

LICENSING AND ORDINATION TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY THROUGH HOUSTON'S FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

by
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and
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(1) What is the difference between being “licensed” and being “ordained?”

Licensing (which always precedes ordination) is when a male church member contacts HFBC and (in his own words) says, “I believe God is calling me into full-time career ministry for Jesus Christ and I am willing to follow that calling.” **Ordination** occurs after a candidate has been, examined, licensed and observed for a period of time by HFBC staff and members. Ministerial ordination at HFBC is the church’s way of formally saying, “After examination and observation, we concur and believe God is calling you into full-time career ministry for Jesus Christ.”

(2) What is the basis for HFBC having a Licensing and Ordination program?

Licensing and ordination activities, carried out in various forms as determined by individual Baptist churches, are partly civil and partly ecclesiastical. For example, HFBC licenses men into the gospel ministry to comply with the laws of the State of Texas related to things such as conducting weddings. Ordination, though having legal implications, is largely a spiritual process conducted by local Baptist churches as licensed ministers are set apart and prayed for as men embark upon full-time vocational careers in the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. The following scriptures are supportive of the ordination process which we practice: John 15:16, Acts 14:23, I Timothy 2:7, Titus 1:5, Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, II Timothy 1:6 and 1 Peter 5:1-3

(3) What is the procedure for making application to become a licensed minister of Jesus Christ through HFBC?

An interested individual should contact the Coordinator of Licensing & Ordination at 713.957.5891 and request that the application forms be made available to him. After the completed forms are returned, the Coordinator convenes a Licensing & Ordination Council to study and pray over the applicant’s written responses. Taking several factors into prayerful consideration, the Coordinator forms a Council by selecting additional ordained ministers on the church staff to join him in prayer and study of the applicant’s written responses to a wide range of biblically-based theological questions and spiritual matters. The Council also meets personally with the applicant to discuss a wide range of topics, including conversion experience, church membership and service, doctrinal beliefs, stewardship, education and call into full-time ministry.

(4) What happens after completing the forms and meeting with the Licensing & Ordination Council?

Assuming the absence of any problems, the Council formally recommends to the congregation that the applicant be licensed by HFBC into the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. A vote on the Council’s recommendation occurs during a monthly Church Conference. Assuming a favorable vote from the congregation, a License Certificate is provided to the individual.

(5) What functions can a person licensed by HFBC perform? For example, can he perform weddings or baptize?

There is no blanket answer to this question. What may or may not be allowed can vary. The Pastor, makes determinations based on real-time circumstances and considerations.

(6) How long is a licensed minister “observed” by the church before he can be considered for ordination?

There is no set number to answer this question. Without fail, the experience at HFBC has been that a confluence of spiritual thinking among the Licensing & Ordination Council, staff and congregation has come together in unanimity, under leadership of the Holy Spirit, to feel and say “the time is right” to ordain individual candidates. The candidate is not to assert himself in this process; rather, he properly “waits” until he is contacted by HFBC. Generally, the time of observation ranges from six to 18 months.

(7) What is the procedure for officially becoming an ordained minister of Jesus Christ at HFBC?

After observing the licensed minister for a period of time and a decision is made to proceed with ordination, the Licensing & Ordination Council formally recommends during a Church Conference that the candidate be ordained. Assuming a positive vote from the congregation to ordain the candidate, plans are made for the candidate to be publicly recognized as part of a Ministry Ordination Service. Such a service may recognize more than one newly ordained minister. During this time, the Pastor spends time with the new ordainees, making personal recommendations and discussing the challenges and opportunities associated with going into full-time career ministry.

(8) What are the elements of a ministry ordination service at HFBC?

- Explanation of the ordination process
- Introduction of the ministers being ordained and their Ordination Councils
- Ordination related scriptures
- Charge from the Pastor
- Laying on of hands ceremony
- Special music
- Presentation of new Bibles and official Ordination Certificates
- Special time of prayer commemorating both the newly ordained ministers’ commitment to serving Jesus Christ throughout their careers, as well as the congregation’s commitment to praying for the newly ordained ministers
- An opportunity for attendees at the service to meet and visit with the newly ordained ministers.

(9) Is there a person at HFBC to whom questions about licensing or ordination may be directed?

Yes. Call Dr. Charles Poor at 713.957.5891. As Coordinator of Licensing & Ordination, he can answer your questions, as well as provide the forms used in the Licensing & Ordination process at HFBC.