



NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE CREDENTIALING GUIDELINES ON ORDINATION AND LICENSURE

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Edited, Updated, and Reformatted.

Approved by the North American Baptist Governing Board on October 7, 2025, as a revision and expansion of guidelines previously approved in 2004, 1971, 1985, 1993, and 2003. Updates approved by Regional Ministers in July 2011.

This not a policy document. Instead, this is intended to be a non-binding guideline of best practices to assist local churches and associations/regions in making decisions.

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SECTION ONE

MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALING IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:11–12 BSB)

As North American Baptists, we affirm from our history that each church is self-governing, and that each church calls its own pastors and leaders to carry out the Lord's mission in building His Kingdom. While recognizing each church's autonomy, we are also committed to cooperate as a conference of churches to the advancement of that Kingdom. In order to maintain a high standard for all our churches, it is prudent to have guidelines for credentialing pastors and full-time staff for vocational ministry.

I. Value of NAB Ministerial Credentialing:

A. The value of NAB ministerial credentialing is:

1. To affirm God's call upon a person's life for vocational ministerial leadership.
2. To verify that this person has met the biblical qualifications and standards for ministry.
3. To verify that this person has the training and competence needed for the ministry role.
4. To approve this person for ministerial service in the NAB.
5. To provide transferable legal status in the exercise of that person's ministry.

Even though God calls and gifts each person for ministerial service, the Scriptures affirm that it is the community of faith that ultimately determines the legitimacy of that call (1 Timothy 4:14), and our cultural system requires that an ecclesiastical body affirms that call. This credentialing means entrusting the person to a life of service in leadership of Christ's body.

It has been the practice over the years that men have filled the role of senior pastor / teaching elder in NAB churches. While the churches of the NAB believe that both men and women are called by God to serve in ministry, there has been and remains a diversity of viewpoints pertaining to what roles or positions women can be called to in the ministries of the local church. Even though the NAB, as a conference of churches, has not had (and does not have) the authority to make a final determination in this regard, it is the position of the NAB that this decision be left to the local church so this does not become a divisive matter among us.

II. Types of NAB Ministerial Credentials:

All NAB credentialing is understood to be conferred by the local church, affirmed by the Association/Region, and where appropriate, recognized by the NAB International Office.

- A. Ordination – This credentialing designation is viewed as **conferred** as an act of the local church in recognition of the call of God upon a person’s life, which is **affirmed** by the association/region representing the entire NAB Conference. It is designed specifically for those involved in pastoral ministry such as Senior Pastors / Teaching Elders, Associate Pastors, Vocational Directors of various ministries within the church, Chaplains, Counselors, Evangelists, Missionaries, Seminary Professors, and Denominational Executives, where applicable. It is conferred by the local church, working in cooperation with the association/region of the conference. It is affirmed by the association/region and **recognized** by the NAB International Office.
- B. Licensure – This credentialing designation is in recognition that a pastor / ministry worker has been called to serve the local church. It is applied in those situations where the local church, in cooperation with the association/region, recognizes a pastor / ministry worker as ‘clergy,’ so as to function as such in the eyes of the state. In order to comply with the Internal Revenue Service / Canada Revenue Agency standards, the ministerial license must be both conferred by the local church and affirmed within the association/regional leadership structure.

III. Minimum Requirements for NAB Credentialing (Ordination or Licensure):

- A. Must be a member in good standing of a local NAB congregation or a member of an evangelical church if transferring into the North American Baptist Conference.
- B. Must subscribe to the NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.
- C. Must be one who has heard and answered the divine call, first to personal salvation and then to the call of the Gospel ministry and be actively engaged in ministry.
- D. Must be able to demonstrate a godly lifestyle and informed theological reflection applicable to the ministerial role, as determined by the local church in cooperation with the prescribed processes of the association/region.

IV. Recognition of a Non-North American Baptist Conference Ordination (or those with NAB Ordination re-entering an NAB church/ministry)

Those who intend to transfer ordination credentials into NAB from another conference shall be:

- A. Called to serve in the North American Baptist ministry context.
- B. Willing to commit to the NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.

V. Credentials of Those Retiring from Active Ministry

Those retiring from active ministry, or those who are permanently disabled, may retain their NAB ministerial credential status for as long as they continue to follow the guidelines defined in this document.

VI. Removal of NAB Ministerial Credential Status

- A. Removal of NAB ministerial credentials (ordination or licensure) is intended to be a safeguard for the abuse of ministerial privilege. Removal shall apply:
 - 1. To a person whose moral and ethical conduct and lifestyle no longer affirms the biblical standard, as understood in the NAB Statement of Beliefs, who has broken the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, or who no longer affirms the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage. Clarification of what constitutes ethical misconduct is found in the **NAB Code of Ethics**. Further direction on (NAB Ministry ethical conduct, pertaining to) sexual misconduct is found in **Section Three of this document (Recommended Course of Action on Sexual Misconduct and Restoration in the North American Baptist Conference)**.
 - 2. To a person whose teaching is contrary to the NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, or the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.
 - 3. To a person who no longer desires NAB ministerial credentialing status.
- B. In a situation where removal of NAB ministerial credentials is being considered, the current local church, in cooperation with the association/regional leadership, shall review the circumstances and determine whether the credentials shall be continued or removed and inform the North American Baptist Conference.
- C. For those situations where removal of NAB ministerial credentials is called for, the minister shall surrender such status. If the person refuses to do so, the applicable local church, in cooperation with the association/region, will take the necessary steps to remove the credentials and inform the North American Baptist Conference.
- D. In a situation where a pastor leaves an NAB Conference church/ministry, credentialing status will be assessed as transferred or removed on a case-by-case basis, dependent upon compliance with NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.

VII. Reinstatement of NAB Ministerial Credentials

- A. If removal of NAB ministerial credentials was the result of any issues as defined in Section Two.VI of this document (above), a request for reinstatement must be provided, by the person seeking restoration, to the appropriate leadership within the region/association and/or the NAB International Office. When applicable, this reinstatement process must also comply with the **"Recommended Course of Action on Sexual Misconduct and Restoration in The North American Baptist Conference."**
- B. A person whose ministerial credentials have been removed for moral, ethical or theological reasons may seek reinstatement of the credentials by the following process:
 - 1. A spirit of contrition and repentance has been manifested.
 - 2. All effort has been devoted toward full and complete restitution for any wrong done.
 - 3. Healing and restoration of broken relationships, to the extent possible, has been established and verified.
 - 4. A proper program of treatment and/or therapy has been undertaken when recommended.

