

WINEBRENNER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A NEED FOR STANDARDS TO BRING UNIFORMITY AND INTEGRITY
TO THE ORDINATION PROCESS OF THE
LIMA BAPTIST MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

A PROJECT REPORT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
BY
BRIAN LAMONT MONFORD, SR.

JULY 2006

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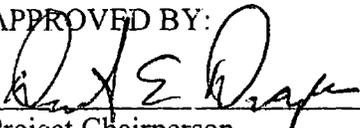
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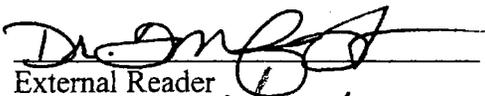
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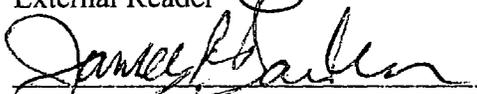
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ABSTRACT

Because of the nature of autonomy inherent within the Baptist tradition the national, state, and district conventions and associations are reluctant to produce suggested documents and guidelines for the ordination of Baptist ministers. In part, this has made it difficult to establish uniformity in many of the practices of the denomination. By allowing the local pastor to exercise a great deal of discretion in the practice of ordination, the guarantee of a standard definition of competency is lost. The purpose of this study was to highlight the need to establish standards that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process within the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA).

To address the problem identified by this research project, a phenomenological method of research was selected. As the focus of this study would be on the experience of ordination among the pastors associated with the LBMA, it is felt that the phenomenological research method, which emphasizes the essence or structure of an experience, would be the most effective. Through this research study, several of the LBMA pastors' ordination experiences, including those of ordaining others prematurely, served as a foundation for making the case for uniformed standards.

The researcher used a focus group comprised of ten pastors affiliated with the LBMA. This methodology was chosen to provide the participants with a familiar and comfortable environment in which to share their experiences of being pastors and their views regarding the ordination process and practices within the LBMA.

It was found that the members of the LBMA believed that uniformed standards for ordination would serve to prepare candidates for ministry. In this consensus, it was

argued that the LBMA would be at the forefront of the establishment of such ordination standards. The members concluded that, unlike licensing which is conducted solely at the discretion of the candidate's church, ordination involves the pastors of sister churches; therefore, it was found that ordination standards could not developed by one church alone.

Themes that arose from the focus group discussions are: 1) Consensus for Uniformity; 2) Criteria for Ordination; 3) Defining Good Moral Character; 4) Role of Formal Education; 5) Assessing Commitment to Baptist Doctrine; 6) and Sanction for Ministerial Misconduct. Implementations of these themes were used in making recommendations for ordination standards for the LBMA.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

It is a Sunday evening in August. The XYZ Missionary Baptist Church in Lima is filled to capacity. Congregants have gathered to witness the crowning moment of an aspiring minister. The ordination candidate is about to stand before the Ordaining Council of local pastors, during which time he will be publicly examined to determine his worthiness for ordination. Although nervous, the candidate himself has been looking forward to this moment since receiving his license into the preaching ministry.

Despite his nervousness, he is excited because he knows that, at the end of this evening's ceremony, he will receive his ordination certificate that will certify his qualification as an ordained minister into the Gospel ministry. During the period of licensure, which varies in its length from church to church, he is limited in his leadership role and can only perform tasks that are sanctioned by his pastor. However, as an ordained minister he can now seek a leading role in a church where he will have the responsibility of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). He can perform the tasks of pastoring, preaching, administering baptism and the Lord's Supper, teaching, and carrying out many other duties.

Although this is supposed to be a night of joy and celebration, I could not help but have a feeling of anxiousness. As one of the members of the Ordaining Council, my anxiety stems from concern regarding the candidate's qualifications. At various times through a pastor's life, he is asked to give his approval of a candidate's petition for ordination. Yet, due to a lack of uniformity in various churches' requirements for

ordination, “worthiness” can be defined differently. Therefore, on that night as in many others, I stood to ordain a minister of the Gospel, my heart filled with trepidation.

Context of the Problem

In 1993 several Baptist pastors joined together to found the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA). The LBMA consists of the Baptist pastors in the city who formed a fellowship wherein they could address the spiritual, theological, and social needs of the Lima Community. The churches that comprise the LBMA consider themselves to be “sister churches.” Many of them are affiliated with the same national, state, and district Baptist Associations. As a member pastor of the LBMA, one finds himself receiving many requests from sister churches to join them in many different programs, celebrations, and ceremonies that are taking place within their congregations. These events vary from anniversaries of auxiliaries, choir concerts, Vacation Bible Schools, and many others, all of which provide opportunities for celebration and fellowship.

However, there is a particular invitation that may bring with it both joy and apprehension. It is the request to be a member of an Ordination Council that is assembled for the purpose of examining an individual for ordination into the Gospel Ministry. This is one invitation that causes one to have mixed emotions. On the one hand, such a request brings excitement because the pastor is afforded the opportunity to ratify the call that God has placed on the candidate’s life. The pastor, along with at least six other pastors from the LBMA, will carry out the ritual of “laying on hands” upon the individual that serves as public recognition that this person has appropriate qualities of mind and spirit, has shown dedication to Christ and the church, and has undergone the

necessary preparation for ministry. The candidate is, therefore, set apart for ordained ministry. On the other hand, one may have a sense of concern about the invitation because the reviewer knows that what is supposed to be an opportunity for examination of the candidate is really nothing more than a council that has been brought together for the purpose of rubber stamping the desire of the candidate's pastor. It is a foregone conclusion that this person will be ordained even before ever being examined by the committee. In most cases the only opportunity the invited pastors will have to speak with the candidate is for the hour preceding the presentation to the congregation. Even then, the visiting pastors are often only asking questions of the candidate that were hand-selected by his pastor.

These questions are sorted out in the pastor's study and evenly distributed to the members of the Ordaining Council. They will also be used during the public questioning period of the ceremony. It is not uncommon for the questions to be those that the candidate's pastor believes can easily be answered. Such a practice is done in the place of those of interest to the visiting pastors to alleviate the possibility of a candidate's public embarrassment while standing before the congregation of onlookers.

In an effort to honor and respect the desires of the host pastor and his congregation, the Ordaining Council is prepared to go along with his wishes to see to it that the candidate receives his public approval for ordination. In my opinion, this kind of mindset can and has caused far reaching problems within the Baptist church. Unfortunately, the fact that each church is autonomous within the Baptist tradition, the current practice of "appropriate ordination procedure" is often different and sometimes contradictory among congregations. However, since the ordination process requires the

participation of pastors from other congregations, steps should be taken to establish a protocol that allows the Ordaining Council to honor the request of the host pastor and yet maintain the integrity of the ordination process. Steps must be taken in order for one to affix honestly his signature to the Certificate of Ordination that states:

We, the undersigned, that upon the recommendation and request of the XYZ Missionary Baptist at 1234 Holy Street in Lima which had full and sufficient opportunity for judging his gifts, and after satisfactory examination by us in regard to his Christian experience, call to the ministry, and views of Bible doctrine, John Doe was solemnly and publicly set apart and ordained to the work of the Gospel Ministry by authority and order of the XYZ Missionary Baptist Church on the 28th day of August, 1988.

It is very difficult to place one's signature on the above document especially when there has not been the opportunity to "fully and sufficiently" examine the candidate. This is a dilemma a pastor on the Ordaining Council finds himself in almost every time he sits on this council.

Statement of the Problem

Because of the nature of autonomy inherent within the Baptist tradition the national, state, and district conventions and associations are reluctant to produce suggested documents and guidelines for the ordination of Baptist ministers. In part, this has made it difficult to establish uniformity in many of the practices of the denomination. By allowing the local pastor to exercise a great deal of discretion in the practice of ordination, the guarantee of a standard definition of competency is lost.

In his book *The Mission, The Minister, The Ministry* Jim Holly appears to affirm the autonomy within the Baptist Church and the conflict it may cause if the National Baptist Convention were to set forth uniformed guidelines for ordination in the local church setting. He states:

Concerning the ordination of a minister, it is only fair to say that to conform to existing policies and practices which are peculiar to the immediate location, may offer definite advantages, inasmuch as procedures and customs vary according to standards, traditions, experiences, and with the general intellectual status of local communities (churches). Any attempt to set up a definite hard and fast program of procedure may lead to entanglement with local authorities (pastors) on the subject, or those who consider themselves such. However, in every situation, there are those whose experience, judgment, and sympathetic interest can always be relied upon to give safe and sane council to worthy candidates for ordination. (1990, 11, 12)

It is Holly's belief that the National Baptist Convention should rely on the wisdom and experiences of the local pastor to determine the worthiness of a candidate for ordination. He further argues that local pastors can "always be relied upon to give safe and sane council to worthy candidates" (1990, 12). The belief put forth by this study is that the local pastor certainly seeks to bring genuine integrity to the ordination process. However, there are times when he fails to do so. For example, when a pastor feels the pressure to increase the number of ordained ministers in his congregation, he may circumvent his normal ordination standards and quickly seek the ordination of those whom have not worked under his tutelage for an extended period of time. In reviewing ordination practices in the Northwestern District of Ohio's Baptist Association, periods of study for ordained ministers varies greatly. There is one example of a pastor who welcomed a minister into his church in June and requested a convening of the Ordaining Council in October of that same year.

Another issue that arises that can and has often decried the assertion made by Holly that the individual pastors can be relied upon to make wise decisions regarding the ordination process is that the "sympathetic" nature of some pastors has clouded their judgment as to the qualifications and worthiness of a candidate. An example of this is seen in the request of a local pastor to have a minister from another denomination

ordained. On closer study, it was discovered that the denomination of which he was a part had previously refused to ordain him. Because he had recently married one of the members of the pastor's church, the pastor felt that it would be a good thing to ordain the young man as a Baptist minister, thus helping to further his ministry.

Although autonomy is strictly adhered to within the National Baptist Convention, there are other Baptist conventions that have written policy statements on the protocol of ordination. These policies and guides provide greater opportunity for standardization and integrity in the ordination process. In fact, some of them rely on ordinations of individuals to take place at the district or state levels of their conventions.

Often the pastors who are a part of the Ordaining Council feel that the right and noble thing to do is to honor the host pastor's wishes. By doing this, the council becomes more concerned with pleasing the host pastor than adequately examining the candidate's qualifications. This mindset, although well intended, can and has caused pulpits within the denomination to be occupied by unqualified men who were sanctioned by pastors who compromised the integrity of the ordination process. The Reverend Dr. Donald J. Washington, former President of the Ohio Baptist General Convention stated that one of his greatest frustrations while in office was helping to revive churches that had been rendered spiritually dead by inept pastoral leadership (Washington 2004). He proceeded to state that "many of the ministers had been ordained with no real understanding of what Baptists believe." Simply stated, there is a real need for a protocol that brings uniformity and integrity to the ordination process.

There are several reasons why the ordination process within the LBMA is not consistent. (1) There is no policy set forth by the national, state, or district associations to

serve as a guideline for the procedure. Unlike other Baptist bodies, the National Baptist Convention has not adopted a policy statement on ordination. Although this document could not be mandated it would serve as a guideline for its member churches to follow.

(2) Some pastors only rely on traditional practices that have been passed on to them from their pastors or mentors. Thus, they revert to similar procedures used in their own ordinations. (3) In the cases where the request for ordination has come from the congregation, the pastor feels a sense of pressure to ordain a candidate without genuine examination. (4) There is also a belief by some, that since the call to ministry can only be issued by God, man has no right either to examine or confirm that call.

Due to individual sovereignty of churches in the Baptist tradition, it is understood that there will probably never be a protocol established to which others universally ascribe and is deemed mandatory. Yet, there is still a need for such a suggested document that brings consistency to the process. It is asserted that there must be a protocol established that will provide ministers with the option of ordination standards, which in turn will bring uniformity and integrity to the process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a protocol for ordination that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process in the LBMA. It will examine the ordination procedures within the individual churches of the LBMA. By examining these procedures, common areas of concentration, as well as discrepancies within the practices will be determined. Such information will then be used to aid in the development of standards for ordination that will bring consistency and integrity to the ordination process in the LBMA.

This study seeks to address the lack of standardized ordination procedures within the member churches of the LBMA. An examination of the historical view of ordination in the Baptist church will serve as the foundation for ascertaining the importance of the ordination practice. In addition, the personal experiences of the pastors who have participated in various ordination ceremonies, as well as the protocols endorsed by other Protestant denominations, will provide additional confirmation of the importance of standardized practices.

Research Methodology

This study sought to answer the question of how to develop standards that bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process within the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA) using the phenomenological approach to qualitative research as defined by Merriam (1998, 15). According to Merriam, in the conduct of a phenomenological study, the focus would be on the essence or structure of an experience (phenomenon) (1998, 15). The experience being looked at in this study was the way in which ordination takes place within the various churches affiliated with LBMA.

In the use of the phenomenological approach to research, this study followed Spiegelberg's phenomenological method of research as outlined by Merriam (1998, 16).

The steps suggested by Spiegelberg include the following:

1. Have an intuitive grasp of the phenomenon and investigate examples of the phenomenon.
2. Investigate several examples to discover the general essence of the experience.
3. Explore systematically relationships in the examples.
4. Bracket the beliefs of the phenomena.

5. Interpret the results of the phenomena.

In utilizing the steps suggested by Spiegelberg, this study investigated examples of the phenomenon of ordination in the Baptist denomination specifically the LBMA that serves as the problem statement in this study. Through an examination of biblical references to ordination, the historical basis of ordination in modern Christianity, and the role of ordination in the Baptist church, a historical perspective on the importance of the ordination phenomenon was established. As Spiegelberg's second step is the investigatory stage of phenomenological research, this study utilized several methods to gain an understanding of the ordination practice phenomenon. A selection of ten Baptist pastors, specifically those who comprise the LBMA, was chosen to complete surveys and demographic questionnaires. In addition to the surveys and questionnaires, there will be a focus group of these ten LBMA pastors to gain information regarding their interpretation, use, and practices in the ordination process. After the collection of data, steps three and four were completed through the analysis of the collected data. Finally, an interpretation of the information analyzed was completed and used to develop a standardized protocol for ordination that can be implemented by members of the LBMA as well as other member churches of the National Baptist Convention.

Research Questions

The primary question proposed is that inherent in the problem statement. How does the LBMA develop uniformity in the ordination process?

In order to narrow the scope of the research while still addressing pertinent areas, this research project answered the following questions.

1. What is the biblical view of ordination by Baptists, particularly in the LBMA?

2. What resources do other Baptist conventions and districts offer that will help the LBMA develop standards for ordination?
3. What role should the Ordaining Council of the LBMA have, if any, in preparing the candidate for ordination?
4. What minimum qualifications should a candidate possess before he is considered for ordination?

Question one recognized that the concept of ordination derives from historical and biblical points of view which must be examined in order to discover the principles of ordination. There can be no uniformity and integrity in the ordination process without looking at its point of origin.

Question two recognized that there are other Baptist conventions that ascribe to the autonomy of each church. However, they have managed to institute standards through which uniformity is established and integrity is maintained in the ordination process. It is believed that an examination of the practices of other Baptist conventions can provide valuable information in the LBMA establishment of ordination standards.

Question three recognized that each church within the LBMA has the authority and autonomy to recommend and ordain each individual as it wills. However, since the ordination of a candidate involves the participation of pastors from sister churches there have to be minimum qualifications established by the participating members of the council. Such an agreement with established standards would likely increase an Ordaining Council's confidence in the ordination process.

Finally, question four acknowledged that there must be minimal qualifications a candidate must possess. These qualifications must be identified, thereby providing a road map for preparing the candidate for ordination.

