

Credentialing Guidelines

North
American
Baptist
Conference

Approved by the North American Baptist General Council
6-5-4 as a revision and expansion of guidelines previously
approved in 1971, 1985, 1993, and 2003.

INTRODUCTION

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

As North American Baptists, we affirm from our history that each church is self-governing, and 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 an association of churches to the advancement of that kingdom. In order to maintain a high standard for all of our churches, it is prudent to adopt a uniform standard for credentialing pastors and full-time staff for vocational ministry.

I. Purpose and Scope of Ministerial Credentialing:

A. The purpose of 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.

II. Types of Ministerial Credentials:

We affirm the call of both men and women to ministry. According to our understanding of Scripture, the role of the Senior Pastor/leading elder is limited to men (*1 Corinthians 11:2-6, 1 Timothy 2:8-14*).

- A. Ordination - This credentialing designation is viewed as an act of the local church in recognition of the call of God upon a person's life, which is recognized by the association representing the entire conference. It is designed specifically for those involved in pastoral ministry as Pastor/Leading Elder, Associate Ministers, 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 fraternal cooperation with the association of the conference.

- B. Licensure - This credentialing designation is viewed as an act of the local church and association in recognition of the call of God upon a person's life. It is applied in those situations where the local church, in cooperation with the association, deems ordination as unneeded or inappropriate. In order to comply with IRS/Revenue Canada Standards, the ministerial license must be both conferred by the local church and affirmed by the appropriate board/committee within the association leadership structure.

III. Minimum Requirements for 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 Faith and NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics.
- 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 have completed training, theological preparation and be able to demonstrate theological reflection appropriate for their ministerial role as determined by the local church in cooperation with the association's process.
- E. Must demonstrate a cooperative spirit and support for the purposes and policies of the NAB and demonstrate a lifestyle consistent with biblical standards of Christian conduct, such as honesty, integrity, moral purity, etc.
- F. Must be committed to ongoing personal growth and development.

IV. Recognition of a Non-North American Baptist Conference Ordination

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

- A. Be called to serve in North American Baptist ministry context.
- B. Cooperate with both the local church and the association to determine the candidate's personal background of conversion, doctrinal views, ministerial experience, academic training and personal character, and willingness to commit to the NAB Statement of Faith and NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics.

V. Credentials of Those Retiring From Active Ministry

Those retiring from active ministry, or those that are permanently disabled, may retain their ministerial credential status so long as they shall be found living and teaching in

accordance with the Holy Scriptures, and continuing to follow the regulations defined in this document.

VI. Suspension and Revocation of Ministerial Credential Status

- A. Suspension and/or revocation of ministerial credentials (ordination or licensure) shall be a safeguard for the abuse of the ministerial privilege. Suspension and/or revocation shall apply to:
1. A person who is no longer engaged in a qualifying ministry and has entered another occupation, or who no longer wishes to serve in the ministry.
 2. A person whose moral and ethical conduct has violated the biblical standard, or has broken the NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics. A policy on moral failure and restoration can be obtained from the NAB International Office.
 3. A person who teaches contrary to the doctrinal statement, principles, or practices of the NAB.
 4. In a situation where divorce or divorce and remarriage occasion a question of qualification for ministry, the association Executive Committee, or its designee, in cooperation with the local church, shall review the circumstances of the divorce and determine whether the credentials shall be continued or revoked.
- A. For those situations where suspension or revocation of credentialed status is called for, the minister shall voluntarily surrender such status. If the person refuses to do so, the appropriate leadership board/committee of the association where the individual is serving will take action to either suspend or revoke the credentials.

VII. Restoration and Reinstatement of Ministerial Credentials

- A. A person whose credentials have been suspended for conduct unbecoming of a servant of Jesus Christ may seek restoration of the credentials by the following process:
1. A spirit of contrition and repentance has been manifested.
 2. Where others have been defrauded, a full and complete restitution must have been attempted.
 3. Healing and restoration of broken relationships, to the extent possible, must be established and verified.
 4. A proper program of treatment and therapy must be undertaken where recommended.
 5. Recommendations for restoration and reinstatement must come from a church, from an appropriate group, or from a professional counselor, and other valid witnesses who can attest to the completeness of the subject's personal recovery.

6. After the above qualifications have been fulfilled, the Executive Committee of that particular association, or its designee, will interview the individual and make the final determination as to whether or not reinstatement should be granted.
 7. The process should be given a span of time appropriate in length to provide for evidence of contrition repentance and new healing of the individual. This span to be determined by the local church and the Association Executive.
- B. If suspension was resulted from issues as defined in Appendix B of this document, a request for reinstatement must be given to the appropriate board or committee within the association leadership structure. Reinstatement policy must comply with the NAB policy on “Moral Faith and Restoration.”
- B. A person who desires to re-enter vocational ministry after having served in another occupation must have a recommendation from the sponsoring church and be interviewed by the appropriate board in the association leadership structure of that particular association, giving reasons for desiring re-entry in writing and commit to NAB Statement of Faith and NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics.

