An

ORDINATION MANUAL

for the

CHURCHES

of

CONVERGE MIDATLANTIC

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INTRODUCTION

Pastor Mike Larson felt satisfied and encouraged as he reviewed his ordination. His church had positively affirmed his gifts for ministry and his actual practice of those gifts. A council of his colleagues and representatives from other churches had examined his life and faith and had formally affirmed his call and preparation for ministry by recommending that he be formally set apart as an ordained minister of the Gospel. His church, family, and friends had surrounded him in prayer as other ordained pastors had laid their hands on him.

His ordination was a very special time for Pastor Larson. His colleagues in ministry had identified themselves with his ministry as they sought a special anointing of the Holy Spirit for him. He had experienced a great sense of satisfaction in who he was as an ordained minister. He also experienced a great sense of awe for the responsibilities that had been committed to him. This had truly been one of the most significant experiences in his life.

Pastor Larson's experience in ordination can be the experience of each pastor ordained by a church in Converge MidAtlantic. The Pastoral Relations Committee of this district is committed to helping each candidate have a positive experience in the ordination process. This manual is one help the committee provides both pastors and churches in Converge MidAtlantic.

This manual is prepared for both pastors and churches. Some pastors may
never have experienced an ordination service prior to their own ordination. Some churches may never have had the privilege of ordaining one of their pastors. This manual provides information they may not have on each of the steps and parts that are usually included in a Baptist ordination service. It also answers many of the questions that are asked about ordination.

1. WHAT IS ORDINATION
A Baptist Definition of Ordination

Ordination can be simply defined as the act of conferring the functions or office of a minister. Baptists have a more specific definition. This definition is in harmony with the basic Baptist belief that all Christians are priests before God (I Peter 1:9).*

This definition begins with the Bible since Baptists are people of "The Book". There are numerous texts in the Bible which deal with ordination. Three of the New Testament texts help define ordination for Baptists.

Mark 3:14 describes how Jesus appointed the twelve apostles. The word translated "appointed" has also been translated ordained. Ordination begins with the call of Jesus Christ as He appoints some members of the church to be His special servants.

Acts 14:23 reports that the Apostle Paul appointed elders in every church. This word for "appoint" can also be translated ordain. It also implies the participation of the church in electing their leaders.

*All Scripture references are taken from The New International Version of the Bible.

Titus 1:5 reveals that one of Titus' tasks was to appoint elders. A third
Greek word for "appoint" is used here. It can also be translated ordain. It means to put in charge or grant authority. Churches without properly authorized leaders are incomplete according to this text.

What is ordination? Ordination is the church's recognition of God's call of some Christians to Christian ministry. Ordination is also the church's confirmation of the Lord's endowment of these individuals to serve Him as ministers of the gospel. Ordination is also the authorization of these Christians to serve as special leaders of the church.

This is the traditional Baptist definition of ordination. Augustus Strong, the Baptist theologian, said: "Ordination is the setting apart of a person divinely called to a work of special ministry in the church". Dr. Emmit Johnson defines ordination as: "...above all an outward act of approval that this is the man God has set his hand upon. It is confirmation of that call". Dr. Bruce Shelley, professor of church history at Denver Seminary says, "Ordination is simply the church's formal recognition of a divine call to a special spiritual leadership in the church and of the gifts needed for fulfillment of that call".

Ordination is recognition of a prior call, confirmation of the presence of
the gifts necessary for ministry and authorization of the ordained person to preach and teach the Gospel. It does not confer special spiritual rank or power. Ordination is to an office and not to status. Individuals are ordained by the church because God has already ordained them to serve Him: "...so that the body of Christ may be built up..." (Ephesians 4:11-13).

1. **Systematic Theology**, Augustus Hopkins Strong:

2. **On Ordination**, Emmitt V. Johnson:

3. **The Church God's People**, Bruce Shelley:

2. **WHY ORDINATION?**

   The Biblical Basis For Ordination
But why do Baptists ordain only ministers of the Gospel? Is this in harmony with the Baptist emphasis on the priesthood of all believers? Is ordination, the setting apart of gifted leaders to a special ministry, a strange rite for Baptists?

The New Testament certainly teaches that all of God's people are gifted for ministry. Churches have been renewed as they have discovered this truth in texts such as: I Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Peter 2: 7-11. Ephesians 4:12 even teaches that one of a pastor's duties is to equip God's people for ministry.

While this is a basic truth, the New Testament also teaches that the Lord gives churches special people to lead them. The Ephesians 4 text lists some of them: apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors. Other passages list other offices. The various terms used in the New Testament for church leaders suggest that church organization was fluid and in a developing stage in the New Testament Church. Yet, at the same time it is also obvious that each church had gifted leaders who served in special ministries.