Significance of the Study

Ordination is a ratification of God's call on the life of an individual to ordained ministry. At that time a council of ordained pastors publicly examines and endorses an individual for ministry, therefore certifying the individual's qualifications or leadership in the church. Once ordained, it is believed that the individual is ready to serve and equip its members for the whole work of the ministry. He can now preach and teach the Word of God, admonish, exercise authority in the Lord, care for the church and exemplify a model life in Christ. Holly states the importance of this call to ministry, which further affirms the importance of the ordination process. He says,

The call to ministry is first a call preparatory to the work, a call to study the Master, His message and methods, a call to harmonize with His example; to become a builder for God, an Elder and a Father in his cause; to become an overseer in His vineyard, a pastor over His flock; a steward in His household; a watchman on His wall, that you may gather in, feed and guide as becomes workers and servants of God. With the call to become fishers, also comes the call for character development, tact, common sense, intelligence and grace. (1990, 11)

As stated previously, the work of the ordained minister is one of great responsibility. Therefore, the lack of uniformity and integrity in the ordination process within the LBMA must be addressed. This study will serve as a guide for the pastors of this organization to assist them in their efforts to bring consistency and integrity to the ordination process.

Results will not only impact the LBMA, but could serve as an example for the adoption of uniform standards throughout the National Baptist Convention and its

affiliate state conventions, associations, and churches. The results also can be used as a written guide for ordinations in local churches throughout the Baptist tradition.

In addition to the uniformity and integrity this study will bring to the ordination process for Ordination Councils within the LBMA, it will also prove to be beneficial to the candidate himself who will be better prepared to serve as a leader of a church. The preparation period for the candidate will be more defined and purposeful. It is also believed that this will be of significance to the congregations within the Baptist denomination in that the pastors who have undergone this process will have been thoroughly examined and thereby proven to be qualified for pastoral leadership.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Several assumptions are made. The primary assumption is that the pastors in the LBMA will welcome a protocol that could bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process. It is asserted that the LBMA pastors would view the ordination protocol developed from this study as an opportunity to equip candidates to be effective leaders within the Christian community.

The second major assumption of this study is that the pastors within the LBMA will have differences of opinions as to what qualifications a candidate must possess in order to be deemed worthy or prepared for ordination.

Assumption three asserts that the ordination procedures practiced by members within the LBMA are primarily based upon personal experiences of the pastors within the group, rather than some biblical precedent.

As in any study, this one has limitations. First, because the sample selected is that of the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association, which comprises a miniscule portion of

churches that make up the National Baptist Convention or the Baptist denomination as a whole, generalizability to that larger population is limited. Secondly, all of the Baptist pastors in the Lima community are not members of the LBMA. Therefore, their opinions and varying views will not be examined and thus their opinions or differing ordination practices will not be used to develop the ordination protocol that is designed to benefit them as well. As in most research, participation is voluntary. Although all the pastors in the LBMA will be contacted for this study, if full participation is not accomplished, those who do not choose to complete the survey will limit the validity of information and its overall application to the churches in the LBMA.

Definition of Terms

1. *Candidate* – A licensed minister who has been set apart for examination and consideration for ordination
2. *LBMA* – Lima Baptist Ministerial Association that is made up of pastors of the Baptist Churches in Lima, Ohio
3. *Licensed Minister* – An individual sanctioned by a local congregation to preach the Gospel
4. *Ordination* – A public ceremony ratifying the call of God on an individual's life
5. *Ordination Council* – A council of ordained Baptist pastors assembled together for the purpose of examining and judging an individual for ordination
6. *Pastor* – an ordained minister who serves as the overseer of a congregation

Organization of the Study

Chapter One: Introduction to the Project
Chapter Two: Biblical and Theological Foundations
Chapter Three: Literature and Other Resources
Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Procedures
Chapter Five: Analysis of Data

Chapter One provided a statement of the problem in its wider and narrower context and introduced the intended purpose of the study. In addition, the methodological approach and research questions were presented. An attempt was made to assess the significance of the study as well as to acknowledge the assumptions and limitations that I brought to the study and that should be explicitly stated. Terms that have been given a specific meaning in the course of this study and that must be understood in order to comprehend the material of this study were defined in this chapter.

Chapter Two served to establish the biblical and theological foundations that were used in addressing the problem statement.

Chapter Three reviewed and examined the literature of helping professions (education, psychology, and medicine) to see the standards set forth in order for an individual to obtain licensure in their respective fields. In addition, three religious organization's publications were reviewed to assess the standards utilized in the ordination process.

Chapter Four presented a detailed description of the research conducted in the study. The subjects addressed in this chapter included the selection of pastors affiliated with the LBMA. The research methods used included a demographic questionnaire and a focus group discussion.

Chapter Five gave an analysis of the data generated by the participants in the focus group discussion and the demographic questionnaire.

Chapter Six concluded with the summary and findings, along with a statement of conclusions and recommendations generated by the study.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Ordination Defined

As a result of a report done on ordination by a committee set up by the Southern Baptist Mission Council, a definition of ordination was given as follows: “An act of the church wherein the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, publicly recognizes and confirms that a Christian believer has been gifted, called, and set apart by God for the work of the ministry and in the name of Christ commissions him for the work” (Clark 1958, 202).

In this definition one understands that the call upon an individual’s life comes from God Himself. However, the church’s role, through much prayer and guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to examine and judge the fitness of those who would be ordained. Therefore, ordination is an act that the church must not and cannot take lightly. Ordination should never be done simply because it is sought, nor to please the candidate, his family, or his friends, nor because of one’s fear of repercussions from others. It is a serious matter and therefore must be approached with the greatest of care.

Ordination, in its popular sense, is that form of service by which men are admitted to the ranks of the Christian ministry, and to the exercise of its functions. So important a relationship does this service sustain to the character of the men who fill their pulpits and become instructors and guides of the churches, those ritualistic communions hold it as a sacrament (Hiscox 1985, 344).

In this statement by Hiscox, one should see that ordination is bigger than the individual who seeks it. The ramifications reach even beyond the pastor who would endorse the ordination of a person. It literally has to do with whose hands shall God's church be entrusted. These are the ones who will one day be the keepers of the gate; they are to be the watchers of men's souls. They are also the ones who must help guard and maintain the integrity of the doctrine and polity in the Baptist denomination. All too often, we are so concerned and attentive to the tree that we forget that there is a great big forest about which to be concerned.

While ordination is but one of the avenues by which worthy men can be admitted to and unworthy men excluded from such an important position and role as pastor, instructor, or Christian leader, yet, it is one, and should be vigorously guarded by watchful churches and conscientious councils so the ministry will be kept pure and true to its high calling. Although neither the church nor a council of pastors can keep an individual from preaching if he desires to do so, they can refuse to recognize him, and ought to do it, if they believe him unfit or unworthy.

Within the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA) there has never been any serious discussion as a group concerning the qualifications necessary for a candidate to be considered for ordination. There has not, at any time, been serious dialogue about tradition or even the scriptural precedence for examining such a person. Without such, there can be no uniformity and integrity brought to the ordination process within the LBMA.

In his book, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, William H. Willmon uses as a basis for understanding the ordination of bishops (pastors or elders)

that is found in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, from the church of early third-century Rome. He shares that Hippolytus gives our first full account of the ordination of a bishop, a presbyter (elder), and a deacon. According to Willmon, the ordination of a bishop in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus began with the opening statement:

Let the bishop be ordained being in all things without fault chosen by all the people. And when he has been proposed and found acceptable to all, the people shall assemble on the Lord's Day together with the presbytery and such bishops as may attend. With the agreement of all let the bishops lay hands on him... (2002, 31)

In this statement we see that prior to the ordination of the individual, careful examination of the candidate's moral character and qualifications were given by the presbytery and congregation. Such examination is important because "ordination sets apart those who are to serve as exemplars to the congregation to the congregation, being in all things without fault" (Willmon 2002, 45). This is not suggesting that exemplary moral character is not also for all who make up the congregation of Christ, but that it is incumbent upon the one who is set apart to be a role model for others to follow. He should be able to speak with the confidence of the Apostle Paul, "follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV).

Biblical Foundations for Qualification for Ordination

Ordination is the process of ministers of the gospel affirming the call, equipping, beliefs, and maturity of a man to become the pastor of a local church. In the Old Testament ordination was used to affirm an individual to serve God's purpose. Ordination validated God's will for a fully qualified person to serve Him and His people.

Moses ordained Aaron and his sons to the priesthood of Israel. Moses represented God's will for Aaron to serve as high priest by the laying on of hands, thus affirming or ordaining him for ministry (Exod. 29:9, 29, 35).

The laying on of hands (ordination ceremony) was a symbolic gesture of setting aside a person, animal, or objects for the service of God. When the head of the house brought an animal to the high priest for sacrifice he would lay his hand upon the animal signifying that the sins of his family were now placed or identified upon the animal. The animal was thus set apart to be a sacrifice for the family's sin.

Often in the New Testament the ordination (laying on of hands/setting apart/appointment) was used to appoint elders (pastors) and deacons in the New Testament churches. This is verified in the following scriptures:

Paul and Barnabas are ordained (set apart) prior to going on their missionary journey to set up new churches

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:3).

Timothy is reminded of his ordination when he was set apart to pastor the church at Ephesus.

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you (1 Tim. 4:14).

In 1Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11 the Apostle Paul explicitly mentions the qualifications necessary for the Christian leader:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not

given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. (1 Tim. 3:1-7; see also Titus 1:5-11)

From these two passages found in Timothy and Titus, ten qualifications the overseer must possess are identified. Such qualifications are considered absolute imperatives, not mere suggestions, which are noted in Paul's usage of the word "must." I believe that each of these qualifications address either the character or the competency of the candidate. In order to show this I will label each one to the category under which they fall.

1. *Character*-He must be above reproach (NLT), "a good man whose life cannot be spoken against" (Living Bible). By this, I am not suggesting that the candidate does not have a past wherein he has openly transgressed against the principles and practices of God's moral standard, because all like Paul have at one time headed the wrong direction on the Damascus road. However, like Paul, once God has turned us around and pointed us in the right direction we must not return to our old ways and nature. Instead, after entering the faith there can be no reproach worthy of public rebuke.
2. *Character*-He must be the husband of one wife. A true leader must support the family and the sacredness and permanence of his marriage vows.
3. *Character*-He must be temperate, self-controlled, and respectable. The RSV translates this as temperate, sensible, and dignified. This means that the leader must have a calm orderly demeanor and not be quarrelsome.

4. *Competency*-He must be given to hospitality. He must have a great care for serving others.
5. *Competence*-He must be able to teach. He must be able to communicate the Gospel in a way wherein others are edified and equipped with a foundation necessary to be and grow disciples.
6. *Character*-He must not be given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome. He must not be a drunkard nor should he be one who is of a violent nature. He meets evil with good.
7. *Character*-He is not a lover of money. The leader must never put his greed for money and materialistic goods above meeting the holistic needs of the people. All too often, preachers are led by the mighty dollar rather than the call of God.
8. *Character/Competency*-He must manage his own family well. If the leader cannot manage his own home, he cannot effectively manage the affairs in God's house.
9. *Character*-He must not be a recent convert. He must not be a novice, as other translations put it. Paul states that such a person can become "puffed up" with pride. In order for a person to handle such awesome responsibilities, he must possess a certain level of maturity. This can only come with time.
10. *Character*-He must also have a good reputation among outsiders. Last but not least, the would-be overseer or elder has another important must. He must carry himself in a manner that earns the respect of those outside of the church.

Often time it is the person who is not in Christ who detects the hypocrisy of a Christian leader.

There are other passages that speak to the minimum qualifications a candidate must possess before being considered for ordination. In Acts 6 the apostles were overwhelmed by the rapid growth of the church and problems that had arisen as a result of that growth. They chose deacons to assist them in serving the people in the lesser matters. The apostles understood that their greater responsibility was to give themselves “continually to prayer and the ministering of the word” (v. 2)

We also see in this same chapter other minimal qualifications needed for service. There were prerequisites that were needed for those who were to serve as deacons. They were to be individuals “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (v. 3). They must have a willingness to surrender to or be controlled by the Holy Spirit. And in verse five we see that they were to be “full of faith.” Someone may suggest that these verses are speaking of the qualifications of a deacon; therefore, they do not apply to the minister or preacher. However, in the Baptist tradition, the office of the preacher or elder is considered to be a higher calling than that of a deacon. This leads us to believe that at the very least the preacher must meet the same minimum qualities as a deacon. Therefore, we must believe that he has to be one who is full of faith and has surrendered to the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Character and competency, as we can see, are absolute necessities in which the candidate for ordination must possess prior to such consideration by the church or ordination council. In addition to these qualities, another area that is of the greatest importance is his ability to understand and articulate the “call” of God on his life. This

individual must realize that the call is to God for God's purpose plan. Throughout scripture persons have experienced such a call:

- *Abraham*. "The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you'" (Gen. 12:1, NIV).
- *Moses*. "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exod. 3:10, NIV).
- *Levi*. "As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him" (Matt. 9:9, NIV).
- *Peter and Andrew*. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" Mark 1:17, NIV).

In the call of each of these individuals, it was always God who initiated the call upon their lives. He is the one who gave them their assignment. They knew whose call it was and the assignment that He had given them. It is, therefore, the belief of the author that prior to the ordination of an individual they ought to at least have a clear understanding of their assignment for God.

In addition, the candidate must have a healthy understanding that the call to lead is a call to serve. We must "do the works of him who sent us" (John 9:4, NIV). Often, in the Baptist church, the preacher is led to believe that the call raises him to the level of being served; however, this mindset is in total contradiction of the example Jesus set for his disciples by washing their feet. After doing so he said to them:

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one

who sent him” (John 13:15, 16, NIV). This is another example of the necessity to examine the competency and character of the candidate for ordination.

As we see there is much in which the ordination candidate must possess before he is ready to embark upon such a sacred calling as that of overseeing God’s church. Paul understanding the gravity of this matter further instructed Timothy to not “lay hands on any man hastily” (1 Tim. 5:22, NIV). Looking back at the ordination by Hippolytus, it was only after careful examination and prayer did the bishops lay hands of affirmation upon a candidate. This was done “with the agreement of all.”

If there is going to be uniformity and integrity brought to the ordination process within the LBMA, its members must not allow the “sacred” belief in autonomy to get in the way of the greater good of the church as a whole. One must remember Jesus’ most earnest prayer and desire for his disciples (church) is that “all of them may be one” (John 17: 21, NIV).

Examples Demonstrating the Severity of the Problem

As stated in chapter one, the fellowship of the LBMA was formed by a group of Baptist pastors who wanted to strengthen their ability to address the spiritual, theological, and social needs of the Lima community. Consequently, as a member of this association, there are many times when he is called upon to assist another pastor or church in any area deemed necessary. Again, one such area wherein a request is often made for support and participation of association members is that of “ordination.” In most instances, when a supporting pastor agrees to assist in this ceremony he knows very little, if anything, about the candidate, leaving him to trust the judgment of the inviting pastor concerning the readiness and qualifications of the individual.

Although pastors within the LBMA could ordain an individual without the assistance of an ordaining council, it is common practice for a council of member pastors to be convened. Despite the autonomy of each church, tradition has established a practice of calling together pastors from sister churches to help carry out such an important work. In this chapter, the biblical and theological views of ordination within the LBMA will be examined, better equipping us to understand the traditional practices of ordination.

The usual procedure leading to ordination within the LBMA begins with licensing by the local church wherein the person holds membership. Supposedly, licensing is the process in which the pastor and congregation can monitor and validate the authenticity of a minister's call before the granting of ordination. It represents the first formal stage on the way to ordination and possibly full-time ministry.

