

July 15, 2010

Dear Members of Alliance of Baptists clergy registry:

First, we want to thank you for your faithful support of the Alliance of Baptists and our mission and ministry. One way you have shown this was by choosing to enter the Alliance's Affirmation of Call process and thereby join the Alliance's clergy registry.

Second, we want to tell you the exciting news that in April 2010 the Alliance board approved a new process for recognizing ministers called the Clergy Recognition process. A board-appointed task group spent a year studying why and how the Alliance might recognize the local church ordinations of clergy. What prompted this review and these changes?

History

The Affirmation of Call process developed some years ago as a clergy registry for ministers who were members of the Alliance and endorsed for specialized ministry or serving Alliance congregations. Those interested in being on the clergy registry were dedicated souls who loved the Alliance and wanted to be able to call themselves Alliance ministers.

In recent years as the Alliance has become better known, we have been getting requests from folks who have no history with the Alliance to have their call affirmed. The reasons for this it seems are varied. For some it's because they found a progressive group of Baptists, for others they want access to benefits from the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, and for others they want to receive some kind of support from the Alliance for a church start or new ministry.

The Affirmation of Call process was much too simple for these changing times. To have one's ordination recognized by the Alliance in the Affirmation of Call process as you may remember, one simply had to submit a brief application a photo, a copy of an ordination certificate, a letter from one's church, and a \$25 processing fee. The person also had to be an individual member of the Alliance, but there was no time requirement for membership before joining the registry.

This development presented a number of theological, social and legal challenges, as well as an opportunity for the Alliance to reaffirm its commitment to serve individuals and congregations who affiliate with the Alliance. There was a need to maintain both the strong relational spirit of the Alliance family and to maintain the kind of integrity we have demonstrated in our process for the endorsement of chaplains and pastoral counselors.

Clergy Recognition Process

Out of this conversation emerged the Clergy Recognition process which we believe beautifully strikes that balance between our relational spirit and our need for integrity, particularly for folks who call themselves Alliance ministers.

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We want the Alliance's clergy recognition to mean something – not just for legal and vocational reasons that are required by some – so that those who are Alliance ministers see themselves and are seen by congregations, institutions, and the larger world as clergy with integrity and authenticity. This integrity comes from the ministers having engaged a process that verifies education, work experience, and ordination; that obtains a background check for every minister; that invites personal and theological reflection; and that comes from a community of peers who have also reached these high standards.

Clergy Recognition is an official declaration by the Alliance of Baptists, that a person meets the Alliance's standards to be an Alliance-recognized clergyperson. This is a requirement to enter the Alliance's Search & Call Process.

Clergy Recognition is a covenant relationship between the Alliance of Baptists and the clergypersons the Alliance recognizes. This allows ministers to meet certain professional requirements and have denominational recognition for employment. It confirms that a minister is in good standing with the Alliance and provides the minister with a professional denominational identity.

The Alliance pledges to provide support and connection in creative and evolving ways for recognized clergy as they carry out their ministries. Recognized clergy agree to on-going participation in the life of the Alliance, as well as maintaining communication and accountability to the Alliance.

Clergy Recognition addresses the following core standards through a process of written papers, interviews, and mutual discernment:

- Ministerial and theological integrity
- Good standing and accountability within the Alliance of Baptists
- Ability to work in ways that promote equity, collegiality, and diversity
- Willingness to adhere to the Alliance Covenant and Mission
- Commitment to sharing the good news of the Alliance of Baptists
- Continuing spiritual formation and growth
- Academic education, self-reflection training, and professional experience

So, these changes mean that those of you who previously joined the clergy registry are invited to engage in this new Clergy Recognition process in order to maintain your recognition as an Alliance minister. Our hope and desire is that this is a process that is meaningful, supportive, and encouraging for you in your ministry.

Required Materials

The following are required for an application for clergy recognition to be considered:

1. Completed Clergy Recognition Application Form.
2. All applicants must hold individual membership in the Alliance of Baptists at the \$150 Level. Applicants who have already been ordained by a local congregation must be an Alliance member for at least one year prior to application. Those applicants who are in the ordination process in a local congregation must simply be current individual members. Membership in an Alliance-affiliated congregation does not meet the requirement of individual membership in the Alliance.

