

Ordination Policy and Procedure

Theological Value Statement

Based on the testimony of Scripture and our own experience as a congregation, we believe that every person baptized into Jesus Christ is called into God's service and gifted for that service by God's Spirit. These gifts are manifold and diverse. At Knollwood, sometimes believers exercise these gifts without ever entering full-time professional ministry; thanks be to God for those people, who nourish and bless us! At other times, because the congregation and the individual agree on its rightness, the congregation will dedicate the individual to public ministry in a service of ordination. While we do not believe that ordination confers any special holiness or puts a Christian into a higher category of discipleship, we do believe that ordination is public testimony to the ordinand's fitness for ministry, and thus that it should be done only after a process of serious consideration. The following policies are intended to guide the congregation and the candidate for ordination through inquiry to discernment to, we hope, an outcome pleasing to all, especially to God.

A Process in Three Phases: Inquiry/Application, Discernment, Examination/Ordination

Note: After a potential candidate is deemed eligible (after membership of at least a year), this process will usually take at least six months to complete.

Phase 1: Application (Responsible Group: Pastoral Team, Deacon Chair, and Ordination Mentoring Committee, appointed as necessary by Chair of Deacons and Pastor)

Who is eligible to request ordination?

Applicant must be a member of KBC a minimum of 1 year, with evidence of meaningful connection and participation within the congregation. (We will consider exceptions, particularly in the case of a minister we are calling to employment with us who has not yet been ordained. In these cases, we would imagine this as a process we might engage conjointly with another congregation.)

Normally, formal prerequisites also include the completion of an undergraduate degree and a graduate theological education from accredited institutions. Any candidate seeking exemption from this standard would be asked to make a case (e.g., personal study, life experience).

Procedure:

1. A member of the KBC clergy team meets with Inquirer.
2. Inquirer makes known in writing (to Pastoral Team and Chair of Deacons) her/his desire to enter the process.

3. Pastor and Deacon Chair appoint Mentoring Committee, normally 3-5 in size, comprised of at least one KBC clergy and lay leaders.
4. Mentoring committee certifies pre-requisites. If pre-requisites met, Inquirer becomes Candidate and moves to the Discernment Phase.
5. Candidate and Mentoring Committee are introduced to congregation.

Phase 2: A Period of Mutual Discernment (Responsible Group: Ordination Mentoring Committee)

This is a mandatory step (with the possibility of exceptions). This is a time of discerning, forming, advising, and mentoring. The primary task of the Mentoring Committee is to provide counsel, structure, and feedback as the Candidate explores a sense of call in the context of engagement with this church.

During this phase the Candidate will be introduced to a variety of ministry roles and tasks with supervision and feedback. In some cases, some or much of this requirement might be met by collaborative structures of supervised ministry with a divinity school. A time frame for this discernment period is normally 4-6 months.

This period might also include the drafting of materials that would be used in the examination phase and consultation around these materials. The question of the candidate's identity and desire for affiliation with and recognition by groups of baptists with whom KBC is formally affiliated will be explored in this phase and included in any recommendation for ordination.

This advising/mentoring group, at the end of this period, makes a report and recommendation to the church through deacon executive council and the deacons about whether the candidate is ready to move to examination stage. The report notes the ways the Candidate has met the requirements set forth in this policy. Candidate and mentoring group, either separately or together, may determine that no further steps toward ordination should be pursued. The mentoring group may recommend that a further period of time be engaged for continued reflection, discernment, or exploration. The mentoring group may recommend that the candidate move to the examination stage.

Procedure:

1. Mentoring Committee meets with candidate and identifies role(s) of ministry engagement within KBC community to assist candidate explore his/her calling and gifts. Regular structures for reflection and feedback will be part of this process.
2. Mentoring Committee and candidate may utilize this time for writing for reflection, dialogue, and feedback materials that could be used later in the examination period.
3. Mentoring Committee and candidate will explore with what baptist group(s) KBC participates the candidate desires recognition.

4. Mentoring Committee drafts brief report summarizing the candidate's and committee's process, and containing their recommendation to the church (or deacons?) about candidate's readiness to enter the next phase of the process.
5. The deacons vote on the recommendation of the Mentoring Committee. If approved, the ordination process will proceed to the Examination and Service of Ordination phase.

Phase 3a: Examination (Responsible Group: Examination Committee)

Procedure:

1. Examination Committee formed (see below).
2. Written materials prepared and distributed.
3. Examination scheduled, vote taken, decision communicated to church.
4. Service of ordination.

Composition of an Examining Committee:

The composition of the committee will conform to requirements of larger Baptist bodies with whom KBC is in friendly cooperation as discerned and recommended by the mentoring committee in consultation with the candidate during the mentoring phase. In all cases, the committee will include a minimum of 12 total members, including at least 8 members of Knollwood Baptist Church. It will be the responsibility of the pastor, in consultation with the candidate and the mentoring committee, to invite and convene the committee.

Written materials to be prepared:

Materials to be prepared will conform to requirements for recognition of any or all groups with whom candidate seeks broader recognition, consistent with the recommendation coming out of the exploratory stage. In all cases, these materials will include integrated essays that speak to the following:

Life story and spiritual journey, including discernment of call and preparation for ministry.

Credo statement that speaks to the nature of God and God's action in the world through:

- Creation
- Redemption
- The life and work of Jesus the Christ
- The presence and work of the Spirit
- The ministry of the Church, particularly the people called Baptist
- The human condition in theological perspective
- A theological statement about the nature of public ministry

The total length of these essays should not exceed 15 typed, double-spaced pages.

Procedure of an Examining Committee:

The process of examination of the candidate will conform to requirements of larger Baptist bodies with whom KBC is in friendly cooperation as discerned and recommended by the mentoring committee in consultation with the candidate during the mentoring phase. In all cases, the committee will have had access to the written materials at least one week prior to the committee's meeting. The committee may choose to meet prior to calling the candidate in for questions and discussion. The committee will engage the candidate in person around the written materials and any other matters pertaining directly to the candidate's fitness for ordination. After a period of questions and dialogue, the candidate will be dismissed for the committee to have further discussion and vote upon their recommendation. If the committee votes for ordination, the pastor schedules a date for the service of ordination in consultation with the candidate. If the committee votes against ordination, a report is written that documents the vote and any related recommendations.

Is a call to a particular place of service necessary?

Our clear preference is that a Candidate seeking ordination to public ministry will have completed graduate theological education and will have received a call to a place of ministry, so that a service of ordination celebrates and confirms this calling. We can imagine rare instances in which a Candidate has completed every step and has not yet received a call, yet family or other life circumstances require a move away from KBC. The Mentoring Committee, in these instances, can recommend a Candidate for examination and ordination, bearing in mind the requirements of any of the larger Baptist bodies with whom the Candidate seeks affiliation and recognition.

Phase 3b: Service of Ordination

Scheduled and planned by the pastoral team in dialogue with candidate and key participants. The church issues a certificate of ordination at the time of the service.