It is believed that the purpose of the ministerial license is to provide a time of testing, trial, and development of the candidate as he seeks to serve in the ministry. It is supposed to be a time for specific supervised experience and training under the supervision of the candidate's pastor. Such a period should consist of extensive and intensive study of biblical and historical perspectives of the ministry as a whole as well as an exploration of the individual's personal motives and their general fitness for ministry.

Edward T. Hiscox states,

It is often the prevailing custom of our churches (Baptist) to grant a license to young men believing themselves, and believed by others, to have been called to preach the Gospel, but not yet prepared to enter upon the work of the ministry. This is simply an approval by the church of the course that the candidate is pursuing. It confers no rights and imparts no authority, but expresses that conviction that the bearer possesses gifts and capabilities which indicate a call to the ministry, and a promise of usefulness in it. (1985, 300)

Although the period of licensure is for the purpose of training, examination, and preparation for the candidate, often the lack of uniformity and standards from any organized body in which the LBMA is affiliated causes the period between licensure and ordination to be nothing more than a waste of time. Often, there is neither any training nor preparation for ordination and ministry. Some pastors within the LBMA are of the opinion that the period of licensure has become nothing more than a formality that must precede a guaranteed ordination, no matter the candidate's qualification. For some, the period of licensure is merely a stepping stone for ordination. This mindset can and has diluted the ordination process to nothing more than a ceremony.

Due to various pressures, pastors at times have chosen to utilize an accelerated path to ordination. By accelerated, this author is speaking of an expedited process that bypasses any period of real preparation and thus fails to examine the worthiness and qualifications of the candidate for ordination. In the author's opinion, it is a process whereby the student is granted a degree without ever having entered a classroom. Although he has the degree, he never received the education that should have preceded it.

Hiscox stated:

Let no young man deem the time wasted that confines him to a class room in mental training and the acquisition of knowledge preparatory to the great work. He *serves* his Master best who patiently and faithfully *prepares* best to serve Him. That foolish enthusiasm for the work which hurries one into the field only half fitted, When a better preparation was possible, will always after be deeply regretted. (1985, 300)

In order to demonstrate the severity of the problem noted by Hiscox, several examples of individuals who have gone through what this author views as an accelerated version of the preparation period preceding ordination will be given. These will clearly show what can happen when a new convert (novice) is ordained and given ministry

responsibilities for which he is not prepared. (The names have been changed to protect the identity of the persons involved.)

Example One: John was born and raised in a highly liturgical denomination. He attended a private school sponsored and supported by his church. However, when he turned twenty, he decided to leave that church and attended a Church of God in Christ (COGIC) congregation until he was approximately twenty-three. After leaving the COGIC church, John attended a non-denominational church for a few years. During his time at the non-denominational church, John felt a call to ministry. Although he shared his feelings with his pastor on several occasions, he was never allowed to pursue his call in that church. Frustrated, John left that church and went back to the COGIC congregation he had left. When he shared his call with the pastor there, he discovered that, even though the pastor was receptive, there was a strict process that he had to follow before being considered for licensing and ordination to ministry.

John was already aware of the requirements for ministry in the liturgical church wherein he grew up; therefore, he never gave it a second thought about returning there for ministry consideration. Finally, he decided to go to one of the local Baptist churches in the community. Upon his arrival, he immediately shared his desire for licensing and ordination for ministry with the pastor of that congregation. Within one year of his arrival, John was both licensed and ordained by that pastor. Six months after his ordination, he started a “nondenominational” church not far from the Baptist church. John vigorously pursued congregants to join his church from the Baptist church that ordained him. Within a few months, he had recruited a significant number of members from that congregation. In addition, he also started a local weekly radio broadcast wherein he

blasted other denominations, particularly Baptists. As we can see, there were many things lacking in John. He was not self controlled. His reputation took a downward spiral. Also, he exemplified a quarrelsome spirit, which brought great reproach upon him.

After John saw the rapid growth of his congregation, he soon isolated himself from any of the other pastors and congregations within the city. He began to project a spirit of superiority that made him unapproachable. He became “puffed up” with pride and carried himself more as a celebrity than a servant of God. The pastor who licensed and ordained him has since acknowledged that John never believed in Baptist doctrine and polity. He just came to the church because it was an easy road to ordained ministry.

Example Two: Kevin had been addicted to drugs for most of his adult life. As a result of his addiction, he was constantly in and out of drug rehabilitation facilities trying to overcome this vice that had gripped him for so long. At the age of thirty-five he accepted Christ and joined the local Baptist church near his home. Shortly after his conversion experience he felt a real sense of call to the preaching ministry. Three months later he was standing before the congregation in his church preaching his first sermon. Because of his eloquence of speech and the tremendous turn around that had taken place in his life, he was well received by the congregation and therefore received his license shortly thereafter.

Soon after his licensure, Kevin’s pastor received the call to another ministry out of town, thereby leaving the church in need of an interim pastor. Since Kevin was the only licensed minister in the congregation, Pastor Bob decided to ordain him before he left. Due to the need to accept his new position quickly, Pastor Bob decided not to call together an ordination council. Instead, he simply informed the congregation of his

intentions during a Sunday morning service and asked them to stay an extra few minutes after worship to observe the brief ceremony. Kevin was very apprehensive about this because he did not feel qualified for such a great undertaking. However, in the spirit of obedience, he submitted to the pastor's wishes. Pastor Bob informed Kevin that this was only a temporary appointment, and soon as the church found another pastor he would no longer have to serve in the position. But, for now, it was necessary for him to be ordained in order to carry out some of the responsibilities that he would be unable to otherwise such as communion, baptism, and officiating funerals. Not long after pastor Bob departed, Kevin began feeling the pressure of the position. He conducted his first of several funerals at this time. He had to teach Bible study every week and also prepare for sermons. Since he literally had no experience in the ministry tasks that went with the position, it was not long before the pressure began to take its toll on him. It overwhelmed him to the point that he did not even want to go to church any more. Not knowing what to do Kevin quit church and found himself back on the streets addicted to drugs. When asked about his situation he said, "I was pushed too fast and too soon."

In this example this writer has to agree with Kevin. He was pushed too soon. Because Pastor Bob was more concerned about his own future, he risked Kevin's spiritual health as well as that of the church he left. Kevin was a new convert who had not fully developed the fruit of self-control. The action by Bob did cause Kevin and the church to struggle for several years before getting back on track.

Example Three: Pastor Dan, the pastor of a growing congregation, was without any ordained ministers within his congregation. He found himself bombarded by the responsibilities that only an ordained minister could perform. He did all of the funerals,

weddings, baptisms, and responsibilities associated with the position. To alleviate some of his responsibilities, he decided to ordain two of his licensed ministers. Upon sharing with the congregation his intention and who the ministers would be, he received a call from the chairman of the deacon's ministry who complained because his son, also a licensed minister, was not one of the prospective candidates. The chairman felt that since his family had been a part of that church for many years his son should have been the first to be ordained among the licensed ministers in the pulpit. Pastor Dan explained to the deacon that his son needed more time for development and preparation before being considered for ordination. The deacon not only dismissed this explanation, he countered it with a threat that if his son was not ordained with the others there would be severe consequences for Pastor Dan as pastor of that church. The threat led Pastor Dan to ordain this young man even though he knew in his heart that he was not ready.

Example Four: Terrance was a very gifted young man who had been reared in church. He was an active member of the congregation, participating in Sunday school, youth activities, and even performing in many of the theatrical productions at the church. His mother was active in the church, serving as the assistant superintendent of the educational ministry. Although his father did not participate as much, he still encouraged Terrance's love of the church and its activities. Coming from a blended family in which his biological parents shared two other children and his father had older children from a previous relationship, Terrance often felt left out due to the wide age gap. When both of the older brothers became ordained ministers, with the younger of the two becoming pastor of the church Terrance attended, it would seem natural for Terrance's investment and activism in the church to continue.

After graduating from college and living in a different city, Terrance returned to his hometown, believing that God had a call on his life for ordained ministry. At the urging of his brother who pastored his home church, Terrance returned to the church of his youth and was licensed by his brother within one year. Although his brother asked him to come back home and licensed him, Terrance's feeling of resentment at what he viewed as being excluded from the bond that his half-siblings shared, convinced him that it was in his best interest to leave his home church, and the city in which he grew up. Without giving notice to his brother who pastored the church, Terrance relocated to another city and joined a new church. Within three months of his arrival that pastor ordained Terrance as a way to demonstrate one-upmanship to Terrance's brother who did not feel that Terrance had acquired the necessary knowledge or training to be ordained.

At first, Terrance was happy in the new church, viewing his ordination as a confirmation of his own brother having shown bias against him. After approximately one year of waiting patiently for spiritual guidance, Terrance realized that his new pastor would never sit him down and assist him in any way pertaining to his ministry development. On numerous occasions, Terrance attempted to set up appointments, but his pastor was either too busy or out town. Feeling inadequate, Terrance finally called his brother back home and shared his experiences. He expressed his desire to be closer with his older brothers, and more importantly a greater need to be helped in his development for ministry. Terrance also admitted that the pastor who ordained him never tried to be a conduit through whom he and his brothers could come together but added as much fuel to flame as he could. Sadly, in Terrance's case, the pastor who ordained him only did so out of selfish motives without any regard for Terrance's ministerial well being.

As seen in these examples, the failure of a suggested protocol based upon biblical and theological foundations in the ordination process within the LBMA and any of its affiliate Baptist organizations has caused, in part, there to be a lack of unity and integrity in this process. As one looks at each of these situations he or she will observe that the circumstances surrounding ordination and the practice thereof vary from one Baptist church to another. The rules and requirements that apply for ordination in one church differ from those in others, which is primarily due to the autonomy of each local congregation within the LBMA. It is for this reason that this project emphasizes the need for a “suggested” protocol that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process.

Baptist Biblical and Theological View of Autonomy

What does it mean to be an autonomous church? The word “autonomous” comes from two Greek words that mean “self” and “law.” By definition, autonomous means self-governing or self-directing. Thus, an autonomous church governs itself without any outside human direction or control. Because a church should always recognize the control and authority of Jesus as Lord, it is not absolutely autonomous. Autonomy means that each Baptist church, among other things, selects its pastoral leadership, determines its worship form, decides financial matters, and directs other church-related affairs without outside control or supervision. The practice of ordination is certainly no exception to this rule and belief.

Baptists believe that the Bible supports church autonomy. In New Testament times, each congregation of Christians was autonomous. Each was a separate entity under the lordship of Christ. They related to each other in fellowship, but no human individual

or group exercised authority over the congregations. The second and third chapters of the Revelation indicate that each of the seven churches in Asia Minor to which the Revelation was directed existed as a unique, separate entity and was under no authority except that of Jesus Christ. The risen and glorified Christ gave direction to the churches.

The churches in New Testament times selected from their own membership persons to care for the physical need of members (Acts 6:3-6), determined what persons would be commissioned for specific ministries (Acts 13:1-3), and disciplined their own members (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13). Each of these actions was taken under the lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit without any external direction or control. Spiritual leaders, such as the Apostle Paul, relied on persuasion and example rather than dictatorial demands when writing to the New Testament churches. Furthermore, Christians in New Testament times resisted the efforts of governmental and religious authorities to dictate religious belief and practice (Acts 4:18-20; 5:29). The early Christians insisted on autonomy from both secular and religious authorities.

Church autonomy rests on other biblically based convictions of Baptists. For example, the lordship of Christ, a belief precious to Baptists, relates to autonomy. Christ is Lord of each person and of each church. Jesus, not any individual or group, is to be in control. His lordship for a church is exercised through the members of the church, persons who have trusted and followed him as Lord (Eph. 4:1-16).

Born-again persons voluntarily gather in groups and form churches. The Bible indicates that only those who have been born again are to be members of churches (Acts 2:47). These persons have been saved only by faith in God's grace gift of salvation in Christ, and thus all are spiritually on the same plane (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9). As such,

no individual or group inside or outside of a church is to “lord it over” another individual or church (1 Pet. 5:3).

God has endowed each person with the freedom to know and to follow God’s will. Furthermore, each person who believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord becomes a believer priest (1 Pet. 2:9) with direct access to God. No intermediary, such as a human priest, is needed (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:21). Each believer priest has a responsibility to exercise this priesthood responsibly. Part of that responsibility is to relate to one another in a loving church fellowship and to participate in the governance of that church fellowship, seeking the Lord’s will through the study of the Scripture, prayer, and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Just as all the members of a congregation are to have an equal voice in their own church’s governance, so is each congregation spiritually equal to others. No church or organization of churches is superior to another church. None has authority over another church. In other words, each church is to be autonomous.

Congregational church governance and the autonomy of churches go hand in hand. One cannot exist without the other. If individuals or groups outside of the congregation exercise control over it, then there is no autonomy of the church, and there is no congregational governance.

In the Bill of Inalienable Rights, Art. 1 of the Union Baptist Association, October 8, 1840 it says, “Each Church is forever free and independent, of any and every ecclesiastical power formed by men on earth, each being the free household of Christ.” Simply put, the Baptist autonomy is here to stay for better or in some cases for worse. Therefore, if there is going to be a protocol to bring uniformity and integrity to the

ordination process, it will only occur through a spirit of cooperation among the pastors within the LBMA.

In an article by John Newport, a writer for the Baptist standard dealing with ordination and local church autonomy, he states, “that the local church’s autonomy becomes the issue in any practice which is handed down from one body to the other either through edict or tradition.” He further states, “autonomy claims the same right for the local Baptist church that the priesthood of the believer claims for the individual; that each body has the right to make determinations for itself based on what it perceives of divine leadership” (1987, 88).

Edward T. Hiscox states: “All ecclesiastical authority resides in the local, visible church according to the New Testament, therefore, the right to ordain belongs to the church alone, and the only sphere of council or Presbytery action is that of advice to, and cooperation with the church, being in no sense authoritative” (1985, 346).

According to this statement by Hiscox, the local church has complete authority in the matter of ordination; however, in practice few churches assume to act independently. In fact, as it relates to the ordination practices within the LBMA, in the past fifteen years there has been only one pastor and congregation that has ordained a minister without the participation of pastors from other LBMA congregations. The churches participating in this association overwhelmingly rely on assistance from pastors of sister churches in conducting ordination services.

The pastors and churches within the LBMA have displayed a willingness to unite whenever they deem it in the best interest of the Baptist community of faith. Therefore, it is my hope that this project will bring our organization to the realization that establishing

a clear biblical and theological foundation for ordination will help preserve the dignity and integrity in the LBMA by providing leaders who are qualified to serve.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE AND OTHER RESOURCES

Introduction

In a broader sense, ordination is a preparation for a lifetime in ministry. As the ordained minister is placed in a leadership position in the church, it is believed that he must possess certain qualifications to guide the church effectively in pursuit of its mission and goals, ensuring the stability and future direction of the church. Through the ordination process, an individual is recognized and accepted by the church as an individual appropriate for the preaching/pastoral ministry. But one must remember that ordination and therefore the pastoral ministry is bigger than the individual and can determine the future of the church in which he serves. It is paramount that the pastors within the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA) realize the importance of establishing uniform standards that will not only guide the preparation of prospective candidates but also serve to direct the periodic examination of his progress toward meeting the qualifications for ordination and protect the denomination from individuals who are ill-prepared and unqualified for such an important role. This literature review is an effort to highlight various denominations, secular corporations, and Christian leadership authors that address the necessity and effects of adequately trained individuals for the well-being of their respective organizations.

