

American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware

PRE-ORDINATION LICENSE, ORDINATION, AND CERTIFICATION

Introduction

The American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware (ABCOPAD) supports the ministry of the whole people of God. We believe that by our baptism into Christ, each Christian is called to minister in Christ's name.

Some of Christ's followers, however, are called especially to minister to Christ's body, the Church. These Christians are called by God and their local church to use their gifts of leadership in preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and caring for Christ's church. In the history of Baptists, we have grown in our understanding that even as we are independent local churches, we are also partner churches. For the purposes of fellowship and mission, we voluntarily associate as the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware. Within ABCOPAD, we recognize those individuals our churches have called for the ministry "set apart" from the ministry of every baptized Christian.

Because you are receiving this document, you are one of Christ's followers considering one of three avenues for recognition of your special calling to ministry.

Ordination

You may be a college and seminary graduate, or equivalent, who is called to professional ministry and are seeking Ordination. Pages 4 to 7 contain ABCOPAD's "Recognition of Ordination Through a Standard Process". This Standard Process for Recognition of Ordination allows the minister to be recognized throughout American Baptist Churches, USA as a qualified, professional member of the clergy. Pages 7 to 8 contain ABCOPAD's policies for "Recognition of Ordination through a Non-standard Process" and Recognition of Ordination Other than American-Baptist.

Pre-Ordination License

You may be a student in college or seminary looking toward standard Ordination at the completion of your seven years of post high school study, or equivalent. "Steps Toward a Pre-Ordination License" are on pages 9 to 10. The purpose of a pre-Ordination license is to aid you in receiving spiritual support from your local church and care from your Association Ordination Committee as you engage in your studies toward the Master of Divinity degree, or equivalent, and the process toward Ordination.

Certified Lay Minister

You may be a member of a local ABCOPAD church who feels a call to use gifts for ministry to benefit Christ's church, but you want to remain a member of the laity. "Steps Toward Becoming a Certified Lay Minister" are found on pages 12 to 14. Certification as a Lay Minister in ABCOPAD means you are recognized to offer Christian ministry within our Regional churches and are listed in our directory as such.

Adopted 11-5-92

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Revised April 2009

Updated February 2017

POLICIES FOR THE RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION
of
THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF PENNSYLVANIA AND DELAWARE
(ABCOPAD)

I. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Historically, Baptists have followed the practice of setting apart certain individuals for special roles as leaders of local churches. This act is called Ordination. While this has primarily been an action of the local church, it has also been carried out with the counsel of other churches. The participation of other churches in the Ordination process emphasizes that it has more than local significance. It signifies that the person ordained is set apart as worthy to minister to other churches.

Baptists have also historically emphasized the priesthood of all believers, a doctrine which emphasizes the right of each Christian to approach God directly on his or her own behalf, or on behalf of others. Today the concept of the ministry of the laity is receiving strong emphasis. Each member of the Body of Christ has the responsibility to minister to others on behalf of God. This ministry is performed both in the church and in the world.

There are three arenas of denominational life from which recognition/affirmation is needed today for Ordination by a local church: the Association, the Region, and the national denomination. Each has its own standards which must be met if an Ordination is to be recognized. American Baptists have engaged in an attempt to have uniform standards adopted in each arena. Such uniformity, hopefully, not only would raise the standards, but also avoid the inevitable conflicts that differing standards create in today's highly mobile world. Earlier, Ordination was granted only for pastors at local churches. Today Ordination may set apart a person for missionary service, chaplaincy, teaching, experimental ministries, or denominational service. Ordination recognizes God's call to a person and his/her fitness for serving in the ordained ministry of the denomination. When an ordained person transfers from another denomination, American Baptists generally recognize that Ordination if it meets current standards of our denomination.

