

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS

Credentials Committee

Adopted Text
28 September 2013

The Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms shall establish an on-going Credentials Committee consisting of three members for a three-year term, one position to be elected each year. The Committee shall be the first official contact for a candidate requesting accreditation or seeking ordination.

This committee shall be a nurturing one, assisting the candidate to meet the standards desired within the CABF as stated below. It shall advise the CABF of any application for ordination and the need for an Ordination Council.

The Chair (or, if necessary, a designate) of the Credentials Committee shall sit on any such Ordination Council, shall introduce the candidate, and assist the proceedings.

1.1 General Principles

- A. The criteria for Recognized Clergy of the CABF are based on the following general principles:
1. Educational credentials are not granted by the CABF but may be recognized by the CABF. Educational and professional preparation and degrees for an ordained ministry are provided by seminaries and colleges accredited by the Association of Theological Schools of North America or equivalent bodies.
 2. Local Baptist churches are the only ecclesial bodies that can authorize and perform ordinations. The CABF is willing to advise congregations on the suitability of a candidate for ordination, but the decision belongs to the congregation. The CABF will recognize the ordination of those whom they recommend to local churches for ordination based on this criterion.
 3. Authorization to perform ministry or to carry out particular ministerial acts and services (e.g. preaching, counselling, pastoral care, weddings, etc.) is the responsibility of the

congregation or agency in whose name the ministry occurs. Clergy are also responsible for ensuring that such authorization exists.

1.2 Criteria of Recognized (Credentialed) Clergy

- A. To be a recognized credentialed minister of the CABF, the clergy must fulfill the following core standards through written papers, interviews and individual evaluation.
1. Ordination by a body acceptable to the CABF.
 2. Ministerial and theological integrity combined with a continuing exploration and discernment as one proceeds with ministry.
 3. Good standing and accountability within the CABF.
 4. Ability to work in ways that promote equity, collegiality and diversity.
 5. Willingness to adhere to the CABF Covenant and Clergy Covenant.
 6. Commitment to participation in the CABF.
 7. Continuing spiritual formation and growth.
 8. Academic education, self-reflection training and ministerial experience.
 9. Meeting the academic/professional standards normally expected of ordained clergy.
 10. Completion of one year's probation in ministry, with the mentorship of a CABF ministerial colleague appointed by the Credentials Committee.

1.3 Educational/Professional Standards for Recognition

- A. A candidate seeking Recognition is expected to complete:
1. an undergraduate degree from an accredited university
 2. a subsequent degree in theological and ministerial studies.
 3. appropriate studies in Clinical Pastoral Education or its equivalent.

- B. Note: When special circumstances prevail, such as age or experience, and these educational standards are not possible or feasible for a candidate, the completion of an appropriate programme of study specified by the Credentials Committee, shall be deemed as sufficient for this section.
- C. A candidate is expected to maintain:
1. ministerial and theological integrity;
 2. good standing and accountability within the CABF;
 3. ability to promote equity, collegiality and diversity;
 4. willingness to adhere to the CABF Covenant;
 5. willingness to support the activity of the CABF;
 6. continuing spiritual formation and growth;
 7. continuing academic training, self-reflection and professional experience;
 8. acceptance of the principles of the CABF Covenant and generally accepted Baptist Principles. These latter principles are well expressed in *A Capsule of Information about the Baptists* (c. 1969) and/or *Basic Baptist Beliefs* by Gordon C. Warren. Both are posted on the CABF website.
 9. the clergy *Standards of Practice* and the *Ethical Standards* outlined below.

1.4 Standards of Practice

- A. **Worship:** Clergy must lead their congregations in worship through preaching and liturgical forms suitable to the people that they may approach the presence of God to offer their lives in Christ's Name.
- B. **Faith Formation and Education** to teach, model and educate their congregations, to act as teachers, advisors and spiritual resource persons. Clergy need to know the context of their local ministry so they may relate to the experience of their people.
- C. **Denominational Responsibilities:** Clergy have to know the central Baptist Principles, participate in church councils including those of the CABF, and help their congregations to relate to denominations other than their own.
- D. **Pastoral Care:** Clergy are expected to care for the people under their ministry, give a supporting proactive presence to those in difficulties, and develop a systematic and regular care for all within their ministry including visiting homes, hospitals, and nursing homes.

- E. **Self-Care:** Clergy should implement a system for their own health care, mentally, physically and spiritually.
- F. **Community Outreach and Social Justice:** Clergy are expected to engage people with the Gospel, support the mission programmes of their denomination and initiate educational programmes about the Gospel, its mission, and social responsibilities.
- G. **Leadership:** Clergy are expected to be leaders in their congregation, and as opportunity permits, in their community. They also should encourage and mentor those who are willing to be lay leaders, work energetically with the congregational boards and committees, and be able to identify and address conflicts in appropriate ways.
- H. **Administration:** Clergy are expected to ensure timely completion of tasks to which they are responsible, and delegate when that is needed or appropriate. Accurate records of both the congregation and the clergy's personal duties must be kept. They are expected to know the legal responsibilities of their positions and know the polity of their denomination and congregation.
- I. **Professional Development:** Clergy are expected to continue to participate in life-long learning appropriate to ministry, improving their knowledge and skills, continuing their education, being aware of current issues in theology, practice and world events.

1.5 Ethical Standards

These standards are applicable to the Clergy's daily practice.