Once Ordained-Always Ordained

In the LBMA, one of the doctrinal statements that generates much debate is that of eternal security, which is the belief that once in Christ a person can never lose his or her salvation. There is usually no debate among pastors about this concept as it relates to ordination: once a candidate is ordained in the Baptist church, he remains ordained until death. H. Laurence McNeil expresses in his book, *Handbook for Ordination to the Baptist Ministry* that this belief, which is widely held by Baptists, necessitates careful examination of a person being considered for ordination. He states:

Candidates should be screened carefully before any attempt is made to secure the coveted honor of ordination by the church. Baptists may not all adhere to the idea that "once in Christ never out" but the organic structure of our denomination is such that once we ordain a man to ministry even if we conceive it to be the action of the church rather than of a council, he is a Baptist preacher until death, irrespective of his subsequent life. The ordination council is gone and may never be re-convened. The church does not un-frock an erring minister. Thus his credentials have life-time validity. It is important therefore to seek as much assurance as possible beforehand to see that a candidate is fit for the services he desires. (1933, 10)

Bob (not his real name) had been ordained as a Baptist minister for approximately five years. He was serving as an associate minister in the church he was attending. Unfortunately, because of poor money management, he found himself in overwhelming debt. After having exhausted his ability to receive loans from financial institutions, he resorted to borrowing money from elderly members of the congregation with failed promises that he would repay them, if he paid at all, in a reasonable amount of time. When his pastor was made aware of this, he met with Bob and told him that these practices must end immediately. Despite several conversations with his pastor, Bob continued borrowing not only from the elderly in the church but also anyone who would lend him money in their local community.

Bob's reputation in the community had become so soiled that it negatively impacted both him and the church where he served as an associate. The pastor felt that he had left him no choice but to remove him from participating in the pulpit ministry within the church. Other pastors within the LBMA agreed with the pastor's decision and also refused to recognize Bob as a minister in their churches. However, because he was already ordained, he began seeking a pastorate of his own in Baptist churches located in other cities that were not aware of his borrowing practices. Despite his frustration, there was nothing Bob's pastor could do to prevent him from using his ordination credentials to obtain a position elsewhere.

In examining Bob's story, one would think that this definitely has to be an isolated occurrence. However, there are numerous troubling stories like his with some being even worse. Although most stories do not have such blatant deceit and dishonesty, many do involve ineptness and incompetence. Unfortunately, such problems are not always the fault and failure of the candidate. Oftentimes, the negligence belongs to the church, pastor, and ministry association wherein the candidate is a member. The poor preparation provided by these entities produce unqualified individuals who are eventually entrusted with the sacred stewardship responsibility of overseeing God's church. Simply put, they will eventually become the leaders in the LBMA churches.

Assumed to Lead

Within the LBMA, there is an automatic assumption that each ordination candidate will one day be considered for pastoral leadership of a church. For the most part, licensed ministers within this organization overwhelmingly aspire for such an appointment shortly after preaching their first sermon. It is somewhat of a traditional

belief in the LBMA that once licensed a candidate immediately becomes a contender for the pastorate. With this aspiration, the minister, as well as the pastors and churches in the LBMA, must recognize the commitment inherent in a minister's responsibilities to the church. Leadership is not something that can be taken lightly. The role of leadership is more than just a position of prestige and power. It is one of great responsibility.

In their book, *Spiritual Leadership*, Henry and Richard Blackaby state: "the greatness of an organization will be directly proportional to the greatness of its leader. It is rare for an organization to rise above their leaders. Giant organizations do not emerge under pygmy leaders; therefore, the key to growing an organization is to grow its leaders" (2001, 31).

At a pastor's conference held in July of 2005, the instructor, Pastor Henry Parker, was asked why is it that a church can suffer failure under one pastor and then experience overwhelming success under another. He responded: "The success and failure of a place is not in the land, it's in the man." He went on to say that he was not suggesting that the failure and success of a church lie solely in the hands of the pastor, as God is the ultimate source for success. However, divine sovereignty does not negate human responsibility.

With the statements by the Blackabys and Parker in mind, the responsibility is placed upon the pastors and churches within the LBMA to recognize the need for a protocol that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process within this Association. As the Blackabys have stated concerning the growth and potential of organizations, the effectiveness and success of the LBMA's member churches are directly related to the giftedness, as well as the refined and developed abilities of their pastors (leaders).

In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins shares several stories about Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Fortune 500 companies. In these stories, Collins shows how these CEOs helped change their respective companies, either for better or for worse. He gave two examples.

Darwin E. Smith

Darwin E. Smith became chief executive of Kimberly-Clark, “a stodgy old paper company whose stock had fallen 36% behind the general market over the previous 20 years” (2001, 17). Mr. Smith, as described by Collins, was a seemingly ordinary man. In fact, there were those who felt that the board had not made the right choice in hiring him. However, during his 20 year tenure as CEO, Kimberly-Clark became the leading paper-based consumer-products company in the world. Under his stewardship, Kimberly-Clark generated cumulative stock return 4.1 times the general market, enabling the company to surpass its direct rivals Scott Paper and Procter and Gamble. The company also outperformed Coca-Cola, Hewlett-Packard, 3M, and General Electric (2001, 17-18).

Stanley Gault

Another CEO highlighted by Collins was Stanley Gault. Mr. Gault was the CEO of Rubbermaid in the late 1980s. During his tenure Rubbermaid, according to Collins, grew from obscurity to number one on *Fortunes* annual list of America's Most Admired companies. Despite Gault's success as CEO, shortly after his departure from the company, Rubbermaid fell apart and disintegrated into such sorry shape that it had to be acquired by another company to save itself. According to Collins this was due to the fact that Gault came through as a “hard-driving, egocentric executive.” As a result, Gault did

not leave behind the infrastructure and culture for a company that would be great without him (2001, 19).

Both success and failure of these two companies were attributed directly to the leadership of Mr. Smith and Mr. Gault. Although these men represent secular companies, the same effects of leadership are true as it relates to role that the pastor plays in the success and failure of his respective churches.

The Pastor's Role in an LBMA Church

The Webster's New World Dictionary defines power as "ability to do or act; vigor; force; strength; authority; influence" (1995, 465). Due to their attempt to describe the kind of power possessed by a pastor in the African-American church, in their book, *Church Administration in the Black Perspective*, Floyd Massey, Jr. and Samuel Berry McKinney state: "One has power who, possessing authority and influence, acts vigorously from a position of strength to bring about change or achieve a desired goal" (2003, 23). This was a definition they came up with as they sought to describe the kind of power possessed by a pastor within the black Baptist church.

Throughout the African-American Baptist community, with the LBMA being no exception, the office of the pastor is one that carries with it an abundance of influence and power. Although all the power and authority exercised by the black Baptist pastor is granted by the congregation and "under God," the pastor's role, function, and style of operation directly affect the success or failure of the congregation. Massey and McKinney cite the following from research conducted in 2002 by Barna Research Group Ltd., an organization that studies the impact of religion on the American landscape, noted

that “black congregations view pastors as their most important community leaders” (2003, 25).

In the African-American Baptist church the pastor is seen as counselor for the home and church, teacher, interpreter of the times, employment specialist, and a civic leader with ready answers, but not necessarily solutions, to the ills besetting the people. He serves as or is believed to be a spokesman, champion, and an advocate for the oppressed, defeated, and disenfranchised. In other words, he has to be a man for all seasons.

As if this were not enough, Massey and McKinney suggest, “The black Baptist pastor is expected to be a financial wizard, legal counselor, political leader, spiritual advisor, and evangelist. In short, the African-American Baptist pastor is seen as the preacher, prophet, priest, patriarch, program-promoter, and church-name promulgator, God’s anointed and representative of the Eternal” (Massey and McKinney 2003, 13). There has never been any other individual in the black church or community who has been entrusted with as much reverence and respect bestowed upon the African-American preacher/pastor. By some, the African-American pastor is believed to be able to move mountains and calm the raging seas. Marvin McMickle, an African-American Baptist pastor, teacher, community activist, and author, in an interview conducted by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, echoes the role of the African-American pastor. He states, “He knows the calling of the African-American pastor requires honesty, integrity; pastors stand as community models nowhere more than in the African-American community.” He further states that this requires that the African-American pastor be a “person who

pays attention to detail, possess management savvy, and practices the principle of hard work” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May, 27, 2006).

Denominational Integrity

Ordination is bigger than the individual who seeks it. More importantly, it is about the success and future of the churches within the LBMA. The preachers and Christian leaders it produces are a direct reflection upon the churches they represent. Reginald D. Terry, African-American Baptist pastor in Omaha, said recently that “the need for a standardized process for ordination is of absolute necessity. Without a uniformed policy the integrity of our Baptist denomination is in jeopardy” (Terry 2006). In hearing Dr. Terry’s statement, one should see that the lack of guiding standards for ordination in the LBMA, as well as the National Baptist as a whole, opens the denomination up to all kinds of ill-prepared individuals who can tear down the very fabric of the churches they lead. Therefore, standards must be set to guide the preparation of, and examine the readiness and qualifications of the ordination candidates for ministry.

The Consolation Baptist Association, which is made up of Southern Baptist churches in the Atlanta area, speaks to the harm churches and associations can cause when they are not careful in their ordination practices:

When we as ministers of the gospel, fail in our responsibilities by ordaining an unprepared man to the ministry we can do the candidate and his family much harm by sending them to a position of authority in which he is not ready to perform. We can do the church where he will pastor much harm by sending an unprepared man that may mislead church in matters of doctrine and ministry. Lastly, we do the gospel harm by taking a chance of a situation occurring that will bring shame on the church in the community or to the cause of Christ if the man we ordain fails in the matters of doctrine, life, and purpose. We as ministers of the gospel have an obligation to take the ordination of a man to the gospel ministry very serious. Therefore, we need to establish guidelines and standards that will

insure that only qualified men are ordained to pastor our churches, or most importantly, God's churches (2004, 1)

Ordination is for the Qualified

The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey defines ordination as “the act of the church by which, in the name of God, it delegates a qualified person who has responded to the call of God for a wide range of ministerial functions” (2004, 2). The Churches of God General Conference defines ordination as “the standard credential for ministry in the Churches of God. It signifies that the ordained person is fully qualified and authorized to perform all pastoral duties and offices” (1998, 1). In his book, *Associates in Ministry*, Reginald D. Terry defines ordination as “the rite of passage that signifies that a person has been called or commissioned to a specialized ministry by a fellowship of believers. Specific gifts and certain qualifications help to justify such decisions” (1999, 13).

In addition to what we have already considered from the Consolation Baptist Association, in these three definitions of ordination, the key word that is used in each of these definitions is “qualified.” At no time is a person to be ordained who has not proven to be qualified, so it is for this purpose that standards and guidelines for ordination are necessary.

The need for standardized procedures for training and developing individuals for various roles of leadership and qualification to practice in different professions that widely affect most of our lives is seen daily. Just like ministers who have a duty to provide services to the public and have a level of authority over those whom they serve, teachers, psychologists, and medical doctors hold similar positions of authority. Unlike

the Baptist ordination process, the governing bodies for these three professions have standardized procedures to insure the proper training and licensing of its members as set forth by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), the Ohio Board of Psychology, and the State Medical Board of Ohio. The following is an outline of each these organizations showing the standardized requirements for an individual to receive credentials in these organizations.

Ohio Department of Education

The ODE ascribes to what it calls the *Teacher Education and Licensure Standards*, which were adopted by the legislature in January 1998. The reasons why standards were developed is clearly stated in the introduction of its publication:

“These standards ensure that only those teachers who can perform the work will do the work. The standards emphasize performance from the time a teacher enters the classroom and continue throughout his or her career. The ultimate benefit of this new direction is a better education for Ohio’s students” (1996, 2).

This statement gives a clear picture as to what is the “ultimate” goal of the Ohio Department of Education. It is to provide “a better education for Ohio’s students.” There is also an unmistakable understanding that the way in which this desired goal will be obtained is by the development and adherence to standards which are designed to enhance the performance of its teachers throughout their career. These are standards that are designed to increase the “rigor” in the teaching profession and include the following:

1. Strengthen Ohio’s teacher preparation programs. Colleges and universities will improve their teacher preparation programs by developing programs focused on what teachers should know and be able to do.

2. Require successful performance of beginning teachers. The Entry Year Program will provide assistance to Ohio's beginning teachers via mentors, who will offer the support necessary to successfully transition into "real world," full-time challenges. Teachers must pass performance-based assessments to qualify for a five-year professional license.
3. Achieve higher standards through licensure. Licenses are given in the broad categories of early, middle, and adolescent to young adult education. However, in order to receive licensure for multi-age, intervention specialist, vocational education, pupil personnel, and administration, there are additional requirements that must be met.
4. Intensify professional development. With a renewable, five-year license system, the state will no longer award permanent certificates of licensure. To renew a license, a teacher must develop a professional development plan that is then approved by a local professional development committee. In section 3301-24-05 of the Ohio revised code the required qualifications are recorded for teachers and administrators in the State. They are:

(A) *The provisional teacher license*, issued in the areas specified in paragraph (D) of this rule and valid for two years, shall be required for entry to an entry year program and may be used for substitute teaching. The provisional license shall be issued, except as noted in paragraph (A)(4) of rule 3301-24-04 of the Administrative Code, to an individual who holds a degree required by the license, who has successfully completed an approved program of preparation, who is deemed to be of good moral character, who has successfully completed an examination prescribed by the State Board of Education, who has demonstrated skill in integrating educational technology in the instruction of children, who has been recommended by the dean or head of teacher education at an institution approved to prepare teachers, and who has completed:

(1) A minimum of twelve semester hours in the teaching of reading, as required in section 3319.24 of the Revised Code, including at least one separate three semester hour course in the teaching of phonics, and coursework on knowledge and beliefs about reading; knowledge base; individual differences; reading difficulties; creating a literate environment; word identification, vocabulary, and spelling; comprehension; study strategies; writing; assessment; communicating information about reading; curriculum development; professional development; research; supervision of paraprofessionals; and professionalism for the early childhood license, the middle childhood license, the intervention specialist license; and the early childhood intervention specialist license; and

(2) A minimum of three semester hours on the teaching of reading in the content area that includes instruction in organizing instruction, use of protocols for oral language development, strategies for word skill development, strategies for reading comprehension, and assessment strategies for instructional purposes for the multi-age license, the adolescence to young adult license, and the career-technical license.

(B) *A professional teacher license*, valid for five years, shall be issued to an individual who holds the appropriate provisional license and a baccalaureate degree; who is deemed to be of good moral character; and who has successfully completed an approved program of teacher preparation, an entry year program, and an examination prescribed by the State Board of Education.

(C) *The provisional principal license* shall be required for entry to an entry year program and shall be issued, except as noted in paragraph (A)(4) of rule 3301-24-04 of the Administrative Code, to an individual who holds a master's degree, who is deemed to be of good moral character, who has completed an approved principal preparation program, who has successfully completed an examination prescribed by the State Board of Education, who has completed two years of successful teaching under a provisional or professional teacher license at the age levels for which the principal license is sought and who has been recommended by the dean or head of teacher education at an institution approved to prepare principals.

(D) *The professional administrator (principal) license* shall be issued to an individual who holds a master's degree, who is deemed to be of good moral character, who has been recommended by the dean or head of teacher education at an institution approved to prepare teachers, who has successfully completed an examination prescribed by the State Board of Education.

As we can see, the ODE has developed a uniformed policy that is designed to increase the competency of its teachers and principles before, during, and after receiving their licenses. As it is stated in the ODE publication: "Believing that higher standards are

needed for both schools and educators in order to provide an excellent education for every student” (Ohio State Board of Education. *Licensure Requirements* (n.d).

http://www.ode.state.oh.us/teachingprofession/teacher/certification_licensure/standards.asp).

