

Ordination Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

### Christian Commitment and Growth

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3 For as long as I can remember, “church” was part of my life, though it was not  
4 necessarily part of my heart. That is because, in my juvenile perspective, my family and other  
5 people I knew from the churches I attended seemed to view church attendance more as a cultural  
6 norm or moral obligation than as a sacred act of worship. But what I have learned through  
7 reflection on my faith journey is that many people desire to have a lived experience that is in  
8 harmony with their beliefs.

9 Growing up, I attended a few different churches that helped me to understand who God is  
10 and His will for humanity. I attended Grace Church of God in Christ—a black church located in  
11 Trenton, New Jersey—with my paternal grandmother (Granny) when I was six years old.  
12 Through Granny’s church, I learned to appreciate exuberant praise and worship, fellowship with  
13 my “church family,” and powerful preaching and teaching.

14 A couple of years later, my mother began to occasionally attend Wayne Avenue Baptist  
15 Church, a black Baptist church also in Trenton. While attending my mom’s church, my younger  
16 sisters and I were in the children’s choir and participated in other youth ministry activities. The  
17 teaching and preaching of the Gospel at my mom’s church significantly influenced my life and  
18 developing theology.

19 At the time, my sense of spirituality centered around the fact that I believed in an all-  
20 powerful God who loved me, cared for me, and heard and acted on my prayers. That  
21 understanding expanded when, at the age of ten, I was in a Sunday school class that changed my  
22 life. The lesson was on the topic of sin and the need for salvation. I told my mom that I had  
23 accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and wanted to get baptized. With my limited

24 understanding of salvation, I was happy to be officially saved. But the messages I learned in  
25 church were not always reinforced at home or in the community, which had a negative impact on  
26 my growth and development as a young disciple of Christ.

27         It was not until my late twenties that I fully embraced the idea that God did not just want  
28 to save people from Hell; He wanted to have a relationship with me and to see me live out His  
29 purposes for my life. So, in the fall of 1999, I rededicated my life to Christ and later became an  
30 active member of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Burlington, New Jersey. This time, I was fully  
31 committed to embracing the Lordship of Jesus Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to make me more  
32 like Him.

33         I began to desire to please God. I abstained from sinful behaviors, aligned myself with  
34 likeminded believers, and focused on learning as much as I could about the Word of God so that  
35 I could live the way He wanted me to live. During the years that followed, my spiritual growth  
36 was astronomical. The evidence was apparent to everyone who knew me. I was hungry and  
37 thirsty for righteousness, empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to others about Jesus, and  
38 experiencing a deeper connection with the Father through prayer, the study of His Holy Word,  
39 and fellowship with other believers inside and outside of my church.

40         Today, I continue to be devoted to living out my life as a truly converted disciple of my  
41 Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I consider myself to be a servant, working to build God's  
42 Kingdom by seeking and helping to save the Lost, feeding God's sheep, and sharing the love of  
43 God with everyone. I am an active member of Parkway Baptist Church in Willingboro, New  
44 Jersey. At Parkway, where the pastor is the Rev. Dr. Le' Roi L. Gill, I have been dedicated to  
45 serving others and growing in community with others for more than three years.

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47 **Call to the Ministry**

48 The process of discerning and accepting my call to ministry has been a long one,  
49 covering several life events. One such event that helped me understand my call was the first time  
50 I received an invitation to preach. In early 2006, a fellow participant in a workplace Bible study  
51 asked me to preach at a National Day of Prayer service at his father’s church, Amwell Church of  
52 the Brethren in North Jersey. I had always participated in church choirs and other music  
53 ministries. It was in this capacity that I first sensed the Lord using me in a special way. At the  
54 time my friend asked me to preach, I was serving in various church ministries, including leading  
55 worship, and teaching Sunday school and Bible study. However, I did not consider myself a  
56 preacher. So, when he invited me to preach, I told him, “Oh, I’m not a preacher.” His response  
57 startled me: “Oh, but yes, you are!”