Minister is the generic term the New Testament uses to describe all of them. Paul was an apostle. Timothy was a pastor. They both were active in establishing churches. In II Corinthians 3:6 they describe themselves as ministers.
The word translated minister is **diakonos** in the Greek. Its basic meaning is servant. Sometimes it is translated deacon in the New Testament (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8). Sometimes it is translated minister (II Corinthians 3:6; I Timothy 4:6). Sometimes when it is translated servant, it refers to this special office of minister of the Gospel (Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23; I Timothy 1:12). The biblical evidence suggests that the New Testament Church recognized a special class of servant-leaders who were referred to as ministers.

These ministers, whether apostles, prophets, evangelists or pastors, were servants of the Word. Their primary responsibility was to teach all that Jesus and the apostles taught (Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:42). Deacons were servants of the body who assisted the servants of the Word by caring for the needs of the church body so the servant of the Word could devote themselves to teaching and prayer (Acts 6:1-7).

This establishes a biblical basis for special leaders of the church who lead by teaching God's Word. This is a beginning point for today's practice of ordination in Baptist churches. Ordination, along with calling a pastor and financially supporting him, is a way Baptist churches recognize and certify these servants of the Word.
There is also biblical evidence for a ceremony of "laying on of hands" as a way of setting apart those who are called to special service. There is little evidence to suggest that this was identical to the ritual found in today's formal service of ordination. But there is evidence to suggest that "laying on of hands" was a significant spiritual experience in the life of the New Testament Church.

In Acts 6, when the seven were chosen to wait on tables, the Apostles laid their hands on them and prayed for them. In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were set apart for the special work to which the Lord had called them through a ceremony of laying on of hands. I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6, suggest that Timothy was established as a minister in a ceremony of laying on of hands.

While today's practice of ordination in Baptist churches is not identical to the New Testament practice of laying on of hands, it is in harmony with the spirit and teaching of the New Testament. Ordination is a way Baptist churches can set apart and consecrate those whom it recognizes to be called of the Lord into the special service of leadership in the ministry of the Word.
3. WHO ORDAINS?

The Role of the Church and Churches in Ordination

The local church ordains. This is a good tradition. However, most Baptist churches recognizing their interdependence as well as their independence have sought the counsel and concurrence of sister churches in the process of ordination.

Consultation with sister churches recognizes the role the universal Church of Jesus Christ has in ordination. Once a person is ordained he becomes a minister in the whole Church of Jesus Christ. He is granted an acceptance and privilege within the Church universal. In future years other churches may be affected by the quality of the person ordained by the local church. So it is appropriate that more than just one church be involved in the process.

For a brief period of time a form of Baptist independence found expression among Southern Baptists. It was called "Landmarkism". In practice it was a form of exclusive independence. It did not recognize the validity of any other church except its own local group. It denied the biblical and traditional Baptist views on the universal Church as the Body of Christ. Though no longer a real influence among Baptists, individual Baptists from time to time adopt one or more of its teachings without realizing it.

Appreciation of the universal Church and of the mutual independence of local churches has been a characteristic of Converge Worldwide churches and people. They truly are churches doing together what no single church can do
alone. This sense of interdependence has strengthened both churches and people through the encouragement of real biblical fellowship. One of the places where that fellowship has occurred is in the councils and services of ordination called by local churches.

The local churches of Converge Worldwide also recognize their responsibility in ordination to the other churches of the Conference and the whole Body of Christ. The individuals they ordain are recognized throughout the Conference as ordained clergy. So Conference Baptist churches always call a council of delegates from their sister churches to examine their candidates for ordination. Chapter seven describes the work of an ordination council.

The Pastoral Relations Committee of Converge MidAtlantic serves the churches and their candidates by helping them prepare for examination by a council. This committee aids the candidate by reviewing his spiritual presentation and statement of faith prior to a public council. This provides help for the candidate in a private and personal setting. Copies of forms used by the Relations Committee are included in the appendix. The committee helps churches by advising them on standards, practices and procedures for ordination.

As soon as a pastor and his church decide to seek ordination, they should contact the district office. The office will send them a copy of this manual, and forms to be used in preparation for ordination. The District Executive Minister will also be happy to answer any questions that may arise.
4. WHO SHOULD BE ORDAINED?

Criteria to be Used in Evaluating the Readiness of Candidates for Ordination.

The biblical basis for ordination indicates that ordination is reserved for special servant-leaders in the church. So another key question in the ordination process is: Who should be ordained? The answer is: Ministers who are called of God to lead His Church through the preaching and teaching of God's Word are appropriate candidates for ordination.

Some Baptist churches also ordain deacons. Conference Baptist churches generally reserve ordination for pastors or other ministers called to a preaching or teaching ministry. Ordination then is the way Baptist churches certify those who are qualified to lead churches through preaching and teaching. The tax code of the United States government also uses a similar standard in its recognition of "Ministers of the Gospel" (see appendix for a copy of the tax code).

A person does not have to hold the title of pastor to be ordained. Seminary professors, missionaries, and chaplains are an extension of the pastoral office even though they don't hold the title of pastor. The standard which qualifies persons for ordination is whether or not their primary ministry is one of preaching and teaching the Word of God. The person being ordained, however, does need to be a member of the church that is performing the ordination.