5. Recommendations for reinstatement has been initiated by a local church or by a recognized group within an association/region, by a professional counselor, or by other valid witnesses who can attest to the completeness of the subject's personal recovery.
 6. After the above criteria have been fulfilled, the association/regional leadership has interviewed the individual and made the final determination as to whether or not reinstatement of credentials should be granted.
 7. The process of reinstatement has been given the appropriate amount of time to provide for evidence of contrition, repentance, and necessary healing of the individual. This timeframe is to be determined by the local church, along with the association/regional leadership.
- C. A person who desires to re-enter vocational ministry after having served in another occupation or non-NAB ministry must have a recommendation from the sponsoring local church and be interviewed by the appropriate regional/association leadership, having provided written reasons for desiring re-entry, as well as signed commitment to the NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.

VIII. Maintaining Records of NAB Ministerial Credentials

- A. The official record of ordination credentials are copies of ordination council minutes and ordination certificates, along with the signed NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.
- B. An official record of ordination credentials for currently active ministers shall be kept by each region/association, with the NAB International Office duly recording this information.
- C. The official record of licensure credentials are authorized copies, as per issuing government authorities, along with the signed NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage.
- D. An official record of licensure credentials for currently active ministers shall be kept by the regional minister of each region/association.

IX. Process Requirements for NAB Licensure Credentialing

- A. The church where the person is serving shall initiate the process of licensure credentialing. This credentialing is specific to its regional ministry context and location. This process shall include:
 1. A written request from the church to the leadership of the region/association supporting the desire that the individual be licensed.
 2. A brief description of the individual's role in the local church ministry.
 3. A signed copy of the NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage by the individual being considered for licensure.

- B. Upon review, the regional/association leadership shall determine to either affirm the licensure credential, deny the licensure credential, or outline further licensure requirements.

X. Process Requirements for NAB Ordination Credentialing

- A. Consistent with the Baptist understanding of Scripture, ordination remains the prerogative of the local church. In other words, it remains the responsibility of the local church to ordain a pastor. However, according to NAB history and tradition, other associating churches, along with regional/association leadership, work together with a local church to facilitate the ordination process.
- B. Upon recommendation from a local NAB church, the individual being considered for ordination, assisted by an ordination coach, shall prepare and submit an ordination paper to an ordination credentials committee (a small group of ministry peers approved by the association/regional leadership). The ordination paper shall reflect the individual's conversion, calling, and convictions (statement of beliefs).
- C. Upon review of the ordination paper, the association/regional credentials committee shall decide to either recommend (with or without conditions) that the local ordaining church proceed with calling for an ordination council to convene, refer the ordination paper back to the candidate for further development, or recommend the ordination credentialing process be terminated.
- D. Upon a favorable recommendation from the association/regional credentials committee, the ordaining church shall call for an ordination council. It is suggested that the association/regional credentials committee, the association/regional leadership board, representatives from the ordaining church, and representatives from other NAB churches in the region or association be invited to attend the council. The voting delegates on the council must adequately represent the specific region or association of the NAB Conference. The council shall examine the individual concluding its deliberation with a vote to determine if the local church should proceed or not proceed with the ordination.
- E. Upon the favorable recommendation of the ordination council, the local ordaining church shall conduct an ordination service and forward to the association/regional leadership copies of the ordination council minutes and the ordination certificate, along with the candidate's signed copies of the NAB Statement of Beliefs, the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage. The NAB International Office shall be informed of the ordination candidate's new status, and it will then be duly recorded.
- F. Outline for an Ordination Council:
 - 1. A representative of the ordaining local church, the chair of the association/regional ordination credentials committee, or the regional minister shall open the meeting of the ordination council.
 - 2. A moderator is selected to lead the council and secretary to record minutes of the council. The list of delegates from participating churches is ascertained.
 - 3. The ordination candidate presents the ordination paper to the ordination council, while the council delegates interact with the candidate.

4. The examination of the ordination candidate concludes by a vote of the council to move to executive session (restricted to NAB voting delegates).
5. In executive session of the ordination council (restricted to NAB voting delegates), the council shall vote to have the church proceed or not to proceed with the ordination.
6. To proceed with the ordination, the moderator of the council and/or regional minister shall confer with the candidate and the ordaining church to make plans for the ordination service.
7. The secretary of the council shall be responsible to prepare the minutes of the meeting and forward to appropriate individuals or groups.
8. The moderator shall entertain a motion to dissolve or adjourn the council.
9. A certificate of ordination shall be properly signed and prepared for presentation by the regional or association office to the candidate at the public service.

SECTION TWO

NAB CLERGY SIGNATURE OF COMPLIANCE

I, _____, am in complete agreement with the North American Baptist Statement of Beliefs and the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage and agree to adhere to these without reservation.

I further covenant with my colleagues in the North American Baptist Conference that, by our Lord's gracious leading and strength, I will honor the following: the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics, the Recommended Course of Action on Sexual Misconduct and Restoration in the North American Baptist Conference, and the NAB Credentialing Guidelines on Ordination and Licensure.

If at any time I should cease to agree with the NAB Statement of Beliefs or the NAB Christian Affirmation of Marriage or no longer seek to honor the NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics and the Recommended Course of Action on Sexual Misconduct and Restoration in the North American Baptist Conference, I will resign my position as a minister with the North American Baptist Conference, with the acknowledgement that this will be grounds for the withdrawal of my credentials as a minister within the North American Baptist Conference.

Name

Signature

Date

(Revised June 2004 GC)

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APPENDIX A:

BACKGROUND AND PRACTICE OF ORDINATION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

I. The Biblical Background for Ordination

The current practice of ordination among the churches of Christ is the result of the blending of biblical precedent with historical developments. No direct correspondence can be assumed between the contemporary practice and any particular ordination event found in Scripture.

Nevertheless, ordination does arise out of a biblical background. Scripture indicates a variety of practices of selecting, appointing, and recognizing leaders. For this reason, those biblical texts which refer to or describe these acts are useful in helping to form an understanding of what ordination ought to signify in Christ's body today.

- A. The laying on of hands apparently symbolized Moses' transference of leadership to Joshua (Numbers 27:23). Laying on of hands in this case was performed by the former leader (Moses) and included the transfer to Joshua of the Spirit's empowerment for this task (Deuteronomy 34:9).
- B. The delegation of the priestly role to the Levites, likewise, was symbolized by the laying on of hands. Here, however, the people of Israel themselves, not just one leader, were

involved in this symbolic rite (Numbers 8:10). The Baptist emphasis on the congregation as the ordaining body is motivated in part by this Old Testament incident.

