

BNN RESTORATION PROJECT

Recommended Ordination Policy for Churches

Pastoral ministry is a high and serious calling, which should only be entered into by gifted and qualified men whom God has called into ministry (Eph. 4:11-13). When men who have not been called, gifted, or qualified are allowed to serve as pastors, the results will be void of God's power and blessing, at best—or most often, negative and painful. In light of the significant importance of the pastoral office, the following policy for authorizing pastors is recommended to our churches:

1. Stage 1 – Licensure

Licensure differs from ordination in two significant ways. First, licensure is temporary, whereas ordination is permanent. Many denominations license for one year at a time, which may be renewed by the church for those men who continue making progress toward ordination. Should the church determine that the licentiate does not possess the gifting or qualifications for the office, or if the licentiate discovers that the Lord has not called him into the ministry, the church can simply choose not to renew the license. Homer Kent Sr. writes this helpful description of the practice of licensing men to the ministry:

The term “licensure” comes from the Latin verb *licere*, meaning “to be permitted.” Therefore, one who holds a license is permitted to something which otherwise he cannot do. Ministerial licensure is a provision whereby men who are not yet properly prepared or qualified for ordination may receive official authorization by the church to act as pastors. Licensure is an intermediate provision for men who have not yet attained to the full status of eldership in the church—for men who have not fully arrived either as to preparation or experience. By this provision a man is given opportunity to prove himself (2 Tim 4:5) as to ability and character... Through this means the church is able to comply in a very practical way with the New Testament admonition to “lay hands hastily on no man” 1 Tim 5:22 (ASV). – *The Pastor and His Work*, p. 187

Men licensed to the ministry enjoy all the privileges of the pastoral office, including performing weddings, funerals, and preaching and teaching the Word of God. They are also eligible for tax deductions afforded ministers on their ministerial earnings.

Procedure

A man who senses God's call on his life for the ministry should approach the pastor or leadership of his church and express his interest in pursuing the ministry. The leadership of his church should evaluate his calling, gifting, and qualifications for the office of elder as stated in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3. If they find agreement with his sense of qualification and calling, they should recommend him to the membership of the church for congregational approval to be licensed as a minister. The church will then watch his life and pray for him as he works to experience growth in his fittedness for pastoral

ministry. He should report to the church annually his progress and goals for ministry development, until such a time as he is ready to proceed to the permanent authorization for ministry, ordination.

Stage #2 – Ordination

Normally, after several years of growth and development in pastoral skills, a licentiate will ask to begin the process of ordination. The pastor or leadership of his church will intensify his preparation for ordination by working with him to assess and hone in writing his understanding of the practice of ministry, his personal qualifications and gifting, and his doctrinal understanding of the Word of God. Once the church leadership is convinced he is ready, a church can call for an Ordination Examination Council comprised of other ordained men from churches throughout the region. It is best to devote a full day to this examination, and to give the Council the freedom to recommend further preparation deemed necessary for the candidate. Once the candidate has met the recommendations of the Council, the church votes to ordain the man and schedules his ordination service.

Dr. Larry Overstreet, former professor at Northwest Baptist Seminary writes: “Instead of scheduling the ordination council only a day or two before the ordination service, schedule it a month in advance. That relieves the inherent pressure of having to approve a candidate who may not be prepared for ordination, simply because the service is already set and everyone invited has already arrived. It also impresses upon the candidate the seriousness of his commitment to the ordination procedure and his responsibility to show himself worthy.”

Recommended Resources:

Overstreet, R.Larry. *Rethinking Ordination*. The Baptist Bulletin, June 1998.

Hegg, David W. *Appointed to Preach: Assessing a Call to Ministry*. Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999.

SAMPLE CHURCH BYLAWS
Bethany Baptist Church
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ARTICLE I
LICENSING AND ORDINATION

Section 1.1 Licensing

When a man in this membership is called to the Christian ministry and desires to be licensed, he shall make his desire known to the Shepherds Council. The shepherds will interview and examine the man concerning his desires for ministry, his qualifications for ministry, his understanding of the Word of God, and his training and experience in ministry. If satisfied, the shepherds may recommend the candidate to the church for licensure, and upon a three-fourths majority vote, a certificate of license shall be granted. The duration of the license shall be for one year, and becomes invalid once the licensee removes his membership from the church. A license may be renewed at the annual business meeting of the church, at which time the licensee must submit a written report which shall include: (1) a statement as to the exercise of his ministry; (2) a statement as to progress made spiritually, academically, and practically in experience; (3) plans for the coming year; and (4) a request for continued licensure. The shepherds will recommend renewal or non-renewal of each license, with a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting required for continued approval.

Section 1.2 Ordination

A licensee desiring ordination shall make his desire known to the Shepherds Council, who, with the approval of the church, will call for an ordination council. An examination council of invited messengers from churches of like faith and practice shall thoroughly examine the candidate for ordination as to his call to ministry, education, Christian experience, reputation, character, doctrine, and demonstrated ability in ministry. The council shall make a recommendation concerning the candidate to the church, and upon a three-fourths majority vote, the church shall proceed with ordination at a future date as agreed upon by both the church and the candidate.

Section 1.3 Guidelines

No one may be licensed or ordained by this church to the gospel ministry unless they have demonstrated their ability in ministry to the satisfaction of the shepherds, and meet the qualifications of an elder set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The church shall have the right to revoke the license or ordination credentials granted by this church, or of any member of this church, should the church, in its judgment, have sufficient reason for such action. A recommendation to revoke a license or ordination shall be presented to the church in a business meeting called for such a purpose, and, upon majority vote of the members present and voting, shall immediately take effect.