Each Baptist church has the right and responsibility to set the standards it will use in evaluating the readiness of servants of the Word for ordination. In that
process it is good to consider the policies of sister churches. The following standards are recommended by Converge Worldwide:

1. **Spiritual** An experience of conversion, a divine call to the ministry, a consistent Christian walk, a vital concern for the conversion of people and upbuilding of the church worldwide - these are essential elements in the candidate's experience.

2. **Doctrinal** All prospective pastors should affirm their unequivocal adherence to an evangelical doctrinal position based on the Scriptures as the Word of God. The [Affirmation of Faith](#) adopted by Converge Worldwide can serve as a guide in these matters.

3. **Educational** In view of the growing demands placed on pastors, chaplains and missionaries, it is advisable that graduation from a four-year college course followed by a standard Master of Divinity course in seminary, or its equivalent, be recommended. The ministerial calling requires the best training, comparable in quality and intensity to that of other professions.

4. **Denominational** All ministers of Converge Worldwide should be convinced Baptists who accept historic Baptist distinctives in all matters pertaining to church order and practice. Leaders men of non-Conference background, and especially non-Baptists, are advised to take some recommended courses from Bethel Theological Seminary or complete certain prescribed reading in Baptist polity.

5. **Professional** Membership in the church which is doing the ordaining is
essential. Experience for at least one year as a pastor or equivalent service beyond the time spent in preparation for the ministry is advised. This time allows the candidate to try and test his call, gifts and preparation in the practice of ministry. A satisfactory demonstration of the leadership role of the pastor and a theology of ministry is desirable. In addition, the candidate for ordination should adhere to the high ethical standards which are expressed in the suggested Conference Code of Ministerial Ethics. A copy of the suggested Code of Ministerial Ethics is included in the appendix.

An additional standard to be used in evaluating candidates for ordination is found in the status an ordained person has as an agent of the state for the purposes of legally solemnizing marriages. This privilege is granted to "Ministers of the Gospel" because the state recognizes the important role religion can have in the establishment and maintenance of well ordered families. Since this right to solemnize marriages is one of considerable responsibility, churches will want to be sure that those persons who are given this privilege are prepared to responsibly discharge it.

Ordination confers other privileges. The title of "The Reverend" which goes with ordination does not mean much to most Baptist pastors. It does not indicate that those who are ordained are more spiritual than other Christians.

It does, however, indicate the regard and respect which most people give to those who have been ordained. It also indicates the accreditation the ordained person receives in religious circles.
So, I Timothy 5:22 offers good advice to everyone involved in ordination: "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands....". Converge Worldwide follows this advice when in its statement on the ordination of ministers, it recommends that the candidate for ordination spend "...at least one year after graduation engaged exclusively in preaching and pastoral work before being ordained".

The local church has the responsibility to decide whether or not its candidate is qualified for ordination. The work of the Pastoral Relations Committee is advisory. Yet, since so many churches and pastors have been helped by Pastoral Relations Committees, it is recommended that all candidates seeking ordination use the services provided by this committee.

The authority and autonomy of the local church is preserved and the interest of the wider Body of Christ is recognized in this process. The relationship between the local church, the council, and the Pastoral Relations Committee is this:

--Ordination is the function of the local church.

--Examining the candidate is the function of the council.

--Advising the candidate and the church is the function of the Pastoral Relations Committee.
5. HOW DOES THE ORDINATION PROCESS WORK?

Steps in the Ordination Process

1. The person who desires ordination makes this desire known to the church of which he is a member and its official board. There is no reason why he has to wait for the church board to ask him if he wants to be ordained. However, the board has a responsibility to initiate conversations about ordination with its pastor if he doesn't.

2. When the individual and church board are in agreement that they should work toward ordination, the district office is contacted to set a date for the candidate to meet with the Pastoral Relations Committee. This is typically two to three months prior to the time when he wishes to be ordained. Pastoral Relations Committee forms are included in the appendix.

3. The candidate prepares a statement of faith. Instructions for this statement are included in chapter six of this manual.

4. The candidate meets with the Pastoral Relations Committee and the committee then sends its recommendation to the church board. The committee may recommend that the board proceed with ordination. It may recommend that the ordination be delayed. It may recommend that some intermediate steps of preparations be taken before ordination proceeds. It may also recommend that the individual not be ordained.

5. After learning of the Pastoral Relations Committee's recommendation, the
church board decides whether or not to recommend to the church that a council be called to examine their candidate for the purposes of ordination. This decision is the responsibility of the local church board. The work of the committee is strictly advisory.

6. If the church votes to call a council, the church clerk or secretary sends invitations to those churches chosen and invites them to send their pastor and two other delegates to a council. A copy of a sample letter is included in the appendix. The District Executive Minister should also be invited. There is no minimum number that is needed to hold a council, but the wider the representation the better. If churches don't reply, the convening church may want to call them to see if they are sending delegates.

7. Upon favorable recommendation from the council, a service of ordination is held. This service should be held no sooner than one month after the council meets. A sample service of ordination is included in the appendix.