VIII. Maintaining Records of Ministerial Credentials

- A. A record of ordination credentials for currently active minister shall be kept by each association, with a master record maintained at the international office.
- B. A signed copy of the NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics shall accompany the credential copy.

IX. PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

A. Process for Ordination Credentialing

A complete document on ordination policy and procedures can be obtained from the NAB International Office.

1. In the case of ordination credentialing, the individual seeking ordination shall submit an ordination paper to the appropriate board/committee within the association leadership structure. This paper shall explain items including but not limited to:
 - a) The individual's Christian experience
 - b) The individual's call to ministry
 - 1) Education
 - 2) Previous Christian service
 - 3) Doctorial statement
 - 4) Current ministry position and duties
 - 5) Signed copy of NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics

The paper should be submitted in such a manner as to allow the committee the needed time for review.

2. Upon review, the committee shall either vote to recommend the church call an ordination council, refer the paper back to the individual for further development, or decline to proceed with ordination credentialing.
3. Upon a favorable recommendation from the committee, the church shall call an ordination council. The council shall examine the individual concluding it's deliberation with a vote either to recommend that the local church proceed with ordination, recommend that the individual undertake further study, or recommend the individual not be ordained.
4. Upon the favorable recommendation of the council, the church shall conduct an ordination service and inform the International Office of NAB of the ordinands new status.
5. Forward signed copy of NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics to Association's Executive and International offices.

B. Process for Licensure Credentialing

1. The church where the person is serving shall initiate the process of licensure. This process shall include:
 - a. A report from the church to the appropriate board/committee of the association supporting this desire to license the individual;

- b. A brief description of the individual's role in ministry;
 - c. The submission from the individual of a signed copy of the NAB Statement of Faith and NAB Pastoral Code of Ethics.
2. Upon review, the committee shall vote to affirm license credential, deny licensure credential or seek clarification of information.
 3. Upon favorable review, the committee shall recommend the church proceed with licensure.

Note: For a complete explanation on licensing and ordination call our International Office at (630) 495-2000 or email us at info@nabconf.org.

**North American Baptist Conference
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

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

In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout our 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 (II 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; II 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, I 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 (I 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; I 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 (I 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 (I Corinthians 15:3-4; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:23-25). He ascended into heaven where He rules overall creation (Philippians 2:5-11). He intercedes for all believers and dwells in them as their everpresent Lord (Romans 8:24; John 14:23).
 - c. The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Scriptures (II Peter 1:21). Through this Word, he convicts individuals of their sinfulness and of their righteousness of Christ, draws them to the Savior, and bears witness to their new birth (James 1:18; John 16:7-11; I Thessalonians 1:5-6; Romans 8:16). At regeneration and conversion, the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit (I 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; I Peter 4:10). He empowers, guides, teaches, fills, sanctifies and produces the fruit of Christ-likeness in all who yield to Him (Acts 4:31; Romans 8:14; I Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 5:18; II 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 (I Timothy 4:1; I 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; II 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; I Timothy 2:5).
 5. We believe salvation is redemption by Christ of the whole person from sin and death (II Timothy 1:9-10; I 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 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 (II Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:15; I 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 congressional (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 (I 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; I 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; II Corinthians 3:37; 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 (I Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 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 Christ-like 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; I 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).

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; II Corinthians 5:10; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

ADOPTED BY NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE DELEGATES, AUGUST 10-15, 1982, AT NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK.

NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

CODE OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS

Adopted June 5, 2004

As a minister of Jesus Christ, called by God to proclaim the Gospel, and gifted by the Spirit, I dedicate myself to conduct my ministry in accord with the Statement of Beliefs of the North American Baptist Conference and the church to which I am called.

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

I will safeguard the good image of the Christian ministry by living honestly, not seeking special financial privileges or gratuities and avoiding embarrassing debts while giving faithfully 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 other churches or 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 permitted or required by law.

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

I will keep my life morally pure by refusing to engage in any form of pornography or become romantically or sexually involved in any relationship which 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 Pastor and not undermine his ministry in public settings or private conversations with others.

I will, if serving with a 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 Conference and the Region and 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 or Association.

Upon my resignation, I will sever my pastoral relations with the church and shall not make pastoral contacts of any kind with the members of the church(es) whom I formally served without the knowledge and consent of the pastor(s).

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.

I, _____, am in full and complete agreement with the North American Baptist Statement of Beliefs and Code of Ministerial Ethics and agree to them without reservation. I further covenant and pledge with my colleagues in the North American Baptist Conference ministry to keep the Code of Ministerial Ethics. If at any time I should cease to agree with the Statement of Beliefs or the Code of Ministerial Ethics, I will resign my position as a minister with the North American Baptist Conference. I also acknowledge that, should I cease to agree with the Statement of Beliefs or act in such a manner as to violate the Code of Ministerial Ethics, that this will be grounds for the withdrawal of credentials as a minister within the North American Baptist Conference.

Signature _____ Date _____

(Revised June 2004 GC)