- C. Anointing with oil was the consecration for the office of a prophet (1 Kings 19:16), the office of a king (1 Kings 1:39), and an Aaronic priest (Exodus 29:7).

The anointment of the king was not merely a part of the ceremony of enthronement; it was of decisive importance, for it conveyed the power for the exercise of royal authority.

By strength of anointment, the king became a theocratic vessel of the Lord, as texts like 1 Samuel 9:16 and 16:3 indicate.

Anointing with oil symbolized the conveying of the Holy Spirit, and the individuals who were anointed were thus set apart and empowered for a particular work in the service of God.

- D. The mantle (robe) was passed from Elijah to Elisha, and in doing so, Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me" (2 Kings 2:8–9; 13–14).
- E. The laying on of hands was used by Jesus and the early church for several forms of ministry. Both Jesus and the early church employed the act in their healing ministries (Mark 5:23; 6:5; 8:23, 25; 16:18; Acts 9:17; 8:18). Laying on of hands was also linked with the reception of the Spirit (Acts 8:17–19; 19:6). However, it is the use of this act by the early church to set apart persons for ministry that is most significant for the contemporary practice of ordination.
- F. Seven Spirit-filled men were selected by the Jerusalem church to assist the apostles in leadership and service (Acts 6:6). These were installed by the apostles through the laying on of hands.

Although this incident may well have been the beginning of what later developed into an office of "helper" (deacon), the term "deacon" is not used in the text. Actually, certain of the seven later engaged in evangelism and other activities not generally included with the tasks of deacons (Stephen in Acts 6–7; Philip in Acts 8). Nevertheless, some Baptists and other Christian faith groups conclude from this text that contemporary deacons ought to be ordained.

- G. The Antioch church employed the laying on of hands in commissioning Paul and Barnabas for missionary service (Acts 13:3). Here, ministry within a local congregation was not in view. Rather, two persons who would serve as extensions of the ordaining church were set apart for ministry. No indication is given as to how the act was administered. However, prayer and fasting accompanied ordination.
- H. Paul's assistant, Timothy, received this act at the hands of certain "elders" (1 Timothy 4:14), perhaps the leaders of his home church, prior to being sent out to accompany Paul (Acts

16:1–3). Paul, too, it seems, participated in the act (2 Timothy 1:6). Laying on of hands was linked with the reception of a divine gift for ministry.

- I. The appointment of the elders seems to have been Paul's standard practice (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Note that it in no way interfered with the emergence of gifted leadership of other types: for example, the prophets and teachers of Acts 13:1. Note furthermore that in both references the ordaining of elders took place at a subsequent meeting, allowing for individuals to emerge and prove themselves. Finally, the close link between the terms elder and bishop, at least in the Titus context, seems to show that the terms are virtually synonymous.
- J. Timothy was cautioned against being "hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Timothy 5:22). The context indicates that the ordination of local leaders (hence "elders" in verses 17–20) may be in view here. If this is the case, then the command suggests that ordination ought to occur only after careful consideration of the candidate.
- K. In studying Paul's call to the ministry, one discovers a number of references that suggest "self-authentication" (Galatians 1:15–16; Ephesians 3:7–11; 1 Timothy 1:11). However, one must not overlook the fact that it was Ananias who laid hands on Paul (Acts 9:17); that it was Barnabas who brought Paul to Antioch to minister (Acts 11:25–26); and finally, that it was the church at Antioch that publicly set Paul apart for the ministry (Acts 13:1–3).
- L. Jesus's selecting of the apostles (Mark 3:13–19; 6:7–13) suggests an official act. It is not merely reported that they were preaching but that they went out at a specific moment with a specific message. Moreover, the commissioning of the seventy (Luke 10:1) suggests that Jesus foresaw the time when many would be ordained "to do the work of an evangelist." Finally, the educational preparation should not be overlooked; they were with Jesus for some time before He sent them out. Indeed, the idea of "field education" with a supervisor evaluating their work is very strongly emphasized (Mark 6:30–31; Luke 10:17–21).

II. Historic Development and Practice of Ordination

Ordination developed from New Testament practices of church leadership. During the first generations, as the biblical material reviewed above shows, the role of overseer/elder/pastor was not as official as it became later.

While some influence from pagan religious practice may be imagined, the determinant for church structure came from Gentile Christian understanding of the Old Testament. Christian practices were built on various New Testament passages, which so solemnly explain the responsibilities of the bishop/presbyter/shepherd and of the congregation. But the Old Testament was the only Bible the Church had for generations. Early in the second century, therefore, the pattern of the priesthood was transposed into Christian practice. The office which in the New Testament was given interchangeable titles (overseer, elder, pastor) became two offices: a bishop who oversaw the churches of a municipal or rural region and a presbyter who was the priest of the local church.

By identifying him as priest, the emphasis in his ministry shifted to corporate worship. The focus of congregational life increasingly became the celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. With this, the function of the priest as mediator between God and His people gained prominence.

The responsibility for teaching the truth and for rightly guiding the congregation in worship and Christian living was solemnly undertaken in an act of ordination. Initially, congregational affirmation was required, along with the assent of fellow clergy. In time, ordination, particularly the practice of other clergy laying hands on them, came to be understood as an act that infused spiritual graces that distinguished clergy from laity and that empowered the priest to preach, to celebrate the ordinances of Christ, and to care for the people's physical and spiritual welfare.

Centuries passed, during which the Christian church developed a fixed structure and sacramental practice. By the end of the Middle Ages, Western (Latin, Roman) Christianity tended to emphasize only the role of the priest as mediator in ritual celebration. During the Reformation, Lutheranism and Anglicanism recovered in principle the importance of the priest as preacher and pastor as well as sacramental agent, but even these reforms were not satisfactory in the eyes of all.

In Elizabethan England, a conflict arose within the Anglican Church between those who wished to purge all traces of Roman tradition and those who felt it sufficient to remove only what was obviously false in ritual and doctrine. The Anglican view finally prevailed in 1689. In the interim, however, the anti-Episcopal dissenters (Nonconformists) had developed definite principles of church and ministry that differed from the Anglican norm.