8. Following the service of ordination, the church sends notices of the ordination to the President of Converge Worldwide, the Editor of Converge Point, the District Executive Minister, and the Conference archives at Bethel Seminary. The archives also receive a copy of the minutes of the council, all correspondence, and the order of service of ordination. The newly ordained individual also receives copies of these. The church may also wish to make other announcements which it feels are appropriate.
6. WHAT DO I SAY?

Guidelines for Preparing a Testimony of Conversion,
Call to Ministry, and Statement of Faith.

A statement of conversion, and call to ministry is usually given orally and is brief by comparison to the Statement of Faith. The appendix includes a list of questions that the Pastoral Relations Committee may use in learning more about the candidate's life, preparation, and journey in faith. This list can be a guide around which the candidate can form a verbal testimony.

A Statement of Faith is a formal document which demonstrates the candidate's biblical knowledge, doctrinal orthodoxy, Baptist conviction and ability to communicate. It is written in the candidate's own words but in language which non-theologically trained people can understand. Quotations from theological sources are not included in this paper. The paper positively states what the candidate believes, avoiding negative statements about what the candidate does not believe.
Suggested areas to be Covered

This statement treats major theological themes, i.e.: scripture, God, Christology, the Holy Spirit, man, sin, salvation, the Christian life, eschatology and the church. Each of these doctrines are developed as they grow naturally out of the individual's present theological understanding. They are written with traditional approaches in mind, but expressed in the categories of personal experience that establish continuity with the experience of the reader (a part of whom will be an ordaining council). Wherever relevant, this statement should reflect personal knowledge of the biblical expression of the particular doctrine, its historical development and its contemporary synthesis. Examples are provided below:

On the doctrine of God

Without ignoring the traditional forms, express this doctrine in categories which will be understandable to today's listener. How do you present the "form" of God to man today? What is the meaning of concepts such as "transcendence" and "immanence" for today's understanding of the world in which we live? Who is the God whom you communicate to modern man?

On the doctrine of man

Seek to incorporate in the statement the following concepts: What is the biblical understanding of man? Who is man as a soteriological creature in the twentieth century? What does the image of God mean? What are the ethical dimensions of this?
On the doctrine of church

Demonstrate the theological significance of the church for today. How does the church relate to the Kingdom of God? How is the church related to contemporary society? What is the significance of the church for eschatology, etc.? Include a statement on the ordinances and Baptist church polity.

Before beginning to write each of the separate doctrines, outline the areas which will be included, develop the procedure for treating these areas and then ask the question: Does this demonstrate knowledge of the biblical and historical data and does it relate to people today?

Format

-The statement is ten to twelve pages in length, double spaced.

-Pay attention to literary style, grammar, and spelling.

-Use headings, subheadings, and page numbers for easy reference during the questioning period. Use thesis-like margins.

-Since Baptists are "people of the Book", use scripture. One quoted reference which is the major support for each statement is better than a long list of references.

-Remember that two-thirds of a given ordination council are laity, some with little theological education. Prepare to communicate to them.

Due Date

Three legible copies of the Statement of Faith must be submitted to Converge MidAtlantic, 20 E. McKinley Way, Suite 5, Poland, Ohio, 44514, one
month prior to meeting with the Pastoral Relations Committee.

7. HOW DOES AN ORDINATION COUNCIL WORK?

Guidelines for Conducting an Ordination Council

Prior to the Council

1. At least four weeks prior to the date of the meeting of the Council, the convening church shall send a written invitation to each church selected for participation requesting that the pastor and two other delegates be sent. The convening church shall also seek to encourage a good number of leaders and members to attend the council - not as delegates, yet their input will be important. A representative from the district office shall also be invited as well as representatives from Converge Worldwide and Bethel Seminary. A sample letter of invitation is included in the appendix.

2. Along with the invitation, the convening church shall send copies of the candidate's Statement of Faith.

3. The convening church shall invite someone who will be attending the council as a delegate to serve as moderator of the council. That person shall then have the opportunity to adequately prepare for leading the council. At the time of the council a member of the convening church shall nominate that person to be elected moderator by the assembled delegates. The convening church shall also invite and nominate someone to serve as clerk of the council.

4. The district office will use its resources to encourage participation by the invited churches. It is expected that invited Conference pastors will fulfill their responsibility to be present together with other delegates from their
churches.

**DURING THE COUNCIL**

1. Opening activities are led by a member of the convening church. These activities typically include congregational singing, a prayer of invocation, a Bible reading, and a welcome to delegates and guests. The candidate is introduced to the council at this time. This introduction shall include the reasons why the church believes the candidate is ready for ordination.

The leader organizes the council by:

--Calling for the reading of the church minutes authorizing the council.

--Nominating the convening church's properly credentialed candidates for the offices of moderator and clerk of the council.

--Conducting the election of moderator and clerk and turning over the rest of the council proceedings to them.