Ohio State Board of Psychology (OSBP)

Although the services by psychologists are not educational in nature as those of classroom teachers/educators, they also carry significant influence over those who receive their services. To insure the integrity of the field of psychology in Ohio, the Ohio State Board of Psychology has been given authority over those practicing psychology within the state. The purposes of the OSBP are as follows:

1. Ensure that appropriately trained professionals are providing psychological/school psychological services.
2. Stop illegal practice of psychology/school psychology.
3. Provide safeguards to consumers of psychological services who expect and need psychological/school psychological services.
4. Establish rules to guide professionals in their provision of psychological/school psychological services, emphasizing the protection of client welfare.
5. Protect the public by monitoring the actions of psychologists, school psychologists and/or persons who are not licensed by this board (nor licensed as a professional) in delivering services to the public.
6. Employ knowledgeable staff who will provide accurate information specific to psychology and school psychology through telephone and written

communications with the public, professionals and other licensing boards (Ohio State Board of Psychology *(n.d)*). <http://www.psychology-ohio.gov/oac>.

The OSBP ascribe to standards as they are set forth in section 4732.10 of the Ohio Revised Code. Under the heading, *Examination Qualifications*, the following requirements are recorded:

- A. The state board of psychology shall appoint an entrance examiner who shall determine the sufficiency of an applicant's qualification for admission to the appropriate examination.
- B. Requirements for admission to examination for a psychologist license shall be that the applicant:
 - 1. Is at least twenty-one years of age;
 - 2. Is of good moral character;
 - 3. Is a citizen of the United States or has legally declared his intention to do so;
 - 4. Has received from an educational institution accredited or recognized by national or regional accrediting agencies as maintaining satisfactory standards for an earned doctoral degree in psychology; school psychology, or a doctoral degree deemed equivalent by the board;
 - 5. Has had at least two years of supervised professional experience in psychological work of a type satisfactory to the board, at least one year of which must be postdoctoral.

State Medical Board of Ohio

It is the mission of the State Medical Board of Ohio (SMBO) to protect the health and safety of the public through effective medical regulation. It is the goal of the SMBO to:

1. Ensure that persons practicing medicine meet sufficient standards of education, training, competence and ethics.
2. Rehabilitate, when possible, persons who are impaired or who practice medicine unethically or below minimal standards of care, and prohibit persons who have not been rehabilitated from practicing medicine.
3. Prohibit persons from practicing medicine whose violations are as egregious as forfeit the privilege or who otherwise lack the legal authority.
4. Provide information about the licensees of the Medical Board, the Board's functions and operations, and the laws governing the practice of medicine.
5. Achieve and maintain the highest possible levels of organizational efficacy (State Medical Board of Ohio. *Licensure Requirements* .(n.d)

<http://www.med.ohio.gov>).

In section 4731.95 of the Revised Code, each person who desires to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine and surgery in this state shall file with the secretary of the state medical board a written application for admission to the examination conducted by the board under section 4731.13 of the Revised Code. The applicant shall furnish evidence satisfactory to the board that the applicant is more than eighteen years of age and of good moral character.

Section 4731.09 specifies that the entrance examiner is to determine the sufficiency of preliminary education of the applicant and certificate of preliminary examination:

The state medical board shall appoint an entrance examiner who shall not be directly or indirectly connected with a medical school and who shall determine the sufficiency of the preliminary education, other than medical education, of an applicant for admission to the examination conducted by the board under section 4731.13 of the Revised Code. The minimum requirement shall be two years of undergraduate work in a college of arts and sciences approved by the board in addition to a high school diploma, or the equivalent of such education as determined by the board. In the absence of the foregoing qualifications, the entrance examiner may examine the applicant to overcome deficiencies. When the entrance examiner finds the preliminary education of the applicant sufficient, the entrance examiner shall issue a certificate of preliminary examination. (State Medical Board of Ohio Web Site)

This section shows medical board's intent of maintaining strong checks and balances, as well as a high level of integrity in this process. The fact that the medical examiner is not permitted to have any affiliation, whatsoever, with a medical school helps to assure that he or she maintains an objective view toward each candidate for licensure. Although the concept is that of having an "ordination examiner" who is independent of all the churches represented in the LBMA, the idea is to create an objective system to determine whether ministerial ordination candidates meet minimal standards to be effective pastors, qualified through honest and objective examination.

In the next section of the Ohio Revised Code, 4731.091, the medical education and graduate medical requirements are established. The following is stated:

As used in this section and in section 4731.092 of the Revised Code: "Graduate medical education" means education received through the following:

1. An internship or residency program conducted in the United States and accredited by either the accreditation council for graduate medical education

of the American Medical Association or the American Osteopathic Association.

2. A clinical fellowship program conducted in the United States at an institution with a residency program accredited by either the accreditation council for graduate medical education of the American Medical Association or the Osteopathic Association that is in a clinical field the same as or related to clinical field of fellowship program. (State Board of Ohio Web Site)

Similarities in Standards

In examination of the standards for practicing in the fields of education, psychology, and medicine, several requirements are found to be present despite the differences in discipline and services provided. Factors such as minimum age, moral character, educational requirements, demonstrated knowledge base, and mandatory clinical or supervised experiences in the sought after professional setting are noted throughout the standards of those governing bodies. A closer examination of the common requirements of each of these secular helping professions and how their inclusion is needed in standards for LBMA ordination will be discussed.

Autonomy is no Excuse

As previously noted, there are several expectations that the fields of education, psychology, and medicine have in common. Moral character and educational preparation are just two of many. However, there is one similarity in particular that must be noted. Unlike the LBMA, each of these entities has a governing body that mandates standards for them to follow. Therefore, there is no possibility for individual entities to refuse cooperation without suffering consequences. However, the churches represented in the

LBMA are autonomous; this characteristic does not allow any outside governmental body to mandate any specific standards for them to follow.

Although autonomy is revered by many in the Baptist denomination, there is a history of organized cooperation for mutual benefit, demonstrating that there are Baptists who do understand what can be accomplished when churches and pastors come together:

Such conferences and fellowships across the nation enable African-American pastors to improve themselves professionally; to support seminaries, colleges, YMCAs, civic organizations, and ministers in need; to become informed on community and civic problems and react as a body; to serve as an open forum for candidates for public office; to conduct institutes and seminars led by some of the nation's leading authorities in their fields; and enjoy themselves in a great forum of preaching and lecturing. (Massey and McKinney 2003, 88)

The possibilities described by Massey and McKinney have been proven to be true in many conferences and associations throughout the country. Recently the Columbus Baptist Ministers Association (CBMA) sponsored an annual, week-long simultaneous revival. During the gathering, over seventy Baptist churches participated. Each church brought guest preachers from across the nation. During the day all of them came together for a unified worship, while at night, each participating church held individual worship services. In addition to the common worship, each contributed approximately five hundred dollars toward a relief effort for Baptists in the Gulf Coast. Although the revival participants consisted of churches that ascribe to autonomy in the local church, the revival exemplified the promise and possibilities that individual churches can manifest when they work interdependently with others.

Like the CBMA, the pastors and churches within the LBMA have often enjoyed working together to address local, state, and national causes that effect African-Americans in particular. Although each church represented by the organization is

autonomous, the members of the LBMA have proven that although each church represented by the organization is autonomous they can come together and set aside any differences which exist among them for the greater good of the entire community. Such efforts have been a practice among the LBMA churches for years; however, the collaboration has not extended to development of common standards for ordination.

Precedent for Cooperation in the Ordination Process

While the LBMA has argued for autonomy, which has extended to the ordination process, other organizational bodies have recognized that autonomous churches may need uniformity within various practices, including ordination. The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey ascribe to the autonomy of the local church while also realizing the importance of cooperation among its member churches on various issues:

Baptists have long celebrated the autonomy of the local church and joined in voluntary association with each other for mission endeavors best accomplished by the wider Christian community. Thus the local church retains the right to decide for itself in matters of faith and polity, but also recognizes interdependence with other Baptist churches and organizations as beneficial to full ministry. (2004, 2)

This statement further affirms that Baptists have historically worked together, despite the autonomy of the local church in many endeavors. However, unlike the LBMA, the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey do address the importance of working together in the practice of ordination within its organization. It is their belief that if the ordination of an individual is done in cooperation with the standards of this body that it represents a universal acceptance of their qualification for ministry:

Although most often a local congregation has taken the initiative in ordaining an individual, it does so in cooperation with other congregations. This participation of a group of churches has given the rite much more than merely local significance. In fact, if the ordination was carried out according to the standards of the American Baptist Churches, it represented a denominational recognition of

the individual's call and qualifications for the ordained ministry of Christ's.
(2004, 3)

In this section, the literature published by the American Baptists Churches of New Jersey, the Churches of God, General Conference, and the Consolation Baptist Association of Atlanta will be reviewed to see what tools they use to assess the readiness of individuals for ordination in their associations. The major emphasis in each of their definitions is the practice of recognizing the qualifications of an individual for ministry.

American Baptist Churches of New Jersey

A tested call-The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABCNJ) believe that the most important prerequisite for ordination is the call of God to a specialized ministry. However, they also acknowledge that the call is of a personal nature between God and the individual which does not lend itself to any particular standards by the denomination. They, therefore, believe that the call must "be tested by other prerequisites or standards" (2004, 4).

Member in good standing-It is believed by this organization that an individual must be a member in good standing of a local American Baptist church. Since it is the local church's responsibility to license an individual for ministry and subsequently recommends them for ordination, their membership allows the church to be well acquainted with the candidate. This will allow them to attest to the licensee's qualifications. "By having them under their watch, a local church is expected to give ongoing counsel in regards to vocation and professional training. The pastor or appropriate board and committee of the church, should perform such counseling" (2004,

4). In accordance with the national recommendation the ABCNJ hold that a candidate seeking ordination must be licensed for a period of at least six months prior to ordination.

The candidate makes known the desire to be licensed to the pastor and the appropriate committee of the church where he or she is a member. After such desire is made known, the candidate is interviewed to determine eligibility for licensing. If the candidate is deemed worthy for being licensed by the pastor or committee he or she is recommended to the congregation for a vote of affirmation. Once the candidate is affirmed by the congregation, recognition as a licensed candidate will be granted to him or her. The local church then notifies in writing the ABCNJ Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations of its actions so that the person might be registered with both the ABCNJ and their national body.

In assessing candidates for ordination, the ABCNJ gives special attention to various areas of the candidate's life and preparation, for they hold that ordained ministry involves more than academic attainment; it calls for ongoing pastoral competence, emotional and spiritual maturity, and consistent Christian character. Assessments and evaluation of the candidate's fitness includes the following criteria:

1. Commitment to Christ and the propagation of the Christian gospel.
2. Love of people and an unselfish commitment to their needs.
3. The ability to communicate with others effectively.
4. Emotional stability, maturity, and competence.
5. Commitment to maintain a high level of intellectual discipline.
6. Formation of pastoral identity.

The above criteria are assessed on the basis of dialogue with the local church, information from field education and clinical pastoral education evaluations, and discussions with the ordination review committee. Also, a candidate must provide field education and CPE evaluations for the ordination review committee.

The educational standard of four years of college and three years of seminary (the B.A. and M.Div. Degrees or their standard equivalent, such as a Ph.D. in Religion) are the normative educational prerequisites for the recognition of ordination by the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey. This includes:

1. The candidate must have a functional knowledge of American Baptist history and polity.
2. The candidate's professional ethics and intention of cooperation must be affirmed by signing the Covenant and Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist churches.
3. The candidate must have at least six months practical experience in Christian ministry (field education).

When a licensed candidate for ordination has completed the above prerequisites and standards for ordination, his or her local church notify, in writing, the ABCNJ Committee on Professional Ministry and Church Relations, making known that it supports and affirms the candidate's readiness for ordination. On the local church's recommendation, the committee meets with the candidate to ascertain the readiness of the candidate, after which he or she is referred back to his or her local church to move forward in the process. Although examination for ordination may occur, the act of

ordination will not take place until the candidate has a specific call to a position in ministry. During their time with the candidate, the committee seeks to determine:

1. Whether the candidate meets the standards for ordination.
2. Whether the candidate understands the nature of an ordination Council and will be prepared to meet with one.
3. Whether the candidate has given proper attention to preparation of the ordination paper.
4. Whether the candidate understands and subscribes to the covenant and code of ethics developed by the Ministers Council.
5. Whether the candidate has a call to vocational Ministry.

In addition to the above requirements, any candidate seeking ordination in the ABCNJ is required to write an ordination paper. It must be written according to the following outline as given to the candidate by the ABCNJ.

1. Introduction
 - a. Christian commitment and growth
 - b. call to the Ministry
 - c. academic and field preparation
 - d. present field service
2. General comprehension of Christian doctrine
 - a. the doctrine of God
 - b. the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - c. the Holy Spirit
 - d. the authority of Scripture
 - e. the world to which the gospel speaks: doctrine of humanity and sin
 - f. the nature of the gospel and salvation
 - g. the Christian hope: the meaning of death and eternal life
 - h. Christian eschatology
3. General comprehension of the church
 - a. definition of the church
 - b. the place of the church in history
 - c. the purpose and place of the church in the world
 - d. the ordinances

- e. the church in its ecumenical relationships
 - f. the role of the minister
 - g. the Ministry of the laity
 - h. the movement of the gospel to the world
 - i. understanding of mission and evangelism
 - j. understanding of justice and the life of society
4. Denominational commitment
- a. reasons for seeking ordination within the ABC/USA
 - b. relationship to the ABC/USA and to the Christian church as a whole.
(The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey 2004, 10).

It is recommended by the ABC/USA, the parent body of the ABCNJ, that local association council establish a standing committee to ensure that, before the ordaining Council is called to examine the candidate; all basic requirements have been met. This allows the committee to review and raise points of clarification, with the candidate concerning his or her paper. If satisfied, the committee then recommends his or her ordination. It is only then an ordination council is called to ordain the candidate.

The Churches of God, General Conference (CGGC)

Like the ABCNJ, the Churches of God General Conference (CGGC) “believes that the personal call is essential for anyone seeking ministerial credentials in the Churches of God” (2000, 3). It is their position that the church has the biblical mandate to judge the qualifications of anyone who seek credential through the CGGC. They also believe that this call must be followed by preparation, as well as be confirmed by the church.

After the individual senses a call from God, he or she is guided by their regional commission which is the conference that will confer credentials. “Under the care,” as it is called, of the commission the applicant is guided through the process. This relationship

between the candidate and the commission is “long-term.” The CGGC deems this necessary for the effective preparation of the candidate.

As it relates to confirmation of the candidate, the CGGC does not look at the credentialing of the candidate as a single action but rather as a process that does not result in an automatic credentialing:

Confirmation should be thought of as a process rather than a single action, and it should never be treated as an automatic result of the preparation process. As the applicant nears the completion of academic requirements, the commission that has the applicant under its care should begin the formal process of final evaluation to determine if applicant is truly ready for service in the pastoral ministry. If approved by the commission, confirmation will come with the vote of the regional conference and the conferring of licensing credentials. (2000, 3)

In the *General Conference Standards for Ministerial Credential*, published by the CGGC, criteria for candidates seeking credentials by the Churches of God must:

1. Be a believer in and a disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. Have been baptized as a believer and participate in the Lord’s Supper and feet washing.
3. Have received God’s call to the Ministry for which credentials will be granted.
4. Demonstrate the presence of the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit needed for ministry.
5. Demonstrate preparedness for Ministry appropriate to the credentials being issued as defined by the Readiness for Ministry document of the churches of God, General conference.
6. Be a member of a local congregation of the churches of God.
7. Cooperate with and be subject to the authority and standards of the local conference/eldership and General Conference of the Churches of God. Failure to

cooperate and be subject to the local conference/eldership or the General conference may result in the recall of credentials following due process.