Baptists were among those who regarded the minister not as a priest but as a preacher–teacher, a shepherd for the welfare of the congregation, and a leader in the worship, ordinances, discipline, and deliberations of the church. They no longer defined the ordinances in a sacramental manner that required a priest to perform them, but they gave them a spiritual interpretation that had its roots in Holland even before the Reformation. The pastor possessed no special powers by virtue of ecclesiastical rites and succession. His was a moral authority that derived from God's endearment and the knowledge and spirituality he had developed by God's grace.

In New England at the time of the Great Awakening (1740–75), zealous new Christians in the established church charged that the Protestant clergy had become a special class, which perpetuated itself by mechanical procedures. Education, morality, and approval by (mostly unspiritual and, therefore, unfit) ministers, in their opinion, could not qualify a person for Christian ministry. They felt that Christ, as head of the Church, called and endowed a person for ministry. A congregation was responsible to test these persons' spiritual credentials as well as their ministerial skills.

Many who held this view left the established Congregational churches and joined the languishing Baptist fellowship. They inspired, afresh, the Baptist understanding of the

importance of spiritual qualifications for the ministry and of congregational decision in installing a pastor.

The view that each local church enjoyed the fullness of spiritual authority for Christian life and ministry relocated responsibility for ordination from the hands of the clergy or a supra-congregational administrative structure. On the other hand, Baptists did not operate in isolation from one another. They felt the need of mutual discussion among congregations to decide important issues. On its own authority, a local church could license someone to preach and “improve one’s gifts” among them or wherever one could find opportunity. A church likewise ordained this person into full ministry as a pastor.

However, ordination by the local church came about after delegates from invited sister churches had given their agreement that the pastor was suited for public ministry. In asking a council to examine their pastor for ordination, a congregation declared that the pastor was demonstrating among them gifts and skills required for the office. The task of the sister churches, then, was to assess the candidate’s doctrinal fitness and to evaluate their church’s testimony as to their pastoral effectiveness.

Baptists developed their understanding of ordination in response to the practices others had formalized centuries earlier and amidst the arguments of English Protestants about the nature of the church. They intentionally attempted to recover New Testament principles of church and ministry which, through history, seemed to them to have been forgotten or only partially remembered by other Christian bodies. As a result, their view deliberately runs at a tangent to the interpretations of the Church and its ministry and to the ordination practices prevalent in other churches and often codified in civil law.

III. Purpose of Ordination

The official act of ordination, carried out by a local congregation, has three purposes:

A. Acknowledgment and Confirmation of God’s Call

Through the act of ordination, the community of believers both acknowledges and confirms the fact that God has indeed called a certain individual to the Gospel ministry (1 Timothy 4:14). On the one hand, this formal act is necessary to avoid any individualistic and purely subjective understanding of the call. Although the call of God comes to an individual, it is the community that ultimately determines the legitimacy of a personal experience of calling.

On the other hand, the formal act of ordination is necessary in order that the community may publicly and in an official manner acknowledge the special role that the ordained person will be fulfilling in the church of Christ.

B. Commissioning

Through the act of ordination, the community of believers commissions into service one who has been called of God (Acts 13:3). This commissioning encompasses three related

aspects. First, the act entails committing or entrusting this person to God for ministry. A prayer of commitment is, therefore, appropriate in connection with ordination.

Secondly, as was the case in the biblical era, the act of laying on of hands is a bestowing or imparting of a blessing on the individual. This is linked to the divine blessing, the bestowal of God's gift, and God's Spirit, on that person for the task entrusted to the minister of God (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). A prayer for divine empowerment is, therefore, appropriate.

Thirdly, this commissioning entails entrusting the person with a specific task. At ordination, a servant of God is embarking on a lifelong service to Christ's body, a service that the body officially entrusts to that person through ordination (Acts 13:3 and, in some sense, Acts 6:6).

C. Declaration of Ministerial Status

Ordination is a public declaration that a specific person has been entrusted with ministerial status. This is important today, because clergy are acknowledged in the civil and social realms, as well as ecclesiastical. Clergy are called upon to function in certain ways in the wider society. Ordination is a declaration to society, in general, that this person is to be looked upon as a member of the clergy.

This aspect of ordination has no specific roots in the first century. That this is the case is understandable, for ancient Roman society had no place for the leaders of what was in their eyes a small religious sect.

IV. Prerequisites for Ordination

Having ascertained the purpose of ordination, certain prerequisites for ordination must be considered. These constitute specific features that should be true of, or present in, the candidate before that one may be ordained. The NAB believes ordination is a function of the local church that identifies the following key prerequisites:

A. Called of God

Since ordination is an acknowledgement and confirmation of God's call, the call of God must be present. Specifically, the candidate for ordination must be one who has heard and answered the divine call, first to personal salvation and then to the Gospel ministry. Evidence of this in both word and life ought to be scrutinized prior to ordination by the ordaining church and subsequently by the ordination council (Acts 13:2).

B. Gifted and Prepared for Ministry

An effective ministry requires both a divine endowment (ministry gifts) and personal diligence in developing certain ministry skills. For example, ministry gifts may include the ability to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; Ephesians 3:9) or to preach (1 Timothy 4:13; Ephesians 4:11–13). To these could be added skills in areas such as counseling and administration.

It is recommended that persons being considered for ordination have completed a recognized course of theological study or its equivalent, have demonstrated maturity in handling the Word of God, and have had effectiveness in ministry tested through practical, ministry experience.

C. Sound in Doctrine

One who is ordained is looked to as a teacher. Therefore, a candidate for ordination must be knowledgeable in the Christian faith, committed to biblical truth, and able to apply the truth of God's Word to life. Soundness in doctrine is a prerequisite for ordination.

Theological education is important. Such training encourages an ordination candidate to explore doctrinal issues, draw personal conclusions based on an understanding of viable options, and apply doctrine to life.

The candidate's ability as a teacher of the church, with a sound grasp of doctrinal considerations, ought to be tested prior to ordination. This assessment is the responsibility of both the ordaining church and the ordination council.

D. Exemplary in Lifestyle

One who is ordained is looked to as a model of Christian maturity. The fruit of the Spirit should be apparent in the ordination candidate's personal life, evidenced in personal conduct as well as interpersonal relations.

As with other prerequisites, Christian maturity ought to be tested prior to ordination. The qualifications in the Pastoral Epistles (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:1–7) provide a guideline for assessing the lifestyle of a candidate for ordination.

E. Affirmation by a Body of Believers

A body of believers' affirmation of an individual's call, giftedness, soundness in doctrine and exemplary lifestyle is a prerequisite for ordination to Gospel ministry. The church will then, in agreement with the candidate, initiate the steps toward ordination. Through the act of ordination, a church confirms that the individual has been set apart for the Gospel ministry.