2. The moderator of the council further organizes the council by:

--Asking the delegates to give their credentials to the clerk of the council.

--The clerk of the council then reads the list of the credentialed delegates and the churches and organizations they represent.

--The moderator then entertains a motion that these be established as the council.

3. The moderator will also remind the delegates of the nature and the procedure of the task and that the council's decision shall not be predisposed by announced plans for an ordination service. A list of suggestions for council moderators is included in the appendix.
4. The moderator then reminds the delegates of the purpose of the council. They have gathered to examine the candidate's spiritual preparation and theological beliefs to determine readiness for ordination. Questions are asked for clarification or expansion of a statement made by the candidate and to cover areas not covered in the paper. An ordination council is not the place for debate. During the closed session, delegates will have the opportunity to express their evaluation of the candidate and his preparation.

5. Relatives of the candidate and friends from non-Baptist schools and organizations may be seated as honorary delegates by vote of the council. These individuals do not have voice or vote in the council. However, at the end of the council the moderator may want to call on them for their personal evaluations of the candidate's life and ministry.

6. The chairman calls on the candidate to give a testimony of conversion, call to, and preparation for the ministry. Following this presentation the delegates may ask questions related to this statement. A motion to proceed to the next phase is in order when the council has had sufficient time to examine the candidate in this area.

7. The candidate shall then present his Statement of Faith. Since this paper has been mailed in advance to the delegates, it is not necessary to read it verbatim. The candidate can summarize it section by section. At the end of each section, the moderator entertains questions from the delegates. When he senses that sufficient questions have been raised, he can instruct the candidate to proceed to the next section. Care needs to be taken not to hurry the council
nor to unduly delay it.

8. When the candidate has finished presenting his paper, the moderator calls on representatives from the convening church to attest to the candidate's ministry among them. This covers such areas as: personality and character, demonstration of spiritual gifts, effectiveness in ministry.

9. The council then goes into closed session. Only regular voting delegates participate in the closed session. Guests, including honorary delegates and the candidate are escorted from the meeting room to be called back when the council has reached a decision.

The council will make one of the following four decisions:

a. Recommend without reservation.

b. Recommend with work or study in certain areas.

c. Recommend to delay or postpone.

d. Recommend not to ordain.

10. The candidate and guests are invited to return. The moderator informs them of the decision of the council and makes any comments that are appropriate.

11. The council then adjourns. A leader from the convening church concludes the meeting of the council with appropriate remarks and leads in prayer.

**AFTER THE COUNCIL**

1. Delegates may be invited to sign the back of the ordination certificate which the church has prepared in advance. Ordination certificate samples are included in the appendix. The moderator and clerk sign the appropriate places on the front of the certificate.
2. The clerk provides the convening church with the minutes of the council. The minutes include information as to the composition and leadership of the council and a verbatim record of the council's decisions.

3. Depending on the time of the council, the convening church may want to serve refreshments to the delegates before they leave. Some churches, however, may want to do this before the council begins.
A license to preach the Gospel is a form of temporary certification by the local church. Currently Baptist churches license unordained pastors so they can perform all the responsibilities of their office while they are seeking ordination. Since the license is a temporary step in preparation for ordination, it should be dated to expire after a limited period of time not to exceed three years. Lack of satisfactory progress toward ordination after a three year period may be an indication that the individual is not suited for the ordained ministry. Sample copies of licenses to preach the Gospel are included in the appendix.

Licensing was begun early in American church history. There were few trained and ordained ministers in the early and expansion years of American history. "Lay" preachers often were the only leadership available to isolated and widely scattered churches. These "lay" preachers were given the right to preach, but were usually denied the privilege of administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper and of performing weddings.

Today federal and state laws recognize licensing as an alternative to ordination. A licensed minister of the Gospel receives all the governmental privileges and rights of an ordained minister. He must also be fully qualified to perform all the ecclesiastical duties of an ordained minister in that denomination.

Since the need for "lay" preachers has passed and since the government
confers such rights on a licensed minister, it is preferable for churches to reserve licensing for those individuals who are testing their qualifications for ministry prior to ordination. This will usually be an individual who appears to the church to meet all the standards for ordination except the probationary period of one year. Under no circumstances should a church license someone who is not a member of their church.

The licensure period provides opportunity for the church to be involved in the preparation for ordination. In cooperation with the District Executive Minister and Pastoral Relations Committee, a plan for study can be developed to include readings, workshops, self-evaluation, consultations, and other activities. The ministerial license then becomes a time of testing, trial and development.

The steps in the procedure for licensing are:

1. The candidate or church makes their desire for licensure known to the official board of the church.
2. That board interviews the candidate to determine his eligibility for licensing.
3. Upon the favorable recommendation of the church board and affirmative vote of the local church, a license to preach the Gospel is granted to the candidate.
4. Upon the church's favorable vote, a brief recognition service and prayer of blessing can be included in one of the church's regular worship services.
9. WHAT ABOUT OTHER SERVANTS?