8. Demonstrate compatibility with the current official doctrinal statement of the Churches of God, General Conference. (CGGC, 1998)

As it relates to ordination, the CGGC requires that the candidate be a member of the local congregation for at least three years immediately prior to ordination. They have to complete the course of academic preparation that includes courses on polity, history and doctrine of the Churches of God, General Conference. The degrees that are expected for the candidate are the B.A. and M.Div. (from educational institutions approved by the local conference/eldership). There are exceptions, however, if the requirements are met by the candidate and he or she is granted approval by the local conference eldership (1998, 2).

In the *Readiness for Ministry* document produced by the CGGC there are five areas that the candidate is expected to grasp and integrate into his or her life. They are:

1. Spiritual Readiness: The applicant is a mature believer in Jesus Christ.
2. Intellectual Readiness: The applicant has the necessary knowledge to function in the pastoral ministry.
1. Professional Readiness: The applicant has the skill needed to carry out pastoral duties in the local church.
2. Emotional Readiness: The applicant is emotionally mature.
3. Personal Readiness: The applicant's life is free of conflicts that may interfere with his or her effectiveness as a pastor.

The purpose for which the CGGC produced this document is that it will “be helpful in providing the church with mature, spirit-filled pastors” (2000, 2). As has been stated previously, ordination is bigger than the individual. The future of the church depends upon denominations doing their best to prepare candidates for ministry.

Consolation Baptist Association (CBA)

The CBA recognizes that the call of a candidate comes from God and him alone. However, they believe that it is the church’s responsibility to examine that call to assure that the candidate meets the necessary qualifications needed to lead churches. Therefore, they believe that the ordination process serves to:

1. Identify and certify men truly called and equipped by God for full-time pastoral ministry.
2. Eliminate seeking ministry credentials that are not called by God.
3. Give a congregation great confidence that their leaders are genuinely appointed by God.
4. Furnish a standard of accountability for the church concerning a man’s ministry.
5. Commend a man publicly to ministry wherever God’s will lead him.

Adhering to the strong belief in the Baptist church, the CBA holds that the greater responsibility lies with the local congregation. It is their belief that the local church has responsibility for the preparation of the candidate. They feel that it is the church’s role to assess the candidate’s character, giftedness, obedience, service, and an evidence of a call to ministry. It is the local church that has the opportunity to invest time with the candidate to both examine and prepare him for ordination. During this time, there should be a strong mentoring relationship between the candidate and his pastor. Unlike the

ABCNJ and the CGGC, the association does not meet with any other denominational leadership or assigned committee for ordination. The first time the candidate goes before the council is the day of ordination.

The CBA does not suggest any specific time frame that the candidate should be a member of a local church prior to being licensed. However, they do state that “the candidate should have ample time to serve in his local church during his period of licensure. This allows the local church to closely observe the character and qualifications for ordination” (2004, 5).

Prior to going before the ordination council, it is suggested that the candidate be required to write a doctrinal paper for presentation to the ordination council. This paper should include:

1. A brief resume that lists pertinent background information.
2. Testimony of conversion.
3. Call to ministry.
4. Philosophy of ministry.
5. Doctrinal statement.
6. Practical theology (i.e. pastoral theology, current issues, moral and ethical questions, etc.).

It is also suggested by the CBA that the candidate should prepare his doctrinal statement (section by section) and submit it to the pastor for review and evaluation. After it has been reviewed by the pastor, he should give the candidate suggestions and constructive directions. When this process is completed, the pastor should conduct a practice examination to help prepare the candidate for the ordination council.

The CBA also recommends that personal references be acquired from individuals who are familiar with the candidate. These individuals may include: the candidate's pastor, parents, past employers, and churches with which the candidate has been affiliated. They feel that this would further assist in ascertaining the candidate's attitude, ambitions, maturity and conduct around those outside of his ministry context. The following are suggested questions to ask these references:

1. Is the candidate a man of prayer, common courtesy, and love?
2. Does he demonstrate a pastor's heart? Does he care for people with tenderness and grace?
3. Does he get along with people? Does he know how to lead people?
4. Is he given to faultfinding, criticism, gossip, anger, promise breaking, power or prestige seeking, laziness, favoritism, greed?
5. Does he live within his income, pay his bills promptly? Does he seek favors?
6. What is his relationship with the opposite sex?

Although there is no minimum educational requirement, the candidate is encouraged to pursue formal training in an accredited institution. There is also much encouragement for the candidate to attend educational seminars offered by the denomination. In order for this to be possible there are several seminars offered throughout the year.

Common Themes in Ordination Requirements

There are common themes among the denominations that were reviewed. These include a call to ministry, a minimum period of local church membership, a knowledge base evidenced by a combination of educational attainment, a written doctrinal paper and/

or a council examination, and a supervised period of licensure where the candidate works to prepare for ordination. Other requirements are leadership characteristics as well as people management skills.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Qualitative Research

“By the term, qualitative research, we mean any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Qualitative research can refer to research about persons’ lives, stories, behavior, but also about organizational functions, social movements, or interactional relationships” (Straus and Corbin 1990, 17). Merriam defines qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (1998, 5).

This study will seek to answer the question of how to develop standards that brings uniformity and integrity to the ordination process within the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA) using the phenomenological approach to qualitative research as defined by Merriam (1998, 15). According to Merriam, in the conduct of a phenomenological study, the focus would be on the essence or structure of an experience (phenomenon) (1998, 15). The experience being looked at in this study is the way in which ordination takes place within the various churches affiliated with LBMA.

Procedures

Initially, it was the intent of the author to contact and invite all of the pastors who were on the membership roster of the LBMA. However, given the fact that if all the members would have attended, the group would have far exceeded the number of

participants desired by the author. Therefore, with the help of the LBMA recording secretary the author identified those potential participants who had shown a history of active participation in the organization. The author called those persons and requested their participation in this project. It was the belief of the author and the recording secretary that these individuals would more than likely consent to be a part of the study.

After identifying these individuals the author copied their contact information from the roster. Knowing the fact that it is very difficult to get these pastors to add one more meeting to their schedule, the author solicited the assistance of a well respected senior pastor in the LBMA to further encourage their participation. The following steps were then taken to increase the likelihood of participation:

1. The author called each individual to solicit his participation.
2. A letter was sent to each person to confirm his participation and the date, time, and location of the meeting (Appendix C).
3. Each participant was contacted by phone the night before the meeting by the senior pastor as a reminder.
4. Each participant was notified that breakfast would be provided by the author.

Participants

Ten pastors who are affiliated with the LBMA were selected for the focus group. Their ages ranged from 43 to 71. Although initially, there were requests for twelve potential participants, the researcher's original intent was to have a group of ten. All subjects met the following criteria, they were: (1) members of the LBMA, (2) agreed to participate in the study, and (3) consented to being audio taped. Of the ten pastors who participated in the focus group nine were originally ordained in the Baptist denomination.

The one remaining participant was ordained in a non-denominational church while serving in the military. However, prior to serving in the military he had been in the Baptist church all of his life. Therefore, soon after returning home he was ordained as a Baptist minister. According to the demographic questionnaire, seven out of the ten participants waited more than two years after their initial licensing before they were ordained. Of those who had ordained other ministers under their leadership, the average time between licensing and ordaining a candidate was approximately two or more years. The average number of years the participants had pastored was twenty-six years.

Research Instruments

1. Demographic Questionnaire

The Demographic Questionnaire consisted of questions used to determine educational background, years of pastoring, whether or not the participant had ever been ordained in another denomination, how many years since ordination, amount of time between their call and ordination, the average amount of time that passed between the call and ordination of ministers under his pastorate (if applicable), and the age of the participant (Appendix B). In addition, the questionnaire asked participants to rank certain moderator variables based upon their believed order of importance.

2. Focus group protocol

A focus group methodology was chosen to provide the participants with a familiar and comfortable environment in which to share their experiences of being pastors and their views regarding the ordination process and practices within the LBMA. It was believed that a discussion group would allow the participants to discuss these issues with individuals with whom they have already an established relationship.

Having reviewed the use of licensing standards among a variety of nurturing type professions and the criteria for ordination used by three denominations closely related to the LBMA, the group was asked the six following research questions:

- a. Do you believe that there is a need to have a uniformed process for ordination within the LBMA and the Baptist Denomination as a whole?
- b. Other than the call to ministry, what other criteria do you believe should be set for ordination?
- c. How do you define moral character in regards to those who are being ordained under your pastoral leadership?
- d. What, if any, minimal educational classes or training should be undertaken before a candidate is ordained?
- e. How do you assess a candidate's understanding and commitment to Baptist Doctrine and Polity?
- f. How can the autonomy of the local church be maintained while still establishing uniformed ordination standards within the LBMA?

Researcher's Role

“Qualitative research is done by researchers in social and behavioral sciences, as well as by practitioners in fields that concern themselves with issues of human behavior and functioning” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 19). Being a part of the LBMA and its process of ordaining ministers, the researcher's concern was the lack of uniformity in said practices.

Understanding the bias held by the researcher, a deliberate effort was made to not allow held views and biases to taint the views of the participants. Therefore, an opening

summary of the project was given by the researcher to familiarize the participants with the intent of the study. After the summary statement was completed, the researcher simply asked the research questions and allowed for open dialogue between the participants. The researcher also made sure that the participants remained focused on the specific questions. This prevented the group from being sidetracked by subjects not pertinent to the study.

Conclusion

Although the session lasted approximately three hours, the researcher observed that not one pastor left early. This was uncommon, given the fact that regular meetings only lasted a maximum of an hour and a half. In fact, participants suggested that this format would be used in dealing with other issues the LBMA has to deal with in the future. For the most part, everyone had opportunity to express his views and opinions; however, the author noticed that two of the participants offered little or no input in the discussion. It did not appear that they were disinterested in the discussion because although they did not speak, they did express themselves through non-verbal responses. When the meeting was adjourned the author observed that most of the members lingered around continuing their own discussions about the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this section, themes that arose from the focus group will be presented, quotes from the participants will be highlighted, and a summary of the findings including the investigator's impression of the group will be given.

In the focus group, the participants were asked a series of questions dealing with their views on the practice of ordination in the Baptist church, particularly that of the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA).

As the discussion began, the investigator was surprised at the enthusiasm of the group concerning the topic. Several expressed that a discussion in this area is long overdue. Repeatedly, the investigator was commended for seeking to address the "weakness" of the ordination process in the Baptist church. One pastor stated, "I am glad that someone has finally brought the issue of how we handle ordination to the table. I'm sure that we all agree that the Baptist church has been negatively affected by how and who we ordain" (Monford, CB transcript 2006, 1).

The fact that each of the ten participants arrived at least fifteen minutes before the meeting was supposed to begin, appeared to support the belief that this was a topic they wanted to address. Normally, more than half of those present are twenty to thirty minutes late for meetings held by the association. Listening to these comments by the participants, the investigator sensed that the participants were ready and willing to give their undivided attention to the topic of discussion.

Themes of the Research Data

In analyzing notes, tapes, and transcripts of the group's discussion, I discovered six themes that helped me organize the gathered information. These themes derived from careful reflection upon the comments and responses made by the participants. The titles I have given these themes are: 1) Consensus for Uniformity; 2) Criteria for Ordination; 3) Defining Good Moral Character; 4) Role of Formal Education; 5) Assessing Commitment to Baptist Doctrine; and 6) Sanction for Ministerial Misconduct.

Theme One: Consensus for Uniformity

Although it was argued in previous chapters that uniformity was deemed essential by those in the Baptist denomination and the member churches of the LBMA in particular, this study's focus group indicated that such autonomy is not absolute. It was the opinion of several members that autonomy exists in the process but only as far as it relates to the decision to license ministers. When it came to the ordination process, the focus group members agreed that this practice required a consensus among the member churches.

Several members argued that true autonomy does not usually exist in the Baptist tradition. Many Baptist churches choose membership within organizations that make recommendations and/or requirements of its member churches. One group member acknowledged this by stating: "being members of our district, our state, and national [conventions], even though we are separate governing, we are willing to listen to the recommendations or suggestions of the district from those organizations or affiliates that we are part of" (Monford, ES transcript 2006, 11). Another minister cited belonging to

the Baptist denomination as another example of not being fully autonomous. He stated, “Even though we are autonomous in our organizations, we are still a part of this covenant community of Baptist churches and pastors” (Monford, AL transcript, 2006, 12).

A primary reason for wanting consensus in the ordination process included focus group members recognizing that they would be accountable for anyone ordained when they sat on the ordination council. One focus group member who had been a pastor for twenty-five years and sat on more than twenty ordination councils stated, “When we in the ministry...ordain a brother who has exhibited a calling for this ministry...we are going [to] put our names on his [ordination] certificate” (Monford, ES transcript 2006, 1). Another group member went on to agree that being a part of an ordination process implied some level of responsibility for the knowledge and worthiness of the candidate. “Ordination is saying that we have come together collectively and found that they [those being ordained] have the basics [knowledge needed for ministry]” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 2).

Another major reason other group members agreed on the need for standards was the recognition that, although Baptist churches have the right to be autonomous, ordination and the practice of ministry does not occur in a vacuum. It is known and expected that ordained ministers will go outside of the churches wherein they have been licensed and engage in the practice of ministry. One minister complained about not knowing what knowledge base an ordained minister possesses simply because he is ordained: “Lots of times, churches have ministers and the pastors [of other churches] do not know who they are. [Uniformed standards] would help them [pastors] recognize that the minister has been trained adequately, because his home church is not the only place

he is going to be expected to preach and practice ministry” (Monford, RC transcript 2006, 2). Another group member went on to discuss the fluidity of movement of ordained ministers within the Baptist faith: “[ordained ministers] go...from one Baptist church to another; therefore, we have to be mindful that these persons can end up in our church” (Monford, FW transcript 2006, 4).

When outside ministers end up in one’s church or even when those seeking ordination in the church that the pastor does not deem ready, pastors are often pressured into ordaining those ministers by others within the church. Examples were given in a previous chapter about the pressure placed on pastors regarding some candidates. Focus group members believed that providing uniform standards for ordination would alleviate some of the outside forces that seek to ordain those for reasons other than readiness, thus empowering pastors by providing support for their decision whether or not ordination should occur. Current problems of being able to ordain without approval of other Baptist pastors left room for those within the church to press for ordination as “if the ordination council doesn’t like this guy [being brought as a candidate for ordination], then [the candidate’s pastor] could still...ordain him” (Monford, FW transcript 2006, 3).

Theme Two: Criteria for Ordination

As there was a consensus of the need for uniformity in the ordination process, it was imperative for group members to determine what criteria should be established for ordination. Group members were asked to identify important components of the ordination process. In examining criteria discussed by group members, three major areas emerged: training, spiritual maturity, and a period of preparation.

In the other professions reviewed in this paper, training was considered an integral part of the licensing process among group members. Training was also identified as needed in the standards for other denominations sited. One member argued that training was a requirement of other professions that did not involve as much responsibility as ministry and that he could not understand why such standards were not already set. He stated, "I think in the ordination process, being a minister is just like any other profession---you need to know something about what you are going in to. I was an apprentice carpenter for four to five years...to get my license...If you are going to work on a car, you need some mechanical skills" (AL transcript, focus group, p. 4). Another voiced agreement about how training occurs before one is given the task to perform, stating, "A person driving a car, you are [not] just going to put them in the car" (Monford, FW transcript 2006, 5). A group member asserted that "the most specific one...is the training for services as an absolute requirement [for ordination]" (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 8).

Although group members agreed that training of ordination candidates is needed, identification of training requirements were not uniform among focus group members. Some were able to identify specific books that they believed were essential to the training process. However, others argued that reading alone did not constitute an acceptable level of training. Simply passing an examination on what is read is not acceptable, but should also contain what has "been observed and learned" (Monford, FW transcript 2006, 9).