V. The Scope of Ordination

Ordination is linked to biblically defined roles within or on behalf of the church of Christ. Rather than being a "status" with which one is endowed, it is, essentially, a call to serve in an equipping role within the church.

- A. General Principles – Not all roles or ministries in or for the church include ordination. However, certain general principles taken together can serve to delineate the "ordainable roles" from others.

Church Mission

Ordination must relate to the mission of the church. The church exists to glorify God as it fulfills the mandate given to it by Christ. This mandate includes the worship of the Triune God, the building up of the people of God as well as outreach in evangelism and in service to the world. Only persons serving in those functions that grow out of this mandate ought to be considered for ordination.

Church Setting

Ordination must relate to functions that find their setting within the local church or as extensions of the church. Ordained ministers function primarily as models to and “equippers” of the people of God in the fulfillment of the common mandate (e.g., Ephesians 4:11–12). For this reason, such persons find their places of service either within the local church context (1 Timothy 5:17–22) or as those commissioned as ministers serving on behalf of the people of God beyond the boundaries of a local congregation. (Acts 13:1–3).

Centering on the Word of God

Ordination must relate to roles and functions that center on handling the Word of God. The ordained person is one whose major task in life is to “minister the Word of God” (Romans 15:16). Often, this is primarily in the form of preaching or teaching (1 Timothy 2:7; Ephesians 3:7; 2 Timothy 1:11); although applying and bringing the Word in other ways may also be included. In any case, the primary resource of the ordained person is the Word, and that person’s primary concern is its application to the lives of people.

Accountability

Ordination must require accountability to the people of God. Ordination is not a permanent status with which a person is endowed but rather the confirmation of a call to serve in certain ways in or for the church. For this reason, ordination must include ongoing accountability. Accountability for ordained persons serving in a local church lies with the local church. Ordained persons ministering beyond the local congregation must be tied either to a local church, to a group of local churches, or, in certain cases, to a denomination, through its designated officials, for the sake of accountability.

APPENDIX B:

RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND RESTORATION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

Preamble

- I. Objectives**
- II. Definitions**
- III. Steps in Dealing with Sexual Misconduct**
 - A. Investigation
 - B. Outcomes
 - 1. Allegations Substantiated
 - 2. Allegations Unsubstantiated
 - 3. Allegations Untrue
 - C. Applying Discipline
 - D. Care for Survivors
 - E. Steps toward Restoration



RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND RESTORATION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

Preamble

The NAB is a community of faith that believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and seeks to live it out. It is our earnest desire for safety for all within our community, and, when that safety has been breached, to see “justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24 NIV). For that reason, the NAB is committed to deal honestly with instances of sexual misconduct on the part of NAB clergy.

I. Objectives

This recommended course of action seeks to hold NAB church ministry staff to a high standard and to be above reproach as the people of God (Philippians 2:15; Colossians 1:22).

This recommended course of action outlines the NAB’s expectations of Christian accountability to the truth in the area of sexual sin and, if possible, the steps to restoration (Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:19–25).

This recommended course of action puts into place steps for protection and healing for the survivor(s), including suggestions to the local church (Psalm 9:9, 82:3–4; Proverbs 18:5).

This recommended course of action seeks to encourage Christian living in a community of accountability and restoration (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 12:26–27; James 4:17, 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

This recommended course of action seeks to protect the integrity of the Church (meaning the church as a whole), protect the reputation of innocent parties, and to apply appropriate penalties and corrective action for wrongdoing (1 Timothy 5:19–22).

II. Definitions

Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:

Child sexual abuse: including, but not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. The NAB’s definition of sexual abuse of a child is anyone under the age of eighteen;



Sexual abuse: any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person [including the spouse of the offender] when the conduct includes sexual assault, force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position;

Sexual harassment: conduct that is known, or ought reasonably to be known to be, unwelcome, including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when:

- a. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution;
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual, including termination for employees, if necessary;
- c. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment;
- d. an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
- e. It also includes sexual conduct that is offensive, obsessive or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching, or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.

Sexual Malfeasance: the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.

Misuse of Technology: use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property or otherwise. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.

Respondent/Defendant: in the legal system, a respondent/defendant is the person against whom a case is brought.

Complainant/Plaintiff: in the legal system, a complainant/plaintiff is the person bringing their case against the respondent/defendant.

Survivor: a person who has experienced sexual misconduct.

All above statements also apply in the case of a marriage relationship.

III. Steps in Dealing with Sexual Misconduct

According to Baptist governance, the local church bears the primary responsibility for appropriately investigating and reporting alleged sexual misconduct. Law enforcement / authorities must be contacted if the allegations involve sexual contact without consent, or sexual harassment (see definitions above). In the interests of fairness and impartiality, it is strongly recommended that the church call on a third party, outside of the local congregation, to investigate. (Contact the Regional Minister for possible resources.) While the following procedure is strongly recommended, each local church is required to adopt their own policy:

A. Investigation

1. With alleged abuse, or perceived risk of experiencing abuse, of children, disabled persons or vulnerable seniors, most jurisdictions require immediate reporting of such allegations to the appropriate local authorities. As this normally indicates the immediate involvement of local law enforcement, each local church is to ensure that its policy meets its state or provincial requirements.
2. If someone has been or is being sexually abused, they are encouraged to first contact law enforcement, and then to approach a leader in the church. If approaching a local leader is not possible, the survivor is encouraged to contact the Regional Minister (RM). It is expected that the RM would then contact the leadership of the church to ensure the issue is being addressed. If an individual has been, or is being, sexually abused, they are **not** required to confront their abuser.
3. If one becomes aware of possible abuse or misconduct by a pastor or ministry team member, they are encouraged to approach a leader in the church. This leader is expected to contact others in leadership and take steps to initiate an investigation.
4. During an investigation, the best practice would be that the accused be placed on a leave of absence to facilitate a non-biased investigation. This communicates that the church is taking the allegation seriously as they undergo the process of discovering the truth.
5. It is recommended that the congregation follow the recommendations of their investigative team as it pertains to public disclosure of the nature of the allegations.