Commissioning As An Alternative Form of Recognition

The increase of multiple staffs and the ministry of para-church leaders raises a question about ordination for them. What is the proper way to recognize and certify the special ministries these servants provide?

Our district suggests commissioning as the proper way to recognize and certify these servants. This procedure allows recognition of the contributions that those other than servants of the Word make to the work of Christ's Church and still preserves ordination for the preaching/teaching ministry. A pattern for commissioning may be found in the special services which are held for missionaries prior to their leaving for the mission field.
10. IS THERE AN EXPIRATION DATE FOR ORDINATION?

The Continuation of Ordained Status

1. When an ordained person accepts the call of another church, the responsibility for supervision of his ordination is transferred to that church. When an ordained person accepts a call to a form of ministry that does not in itself provide for church membership, the church of which the ordained is a member shall be responsible for the supervision of his ordination.

2. When an ordained person does not have a call from the church of which he is a member or the church of which he is a member does not recognize the validity of his call to some other form of ministry, his ordination should be considered inactive.

3. If a pastor holding ordination from a Converge Worldwide church moves to another group, denomination, or fellowship, his ordination papers in Converge Worldwide will be considered inactive.

4. Ordained persons who become disabled or who enter full vocational retirement shall continue with full recognition of their ordained status.

5. Ordination may be revoked only by the church of which the ordained is a member. Should such action be necessary, due to the neglect or abuse of his calling or some serious deviation from sound doctrine and godly conduct, the following steps are suggested to the church in which he is serving:

   A. Follow proper guidelines within the church's own constitution and
by-laws (which ought to include provisions for pastoral-church relations) and consult with the District Executive Minister.

B. Once it is determined to investigate revoking a church member's ordination, the ordained member should surrender his ordination certificate to a mutually agreed third party who will hold the certificate until the church reaches a final decision. If the ordained member is exonerated of the charges, his certificate will be returned to him. If the church votes to revoke his ordination, the certificate will be given to the officers of the church for final disposition.

C. Should the ordained member seek to avoid discipline by resigning his position or membership, he should be advised that membership does not cease until the church votes on his request. A request to be dropped from membership does not automatically terminate membership. The church can retain his membership until its investigation is completed. Discipline is in order until membership ceases.

D. Some offenses are of such a character that no delay is advised, but usually the act of being deposed from office and subsequent revocation of ordination would be preceded by suspension from office.

E. Where delay is advisable, the local church will want to receive the advice of a council made up of delegates from sister churches and the district office. Revocation, however, still requires a vote by the
church.

F. Written notification of this action goes to the Baptist General Conference, all District Executive Ministers, the Conference archives, and the individual involved.

G. Suspended ministers who are proven not guilty should receive public exoneration in their church.

H. A deposed minister should not be reinstated unless he gives sufficient evidence of genuine repentance.

1. The judgment as to whether a deposed minister shall be subsequently reinstated should be made by the church that desires to call him, together with the concurring advice of denominational leaders.

2. Upon acceptance of a call, the deposed minister's ordination should be reinstated.

6. Ordination may be renounced voluntarily. Such renunciation shall require that the ordained person declare such desire to the board and that the Certificate of Ordination be returned to be destroyed. The church shall vote to recognize such a renunciation.
Validation of Ordained Status

1. Since these policies and procedures assume that the call of a church is fundamental to ordination, it is expected that in the process of issuing a call, each church shall satisfy itself of the validity of the ordination of the candidate being called. The issuance of a call in and of itself validates previous ordination.

2. When a church issues a call to a person ordained in another denomination, it is appropriate for that church to call an Ordination Review Council. The purpose for such a council is to confirm the fact that this person meets Baptist standards for ordination.

3. The district office shall maintain a list of:
   
   1. Active ordained pastors
   2. Disabled or retired pastors
   3. Inactive pastors - the district office will communicate this to them
   4. Pastors whose ordination has been revoked

This list will be sent to the Baptist General Conference annually.
Appendix
PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE REQUEST FORM
(Return to: Converge MidAtlantic, 20 E. McKinley Way, Suite 5, Poland, Ohio, 44514)

Church ____________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code ________________________________________________
Phone _(___)_______________________

Candidate for Ordination:
Name ______________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code ________________________________________________
Phone (____)_________________________

Education for Ministry ______________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Ministry service record _____________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Plans for future ministry
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
How long has the candidate been a member in good standing of the church making the request? _________________________________________________

LICENSE: Church _________________________________________________

    Position _________________________________________________

    Date ___________________________________________________

FORMER ORDINATION: Church ____________________________________

    Denomination _____________________________________________

    Date ___________________________________________________

Candidate’s brief statement of conversion:

Candidate’s brief statement of sense of call to ministry:

Why does candidate wish to be ordained?
Why does candidate wish to be ordained by a Converge Worldwide Church?

Request submitted by:

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip Code ________________________________________________

Phone _(____)________________________

Current Church Office held __________________________________________

a
QUESTIONS USED BY PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Describe the circumstances and events surrounding your conversion experience with Jesus Christ.