In the early Church, the rite of Ordination came to a climax in the act of "laying on of hands." This act indicated that the person so ordained was not only consecrated to God's service and set apart for ministry, but was at the same time commissioned to serve on behalf of those who laid on hands (see Acts 6:6 and 13:3, I Timothy 4:14, II Timothy 1:6). Also, this act and the accompanying prayer which invoked God's grace upon the ordained implied the ordained's authority to share the functions and responsibilities of those who laid hands upon the individual. This meaning has continued to be central to Ordination. Today the act of "laying on of hands" symbolizes in one person the ministry of many persons, who themselves represent the wider Church and Jesus Christ.

II. LOCAL AUTONOMY, AUTHORITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE

There are two historical Baptist principles which are applicable to Ordination. One principle is that ultimate earthly authority resides with the local congregation, since congregations are recognized as being autonomous. The companion principle is that local congregations are interdependent. Therefore, our churches cooperate with the larger American Baptist family in three traditional arenas: the local Association, the Region, and the national denomination. In matters of Ordination, although it is the local church which ordains, churches and ministers want Ordinations recognized by other American Baptist Churches across the country. To obtain this wider recognition of local church action, Associations, Regions, and the denomination have traditionally functioned as follows:

An Association, at the request of the local church, calls an examining council consisting of lay and pastoral representation from each of the churches belonging to the Association. It is recommended that an Association Credentials Committee meet with the Candidate before the Association Credentials Council does. The Association Credentials Council decides whether or not to recommend to the local church that it proceed with plans for ordaining the Candidate, and forwards its action to the Region Commission on Ministerial Leadership.*

A Region, through its Commission on Ministerial Leadership, decides whether or not to grant recognition, making its decision in part on the basis of the Association's recommendation and in part on the basis of objective standards it has adopted.

The Denomination sets standards for national recognition of local church Ordinations. Because the Region meets the national standards, meeting the Regional standards for full professional Ordination qualifies a minister for national recognition.

The benefits from the recognition of Ordinations are primarily the encouragement it gives both ministers and churches to be at their best for our Lord. Secondly, recognition of Ordinations provides ministers a high degree of acceptance:

(1) among other churches, (2) among other ministers, (3) among other denominations, and (4) among other professions.

The terms "college", "seminary", or "higher education" are used throughout this document to mean post-high school study in regionally or nationally accredited institutions of higher education. Such studies will have been completed for credits while enrolled in a degree program.

** In the Absence of a functioning Association, The Area Commission Team is authorized to form an adequate credentialing process. (This will be true throughout the document)*

III. RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION --- THROUGH A STANDARD PROCESS

Recognized Professional Ordination is carried out by a local church upon recommendation from an Association examining council of a Candidate. The educational standard* is an earned Master of Divinity degree (its equivalent or higher) from a theological seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The following areas of study are required:

- American Baptist History and Polity
 - Introduction to Old Testament
 - Introduction to New Testament
 - Preaching
 - Systematic Theology
 - Church History
 - Education Ministries
 - Church Administration
 - Pastoral Care
 - Clergy Ethics
 - At least one year of Field Education and/or internship, and/or satisfactory equivalent.
- It is recommended that the Candidate take a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education and one course in Biblical languages.

The individual's periodic involvement in professional continuing education experiences is encouraged and expected. The recommended guideline is a minimum of two Continuing Education (CEU) Units per year.

* Candidates in special circumstances who do not meet the educational requirements may petition the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership for advice and counsel.

Step 1 – Consultation

In order to be adequately prepared for a meeting with local church and/or Association committees regarding Ordination, a potential Candidate shall arrange for a meeting with an advisor affirmed by the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership, and assigned by the Association, who can explain and guide him/her through these steps. The "Application for Recognition of Ordination" (Form: COM-A2) should be prepared prior to that meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for the advisor to discuss the Candidate's credentials and progress towards the goal of Ordination. The following five points would be discussed with the Candidate to assure full understanding on his/her part of the expectations and process. Step 2 would be discussed for clarification.