B. Outcomes

1. Allegations Substantiated

If the investigation team determines that the allegations are true, the team will confront the accused party. The defendant may make a confession and repent or deny the allegations. It is expected that repentance would include the following, and does not exclude the application of discipline in Section C:

- a. that the guilty individual and the investigative team agree on the precise nature of the offense (with the focus being on what was done, not why).
- b. that the guilty individual express sincere repentance toward God by:
 - sincerely admitting their guilt and their need for repentance to all injured parties, as determined by the investigative team in consultation with the survivor or their representative to ensure their comfort and safety,
 - ceasing all inappropriate relationships, including contact with the survivor(s),
 - agreeing, in writing, to a system of accountability established by the “third party” or church leadership, including counseling.
- c. that the safety, reputations, well-being, and recovery of survivors and other innocent parties are a priority.

If the guilty respondent does not confess or repent, the steps in Section C: Applying Discipline need to be taken.

2. Allegations Unsubstantiated.

If, based on all available data and credibility assessments of witnesses, the investigation team determines that the allegations cannot be substantiated, it is the responsibility of the local church community to seek the emotional and spiritual health of those involved. No disciplinary action will be taken.

3. Allegations Untrue

If the investigation team determines that the allegations are not true, it is the responsibility of the local church community to seek the exoneration of the accused.

C. Discipline

After an allegation has been determined to be substantiated, the following actions are expected in addition to possible criminal prosecution:

1. Based on recommendations from the independent third-party counsel, church leadership should take the lead in determining discipline for the offender including, when applicable, termination.
2. It is strongly recommended that church leadership report the results of the third-party investigation to the local congregation (1 Timothy 5:19–20). This should be done in such a way as to protect the identity and integrity of innocent parties.
3. In the seriousness of the offense, it is strongly recommended to the leadership team of the Association or Region that they remove recognition of the respondent’s credentials and notify the NAB International Office of its action and the reasons for its action. The

record of this action will be maintained by the Region, as well as the International Office (1 Timothy 5:19–22).

4. In the seriousness of the offense, it is strongly recommended that the respondent be removed from church membership and, when applicable, terminated.
5. The church leadership should demonstrate care for the innocent spouse and family of the respondent. Like the care for survivors offered in Section D, the family of the respondent deserves recognition and understanding, as well as similar support.

D. Care for Survivors

The NAB believes that the survivors must be offered autonomy in the process of seeking restoration and biblical justice after abuse. While it is understood that survivors may not wish to take part, we strongly believe that they should be offered the freedom to determine their level of involvement. Any decision of a survivor to remain anonymous to the community should be respected

1. It is strongly recommended that an individual in a position of authority within the church and/or the region/association be charged with the task of offering an official apology to the survivor. As is currently understood, it is important that an official or institutional response is available to survivors of abuse. It is the goal of the NAB that we seek justice and restoration.
2. It is strongly recommended that the survivor and their family are provided pathways to pursue professional counseling and/or assistance from outside agencies that will provide possible support groups and therapy resources. This may include referrals and financial assistance from the church, from the region or from the NAB.
3. It is strongly recommended that the survivor be offered an advocate. This person could be a trusted individual who will walk with them through the healing process. It is understood that survivors of abuse deserve to have someone listen to them, believe them, and reassure them that the abuse was not their fault or responsibility. The responses and reactions of the survivor should be acknowledged and validated. If the survivor chooses to decline an advocate or support from the church, this decision should be respected as the choice of the survivor and documented by the local church.

E. Steps toward Restoration

We believe in a God of redemption, reconciliation, and restoration. We also recognize the consequences of sin. The consequences in the case of sexual misconduct may include a lifetime disqualification from ministry service. This is recognized with a heavy heart. Accepting the forgiveness of a loving God does not erase the consequences that follow such misconduct. The loss of the sense of trust from the church toward an offender is only one consequence for the sexual misconduct of a pastor or ministry leader.

The pathway toward ministry re-credentialing would be rare, long, and arduous. The pain caused to survivors must never be minimized. The guilty party must demonstrate contrition and repentance, and the factors that led to the sexual misconduct must have been sufficiently addressed. Genuine progress against re-offense must be documented. Demonstration of accountability must be verified and ongoing.

The individual may request the opportunity to be restored to ministry re-credentialing. This request must be made to the Regional Minister, representative of the Regional Leadership / Executive Team, and representative of the NAB International Office. The process of restoration should be documented by the Regional Minister and Regional Leadership / Executive Team and submitted to the NAB International Office. The expectation is that the process would include, but is not limited to, an ongoing accountability team and counseling. Limitations and boundaries may be imposed based on the nature of the offense.

APPENDIX C:

NAB STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

Preface

Baptists, since their beginnings, repeatedly have composed confessions, which expressed the doctrinal consensus among related churches. In principle, however, Baptists always have insisted that no statement of faith can be considered creedally binding, even upon concurring congregations. The purpose of their doctrinal summaries was to explain to other Christians and to the larger society what Baptists believed and practiced. Within and among Baptist churches, statements of faith also provided a standard for instruction, counsel and fellowship.

We, as the North American Baptist Conference, presently feel the need to state more fully our Baptist understanding of the Christian faith. The purpose that guided us in writing and the use that we intend for this declaration are to:

1. further the sense of identity and the spirit of unity within our North American Baptist Conference by declaring our common doctrinal understanding
2. provide a basis for doctrinal instruction within our conference
3. provide a basis for doctrinal discussions in the hiring of conference personnel
4. serve as a reference point when opinions differ
5. provide a basis for doctrinal discussion in admitting new churches and new pastors into our various associations
6. provide a doctrinal guide for new churches
7. give a doctrinal witness beyond our conference

In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout history, we seek to practice and propagate by God's grace the following convictions:

1. **We believe the Bible is God's Word given by divine inspiration, the record of God's revelation of Himself to humanity** (2 Timothy 3:16). It is trustworthy, sufficient, without error—the supreme authority and guide for all doctrine and conduct (1 Peter 1:23–25; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). It is the truth by which God brings people into a saving relationship with Himself and leads them to Christian maturity (John 20:31, 1 John 5:9–12; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2).
2. **We believe in the one living and true God, perfect in wisdom, sovereignty, holiness, justice, mercy and love** (1 Timothy 1:17; Psalm 86:15; Deuteronomy 32:3–4). He exists eternally in

three coequal persons who act together in creation, providence and redemption (Genesis 1:26; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 1:1–3).