2. Describe the way in which you felt God leading you into the ministry.

3. Describe your preparation and education for the ministry.

4. What does ordination mean to you?

5. Why are you seeking ordination at this time?

6. What are some of the growing areas of your life where your relationship with Jesus Christ is expanding?

7. How is Jesus Christ leading in your life today?

8. What place does the life of devotion have in your ministry?

9. What is the most important task of the ministry as you see it?

10. Describe some of the experiences that you had as a child and a young person which were meaningful to you.

11. Describe your family relationship both prior to and after marriage.

12. Who are some of the people that have served as models for ministry for you?
SAMPLE LETTER
To Call An Ordination Council

Greeting from ____________ Baptist Church.

It is with much joy we present ____________ as a candidate for ordination. At a church business meeting (date) our congregation voted to invite you to send your pastor and two other delegates to meet in Council with ____________ Baptist church at _____ on ______. _______, at _______ to consider the advisability of ordaining ____________.

Lunch will be served at 12:30 p.m. with the council to convene at 1:30 p.m. This session will be followed by refreshments for all members of the council.

Your presence in the examining council is very important. We need your participation in the council so the candidate can be properly examined.

Please fill in and return the enclosed card as soon as possible in order to assist in our preparation.

We trust you will join with us on this important day.

Yours in Christ,
SAMPLE LICENSE

This certifies that _________________ is a member of _______________ church, in good and regular standing, and is held in high esteem by us. We believe him to have been called of God to the work of the Gospel ministry, and encourage him in the improvement of his gifts, by preaching the Gospel, as the Lord may give him opportunity. Our prayer is that Jesus Christ will endow him with all the needed gifts and crown his labors with abundant success.

Done by order of the church, this day ______________, 20__. The license shall be in force for three years from this date.

________________________________________
Pastor

________________________________________
Clerk

__________________________ Baptist Church
Certificate of Ordination

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that upon the recommendation and request of the _______________ Church at _______________ which had full and sufficient opportunity for judging his gifts, and after satisfactory examination by us in regard to his Christian experience, call to the ministry, and views of Bible doctrine,

______________________________________________________

was solemnly and publicly set apart and ordained to the work of

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

by authority and order

of the _______________ Church

at ______________________________________________________

on the _______________ day of _______________ , 19________
TYPICAL ORDINATION SERVICE
(Format is optional)

Leader is chosen by the local church

Hymn

Invocation

Scripture

Minutes of the council in brief, by council clerk or moderator or someone else who was present.

Special Music

Ordination message (20-30 minutes)

Ordination Vows

The Act of Ordination, which is the laying on of hands and the Ordination Prayer

Special music or hymn (optional)

Charge to the ordained (5 minutes)

Charge to the church (5 minutes)

Hand of fellowship, a welcome to the fellowship of ordained Conference Baptist ministers.

Presentation of Ordination Certificate and words of congratulations from the local church.

Benediction by the Ordained.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture Reference</th>
<th>Commentary Reference</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 11:17</td>
<td>Romans 1:1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joshua 1:5-9</td>
<td>I Corinthians 9:12-27</td>
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<td>Psalms 71:14-17</td>
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<td>Psalms 119:97-112</td>
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<td>Ezekiel 2:4b-7</td>
<td>I Thessalonians 2:4-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 37:1-9</td>
<td>I Timothy 1:12-19a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malachi 3:1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Luke 4:18</td>
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<td>John 15:12-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>John 20:19-23</td>
<td>I Peter 2:4-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 21:15-17</td>
<td>I Peter 5:1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 26: 16-18</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTED HYMNS

O, For a Thousand Tongues
To God Be the Glory
A Charge to Keep I Have
Jesus, I Have Promised
Fill All My vision
Channels Only
Lord, Speak to Me
May the Mind of Christ, My Savior
Take My Life, and Let It Be
A Mighty Fortress is Our God
Praise Ye the Lord, The Almighty
O Breath of Life
My Faith Looks Up to Thee
ORDINATION VOWS

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

I am ready, the Lord being my helper.

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

I will, the Lord being my helper.

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

I shall so endeavor, the Lord being my helper.

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

I do so promise.

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

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

I do so engage.
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Ordination service is planned by local church leaders and the ordained. They select the participants for each part of the ordination service. Careful prayer and preparation enhances the sacred significance of the service.

The ordinand usually selects the speaker. The convening church provides for the speaker’s expenses and honorarium.

Participants in an ordination service need to be reminded that the address is brought by the principal speaker. The charge to the church, the charge of the ordinand and the hand of fellowship remarks are brief so they do not detract from the impact of the ordination sermon and create an anti-climax.

Usually the church provides a reception following the service at which time the ordinand can be congratulated.
MODERATOR RESPONSIBILITY

While being elected moderator is an honor, it carries responsibility to the council and the candidate. The moderator will want to be familiar with the purpose of the council, its format and parliamentary procedures. The moderator needs to remain neutral in debate to allow different opinions to be expressed. The moderator is the servant of the council.