3. Ordination to the Gospel ministry by a congregation affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists or a congregation from the free church tradition.
4. Participation in a local congregation that is nurturing the faith and vocational identity of the clergyperson, as well as at least 2 years of relationship with a congregation affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists or a congregation from the free church tradition.
5. A brief autobiographical and vocational sketch of your life.
6. A brief statement of your faith journey.
7. A brief statement of your identity as an Alliance of Baptists minister.
8. An earned bachelor's degree consisting of 120 semester hours (180 quarter hours) and a Master of Divinity degree or equivalent, consisting of at least 90 hours of graduate study.
9. Experience of at least one year of pastoral/spiritual leadership experience in a congregation or specialized ministry setting. One year of contextual education, ministerial internship, or Clinical Pastoral Education residency will satisfy the one-year requirement.
10. At least one completed program or unit of a supervised self-reflective training experience (e.g. Clinical Pastoral Education, spiritual direction training, community organizing training, etc.).
11. Letter of reference from supervisor or colleague in ministry.
12. Two letters of reference from professional and/or personal references (not family members).
13. Signed Alliance of Baptists Clergy Covenant.
14. A current photograph.
15. Signed Authorization for Release of Personal Information.
16. \$100.00 application fee to cover the cost of background check and processing.

Current Members of the clergy registry

As a current member of the clergy registry, you have the opportunity to complete this new Clergy Recognition process with a few of the aforementioned requirements waived. You are not required to provide:

- at least one year of prior membership in the Alliance at the \$150 level
- copy of ordination certificate
- letter of participation from local congregation

However this opportunity is available to you as long as you submit the rest of the materials by December 31, 2010. After January 1, 2011, a former clergy registry member may apply for clergy recognition by submitting a fully completed application.

As of January 1, 2011, the clergy registry will no longer exist. All previous members of the clergy registry must submit an application for clergy recognition to be a recognized clergyperson of the Alliance of Baptists.

Alliance Endorsed Ministers

Ministers who have been endorsed by the Alliance of Baptists for ministry in specialized

settings such as chaplaincy, clinical pastoral education, and pastoral counseling and are Active are required to submit **only** the following for clergy recognition to be considered:

1. Completed Clergy Recognition Application Form.
2. A brief statement of your identity as an Alliance of Baptists minister.
3. Signed Alliance of Baptists Clergy Covenant.
4. A current photograph.
5. Signed Authorization for Release of Personal Information.
6. \$100.00 application fee to cover the cost of background check and processing unless endorsement has been granted in the 12 months prior to application for clergy recognition.

You can read more about the new Clergy Recognition process, perspectives, and procedures at www.allianceofbaptists.org/serve/clergy_recognition.

Search & Call

Historically, anyone who wanted to enter the Alliance's Search & Call process could simply submit a resume to the Alliance office. That resume would then be circulated to Alliance-affiliated and Alliance friendly congregations looking for clergy.

In order to maintain integrity of the Search & Call process and to ensure that the clergy the Alliance recommends for ministerial leadership positions are credentialed and recognized, as of January 1, 2011, Alliance clergy recognition will become a requirement for participation in the Search & Call process. This is another great reason to complete the Clergy Recognition process soon.

Conclusion

While for some this new process may seem cumbersome and more formal than the Alliance has been in the past, our experience with the Endorsement process has taught us that such a process is a great benefit to the Alliance, to the clergy, and to potential employers.

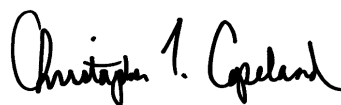
We hope this new process is good news for you because it strengthens the Alliance's process for recognizing clergy, it provides credentials for ministers that exemplify integrity and authenticity, it offers access to outstanding MMBB benefits regardless of a clergyperson's ministry setting, and it assists those who are seeking a call in another denominational congregation or organization.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us. We look forward to working with you in the Clergy Recognition process for the Alliance of Baptists!

Faithfully,



Leah Lonsbury, Chair
Clergy Recognition Community



Christopher T. Copeland
Minister for Leadership Formation