To become an Ordained Minister recognized by the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware and listed in its Directory, a Candidate must:

- 1.a. **Church Membership** -- be a member in good standing of an ABCOPAD American Baptist church or fellowship group related to the American Baptist Churches, USA;
- 1.b. **Education** -- be a graduate of a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, and have earned a Master of Divinity Degree or its equivalent (another educational sequence; e.g. Doctor of Philosophy in Religion). The candidate must complete courses on Baptist History and Polity, and Clergy Ethics, which are currently approved by the ABCOPAD Commission on the Ministerial Leadership;
- 1.c **Field Education** – Participate in at least 1 year of supervised Field Education

1.d. **Licensing** -- be licensed by the church in which membership is held, in cooperation with the respective Association and ABCOPAD at least six months prior to Ordination; this provides an opportunity for the local church and the wider Baptist family to be involved in preparations for the Ordination as well as be a part of the Ordination Council (see item VI "Steps Toward a Pre-Ordination License" and Form COM-A1).

1.e. **Call** -- have a specific call; (i.e. a ministry as defined under Types of Service has offered a position to the Candidate, or the Candidate is already serving that position.)

[TYPES OF SERVICE]

1.e.1 Local church ministry, including all staff who exercise ministerial functions: preaching, teaching, administering the ordinances, pastoral care, and counseling.

1.e.2 Mission service on the national or international field in which ministerial functions (as described in 1.e.1) will be exercised.

1.e.3 Chaplaincies -- institutional, military or academic -- where ministerial functions (as described in 1.e.1) will be exercised.

1.e.4 Experimental ministries, including staff membership in a church related institution where preaching, teaching, and ministerial work is required.

1.e.5 Staff service, involving ministerial functions (as described in 1.e.1), of an American Baptist agency or institution, a council of churches, or some other ecumenical ministry appropriately recognized by the American Baptist Churches. Any Candidate whose proposed type of service does not fall into one of the above categories may consult with the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership.

1.f. **Candidacy Assessment** -- Ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and consistent Christian character. Therefore, Candidates for Ordination will complete a comprehensive career and candidacy assessment program sponsored by or in consultation with the Midwest Ministry Development Center in Columbus, Ohio within five years prior to examination.

1.g. **Ordination Paper** -- Give SATISFACTORY written testimony, using the following outline for an Ordination Paper to be presented to the Association Credentials Committee:

INTRODUCTION

Faith Journey

Call to the Ministry

Your Gifts for Ministry

Academic and Field Preparation

Reasons for Seeking Ordination Within ABCUSA

GENERAL COMPREHENSION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

The Person of God

The Person of Jesus Christ

The Person of the Holy Spirit

Humanity and Sin

Salvation -- The Nature of the Gospel

View of Scripture

The Christian Hope -- The Meaning of Death and Eternal Life

Christian Eschatology

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The Theology of Mission

Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Ecumenical Aspects of the Church

Place of the Church in History

Purpose and Place of the Church in Today's World

The Role of the Minister and the Church as Agents of Racial Reconciliation and Social Justice.*

The Role of the Ordained Minister

The Ministry of the Laity

** This change has been approved by COML on 7-27-20 subject to review by the ABCOPAD Regional Board.*

RELATIONSHIPS

Ecumenical Witness to Community and World

American Baptist Churches, USA; ABCOPAD; Association

NOTE: For recognition this paper must be filed with the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership before recognition is granted.

Step 2 -- Examination, Affirmation, Ordination

The Candidate shall follow through with the next three items.

2.a. **Examination** -- The Candidate shall ask his/her local church to request the Association of American Baptist Churches to which it belongs to examine the Candidate and forward its recommendation in writing to the local church and to the ABCOPAD Commission on the Ministerial Leadership. (Forms: COM-S1, COM-CL5)

2.b. **Affirmation** -- The Candidate shall affirm and sign the current edition of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the American Baptist Churches" and such signed document shall be retained in the personnel file of ABCOPAD. All persons seeking Ordination will have completed a course in Clergy ethics offered either by a seminary or a Region. This course will consider areas such as professional boundary issues, relationships, confidentiality, ethics in financial matters, and other related issues which can dramatically affect the relationship between pastor and people.