- a. **The Father** reigns with providential care over all life and history in the created universe. He hears and answers prayer (1 Chronicles 29:11–13; Matthew 7:11). He initiated salvation by sending His Son, and He is Father to those who by faith accept His Son as Lord and Savior (1 John 4:9–10; John 3:16; John 1:12; Acts 16:31).
 - b. **The Son** became man, Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18). Being fully God and fully man, He revealed God through His sinless life, miracles and teaching (John 14:9; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:23–24). He provided salvation through His atoning death in our place and by His bodily resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:3–4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:23–25). He ascended into heaven where He rules over all creation (Philippians 2:5–11). He intercedes for all believers and dwells in them as their ever-present Lord (Romans 8:34; John 14:23).
 - c. **The Holy Spirit** inspired men to write the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21). Through this Word, He convicts individuals of their sinfulness and of the righteousness of Christ, draws them to the Savior, and bears witness to their new birth (James 1:18; John 16:7–11; 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6; Romans 8:16). At regeneration and conversion, the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit indwells, seals and gives spiritual gifts to all believers for ministry in the church and society (Romans 8:9–11; Ephesians 1:13–14; Romans 12:5–8; 1 Peter 4:10). He empowers, guides, teaches, fills, sanctifies and produces the fruit of Christlikeness in all who yield to Him (Acts 4:31; Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 2:10–13; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 5:16; 22–23).
3. **We believe God created an order of spiritual beings called angels to serve Him and do His will** (Psalm 148:1–5; Colossians 1:16). The holy angels are obedient spirits ministering to the heirs of salvation and glorifying God (Hebrews 1:6–7; 13–14). Certain angels, called demons, Satan being their chief, through deliberate choice revolted and fell from their exalted position (Revelation 12:7–9). They now tempt individuals to rebel against God (1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8). Their destiny in hell has been sealed by Christ’s victory over sin and death (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).
 4. **We believe God created man in His own image to have fellowship with Himself and to be steward over His creation** (Genesis 1:26–28). As a result, each person is unique, possesses dignity and is worthy of respect (Psalm 139:13–17). Through the temptation of Satan, Adam chose to disobey God; this brought sin and death to the human race and suffering to all creation (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12–21; 8–22). Therefore, everyone is born with a sinful nature and needs to be reconciled to God (Romans 3:9–18, 23). Satan tempts people to rebel against God, even those who love Him (Ephesians 4:27; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Matthew 16:23). Nonetheless, everyone is personally responsible to God for thoughts, actions and beliefs and has the right to approach Him directly through Jesus Christ, the only mediator (Romans 14:12; 1 Timothy 2:5).
 5. **We believe salvation is redemption by Christ of the whole person from sin and death** (2 Timothy 1:9–10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). It is offered as a free gift by God to all and must be

received personally through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 2:8–9; Acts 20:21). An individual is united to Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27). As a child of God, the believer is acquitted of all guilt and brought into a new relationship of peace (Romans 5:1). Christians grow as the Holy Spirit enables them to understand and obey the Word of God (2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).

6. **We believe the Church is the body of which Christ is the head and all who believe in Him are members** (Ephesians 1:22–23; Romans 12:4–5). Christians are commanded to be baptized upon profession of faith and to unite with a local church for mutual encouragement and growth in discipleship through worship, nurture, service and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world (Acts 2:41–42, 47; Luke 24:45–48). Each church is a self-governing body under the lordship of Christ with all members sharing responsibility (Acts 13:1–3; 14:26–28). The form of government is understood to be congregational (Matthew 18:17; Acts 6:3–6; 15:22–23).

The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18–20). It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s identification with the death, burial and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3–5). The Lord’s Supper is the partaking of the bread and of the cup by believers together as a continuing memorial of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. It is an act of thankful dedication to Him and serves to unite His people until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

To express unity in Christ, local churches form associations and a conference for mutual counsel, fellowship and a more effective fulfillment of Christ’s commission (Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 6:1–3).

7. **We believe religious liberty, rooted in Scripture, is the inalienable right of all individuals to freedom of conscience with ultimate accountability to God** (Genesis 1:27; John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21; Acts 5:29). Church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other (Matthew 22:21). Christians should pray for civil leaders and obey and support government in matters not contrary to Scripture (1 Timothy 2:1–4; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–16). The state should guarantee religious liberty to all persons and groups regardless of their religious preferences, consistent with the common good.
8. **We believe Christians, individually and collectively, are salt and light in society** (Matthew 5:13–16). In a Christlike spirit, they oppose greed, selfishness and vice; they promote truth, justice and peace; they aid the needy and preserve the dignity of people of all races and conditions (Hebrews 13:5; Luke 9:23; Titus 2:12; Philippians 4:8–9; 1 John 3:16–17; James 2:1–4).

We affirm the family as the basic unit of society and seek to preserve its integrity and stability (Genesis 2:21–25; Ephesians 6:1–4).

We believe the Bible teaches that marriage refers to the covenant relationship exclusively between one man and one woman, as instituted by God in the beginning (Genesis 2:20b–24; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4).

9. **We believe God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring all things to their appropriate end and establish the new heaven and the new earth** (Ephesians 1:9–10, Revelation 21:1). The certain hope of the Christian is that Jesus Christ will return to the earth suddenly, personally and visibly in glory according to His promise (Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; John 14:1–3). The dead will be raised, and Christ will judge mankind in righteousness (John 5:28–29). The unrighteous will be consigned to the everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25–41, 46; Revelation 20:10). The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and dwell forever with the Lord (Philippians 3:20–21; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

Adopted by the North American Baptist Conference delegates, August 10–15, 1982, Niagara Falls, NY. Section 8 amended by the delegates, July 15–19, 2009, Winnipeg, MB.

APPENDIX D:

NAB CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE

The ministers of our North American Baptist Conference welcome the privilege that our respective civil governments give to solemnize marriages as part of their Christian ministry. However, the same Biblical authority that informs all our teaching and ministry governs our convictions about the nature of marriage. Therefore, our ministers will in good conscience only perform weddings consistent with the view of marriage expressed in the following “Christian Affirmation of Marriage:”

From the Bible we believe . . .

