

CABF Credentials Committee Annual Report
September, 2022

The introduction to the policy that guides the work of the CABF Credentials Committee states the following:

The Committee shall be the first official contact for a candidate requesting accreditation, as association licence, or seeking ordination. The Committee shall be a nurturing one, assisting the candidate to meet the standards desired within the CABF... It shall advise the CABF of any application for ordination and the need for an Ordination Examining Council.

Over the last year, these words have continued to guide the work of the Committee.

The Committee shall be the first official contact for a candidate requesting accreditation

In many ways, the Credentials Committee is a primary entryway into the life of CABF. We are finding that discussions with potential member churches often begin when the clergy serving those congregations reach out to CABF for information about credentialing. Notable this year is that the entryway has expanded westward as clergy from Alberta and British Columbia have engaged in conversation, in addition to clergy in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

In January, we credentialed our first clergy person in Alberta, Rev. Amanda Strike, a member of First Baptist Church Edmonton who serves as a Chaplain in a women's correctional facility. Conversations with clergy serving other congregations are ongoing, many of whom are seeking with their churches an association of refuge as the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada have adopted an identity statement that seeks to control who a church can accept into membership—specifically excluding members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Through the Credentials Committee, the CABF is currently seeking recognition as a religious body in Alberta and Ontario so that the clergy we credential can officiate marriages in those provinces. It is anticipated that within the next year, recognition will also be sought in British Columbia. Along with supporting clergy in those provinces, this expansion also facilitates CABF clergy who are called upon to officiate weddings in other provinces as temporarily recognized clergy.

The Committee shall be a nurturing one

The Credentials Committee also recognizes our role in supporting and nurturing clergy. To that end, our Chair, Rev. Dr. Rusty Edwards, has initiated an across Canada clergy group that has brought together clergy actively serving Baptist congregations in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. He also travelled to Edmonton, Alberta, to spend several days with the community of First Baptist Church Edmonton and to preach on a Sunday morning. An important part of his trip was extending the welcome of the CABF.

Similarly, the Committee has supported the work of Rev. Hugh Kirkegaard in developing an online gathering for chaplains serving in various settings across Canada. Our Chair, as well as President Rev. Dr. Marlene Knowles, have brought the greetings of CABF to this group and extended invitations to be in contact with the Credentials Committee.

The Credentials Committee has also had conversations with students and other clergy exploring licensing and ordination, often beginning with questions about CABF identity and our understanding of Baptist principles. The members of the Committee take serious our role in supporting and nurturing these students and ministers on their journeys of service within the Christian Church.

It shall advise the CABF of any application for ordination and the need for an Ordination Examining Council.

The Credentials Committee maintains the standards for ordination and actively partners with local Baptist churches in the task of examining and ordaining clergy. This year, candidate for ordination, Lic. Arla Johnson, completed the steps necessary to call an Ordination Examining Council. First Baptist Church Halifax, Arla's home church and the church where she serves as Minister of Inclusive Community, requested that the CABF call an ordination examining council for Arla. That Examining Council will meet on Tuesday evening, November 15, 2022. Arla's ordination is potentially historic, as we believe she will be the first openly gay, married Baptist clergy person ordained in Canada.

In addition to this work, the Credentials Committee completed a years-long revision of the CABF Credentialing Policy. Notable in this update is a new category of accreditation titled Accredited Lay Minister. This track in our credentialing process was developed in recognition that increasingly, churches will be served by multi-vocational ministers, many of them coming to service within the church late into adulthood. It was important that we develop a way to recognize,

affirm, and accredit these ministers who serve faithfully among us. The Committee is grateful for the assistance of the Constitution Committee and Council in supporting the update to our policy documents and their work to revise CABF By-laws in support of clergy and congregations seeking partnership with CABF from across Canada.

Respectfully Submitted
Rev. Dr. Rusty Edwards
Chair, Credentials Committee