Write a narrative describing how you came to faith in Christ. You can discuss individuals and ministries that were instrumental in your life or issues that led you to consider Christ. Discuss what led you to ask to be baptized and what that experience meant to you at the time. Describe other early Christian experiences that you feel were important in your life.

Your call into ministry. Write a narrative summary of how you came to a conviction that you were being called into ministry. Discuss individuals and incidents that were influential in that call. Describe how you have pursued that call and ministerial experiences and education that have been helpful to you. Talk about what has led you to seek to be ordained as a minister in Converge (Baptist General Conference).

Your growth in Christ. Write a description of how you have grown in Christ in recent years. What things have been most helpful in your Christian growth? Are there issues which you are working through at this time? Describe various approaches to a life of devotion you have tried and which are working best for you. What understandings have been most important in motivating you to continue growing and to pursue ordination?

The road ahead. Write a statement which describes future plans you may have in pursuing your preparation for and entry into or continuation in ministry? You might address further education you plan to pursue. Discuss how your spouse and your family are relating to your pursuit of ministry. If you had control over your life and ministry how would you like to see God use you in the years ahead?

Statement of Faith

Purpose

This statement is to be a personal expression of the candidate's understanding of the basic beliefs of the Christian faith. The statement should give evidence that the writer knows and supports historic distinctives of Baptists and the theological heritage of Converge (Baptist General Conference) It should demonstrate a working knowledge of Scripture, a clear declaration of doctrine, and a personal integration of truth in the candidate's own life. This latter point is extremely important. This statement is not intended to be merely an expansion of the Converge (BGC) Affirmation of Faith, nor a condensed version of a theology text. Rather, each of the major doctrines of the faith should be affirmed and expressed as much as possible in the candidate's own language. Therefore, as a secondary purpose, this statement should also reflect the candidate's ability to communicate theological concepts clearly, concisely, and in a contemporary manner.

Contents

The statement should treat the major theological themes: God the Father, Scripture, humanity, sin, Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the church, the last things, and Christian living. The individual doctrines are to be developed as they grow out of your present understanding. What the Bible has to say about these themes is of primary importance. Traditional theological expressions of various doctrines should also be borne in mind. But the goal of this statement is for the candidate to express these concepts in a fashion that demonstrates integration with the candidate's own life and ministry.

Ordination candidates tend to err when they do the following:

1. By omitting major theological themes or doctrines about which there has been or is considerable debate.
2. By substituting a process of ordination preparation with an unrevised statement developed for a Seminary class.
3. By borrowing the phrases and themes of a classical statement or a peer's statement, without being able to defend the statement's language as it is not one's own.
4. By abandoning completely traditional theological language in favor of creative personal paraphrase.

Format

The statement should be 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced, with sufficient margins. Careful attention should be paid to spelling, grammar, and style.

The flavor of the statement should be confessional. Each section should have the tone of expressing, "I believe these things" without woodenly repeating that phrase.

Use major headings, sub-headings, paragraphs, and page numbers for easy reference.

Scripture should be employed, but judiciously. Not more than an average of one quoted verse should be used to support any given point. Additional support reference may be employed by giving location of chapter and verse.

Remember that possibly a majority of any given ordination council are lay people. Express yourself in ways that communicate with them. The candidate's congregation ought to be able to pick up this statement and have a good overall sense of how their pastor thinks and what he/she believes about the Christian faith.

Statement of Ministerial Leadership

Candidates shall prepare a written statement (5-7 pages) describing their understanding of their goals and approaches to Christian ministry as well as their theology of ministry. Candidates preparing for chaplaincy or missionary service should answer the questions as they apply to their anticipated ministry context. However, all candidates should demonstrate an understanding of Biblical ecclesiology and the function and purpose of local church ministry. Comprehensive narrative statements are to be prepared to address the four areas of concern listed below.

- A. Theology of Ministry: Write a statement about your understanding of the nature of the church and Christian ministry. This statement should incorporate your understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church, the goals of Christian ministry, and the roles of the Holy Spirit, the pastor, missionary or chaplain and the people of the congregation in working toward those goals.
- B. Leadership Style: Write a descriptive statement of your understanding of your own leadership style

and the strengths and weaknesses you bring to Christian ministry. Describe how you use your spiritual gifts and personality to assist others to grow in Christ, to address conflict and to catch a vision for ministry.

- C. Personal and Professional Goals: Write a statement describing your personal and professional goals for the immediate future and in later years.. How will you pursue growth in your ability to minister effectively? How will you relate to others with whom you minister? What steps do you intend to take in terms of continuing education, accountability structures and personal disciplines to “watch your life and doctrine closely...(so that you might) save both yourself and your hearers.” (2 Timothy 4: 13-16)? What are your plans to provide for and protect your family? In what ways will you pursue relationships in Converge (Baptist General Conference) and with ministers in your area? How will you evaluate your own effectiveness as a minister and a Christian?
- D. Goals for Your Ministry: Write a statement about the strengths and weaknesses of your church or the ministry you will seek to pursue. Describe goals you may set to address the needs of that ministry and the way you intend to address those goals. Describe how your gifts and personality hopefully will be used of God to build up this part of the body of Christ.

