

General Guidelines for Ordination and License for Ministry

Every Southern Baptist church is autonomous and establishes its own policies. However, there are some traditional practices which seem to be followed by most of our churches. Each local church determines who they will ordain. Associations, state conventions, or the Southern Baptist Convention do not ordain.

License

The licensing is the church's tentative approval for a man to serve until he has proved himself qualified for ordination. In regard to the practice of granting a license for a minister the following steps are usually taken:

1. The person to be licensed makes a public decision in the church and expresses his feeling that God is specifically calling him to ministry.
2. He requests the church to grant him a license.
3. The church votes on the request to grant the license.
4. A "Certificate of License" (which can be purchased at a Christian book store) is filled out and presented to the minister.

Ordination

Ordination usually takes place when a minister begins serving in a church. In regard to ordination the following are the traditional steps:

1. A church calls a minister as pastor or to a position in some field of ministry (such as education, music, youth, etc.).
2. The church who calls the person may perform the ordination, or request the minister's home church to perform the ordination.
3. The pastor, a minister, or the chairman of deacons of the ordaining church presents the request to the church and asks for permission to convene an Examining Council or an Ordination Council. The church should not be hasty in ordaining an individual. It should be certain he has the scriptural qualifications to serve as a minister. The candidate should prove himself before he is considered for ordination.
4. If the request is approved, a time and place is established for the Ordination Council and ordained persons (deacons and ministers) are invited. These may be persons who are members of that particular church as well as ordained persons from other churches. Either a formal invitation or a letter of invitation should be sent to the neighboring Baptist Churches inviting all ordained persons to participate in the ordination council. If the questioning of the candidate and the ordination service is to be conducted on the same day the invitation can include inviting all interested persons to the ordination service.
5. The pastor, a minister, the director of missions, or the chairman of deacons presides

over the Ordination Council until a chairman is elected. The chairman leads in the questioning of the person to be ordained. Usually the person being ordained is seated so that he is facing those who are asking questions. Any person who is present may ask questions. Usually the person being ordained is asked to briefly tell of his conversion experience and also his call to the Gospel Ministry. Other questions may be centered around Biblical theology, ethics, morals, personal beliefs, etc.

6. The Ordination Council votes on whether to recommend that the church proceed with the ordination of the candidate. The council may choose to delay the ordination or even reject the candidate. That is why it may be best to hold the council one week prior to the ordination service.

7. If the Council votes to recommend ordination, the pastor or chairman of the Ordination Council presents the recommendation to the church, either at a regular business meeting or a called business meeting, for church approval.

8.* If the church approves, a date for an Ordination service is set. The service follows the order of a regular worship service with modifications. Someone (or two people) may give a "charge to the candidate" and a "charge to the church" Appropriate music is selected. Someone may preach an ordination sermon. Someone will pray an ordination prayer and ordained persons will "lay on hands." The person being ordained may be presented a Bible and along with his wife and family receive the congratulations of the people after the benediction. The service should be not more than one hour in length.

9. A Certificate of Ordination is presented (may be purchased at a Christian book store or printed on a good computer).

* Most churches in the area combine the ordination council and the ordination service into one. The disadvantage of this method is that there could be great embarrassment for the candidate and to the church if the ordination council voted not to recommend ordination.