58 The Lord’s call on my life to teach, preach, and help others grow in their relationship  
59 with God through His Word was evident to others, but I had never considered that this was  
60 something God was calling me to do. I sang and led worship. It was not initially out of a sense of  
61 call that I taught the Bible classes; I did so because I was captivated by Scripture and other  
62 people said they understood things clearly when I shared with them.

63 But God made a believer out of me at the church in North Jersey, anointing me to deliver  
64 a message in a way that convicted and motivated the congregants to take personal responsibility  
65 for carrying out the mandate on the Church to pray for others. After witnessing their response to  
66 how God used me that day, I began to earnestly seek God through prayer and a multitude of wise  
67 counselors to discern if He was calling me to preach. God confirmed in my spirit that He was  
68 calling me to preach and teach His Word, though I was not certain what that looked like for me.

69           Since that time, I have consistently served God’s people, the community, and my family  
70 with the natural and spiritual gifts that God has given me. Many who have sat under my  
71 preaching and teaching—including close relatives, members of churches I have attended, and  
72 complete strangers I have met while engaging in evangelistic activities—attest to my calling to  
73 preach and teach God’s Word. They say that my practical style makes it easy for them to  
74 understand the Word of God, guides them in how to apply it to their lives, and motivates them to  
75 live for Jesus. But the evidence that gives me the best understanding of what God has called me  
76 to do is the unquenchable, burning desire in my heart to help people on their journey to being  
77 true disciples of Jesus Christ and becoming what God has designed them to be.

78           Now, after years of soul-searching and prayer—along with bouts of fear, doubt, and  
79 discouragement—I can unequivocally say that my calling is to serve as a pastor. I believe that  
80 God has called me to teach, encourage, and lead others to become whole and well-equipped  
81 people who live out His will on Earth. Currently, I am serving as a minister in my home church  
82 and working as a professional hospital chaplain. As part of my church ministry, I regularly teach  
83 an adult Bible study class, engage in congregational and intercessory prayer, provide pastoral  
84 care to members, manage the church’s social media ministry, lead worship, and preach when  
85 assigned by our pastor. As a chaplain, I provide emotional and spiritual support for the patients,  
86 families, and staff at an inner-city hospital.

#### 87           **Academic and Field Preparation and Present Field of Service**

88           I began my career as a newspaper reporter for a major daily publication after graduating  
89 college with a bachelor’s degree in English in 1994. I spent six and a half years in journalism,  
90 then went back to school and earned a master’s degree in Communication and Information  
91 Studies. In late 2001, I moved into a corporate setting and worked in public relations (PR) and

92 corporate communications for another six years. It was during this time that I began to discern a  
93 call to ministry. I clearly heard God tell me to leave my job because He was calling me to the  
94 ministry. Around the same time, my youngest sister became ill, and my family needed my help.  
95 So, in the spring of 2007—nearly nine months after I initially heard God calling me away—I left  
96 my corporate job and started a home-based, Christian PR and marketing communications firm  
97 while helping my mother care for my sister.

98         Throughout this time, I was also a highly active member at Tabernacle Baptist Church  
99 (2000 to 2007) and later at Faith Deliverance Worship Center, Inc., a non-denominational  
100 Christian church in Burlington (2007 to 2018). In February 2009, I approached my pastor at the  
101 time (the late Rev. Eric F. Ricks) about my call to ministry. He said that he had “no doubt” I was  
102 called to preach and teach and began my formal mentoring and training for ministry.

103         Later that fall, I enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at Palmer Theological  
104 Seminary. Over the next few years, my ministry training at church included regular Bible study,  
105 leadership training, and ministry development with Pastor Ricks and other ministers. I also had  
106 hands-on experience, including preaching, teaching, serving Communion, visiting the sick and  
107 shut-in, and leading various ministry programs.

