CLEVELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Recommended Ordination Council Procedures

Proposed two-hour council agenda | Total: 120 minutes

PURPOSE: To provide a structured, respectful opportunity to examine the candidate's theological understanding, call to ministry, pastoral judgment, Baptist identity, and readiness for ordained ministry.

Agenda item	Time	Description
1. Opening and Introductions	10 minutes	Welcome and opening prayer (4 mins) Council introductions (2 mins) Candidate introduction (2 mins) Review of procedures and expectations (2 mins)
2. Candidate's Overview of Ordination Paper	20 minutes	Candidate summarizes the four sections of the written paper without reading the paper in full. Council members should review the paper in advance.
3. Council Questions: Ordination Paper	30 minutes	Questions arising from the paper, including requests for clarification and exploration of theological positions, call, and Baptist principles.
4. Council Questions: Ministry and Application	25 minutes	Practical, ethical, and scenario-based questions addressing pastoral judgment, leadership, accountability, and ministry challenges.
5. Private Council Deliberation and Decision	20 minutes	Candidate is excused. Council members discuss readiness and reach a decision or recommendation in accordance with adopted CBA procedures.
6. Communication of Council Decision	5 minutes	Candidate returns. Designated representative communicates the council's outcome and any recommendations or requirements.
7. Next Steps	5 minutes	Explain applicable documentation, follow-up, and the next stage of the CBA ordination process.
8. Closing Prayer	5 minutes	Conclude the council meeting with prayer.

Candidate Overview: Required Paper Topics

I. **Part I – Personal:** *Christian Experience; Call to Ministry/Vocation; Academic and Field Preparation.*

II. **Part II – Major Theological Concepts:** *Nature of God; Nature of Humanity; Soteriology; Christology; Holy Spirit; The Trinity; Eschatology; The Scriptures; The Church.*

III. **Part III – Concepts of Ministry:** *The Call to Ministry; The Role of the Clergy; The Laity; Ordination.*

IV. **Part IV – American Baptist Polity and Practice:** *Baptist Distinctives; Understanding of the Ordinances as Practiced by Baptists; Choice of American Baptist Churches as the Context for Ministry and My Commitment to The Covenant and Code of Ethics of ABC-USA; Relationship of the Local Church and Pastor to the Denomination; Relationship of the Local Church and Pastor to the Ecumenical Church.*

PROCEDURAL NOTE: The Chair or designated moderator should manage participation and time. The council's decision-making authority, voting procedures, and required follow-up must conform to the CBA's adopted ordination policies.

CLEVELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Guidelines for Ordination Council Members

Questioning, discernment, and candidate engagement

The Ordination Council engages candidates in thoughtful theological and ministerial dialogue, assesses readiness for ordained ministry, and offers discernment, affirmation, and constructive guidance.

Council Questioning Expectations

1. **Prepare in advance.** Read the candidate's paper before the council and develop questions informed by its content.
2. **Ask open-ended questions.** Invite thoughtful responses rather than solely testing memorization or requiring predetermined answers.
3. **Connect questions to the paper.** Seek clarification, deeper theological reflection, and connections between convictions and ministry.
4. **Explore practical application.** Ask how biblical and theological commitments inform leadership, congregational life, ethics, and pastoral care.
5. **Respect response time.** Avoid lengthy preambles, multiple unrelated questions, and repeated questions.
6. **Engage constructively.** Challenge candidates respectfully, without adversarial or dismissive questioning.
7. **Honor Baptist principles.** Consider CBA and ABCUSA expectations while recognizing appropriate theological diversity within Baptist life.
8. **Use follow-up questions.** Allow candidates to clarify, expand, or reconsider their initial answers.
9. **Maintain confidentiality.** Protect sensitive information and keep private council deliberations confidential.
10. **Support equitable participation.** Allow the chair or moderator to coordinate questions and ensure that council members have appropriate opportunities to participate.

Example Questions by Ordination Paper Section

Part I. Personal Experience, Calling, and Preparation

- How has your understanding of your call to ministry developed or changed over time?
- What experiences have most significantly shaped your understanding of pastoral leadership?
- Where do you recognize the greatest need for continued growth and preparation?

Part II. Major Theological Concepts

- How does your understanding of the nature and character of God shape how you lead and care for people?
- How do you understand the relationship between salvation, grace, faith, and Christian discipleship?
- How do you approach biblical passages that are difficult, controversial, or interpreted differently within the church?
- How does your understanding of the Holy Spirit inform your ministry?

Part III. Concepts of Ministry

- What distinguishes ordained ministry from the calling and responsibilities of all believers?
- How do you understand the relationship between pastoral authority and congregational accountability?
- How would you respond when your pastoral convictions conflict with congregational leaders' expectations?
- What does healthy collaboration between clergy and laity look like in practice?

Part IV. American Baptist Polity and Practice

- Which Baptist distinctives are most important to your understanding of ministry, and why?

- How do you understand baptism and the Lord's Supper within the Baptist tradition?
- How do local church autonomy and denominational covenant relationships work together?
- What responsibilities does a pastor accept through commitment to the ABC-USA Covenant and Code of Ethics?
- How would you maintain your Baptist identity while participating in ecumenical ministry?

Additional Scenario-Based Questions

- **Pastoral ethics:** A church member shares sensitive information raising concerns about safety or possible abuse. How would you respond while honoring confidentiality and applicable reporting responsibilities?
- **Congregational conflict:** Two influential church leaders disagree over an important decision, and their conflict begins dividing the church. How would you approach it?
- **Baptist polity:** A congregation asks you to make a significant ministry decision without consulting appropriate leadership or following established governance procedures. How would you respond?
- **Pastoral care:** A grieving family asks you a theological question for which you do not have a clear answer. How would you provide care?
- **Prophetic ministry:** Your reading of Scripture leads you to address an injustice that some congregational members would rather avoid. How would you discern when and how to address it?

Moderation and Deliberation Reminders

- The chair or designated moderator should coordinate the questioning, monitor time, and prevent any one member from dominating.
- Council members should not expect the candidate to repeat the full paper; the council should probe understanding, discernment, humility, and readiness for ministry.
- The candidate should be excused before private deliberation. Record and communicate decisions and any requirements according to authorized CBA procedures.
- Select relevant questions rather than attempting to ask every sample question in this guide.