2.c. **Ordination** -- Ask the local church, on recommendation of the Association, to schedule an Ordination service, and afterward notify the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware Commission on Ministerial Leadership in writing by completing the "Ordaining Church Report" that the Candidate has been ordained. (Forms: COM-R2, COM-R3, COMS-3, COM-S4)

IF THE ABOVE CONDITIONS ARE MET, ABCOPAD RECOGNIZES, UPON THE VOTE OF A LOCAL CHURCH (OR AN AMERICAN BAPTIST AGENCY) THAT THE ONE ORDAINED HAS FOLLOWED THE ORDINATION PROCESS IN A SATISFACTORY MANNER, AND HAS FULFILLED ABCOPAD'S ORDINATION STANDARDS.

Step 3 -- Recognition

When it is satisfied that the above steps have been fulfilled, the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware Commission on Ministerial Leadership will instruct the ABCOPAD office to list the Candidate as an Ordained Minister in the next issue of the Directory. A minister in good standing, upon moving to another Region, may be given a letter verifying status.

IV. RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION ---THROUGH A NON-STANDARD PROCESS

A person not meeting the requirements of Ordination by the Standard Process may be considered for Ordination through a Non-standard Process.

Candidates must contact the Regional Office prior to submitting a request for recognition of an Ordination through a Non-standard Process to the Association Credentials Committee. A Regional Pastor shall provide the Candidate with the packet of reference forms and an outline of the process. This process will include, but is not limited to, the completion and submission of a theological paper, completion of the Clergy Ethics course, and a candidacy assessment program approved by the Commission on Ministerial Leadership. The Candidate shall affirm and sign the current edition of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the American Baptist Churches". The Regional Pastor will pass the completed forms along to the Area Commission Team for review and consideration. Once the Area Commission Team determines that the references are satisfactory, it will inform the Regional Office.

Each Candidate will work with a Mentor assigned by the Area Commission Team for a period of not less than 6 months prior to consideration for Ordination.

For those coming from the CLM track, Permanent Certification is a prerequisite before consideration in the Non-Standard ordination process.

V. RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION OTHER THAN AMERICAN BAPTIST

A non-American Baptist ordained individual may initiate the process of having his/her Ordination recognized by communicating with Regional Office if the person is currently engaged in conversation with the ABCOPAD Regional Executive Pastor or other Regional Pastoral Staff regarding possible placement. The person should communicate his/her intention to the Regional Office by addressing correspondence to the Regional Executive Pastor, expressing the desire to have his/her previous Ordination recognized by ABCOPAD and ABC/USA. The "Application For Recognition of Ordination" (Form: COM-A2) should be submitted with the letter. Note: The full American Baptist Churches educational standards apply.

The individual is invited to appear before the ABCOPAD Commission on the Ministerial Leadership or its Area Commission Team. The Commission takes the following steps at this meeting:

1. A review is made of the letter of ministerial standing which the individual has secured from his/her present denomination.
2. Using this outline as a guide, conversation is undertaken to become better acquainted regarding the individual's (1) personal background, faith, baptism, and ministerial experience; (2) educational background (including transcripts or other forms of certification of graduation); (3) character recommendations from five references (Form: COM-PR); and (4) written request for the recognition of his/her prior Ordination.
3. The Regional Pastoral Staff should next determine the adequacy of the person's understanding of American Baptist history and polity; if no polity and history course has been completed, the Regional Pastoral Staff should explain the different options through which this standard may be satisfied, and appoint a mentor if needed.
4. The Candidate shall provide in writing his/her reasons for entering the ministry of the American Baptist

Churches, USA, and an explicit statement regarding his/her intention to participate in the affairs of the American Baptist Churches, USA, and its agencies, including membership in an American Baptist church. The Candidate shall affirm and sign the current edition of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the American Baptist Churches". The Regional Pastoral Staff will discuss these statements with the Candidate.

5. The Candidate shall agree to be assigned and to relate to an ABC advisor who shall be available as a resource person for at least his/her first year of ministry in ABC (Forms: COM-M1, COM-M2).