THE COUNCIL IN EXAMINATION SESSION

--Be cordial, kind and non defensive.

--Be a friend to the candidate, he is on the spot.

Allow all delegates opportunity to question.

--Be prepared to control more dominant delegates.

--Be prepared to control delegates who seek to instruct or correct the candidate.

--Be prepared to control delegates who debate each other.

--Let the candidate speak for himself. Avoid summarizing or making additional commentary.
CODE OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS

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

MY PERSON

I will endeavor to pray daily, to read, study and meditate upon God’s Word; and to maintain extended times of contemplation.

I will plan time to be with my family, realizing my special relationship to them and their position as important members of my congregation.

I will seek to keep my body physically fit through proper eating habits and planned exercise, renewing myself through a weekly holiday and an annual vacation.

I will try to keep myself emotionally fit, keeping in touch with my feelings and growing in healthy control of them.

I will strive to grow through comprehensive reading and through participation in professional educational opportunities.

MY PROFESSION

I will seek to conduct myself consistently with my calling and commitment as a man of God.

I will give full service to my congregation and will accept added responsibilities only if they do not interfere with the over-all effectiveness of my ministry in the congregation.
I will consider a confidential statement made to me as a sacred trust not to be divulged without consent of the person making it.

I will responsibly exercise the freedom of the pulpit, speaking the truth of God’s Word with conviction in love; and will acknowledge any extensive use of material prepared by someone else.

MY FINANCES

I will advocate adequate compensation for my profession and will assist the congregation to understand that a minister should not expect or require fees for pastoral services to them.

I will be honest in my stewardship of money, paying bills promptly, asking no personal favors or discounts on the basis of my professional status.

I will give tithes and offerings as a good steward and example to the church.

MY CONGREGATION

I will seek to regard all persons in the congregation with equal love and concern and undertake to minister impartially to their needs.

I will seek to be friends with all members, yet retain the right to seek close friendships within the congregation.

I will exercise confidence in the lay leadership, assisting in their training and mobilizing their creativity.

I will seek to lead the church in a positive direction to achieve the goals we have mutually agreed upon. I will remain open to constructive criticism and to suggestions intended to strengthen our common ministry.
I will candidate at only one church at a time. I will respond promptly and definitely to a call and I shall seek to deal fairly with the church I am presently serving.

MY COLLEAGUES

I will not perform services in the area of responsibility of my colleagues in the Christian ministry except upon their request and/or consent.

I will, upon my departure, sever my pastoral relations with the congregation, recognizing that all pastoral functions should henceforth rightfully be conducted by my successor. I will seek and honor comity arrangements made with fellow pastors.

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

MY DENOMINATION

I will cooperate with the personnel of Converge MidAtlantic and Converge Worldwide (Baptist General Conference) and offer responsible criticism in order that our common service in the Kingdom of God might be more effective. I will not use my influence to alienate this church from Converge MidAtlantic and Converge Worldwide (Baptist General Conference). I will immediately resign should I cease to hold Baptist practices and principles commonly held by our denominational fellowship.

I covenant in the sight of God with my colleagues in the ministry to strive to keep the code of ministerial ethics of Converge MidAtlantic Pastor’s Fellowship.
An Affirmation of Our Faith

1. **The Word of God**
   We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

2. **The Trinity**
   We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

3. **God the Father**
   We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

4. **Jesus Christ**
   We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth.

5. **The Holy Spirit**
   We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.

6. **Regeneration**
   We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

7. **The Church**
   We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

8. **Christian Conduct**
   We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ.

9. **The Ordinances**
   We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

10. **Religious Liberty**
    We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

11. **Church Cooperation**
    We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether it is the Conference or a district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary independent basis.

12. **The Last Things**
    We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

U.S. TAX CODE

Rental Allowance

(1) General Rule

Ministers can exclude from their income the rental value of a rectory, parsonage, or manse furnished to them, including the value of utilities, or any rental allowance that’s part of compensation and is used to rent or otherwise provide a home. That tax-free housing allowance can be a great tax saving to any minister who qualifies.

(2) How To Qualify

The exclusion is not necessarily automatic, and not every minister can take advantage of it. A minister must qualify, and the allowance, when offered, must be established officially and in proper order.

Duties of a Minister of the Gospel

The Regulations say that to qualify for the exclusion, the rental allowance or home must be provided as remuneration for services that are ordinarily the duties of a minister of the gospel. Services that are considered duties of a minister of the gospel include the performance of sacerdotal functions, the conduct of religious worship, the administration and maintenance of religious organizations and their integral agencies, and the performance of teaching and administrative duties at theological seminaries.

The exclusion applies only to duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers
of churches. When a church or church denomination ordains some ministers and licenses or commissions others, the licensing or commissioning must generally establish a status that is equivalent of ordination, and is so recognized by the church. That is, the individual, on being licensed or commissioned, must be invested with the status and authority of an ordained minister, fully qualified to exercise substantially all the ecclesiastical duties of such a minister in that denomination.