- A. **Self-Awareness:** Clergy are called to conduct themselves for the greater good of others, and are accountable both personally and professionally to God, themselves, the congregation and to the ministry they serve.
- B. Clergy are called to demonstrate truthfulness, dependability, compassion, patience, diplomacy and integrity.
- C. Clergy are called to know their own limitations, open to guidance, challenge and analysis of their ministry.

- D. Clergy also need to know the visibility of their position within the wider community, and consider how their conduct may be experienced and perceived by others.
- E. Clergy are called to competence in their work and relationships, making referrals to other professionals when obviously required.
- F. Clergy are obviously required to abide by Law as established by legal authority and encourage others to do the same, notwithstanding issues and actions involving justice.
- G. Clergy are required to perform their duties faithfully and use sound financial practices and good management skills. They are to protect the integrity of church and personal funds. They must abide by the guidelines of the congregation and use discretion and good judgement when accepting favours, honoraria, gifts and other forms of remuneration.
- H. Clergy must avoid, and the appearance of, conflict of interest in any situation.
- I. Clergy must respect professional relationships and exercise discretion in all matters. Active retired clergy are called to respect the call of placement of other ministry personnel, respect the expertise of members of other professions with whom they work and relate.
- J. Clergy must respect the rules or regulations established by an employer for ethical conduct.
- K. Clergy must never engage in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct of any nature.

[Reference: Canadian Association of Spiritual Care document (formerly CAPE).

[Resource for the above is adapted from *Standards of Practice and Ethical Standards for Ministry Personnel*. [Draft], Task Group of the Exercise of Discipline of Ministry Personnel, Jan. 2005: UCC]

1.6 Discipline

A. When a written complaint is received with respect to any person credentialed by the CABF who does not comply with the standards set in this document that person shall be examined by the Credentials Committee in order to investigate the matter. This committee may invoke disciplinary action up to and including revoking of the respondent's credentials. The process is set out immediately below.

B. Process

1. Clergy credentialed by the CABF are required to know and understand the expected standards, values and ethical behaviour of this privilege. Accredited clergy shall be required to agree with a document agreeing with the standards established by the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms.
2. If a written complaint against a member of the CABF clergy is received from an individual or congregation, the Credentials Committee shall determine if the complaint is within its mandate and, if so, it will be dismissed or accepted for action.
3. If a complaint is accepted for action, the clergy involved and the complainant shall be informed within two weeks. When a hearing is deemed necessary, the Credentials Committee shall hold such a hearing within 45 calendar days.
4. The Committee may investigate such written complaints; perform such other duties as assigned by the CABF; appoint a person to conduct an investigation; attempt to resolve a complaint informally; refer a matter for mediation; counsel or caution a Minister; reprimand a Minister; suspend or dismiss a Minister from the CABF.
5. The decision of the Credentials Committee and the general development of the Committee's action shall be reported to an appropriate senior officer of the respondent's congregation.
6. If a complaint is accepted for investigation, the clergy involved, the complainant, and the senior officer of the church shall be kept apprised of the decisions of the Credentials Committee and subsequent developments.

C. Appeal

1. If a respondent contests the decision of the hearing, an appeal may be made to the President of the CABF within 45 calendar days of the original decision of the hearing. The President of CABF will appoint an Appeals Committee of not less than three members, none of whom who have been involved with the initial process.

D. Publication

1. When a decision is made final and accreditation is withdrawn as a result, it will be communicated to the respondent's congregation, the complainant, and the respondent, and posted on the CABF web site.

E. End of Process

1. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be considered final.

F. Note to Procedure

1. What any such process requires is a clear sense of fairness and 'natural justice.' An orderly manner of action would include the following:
 - i. the individual should be advised of the nature of the allegations as soon as possible.
 - ii. the individual should be given notice of the hearing with ample time to prepare and attend.
 - iii. the individual should be allowed to hear the evidence presented at the hearing.
 - iv. the individual should be afforded an opportunity to speak on his or her own behalf at the hearing.
 - v. and the individual should be advised of the decision arising from such a hearing in a timely manner.

Above paragraph adapted from Terrance S. Carter, *A Legal Analysis of Church Discipline in Canada* (1995), p. 92

1.7 Grandfather Clause

- A. Clergy who are recognized or accredited by a Convention or Union of the Canadian Baptist Ministries or by the Alliance of Baptists may be added to the list of Recognized Clergy of the CABF following their application and their acceptance of the principles of the CABF, and the CABF Clergy Covenant.

- B.** Applicants from other Baptist conventions and unions should be considered on an individual basis by the Credentials Committee.

CLERGY COVENANT

By the grace of God,
we, united in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ,
promise to uphold our calling to the Order of Ministry,
the priesthood of all believers,
and to respect diversity of opinions in both faith and practice.

We pledge
to maintain the highest ethical standard expected of clergy
and not to abuse any privileges offered to us.

We will maintain
confidentiality as much as the Law allows.

We are determined
to promote ecumenical relationship within the Church of Christ
and to explore clearer understandings
with those of other or no faith.

We promise
to support our ordained fellowship
in times of joy or trial,
success or failure,
and to promote the unity of the ministry
in any way open to us.

It is our prayer
that our behaviour and stewardship
will never betray
the calling or expectations of Jesus Christ,
or of each other.

We commit ourselves
to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments
entrusted to us by God in Jesus Christ,
to be faithful in prayer, study and proclamation,
and to build up the Church of Christ in faith and practice,
so help us God.

Amen.