The Commission through its Area Commission Team will vote on the request to recognize the person's previous Ordination. If recognition is not granted, the Commission should state clearly why it was not granted and, if possible, what needs to be done to receive recognition.

If recognition is granted, the person should complete negotiations with either the local church body or employing organization regarding his/her position within its professional ministry and notify the ABCOPAD Regional Executive Pastor in writing of the understanding or agreement.

The Regional Executive Pastor should communicate its recommendation to the church where the Candidate is or intends to become a member that, after the Candidate has been received into the congregation's membership, an appropriate service of installation or recognition be held.

The ABCOPAD Regional Executive Pastor will forward certified copies of its action to:

1. the ABCOPAD office for its listing in the Directory;
2. the American Baptist Churches Registry of Professional Leaders of the American Baptist Churches, USA.

Finally, the Region Office shall provide for the individual a letter, signed by the ABCOPAD Regional Executive Pastor, which specifies that his/her previous Ordination was recognized giving the date of the action.

VI. STEPS TOWARD A PRE-ORDINATION LICENSE

A student preparing for the ministry may be licensed and recognized as a Pre-Ordination Candidate by the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware. To become licensed as a Pre-Ordination Candidate in ABCOPAD and to be listed in its Directory, a Candidate shall follow these guidelines:

1. **Church Membership** – Be a member in good standing in a fully cooperative ABCOPAD American Baptist church or fellowship group related to the American Baptist Churches, USA.
 2. **Education** – Be accepted by or be attending an accredited college (with intent to proceed to seminary) or an accredited seminary (accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or by a regional college accrediting association) in preparation for ministry. (Licensing is recommended early in one's seminary experience.)
 3. **Mentor** – Agree to a mentor relationship for the purpose of professional guidance with a fully ordained American Baptist pastor affirmed by the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership (Forms: COM-M1, COM-M2).
 4. **Paper** – For recognition, this paper must be filed with the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership before recognition is granted. A person seeking a pre-Ordination license shall give satisfactory testimony in writing concerning the Candidate's personal faith, call from God, and understanding of the following areas of concern:
 - Faith Journey
 - Call to the Ministry
 - Your Gifts for Ministry
 - Academic and Field Preparation
 - Reasons for Seeking Ordination within ABCUSA
- Associations may request further elucidation on topics related to Christian Doctrine and Practice, Doctrine of the Church, and Relationships as listed for the Ordination Paper on pages 5 and 6.
5. **Affirmation** – The Candidate shall affirm and sign the current edition of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the American Baptist Churches"
 6. **Examination** – Ask the church in which the Candidate's membership is held to request the appropriate committee of the American Baptist Churches Association to which it belongs to examine the Candidate and forward its recommendation in writing to the local church and to the Region Office.
 7. **Licensing** – Ask the local church, on recommendation of the Association, to issue a pre-Ordination license available through the Regional Executive Pastor.
 8. **Recognition** – When the ABCOPAD Regional Executive Pastor is satisfied that the above steps have been fulfilled; he/she will notify the Regional office to list the Candidate as having a pre-Ordination license in the next issue of the Directory. Upon moving to another Region, a student in good standing may be given a letter by the Region Executive Pastor verifying status.
 9. **Review** – The pre-Ordination license will be recognized for a period of three years. For a renewal of

recognition, the Candidate must do two things: a) petition his/her home congregation for a three-year (less, if known how long is needed) extension of the license; b) notify the ABCOPAD Region Office that the studies being pursued are still in process or have been completed, and the Candidate is continuing with preparation for ministry.

VII. CHANGE OF STATUS

The local churches to which ministers belong who are on inactive status, special service, or who have retired within ABCOPAD, are responsible to report annually to the ABCOPAD office the fact of those ministers' membership and status.

Any ordained minister may request that recognition of his/her Ordination be withdrawn by writing to the ABCOPAD Region Executive Pastor.