Appendix 3

Suggested Ordination Vows

Moved by your love for God and a sincere desire to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation among all people, 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 and women may be made free in Him?

I will, the Lord being my helper.

Will you make faithful effort duly to administer the ordinances in purity, to preach the Word of the everlasting God, to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, to lead disciples into the presence of God and His healing Spirit, to minister to them the truth of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures, to 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 Converge (Baptist General Conference) and promise to be loyal to this fellowship that it may more and more be 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.

Appendix 4

Converge (Baptist General Conference) Affirmation of Faith

1. **The Word of God** - We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
2. **The Trinity** - We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.
3. **God the Father** - We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.
4. **Jesus Christ** - We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth.
5. **The Holy Spirit** - We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.
6. **Regeneration** - We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
7. **The Church** - We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.
8. **Christian Conduct** - We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ.
9. **The Ordinances** - We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. **Religious Liberty** - We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.
11. **Church Cooperation** We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether it is the Conference or a district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary independent basis.
12. **The Last Things** We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

Appendix 5

Affirmation of Ministerial Ethics in Converge (Baptist General Conference)

The following standards are set forth in an effort to create professional understanding and to preserve the dignity, maintain the discipline and promote the integrity of our chosen profession—the ministry of Jesus Christ.

My Person

- I will endeavor to pray daily, to read, study and meditate upon God's Word; and to maintain extended times of contemplation.
- I will plan times to be with my family, realizing my special relationship to them, and their position as important members of my congregation.
- I will seek to keep my body physically fit through proper eating habits and planned exercise, renewing myself through weekly time off and through vacations.
- I will try to keep myself emotionally fit, keeping in touch with my feelings and growing in healthy control of them.
- I will strive to grow through comprehensive reading and through participation in professional educational opportunities.
- I will be a servant of God seeking to maintain a life of purity, integrity and truthfulness.
- I will avoid lust, pornography and sexual sin.
- I will not abuse my own body and will avoid addictions of all kinds.
- I will not emotionally, verbally, physically or sexually abuse my spouse, my children or any other person.
- I will seek professional help promptly when I need personal support or intervention.
- I will seek to develop accountable relationships with one or more of my peers of the same gender.

My Calling

- I will seek to conduct myself consistently with my calling and commitment as a servant of God.
- I will give priority to my congregation and will accept added responsibilities only if they do not interfere with the overall effectiveness of my ministry in the congregation.
- I will consider a confidential statement made to me as a sacred trust.
- I will responsibly exercise the freedom of the pulpit, speaking the truth of God's Word with conviction in love; and will acknowledge any extensive use of material prepared by someone else.

My Finances

- I will advocate adequate compensation for my profession and will assist the congregation in understanding that a minister should not expect or require fees for pastoral services to them.
- I will be honest in my stewardship of money, paying bills promptly, asking no personal favors or discounts on the basis of my professional status.
- I will give tithes and offerings as a good steward.

My Congregation

- I will seek to regard all persons in the congregation with equal love and concern, and undertake to minister impartially to their needs and refrain from behavior that will be divisive.
- I will treat all those in the church with dignity and respect, while retaining the right to establish close friendships within the congregation.
- I will exercise confidence in the lay leadership, assisting in their training and mobilizing their creativity.
- I will seek to lead the church in a positive direction. I will remain open to constructive criticism and to suggestions intended to strengthen our common ministry.
- I will candidate at only one church at a time. I will respond promptly and definitely to a call, and I shall seek to deal fairly with the church I am presently serving.

My Colleagues

- I will seek to maintain supportive, caring and accountable relationships with my colleagues in the ministry. I

will seek and honor all commitments made with other pastors, and I will respect the pastoral relationships that my neighboring pastors have with their parishioners.

I will, upon my departure, sever my pastoral relations with the congregation, recognizing that all pastoral functions should henceforth rightfully be conducted by my successor. I will not agree to perform any pastoral services in a church I have previously served until I have first obtained permission from the current pastor.

I will, upon retirement or withdrawal from the ministry, refrain from engaging in pastoral functions within our church fellowship unless requested by the pastor.

My Denomination

I will cooperate with the personnel of the Converge (Baptist General Conference) and of the district in which I serve, and offer responsible criticism in order that our common service in the kingdom of God might be more effective. In the event that I seriously violate the vows I have made to God and my church, I will submit to the restoration/reconciliation process established by my denomination and my church. Furthermore, I will use my influence to affirm and edify the fellowship of this church with the district and the Converge (Baptist General Conference).

Appendix 6

Sample Letter Calling an Ordination Council

CONVERGE NORTH CENTRAL Church
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Co-workers,

Our church is requesting you to send your pastor and another other delegate 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 at _____, on _____, _____ at _____.
Church Address Day Date Time

To facilitate the organization of the Council, please complete the enclosed credentials, mail them ahead of time or send them with your delegates.

You will also find enclosed a copy of the written material prepared by the candidate so that your delegate 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 7

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. _____

By order of the church,

Church Clerk/Secretary

Appendix 8

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 the candidate, 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 pastor

Refreshments after are served by local church.

(Local church takes care of an honorarium for speaker.)