Even when one is trained for ministry, focus group members did not believe that training alone indicated readiness for ministry. It was argued that a period of preparation should occur between the time one is called to ministry, licensed, and finally ordained.

Although no specific time frame was agreed upon by group members, a consensus was given that a period of time should pass. One focus group member did not provide an actual time frame for waiting, but did state that “you shouldn’t be in a hurry. I won’t say what I put down [on the demographic questionnaire], I’m just going to say that it should not be that you got a call this week and a month later, he’s out there ready to take over something He can’t even find the bathroom yet.” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 5)

Another group member did provide tentative examples of acceptable time frames “Come before the church, you go back and pray for 30 days, come back and let me know if [ministry] is what you want... Then after, they may not preach for another six to eight months” (Monford, RC transcript 2006, 3).

Training and a period of preparation were deemed essential for incorporation the into ordination standards. However, group members reported that spiritual maturity appeared to be the most important of the three factors mentioned. One minister reported, that “What I believe [spiritual] maturity is essential for any minister. When we talk about winning souls... spiritual maturity is not only what you see behind the pulpit” (Monford, DW transcript 2006, 4). He went on to discuss how such maturity plays a role in all aspects of a minister’s duties. In examining what constitutes spiritual maturity, group members discussed the need for humility as “humility is something that Jesus had talked to his disciples [about]...being a meek and humble lamb” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 5). Spiritual maturity was also addressed as being loyal to the teaching of the church and to the ministry, versus simply following the spiritual lead of one’s pastor. Finally, an overall need to try and aspire to the characteristics exemplified by Christ was identified as embodying spiritual maturity.

Theme Three: Defining Good Moral Character

In the examination of other helping professions as well as other Christian denominations, the concept of good moral character was prevalent. As focus group members did not address the moral character issue in the criteria for ordination, the question of what constitutes “good moral character” was posed. One member was able to acknowledge the importance of good moral character and how the absence of it could negatively impact the church. “If you are going to put them [the ordained minister] out there to be a representative of the Lord, I think this whole question of morality becomes an important [one]. For example, we should learn [from what is going on in other denominations...we’ve seen it within the Catholic community...people fooling around with children” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 6). He went on to give examples of news stories in which spiritual leaders were caught in acts of immorality and asserted that a failure to check for morality could result in “placing a rooster in a hen house” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 6). Another minister relayed a similar concern within the Baptist church. He talked about counseling a young lady who had been in an adulterous relationship with a minister for years. “This person was not the pastor, but was an associate or whatever, and she [person being ministered to] was carrying his baby” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 7).

A standard definition of moral character was not given, but group members acknowledged that it is still assessed on some level by focus group members as “subconsciously, we are doing an examination of moral character” (Monford, DW transcript 2006, 7). When asked to do so, group members were able to define moral character to some extent, including not being promiscuous, examining criminal history,

and overall change. However, even when stating such behaviors as being indicative of a lack of good moral character, group members struggled to reconcile the Christian concept of forgiveness for transgressions with such problem behaviors. One group member discussed that “we are a Christian organization, we realize that people can be forgiven and change” (Monford, RC transcript 2006, 8). To determine how much impact previous moral lapses would have on determining one’s moral character, group members reported that they relied heavily on those who knew them, specifically the candidate’s pastor with needing to know that the individual has “proven himself to [have] changed in this particular area” (Monford, AL transcript 2006, 8).

Theme Four: Role of Formal Education

Members mentioned training as being a necessary prerequisite for ordination. A question was asked regarding the role formal education plays in training. One minister argued that neither formalized education nor informal learning through books were as important as hands-on experience. However, his opinion differed from the majority of focus group members who all stated that some level of formalized education was needed. Yet, no consensus could be gained for what constituted formalized education and what level of education should be required for ordination. One group member discussed how he had a college degree, but that it was not in theological studies, so stating that a college degree alone was indicative of acceptable training was not practical. He went on to discuss his informal education including reading books and studying under the tutelage of more seasoned ministers. One pastor stated that an ordination candidate should at least have a twelfth grade education. A major barrier to requiring formal education included access to formal education as influenced by financial and other constraints.

Theme Five: Assessing Commitment to Baptist Doctrine

Due to the lack of uniform ordination standards, a previous chapter pointed out the fact that some chose ordination through the Baptist denomination due to the ease of doing so. The need to assess commitment and understanding of the Baptist doctrine must occur to insure that those who are ordained adhere to its principles. In discussion with focus group members, criteria for assessing such commitment were defined in a variety of ways. Adherence to the Baptist articles of faith was reported by many as one way to assess such commitment. “We said this [articles of faith] is definitely our beliefs that we have in common...and so that is one thing we must use as a criteria” (Monford, HT transcript 2006, 10). A background in the Baptist faith was addressed as another measure. One group member reported that “most of us grew up in the Baptist church, which means from an early childhood we practiced what we saw, we practiced what we heard.” He went on to argue the importance of an understanding of the way of baptizing in the Baptist church “a person getting ordained should know something about water baptism” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 10).

Although practicing of Baptist traditions/faith should occur in public, group members did not all agree that determination of commitment necessarily occurs in public when coming from a different denomination. It was reported that such commitment could be taught in private by one’s own pastor. A member of the focus group relayed his own story: “I was ordained in a non-denomination church, but one of the pastors that guided me and set me down...[and taught me] this is the way we do it in the Baptist church. Some of the corrections that took place were on the spot corrections...it wasn’t taken to

the point where I felt bad or ashamed [as] he did it in a tactful manner” (Monford, DW transcript 2006, 10).

However, some group members argued that it was ultimately not their decision to question the legitimacy of one’s commitment to Baptist doctrine. “What we can do is to accept at the time that we ordain a person as Baptist, we must remember it’s not our decision, [it’s] God’s” (Monford, ES transcript 2006, 2). Yet, other members challenged this unwillingness to take responsibility for assessing commitment to the Baptist doctrine. One group member asserted, “He is going to be influencing or infecting the congregation if you put him out there as a teacher if his commitment to Baptist doctrine is in question” (Monford, MW transcript 2006, 13). Another member went on to state, “I’m not the judge, but the fruit inspector. If we don’t inspect the fruit, we are going to end up [with problems] because we ought not to ordain a man who wants to become a Baptist. We ought to ordain somebody who is already Baptist in his heart” (Monford, FW transcript 2006, 13).

Theme Six: Sanctions for Ministerial Conduct

Ordination has a sense of finality, which also increased the willingness of focus group members to agree to standards. Unlike in other helping professions discussed throughout this paper, once certification/ordination is granted, one maintains that status regardless of any transgressions or other violations of ministerial codes of ethics. One member complained of the lack of ability to sanction those who are ordained. He stated: “You can shut them down by verbal agreement but it is hard to pull their license once [they] are ordained” (Monford, HT transcript 2006, 14).

Group members were able to discuss the need for sanctions when ministers violate ethics of the ministry. However, the power to do so was viewed as limited to nonexistent. The group appeared to view the minister as being responsible for sanctioning himself when he violated the teachings of the church. Group members discussed the need for ministers to ask for forgiveness from the church for actual transgressions, with the role of other ordained ministers simply be that of forgiving him. “If that person commits an immoral act, he’s got one thing he supposed to do is confess and acknowledge, and we have one thing to do and it’s [to] forgive him” (Monford, RC transcript 2006, 14).

Although actual reprimands for failure to abide by ministerial standards were not requirements of the Baptist denomination, group members did state that such responsibility should be inherent when they were a part of the process of ordaining the minister. “When he received the document [ordination paperwork from the Ordaining Council], he had agreed that he was going to carry himself the way we carried ourselves” (Monford, FW transcript 2006, 14). Members also questioned how one would define an infraction as being egregious enough to require sanctions. Group members were able to discuss that any issues that were deemed violations should be based upon Scripture. In addition, group members were able to report that they should also be held to the same standards that they establish for newer ministers. “The guidelines we set for these ordained ministers in correcting them... [We] who are ordained pastors [are] subjected to those same guidelines” (Monford, RC transcript 2006, 15).

In completing this focus group, a consensus about the need for standards of ordination to address several problems in the ordination process was reached. Group members were able to acknowledge a willingness to surrender some level of autonomy to

insure the integrity of the ordination process. Group members were able to discuss general criteria for the ordination process as well as the barriers to implementation of such standards. In addition, although group members were able to identify ideal requirements for education and the need for the ability to sanction those who violate standards established in the ordination process, a recognition of the problems inherent in doing so were reviewed.

The fact that a spirit of unity was exemplified throughout the discussions between the participants in the focus group shows gives a feeling of great promise that uniformed standards can be developed that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process in the LBMA. Members repeatedly expressed their support of such standards. There also appeared to be a sense of urgency in this matter. The real challenge, however, is to motivate the participants to maintain this attitude.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Because of the widely held belief regarding the role of autonomy in the Baptist tradition, the national, state, and district associations have been reluctant to produce suggested documents and guidelines for the ordination of its ministers in the member churches. The failure to establish such guidelines has contributed to the lack of uniformity in the ordination process within churches affiliated with the denomination. Such a lack of standards has led to the ordination of ill-prepared ministers serving those within traditionally African-American Baptist churches, including those churches that claim membership in the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association (LBMA). The purpose of this study was to address the willingness of LBMA pastors to establish ordination standards as well as what such standards would entail. By developing such uniform standards, it is believed that integrity would be added to the ordination process of the LBMA.

To address the problem identified by this research project, a phenomenological method of research was selected. As the focus of this study would be on the experience of ordination among the pastors associated with the LBMA, it is felt that the phenomenological research method, which emphasizes the essence or structure of an experience, would be the most effective. Through this research study, several of the

LBMA pastors' ordination experiences, including those of ordaining others prematurely, served as a foundation for making the case for uniformed standards.

As a basis for the identification of what should be explored for possible inclusion in the standards, the author reviewed literature and other resources related to the statement of establishing standards that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination process within the LBMA. The primary source for the initial argument recommending ordination standards was the author's own experiences in observing and participating in the ordination process as a member of the LBMA. In addition, other sources included a review of the practices and standards of ordination established by other Protestant denominations. In recognition of the role of African-American Baptist ministers also being helping professionals, the licensing, practice, and procedures ascribed to by the helping professions of education, psychology, and medicine were also examined.

In a closer analysis of both the Protestant Denominations of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey, Churches of God General Conference, and the Consolation Baptist Association, as well as of the aforementioned helping professions, common themes associated with ordination/licensing of its members emerged. Such themes included the need for oversight, formalized training in the respective fields, maturity, and good moral character. In establishing additional focus group questions as well as portions of the demographic questionnaire, these themes were incorporated to determine their significance and bearing on the current and future ordination practices of the LBMA.

After the completion of the focus group, an analysis of notes, audiotapes, and transcripts from that session aided in the identification of six themes that guide the conclusions, findings, and recommendations found in this research paper. The themes that arose were: consensus among LBMA pastors in the need for a uniform ordination process, criteria for ordination, defining good moral character, the role of education within the licensing and ordination processes, the need to assess commitment to the Baptist doctrine, and the problems inherent in there being no identifiable way to sanction ministerial misconduct.

Findings

In Chapter One, it was stated that the primary question proposed is that inherent in the problem statement: How does the LBMA develop standards that will bring uniformity and integrity to the ordination practices within that organization? It was also noted that, in order to narrow the scope of the research, it was imperative that the author answer several questions surrounding the willingness of LBMA members to accept the need for such standards, the barriers to the establishment of such standards, and what should be included in them. The answers to these questions serve as a basis for the findings in this research project.

The first question, “What is the biblical view of the ordination held by Baptist, particularly the LBMA?” Due to the role of ministers being scripturally based, it was believed that the pastors in the LBMA would focus on the theological arguments for the ordination process. However, those who participated in the focus group primarily relied on their own experiences with ordination as well as what would be deemed “traditional” practices, versus biblically-based ones, to guide their views of ordination and its process.

Very few focus group members cited scripture in their arguments describing their own ordination practices.

For the second research question, the author looked to other Protestant denominations to identify, “What resources do other Baptist conventions and districts offer that could help the LBMA develop standards for ordination?” It was found that, of all the national Baptist conventions, only the American Baptist had produced suggested standards for ordination. Even in examining this denomination, the standards were not requirements of the member churches, but only served as guidelines that the member churches were encouraged to follow. In looking at local levels within denominations, some had indeed chosen to establish standards, but again compliance was voluntary. The absence of required ordination guidelines within other denominations, but specifically LBMA churches, has been detrimental to the denomination; for example, the Baptist church being used as a means for ministers to gain ordination and commandeer the Baptist name for the purpose of establishing churches that do not truly ascribe to Baptist doctrine. Such behavior has and can result in the diluting of the Baptist faith.

Due in part to this fear of the misappropriation of the Baptist denomination by those who do not truly ascribe to the Baptist tenets, the third research question, “What role, if any, should the LBMA have in preparing candidates for ordination?” was posed. In this study, it was found that members of the LBMA believed that uniformed standards for ordination would serve to better prepare candidates for the ministry. In this consensus, it was argued that the LBMA would be at the forefront of the establishment of such ordination standards. It is believed that, unlike licensing which is done solely at the discretion of the candidate’s church, ordination involves the pastors of sister churches;

therefore, it was found that ordination standards could not be developed by one church alone, but that standards should be uniform and created by all the pastors involved in the ordination process, specifically those within the LBMA. Although it was believed that the need for autonomy would interfere with the development of such standards, it was found that autonomy was not a barrier to involvement in the creation or implementation of standards. LBMA pastors acknowledged that their autonomy was not absolute in that they relied on other LBMA pastors to aid in ordaining of candidates.

As the LBMA pastors demonstrated a willingness to establish ordination standards, the fourth question, “What minimum qualifications should a candidate possess before he is considered for ordination?” sought to identify requirements for considering a candidate for ordination. Although the LBMA pastors agreed that minimum requirements should be met before a candidate was considered for ordination, there was no real consensus as to what these requirements should be. Suggestions for requirements included spiritual maturity, an undetermined educational requirement, and an understanding of Baptist doctrine. Even when some level of agreement about a specific category was established, defining how to operationalize the category did not occur. For example, when discussing an educational requirement, some defined it as including specific books read; others discussed formalized education, while others viewed it as being more hands-on training. It was asserted by the group that the primary emphasis for assessing a candidate’s readiness was his spiritual maturity, as it serves as the basis upon which all other skills and abilities are developed and nurtured.

Although the LBMA pastors acknowledged the barriers to establishing ordination standards, the benefits inherent in doing so, their willingness to assist in the process, and

even tentative requirements for candidates, the LBMA pastors were unable to adequately define standards that could serve as a basis for the uniform process sought. It was found that additional discussion surrounding the aforementioned areas is needed to insure that any standards established by the LBMA have the integrity argued for in the beginning of this paper.

Conclusions

Autonomy within the Baptist denomination has often been touted as a major part of the faith. However, it is concluded that true autonomy within the Baptist tradition, specifically within the LBMA, does not exist. Individual Baptist churches, especially those in smaller communities such as those served by LBMA pastors, do not and cannot exist in a vacuum. Cooperation and collaboration are needed in order to serve the Baptist community. In addition, membership in district, state, and local associations also have their requirements for membership and edicts to which member churches ascribe, further eroding a church's autonomy. In voicing an adherence to the Baptist denomination, member churches acknowledge an acceptance of the ordinances of the Baptist faith, including Communion, Baptism by Full Immersion, and an adherence to the Articles of Faith. Such common beliefs and practices should remove any barriers that the Baptist autonomy position has, and thus permit the establishment of uniformed standards of ordination.