VIII. WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION

The American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware's recognition of any Ordination or license can be revoked and the minister's name removed from the Directory upon the recommendation of ABCOPAD's Commission on Ministerial Leadership in consultation with the Regional Executive Pastor; such recommendation shall be made only upon due cause (due cause shall be the unrepentant violation of the standards outlined in "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches" [10/2004].) In discussions of conduct "An Ecclesiastical Process for Review of Ministerial Standing" shall be implemented.

Recognition of the Ordained Minister shall automatically terminate when the minister ceases to be a member of a church or fellowship group related to the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware and the American Baptist Churches, USA, with the exception of retirement or disability. The minister's name shall also then be removed from the American Baptist Personnel Service system. If the minister ceases to be a member of a local American Baptist Church within ABCOPAD, the recognition may be withdrawn without notice. Recognition shall automatically be withdrawn after five (5) years of inactivity in recognized American Baptist professional ministries.

In extreme and unusual situations, withdrawal of recognition may be made by the Region Executive Pastor of ABCOPAD. This action is to be taken only after written notification to the individual and personal consultation, if possible, and after consultation with the Executive Committee of the ABCOPAD Ministers Council. The decision to withdraw recognition may be appealed to the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership.

Restoration can be accomplished after a period of time, if there is desire on the part of the individual to be reinstated. The ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership will meet with the individual to review the original action, subsequent history, and present qualifications for ministry.

American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware

RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATION

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Baptists have historically believed in the priesthood of all believers, which emphasizes the right of each Christian to approach God directly on his or her own behalf or on behalf of others. Today, the other side of that coin is emphasized by the concept of the ministry of the laity. Each member of the Body of Christ is seen to have the responsibility to minister to others on behalf of God. The ministry is performed both in the church and in the world.

Baptists have also followed the practice of setting apart certain individuals for special roles as leaders of the local church. Some of His followers are called to minister in a special way. Responsibilities which require training and devotion of time and talent beyond the ordinary are delegated to them. The traditional path toward professional service in the ministry continues to be Ordination following graduation from an approved seminary.

American Baptists have also recognized the need to establish a process for training and certifying laity for a similar type of service. This certification process allows a person to choose a program of study and preparation, which is less intense than the traditional one. At the completion of the certification process, such persons are prepared for service in local churches within the Region of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

There are two historical Baptist principles, which are applicable to recognition of the certification. One principle is that the congregation is autonomous. The companion principle is that all local congregations are interdependent. (For further information, see paragraph II of the Guidelines.) While certification is primarily an act of the local church, it is also an act made in conjunction with the counsel and recognition of Association churches. It signifies that the person so certified is set apart as one worthy to minister in churches in our Region.

Adopted 11/6/96

Revised April 2009

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STEPS TOWARD BECOMING A CERTIFIED LAY MINISTER

Recognizing the call of God and the need for qualified lay persons to lead in local churches and other ministries, the category of Certified Lay Minister has been established. Subject to the approval of the local church and the laws of the State, the Certified Lay Minister is available to pastor a church, serve on pastoral staff, do supply preaching, and generally perform duties similar to those of an ordained minister.

It is understood that the status of the Certified Lay Minister is usually an end in itself. (the Academy of Christian Training and Service) (ACTS) training in and of itself is not normally a path to Ordination; ACTS is not sufficient academic preparation for Ordination.) To become a Certified Lay Minister in American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware (ABCOPAD) and be listed in its directory, a lay person shall follow this set of guidelines.

1. **Church Membership** – Be a member in good standing in a fully cooperative ABCOPAD American Baptist church or fellowship group related to the American Baptist Churches, USA.
2. **Education** – Have completed an intensive program of study approved by the Academy of Christian Training and Service of ABCOPAD, including courses in the following subjects:

Baptist History and Christian Education	Polity Biblical Interpretation
New Testament	Missions and Evangelism
Pastoral Care	Old Testament
Preaching	Pastoral Leadership
Clergy Ethics	Theology

The Candidate shall also demonstrate a commitment to continuing theological education by accepting the obligation to complete a yearly average of at least two continuing education units (CEU's) over a three-year period. It is advised that the Certified Lay Minister take advantage of the continuing education opportunities offered by American Baptists.