That God’s intention for marriage is established throughout the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments

This is expressed in creation and the creation story, the Law of Moses, the wisdom literature, and in the prophetic tradition.¹ The Divine establishment of marriage is confirmed by the words of Jesus and the New Testament authors.² They provide guidance for perfecting marriage, and affirm its spiritual significance. Chaste singleness and marriage are both honored as faithful and holy lifestyles ordained by God.³

That God ordained marriage as a voluntary union for life of one man and one woman

Our creation as man and woman, who are complementary to one another, has significance in revealing aspects of the image of God and His relationship to humanity.⁴ The permanence of the marital bond mirrors God’s faithfulness, just as its monogamy reflects God’s singular devotion to his people and his people’s singular devotion to him.⁵

That sexual intimacy is legitimate only within the bounds of marriage

The commands of God are clear.⁶ Sexual activity profoundly affects people emotionally and spiritually.⁷ Sexual intercourse outside of marriage, promiscuity, common law relationships, adultery, homosexual acts, exploitation, incest and sexual perversion contradict God’s purpose for human sexuality.⁸

¹ Genesis 1–2; Exodus 20:14, 17; Leviticus 18; Deuteronomy 5:18, 21; Proverbs 5; 12:4; 13:22; 14:1; 17:6; 19:13–14; 31:10–31; Song of Solomon; Malachi 2:14–15

² Matthew 19:1–9; Mark 10:6–9; Ephesians 5:22–33; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1–7

³ Matthew 19:10–13; 1 Corinthians 7

⁴ Genesis 2:7, 18–23; Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 11:11–12

⁵ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6; Mark 10: 7–9; Ephesians 5:25; Deuteronomy 6:13; Joshua 24:24; Matthew 4:10

⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7–8

⁷ Proverbs 6:32; 1 Corinthians 6:18–20; Ephesians 4:19–24

⁸ Leviticus 18:6–18; Matthew 5:27–32; Mark 7:21–23; Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 7:1–2, 9; Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 1:8–11

That marriage is more than a contract between two persons: It is a covenant before God

God is committed to every marriage between a man and a woman.⁹ In the covenant of marriage, God joins a man and a woman together “in one flesh,” and forbids anyone to break it.¹⁰ This covenant is unique among human relationships.¹¹ God intends the married couple to recognize and celebrate His call to an irrevocable commitment to love, to cherish and remain faithful which transcends the quid pro quo of contracts.¹²

That in Christian marriage, the Church acts as an agent of God’s blessing, as a primary witness and as a supportive community

The church declares the blessing of God but does not create that benefit.¹³ Therefore the church cannot confer the spiritual blessing of marriage on other relationships.¹⁴

That a healthy marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children

The practical benefits of marriage are inherent to its form. A healthy marriage is a unique source of benefits for children including the stability of the family and the access of children to a mother and a father.¹⁵ God intended that children should receive nurture from male and female parents, and in turn learn to honor both.¹⁶ Neither the church nor anyone else can confer the innate benefits of marriage on other forms of relationships or unions.¹⁷

Therefore, we conclude . . .

That the Bible teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman only, and to recognize other unions as legitimate marriages would be contrary to our understanding of scripture within the North American Baptist Conference.

We affirm, in accordance with the North American Baptist Conference Statement of Faith, that each person is unique, possesses dignity, and is worthy of respect.

We also affirm that we are called to introduce each person to the loving, reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ and the life changing transformation described in scripture.

As Christians we seek to demonstrate God’s love to all people, but we will not compromise our convictions on marriage as defined by scripture.

⁹ Malachi 2:14–15

¹⁰ Matthew 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–9

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 11:12

¹² 1 Corinthians 7:10–11; Ephesians 5:21–33

¹³ Ephesians 1:22–23

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:9–13; 1 Timothy 1:6–11

¹⁵ Proverbs 6:20–23; Colossians 3:18–21

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1–3

¹⁷ Matthew 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–9

Therefore, be it resolved that:

1. As a matter of belief, doctrine and religious practice, the North American Baptist Conference reserves the term “marriage” for the covenant relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.
2. And that the North American Baptist Conference establishes the standard that all individuals, who are licensed to perform marriages, will not officiate, co-officiate or participate as a pastor at any marriage outside of the previously stated definition of marriage.
3. And that in the event that an individual licensed to perform marriages, officiates, co-officiates or participates as a pastor at a marriage that is outside of the previously stated definition of marriage, will be subject to disciplinary review and loss of license.
4. And we recommend that all North American Baptist Conference churches adopt the above as a policy of their individual, local church, and review their “church use policies” to reflect the resolution as stated.
5. And that the facilities of North American Baptist Conference churches will not be used for weddings or receptions where the marriage union is contrary to the provisions of this resolution.

Adopted by the North American Baptist Conference delegates, July 5–9, 2006, Estes Park, Colorado.
Revision approved by the General Council, May 14, 2011, Orlando, Florida.
Adopted with Scripture References by the North American Baptists delegates, July 5, 2012, Orlando, Florida.

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APPENDIX E:

NAB CODE OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS

As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, called and gifted by God, I dedicate myself to conduct my ministry in accordance with the following NAB Code of Ministerial Ethics.

By our Lord's gracious leading and strength. . .

I will constantly prepare myself in body, mind, and spirit for the task to which God has called me.

I will seek to exercise integrity in all my financial dealings while setting an example of biblical stewardship when giving to the work of the Lord.

I will, if a full-time minister, confer with church leaders before accepting remuneration for work other than that normally associated with the pastorate.

I will seek to build up the church without discrediting individual believers, a local congregation, or any other churches and ministries.

I will balance my family commitments and church duties properly.

I will keep all appropriate confidences shared with me in counseling sessions and other ministry contexts, except in cases where disclosure is required by law or necessary to prevent an individual from harming himself/herself or another.

I will be truthful in my speech, never plagiarizing another's work.

I will not be involved in communicating gossip.

I will keep my life morally pure by not engaging in pornography or becoming romantically or sexually involved in any relationship that is in violation of biblical standards of morality.

I will exercise the authority of a servant-leader who influences others through love and understanding and who humbly acknowledges dependence upon God, putting the interests of others above my own.

I will, if I serve in an associate pastor role, support the leadership of the senior/lead pastor and not undermine his ministry in public settings or private conversations with others.

I will, if serving with multiple staff, show respect for other ministers and staff members and shall encourage and work with them as members of a team.

I will relate to other ministers with the respect that is due fellow servants of Jesus Christ and shall cooperate with them as God leads.

I will seek the fellowship of the pastors of the North American Baptist Conference.

I will encourage participation in the mission and ministry of the NAB Conference, as well as the region/association in which I serve.

I will not intentionally cause division within the congregation I serve. If I resign or am asked to resign, I will not seek to provide pastoral leadership for any new church that may develop in the same community unless approved by the region/association.

Upon my resignation or removal from a local church, I will not interfere with matters related to that local church, withdrawing from any official pastoral relations with that local church unless otherwise arranged with the leadership and/or subsequent pastor(s) of that local church.

I will obey the laws of my government as long as they do not conflict with the laws of God and will practice Christian citizenship without engaging in partisan or political activities that would discredit the integrity of the ministry.