As the statement that one is of the Baptist denomination implies that the individual ascribes to the Articles of Faith and other principles previously mentioned that are parts of Baptist doctrine. The failure of the Baptist denomination to establish ordination standards that insure that a candidate is committed to the upholding and

practicing of such standards can and has resulted in ministers being ordained as “Baptist ministers” without this commitment. Such a lack of loyalty to the Baptist ordinances has contributed to the dilution of the Baptist Church’s distinctiveness. In its place, churches have been established with the Baptist name while in truth they are nothing but a fusion of Baptist doctrines that the ordained minister has chosen to embrace based upon his own preferences along with edicts from other denominations and sources. I believe that uniform standards for ordination do not only insure the integrity of the ordination process, but maintains the reputation of the Baptist Church.

When it is ascertained that a candidate does possess loyalty to the Baptist denomination, it is imperative that the Baptist Church provide him with the resources needed to insure his success as a minister of the gospel. I conclude that the only way to guarantee that candidates will be prepared for the task of leading the church is by developing a protocol for training/ordination that includes areas in which they will need to demonstrate proficiency in their roles as church leaders. As it stands, candidates have to travel the ordination path without a roadmap. They are not receiving the tools or skills needed to lead. This author argues that it is the failure of the Ordaining Council of not only the LBMA, but also of the national Baptist organization to develop standards to insure the competency of those who are ordained.

Candidate competency is an important reason for the establishment of ordination standards. However, I believe that such need for candidate aptitude goes beyond the individual candidate. Many of those who are ordained by the LBMA as well as other Baptist Ordaining Councils eventually seek and are awarded pastoral roles. Therefore, their training, leadership style, and knowledge have the capacity to impact the lives of

numerous people within the Baptist Church. In an examination of the demographic questionnaires completed by the LBMA members who participated in the focus group, it was noted that six out of the ten (or 60%) of them ranged in ages from 63 to 71. It is argued that, within the next ten years, there will be a high turnover in the leadership of the majority of those pastors church due to retirement or other age-related factors. In the last three years, a large majority of the African-American Baptist churches in Lima who appointed new pastors chose them from ministers ordained by ordaining councils comprised of LBMA members. The future direction of the Baptist Church in Lima will be shaped by those who are ordained by LBMA member-churches. In addition, as the Baptist pastor's role often extends beyond the walls of the church as he is often viewed as a spokesperson and leader within the African-American community, those ordained by the LBMA also have the potential to impact the African-American community as a whole. Ordination standards within the LBMA member-churches as well as those within the Baptist Church as a whole are needed to insure that the Baptist Church continues to move in a positive direction.

Recommendations

Through review of the literature and themes noted in the focus group discussion, several recommendations regarding the establishment of ordination standards within the LBMA were formulated. A major area that must be addressed in the standards established is that of clear time frames for each stage of the process. Such time frames will serve many purposes, the first of which is to allow other pastors involved in the ordination process to feel comfortable in the knowledge that the process is not a hasty one for any candidate. In determining appropriate time frames, this author reflected upon

Jesus' own practice in regards to preparing his disciples for the work of the ministry for which he had chosen them. He kept them under his tutelage for three years prior to sending them out. It is, therefore believed, that the LBMA should attempt to model this practice by setting a minimum of one year between a minister's call and that of licensure and at least two years between licensure and ordination. During that initial year, the candidate's pastor should assess the character of the candidate through examining his involvement in church ministries, church attendance, pattern of tithing, and other church-based outreach. Such assessment will aid the pastor in determining the level of commitment the candidate has to his call, his church, and the Baptist denomination as a whole. This will help to alleviate some concerns about ministers choosing the Baptist Church for their ordination because of the ease of doing so. After licensure, the two years preceding ordination should include the provision of hands-on ministerial experiences for the licensee.

Ordination is often seen as the step leading to pastoralship. It is the duty of the pastor to insure that the licensee is well-prepared to assume the responsibilities of pastoralship. The licensee will conduct duties consistent with those of a pastor during that two year period. A set number of sermons should occur, pastoral counseling training and practice, as well as assisting in the officiating of weddings and funerals, and carrying out the ordinances of baptism and communion. Such duties will occur under the direct supervision of the licensee's pastor.

As one LBMA pastor stated, he was not ordained in the Baptist faith, although he currently pastors a Baptist church. In developing time frames, the issue of non-Baptist ordained ministers must be addressed. It is recommended that the LBMA include a clause

in the ordination standards that suggests that any non-Baptist ordained minister who wants to retain ministerial status when transferring to an LBMA church, be placed on probationary status for one year. During that year, his commitment to the Baptist denomination as well as training on the Baptist traditions and Articles of Faith should occur. For example, if one chooses to obtain ordination credentials from an LBMA church, he must submit to and carry out the ordinances of baptism and communion as practiced in the Baptist denomination. In other words, if he has not been baptized by immersion, which is a principle standard and practice in Baptist doctrine, he must be re-baptized as a show of his commitment to the denominational practices of the ordinances. In addition, the non-Baptist ordained minister should not be permitted to carry out any duties of an ordained minister until the period of preparation is completed and he has been ordained. In addition, the pastor of the church that he attends should conduct a background check to find out his reasons for leaving his previous denomination. This process should include letters of references, interviews with persons familiar with the individual, and contact with his previous pastor.

LBMA pastors asserted that the role of ordaining new ministers belongs to all of them. Because of this belief, the process preceding ordination should not be the sole responsibility of the candidate's pastor. It is suggested that a mentor, who is not the candidate's pastor but is an LBMA member, be assigned to each candidate during the two-year period between licensure and ordination. Such an appointment will serve three major purposes: first, it will provide an objective opinion of the candidate that the pastor, with whom he has a relationship, may not totally be able to give; second, it will alleviate pressure that the pastor may feel from church members who will insist that the candidate

is ready to be ordained at the end of the minimum waiting period; and third, it will permit the candidate to have access to additional resources, supports, and ways of conducting pastoral duties.

Although mentors and hands-on training are needed and beneficial, another area that needs further exploration is defining acceptable educational background. In the focus group, members of the LBMA asserted that some formalized education was needed. However, due to candidates being called to the ministry at different stages of their lives from adolescence to late adulthood, insisting upon a certain degree attainment is not feasible. Instead, it is recommended that the LBMA design a curriculum in which candidates are required to obtain classroom education in topics deemed necessary for the establishment of a strong theological background as well as a thorough understanding of the faith and practices in the denomination. There should also be a track that helps prepare the individual for church leadership. The LBMA needs to take it upon itself to develop the classes as well as teach them and/or find qualified instructors to do so. The formal education portion of the ordination period should require that the candidates receive passing grades in all identified subject areas prior to being considered for ordination. Although it may be difficult to insist on formal education from an accredited institution, the candidate should be strongly encouraged to do so.

In looking at these various components, the LBMA must draft a formalized statement of the requirements for ordination. However, as discussed previously, the composition of the LBMA is likely to change within the next decade. If the LBMA wants the standards to continue to be enforced, it is essential that the next generation of pastors have input into the creation of them. Therefore, it is recommended that, once a draft of

the standards is completed by the LBMA, copies should be disseminated to each church represented by the LBMA for their adoption. It is not suggested that non-pastors be involved in the initial stages; as based upon this study, the process could become bogged down in semantics and issues unrelated to the overall process. However, when the local churches are made aware of the standards set forth by the association it will increase the chance for uniform practices to be adhered to and supported throughout the LBMA church community, again, reflecting upon the recent trend of local church vacancies are more than likely being filled by individuals who have been ordained by the ordaining council of the LBMA. It should, therefore, be noted that the adoption of this process is in the best interest of the local Baptist community as a whole.

Although adoption of standards is a major step for the LBMA, insuring compliance with the standards is almost as important. One can establish a way of conducting ordination, but if it is not implemented correctly, the standards lose their significance. The LBMA needs to establish a subcommittee whose role is the oversight of compliance with the standards. This committee will be the one to which pastors submit candidates after they are called to the ministry so that their progress, experience, and education can be monitored. This subcommittee will then give approval to the candidate's pastor when that pastor states that his candidate is ready for a convening of the Ordaining Council.

Based upon the results of this study, I believe that there are five major areas that must be assessed before an individual is ordained. They are:

1. *Spiritual Maturity.* An experience of conversion, an understanding and belief of a divine call to ministry, a consistent and stable Christian walk, a deep concern for the salvation, well-being and edification of others are all essentials.
2. *Doctrinal Purity.* Each person who is ordained in the Baptist church is a prospective pastor. Therefore, he must affirm his commitment and adherence to the doctrinal position of the LBMA.
3. *Educational Achievement.* In view of the demands and expectations placed upon LBMA pastors, it is absolutely necessary that they complete a designed course of study that will equip them for the work of the ministry.
4. *Denominational Polity.* All members of the LBMA should be convinced that those who seek ordination in the Baptist church sincerely accept Baptists distinctives and practices.
5. *Practical Experience.* As in other professions, candidates seeking ordination should participate in the practice of ministry prior to becoming a pastor. Therefore, the candidate's local pastor should assign ministry tasks that will give him an opportunity to experience the practical areas of ministry during his training period.

As it is the opinion of this author that the strict adherence to the belief and practice of autonomy among Baptists has and still does prohibit the denomination from reaching its potential for the kingdom, it is, therefore, recommended that a study of this matter be conducted by our national conventions to discover what can be done to create an accountability system among Baptists that will prevent the abuses that congregational self governance continues to bring upon the denomination. When and if this occurs, this

author believes that the Baptist church will become a more effective conduit through which God can work.

Finally, as it stands currently within the LBMA, there is no provision that allows for the revocation of ordination credentials for ministers whose conduct merits such action. Therefore, the author recommends that a study be conducted to establish a system wherein the Baptist denomination may hold ordained ministers accountable for actions unbecoming a Christian. This study must include procedures whereby an individual's ordination status can be revoked for severe acts of misconduct that brings shame and embarrassment upon the denomination and the kingdom of God.

Limitations

Although this research provided a basis for the establishment of ordination standards for LBMA churches, there are limitations to this study; therefore, results should be viewed with caution. A major limitation of this study is that it only included African-American Baptist pastors who were members of the LBMA. The LBMA is a voluntary organization. Although it is comprised of the majority of African-American Baptist pastors in the community, not all African-American Baptist pastors in the city are members or must remain so. Yet, these pastors also ordain and select those for the ministry. Such pastors may have different views of ordination, different practices, and may not be invested in the development of standards for ordination. Standards that may be established by the LBMA may not be put into practice by all African-American Baptist pastors, keeping the door open for those seeking an easy route to ordination.

In examining the number of African-American-led Baptist churches, those in the LBMA comprise a miniscule percentage of them. In addition, those participants in the

focus group acknowledged that the majority of their positions related to ordination were based upon personal experiences, not theology. If the goal becomes to generalize the results of this study to the larger African-American Baptist Church community, such a generalization would not be prudent. Instead, if such generalizations are to be done, themes addressed in this focus group should be discussed at an organized meeting of pastors throughout state, district, and national conventions to insure that issues pertinent to LBMA pastors are also of concern in other cities/communities.

The LBMA has the challenge of aiding in the determination of the future direction of the African-American Baptist church community in Lima, Ohio. The establishment of ordination standards insures that the next generation of ordained ministers is well-equipped to assume the leadership of the African-American Baptist churches. It is the duty of the LBMA to begin the development of ordination standards that will bring integrity and uniformity to this process.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION TO THE FOCUS GROUP MEETING

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION TO THE FOCUS GROUP MEETING

June 1, 2006

Dear Pastor:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. My dissertation project is studying the impact of having uniformed standards in the ordination process within Baptist associations such as the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association. I am conducting a focus group as a study to gain information that is not currently available in the literature. As a Baptist pastor, I have both a professional and personal interest in issues that relate to the Baptist church.

The focus group will consist of pastors who are affiliated with the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association. Group discussion will focus on issues related to the ordination practices in our association. The focus group, which will be held at the Philippian Missionary Baptist Church, will require approximately 2 hours of your time, including introductions and discussion time. A full breakfast will be served by our culinary ministry.

Your participation is voluntary and you will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The focus group will be audio taped as the primary mode of data collection. The audiotapes will remain in my possession until they are transcribed, at which point the audiotapes will be erased and destroyed. All information will be coded and kept strictly confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in the final report, only group data will be reported. No individual data will be included in the report.

Participation in the research may aid in a better understanding of the impact of ordination practices on the Baptist church.

Again, I thank you for your willingness to participate. Please feel free to contact if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

B. LaMont Monford, Sr.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age _____
2. Educational Background (please do not include honorary degrees)
 - High school diploma/GED _____
 - Associates degree _____
 - Bachelor's degree _____
 - Masters degree _____
 - Doctorate _____
3. Years as a Pastor _____
4. Years as an Ordained Minister _____
5. Originally ordained in the Baptist Denomination _____yes _____no
6. How many ministers have been ordained under your pastorate _____
7. Amount of time from your call to the ministry to your ordination:
 - Less than 6 months _____
 - 6 months to 1 year _____
 - 1 year to 2 years _____
 - More than 2 years _____
8. What is the average amount of time that passed between the call and the ordination of ministers under your pastorate:
 - Less than 6 months _____
 - 6 months to 1 year _____
 - 1 year to 2 years _____
 - More than 2 years _____
9. Rank (in order of what you deem as important) criteria for ordination
 - _____ educational background
 - _____ call to ministry
 - _____ moral character
 - _____ member of an LBMA church
 - _____ practical/field experience
 - _____ emotional stability/competence
 - _____ baptized believer

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

- I. **Introduction of project to group members** (not audio taped) 10 minutes
- II. **Warm-up** (audio taping begins) 10 minutes
 - A. Read over consent to participate in research
 1. Ask for clarifications
 - B. Explain the process and time commitments for the group, e.g.
 1. Pass out Consent to Audiotape Group. Get signatures. Ask for questions
 2. Ask participants not to refer to each other by name during taping
 3. Explain the process for the day, e.g. breaks, time commitment, ending time
 4. Ask for questions before beginning
- III. **General Discussions**
 1. Do you believe that there is a need to have a uniformed process for ordination within the LBMA and the Baptist Denomination as a whole? Why or why not?
 2. Other than the call to ministry, what other criteria do you believe should be set for ordination? Why?
 3. In reviewing the criteria for ordination of other denominations and for eligibility to practice medicine, psychology, and to teach, the idea of good moral character is noted. How do you define this in regards to those being ordained under your pastorate?
 4. Educational backgrounds of the members of this group vary. What minimum educational background should be required (high school diploma, bachelor's degree, etc.)? What educational classes/training topics should be undertaken before one is ordained?
 5. How do you assess a candidate's understanding and commitment to Baptist doctrine and polity?
 6. Autonomy is valued within the Baptist tradition, how can autonomy be maintained while still establishing uniformed standards within the LBMA?
- IV. **Wrap-Up and Debriefing**
 - A. Are there any questions you would like to ask or additional information you would like to ask before we adjourn?
 - B. Once again, thank you for participating in the focus group.

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

I _____ agree to participate in the research project entitled “Developing Standards to Bring Uniformity and Integrity to the Ordination Process in the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association.” I understand that the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact that ordination practices has on the churches in the Lima Baptist Ministerial Association. I also understand that the discussion will be **audio taped** for accuracy of statements but that the audiotapes will be erased and destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, I acknowledge that I willingly enter into this research project as a participant and that I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Further, I understand that information about me obtained from this research will be kept confidential with only demographic information being included in the report. I also understand that I will be notified when the research project is completed and that I can make a written request for a copy of the report or any part thereof, if I so desire.

My signature below means that I freely agree to participate in this research project.

Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator _____ Date _____

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