3. **Mentor** – Have participated in a mentor relationship over a period of at least two years for the purpose of professional guidance with a fully ordained American Baptist minister affirmed by the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership (Forms: COM-M1, COM-M2).
4. **Affirmation** – The Candidate shall affirm and sign the current edition of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the American Baptist Churches"
5. **Paper** – A person seeking certification shall give satisfactory testimony in a Certification Paper in writing concerning the Candidate's personal faith, call from God, and understanding of the following areas of concern:

INTRODUCTION

- Faith Journey
- Call to the Ministry
- Your Gifts for Ministry
- Academic and Field Preparation

Reasons for Seeking Ordination Within ABCUSA

GENERAL COMPREHENSION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

The Person of God
The Person of Jesus Christ
The Person of the Holy Spirit
Humanity and Sin
Salvation -- The Nature of the Gospel
View of Scripture
The Christian Hope -- The Meaning of Death and Eternal Life
Christian Eschatology

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The Theology of Mission
Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper
Ecumenical Aspects of the Church
Place of the Church in History
Purpose and Place of the Church in Today's World
The Role of the Ordained Minister
The Ministry of the Laity

RELATIONSHIPS

Ecumenical Witness to Community and World
American Baptist Churches, USA; ABCOPAD; Association

6. Examination and Documentation –

- a. Ask the church in which the Candidate's membership is held to request the Association Credentials Committee of the American Baptist Churches Association to which it belongs to examine the Candidate and his/her testimonial paper.
- b. The committee will forward its recommendation in writing to the local church. (Forms: COM-S2, COMS3).
- c. The local church shall subsequently call for the Association Credentials Council to examine the Candidate and vote to grant his/her status.
- d. The Committee will send a copy of its recommendation, his/her testimonial paper and a signed copy of the current edition of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches" to the ABCOPAD office. These documents shall be retained in the personnel file of ABCOPAD.
- e. Develop a plan for ministry with your Association Credentialing Committee

7. Provisional Certification – Ask the local church, upon recommendation of the Association, to request a certificate for Provisional Lay Minister Certification from the Regional Executive Pastor and to notify the ABCOPAD office in writing that Provisional Certification has been granted and a certification service held (Forms: COM-R4, COM-S4, and COM-S5).

8. Recognition – When it is satisfied that the above steps have been fulfilled, the ABCOPAD Commission on Ministerial Leadership will instruct the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware to list the Candidate as a recognized Certified Lay Minister in the directory. A Certified Lay Minister in good standing, upon moving to another Region, may be given a letter verifying his/her status. There are two levels of recognition for Certified Lay Ministers:

- a. Provisional

b. Permanent

9. Permanent Certification – Provisional Lay Minister Certification will be recognized for a period up to three years. Permanent certification will require:

- a. Within six months of your intention to seek Permanent Lay Minister Certification, work with your Regional Office to schedule and complete the Candidacy Assessment program at the Midwest Ministry Development Center in Columbus, Ohio.
- b. When Provisional Certification is granted, complete 6 units of Continuing Education within 3 years. The required Clergy Ethics Course will not be counted toward Continuing Education Units. After 18 months from the date of Provisional Certification, and if the CEU requirement has been completed, the Certified Lay Minister may then apply for permanent certification status. In order to obtain permanent certification, the Certified Lay Minister must join with his/her home congregation in requesting the Credentials Committee of the American Baptist Association to which the congregation belongs to examine the certificate holder to determine whether the continuing education requirement has been met and they have had satisfactory performance in ministry. If the Association Credentials Committee finds that everything is in order, it will ask the congregation to grant permanent certification, to request a certificate for Provisional Lay Minister Certification from the Regional Executive Pastor and to notify the ABCOPAD office in writing that Permanent Certification has been granted.