108         During my first two and a half years at Palmer, it became abundantly clear that the  
109 seminary was exactly where God wanted me to be to sharpen my pastoral leadership skills,  
110 develop my foundational theological understanding, and clarify my own ministry identity. As  
111 part of my seminary training, I participated in nine months of theological field education at  
112 Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton from the fall of 2010 to the spring of 2011. I served as a  
113 pastoral intern under the Rev. Dr. Darrell L. Armstrong and was fully immersed in the life of the  
114 congregation. While at Shiloh, I served and learned in various areas of ministry. Among my

115 responsibilities were preaching during weekday services (at the Wednesday Morning Glory  
116 Service and the Friday Noonday Service), teaching Bible study, and collaborating with other  
117 ministers to develop the church’s new singles ministry.

118 I also served for five months (June to November 2011) as an Assistant Pastor (pastoral  
119 intern) at NextGen Church in West Windsor, New Jersey, where the pastor is the Rev. Dr. Mia  
120 Chang. At NextGen, I led worship, taught Bible study, supported the social media and vacation  
121 Bible school ministries, provided pastoral care to congregants, helped serve Communion, and  
122 preached when assigned by the pastor.

123 In May 2018, I finally earned my Master of Divinity from Palmer Seminary. I also  
124 participated in Clinical Pastoral Education programs within the University of Pennsylvania  
125 Health System in Philadelphia, earning four units of CPE—one unit as a chaplain extern  
126 (September 2016 to May 2017) and three units as a full-time chaplain resident (August 2018 to  
127 September 2019).

128 After completing my residency, I worked part-time as a chaplain simultaneously at Penn  
129 Presbyterian Medical Center in Philadelphia and Cooper University Hospital in Camden, New  
130 Jersey. In July 2020, I was commissioned by the Federation of Christian Ministries, providing  
131 me with the ordination credentials required to engage in my work as a professional chaplain. For  
132 the past year (beginning in February 2021), I have been the full-time manager of the Pastoral  
133 Care Department at Capital Health Regional Medical Center in Trenton.

## 134 **GENERAL COMPREHENSION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

### 135 **The Doctrine of God**

136 According to the Scriptures, I believe that God exists in three persons known as the  
137 Trinity. While these three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—are

138 distinct, they also dwell together in perfect unity and are of the same substance and equal worth.  
139 The three persons of the Triune God function differently while working in unison to achieve  
140 God's will.

141 I believe that the Bible teaches that there is only one God and that He is the only being  
142 who was never created. God has no beginning and no end; He is eternal. God is immutable,  
143 meaning His nature and will do not change. God is all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful, and  
144 present everywhere. God is also sovereign, having absolute authority over the universe and  
145 everything in it. I believe that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, as well as Ruth, Mary  
146 Magdalene, and Paul. God is holy—pure, perfect, and undefiled. God is love, and His nature is to  
147 be merciful, kind, and just.

#### 148 **God the Father**

149 I believe that the Father is God, the first person in the Trinity, possessing all the attributes  
150 of God. According to the Scriptures, I believe that God the Father is the loving and divine Father  
151 of the entire universe. His power overflowed from His love, which resulted in the creation of the  
152 cosmos, the earth, humanity, and all other lifeforms. As its Maker, God the Father shows great  
153 love for the world and everything in it by consistently caring for it. I believe, for example, that  
154 the Scriptures show the Father to be a strong protector, generous provider, loving restorer, and  
155 constant sustainer of the world's existence.

156 I also believe that the Scriptures reveal the Father to be relational because of His desire to  
157 have fellowship with humankind and to intervene in the affairs of the world. In the Old  
158 Testament, God repeatedly presented Himself as "Father" to His chosen people the Israelites. He  
159 gave them the Law and made covenants with them, showing that He wanted to be in a committed  
160 relationship with them and that He wanted to care for them. God the Father also gave the people

161 the Law to help guide and protect them. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ often refers  
162 to God as His Father; Jesus also relates to the Father in such a way that demonstrates His reliance  
163 on and submission to the Father, which Jesus willingly did as an example for others to follow.  
164 Christians in the Bible also enjoyed the experience of knowing God as Father when they  
165 accepted Jesus as their Savior and were adopted into the family of God and became children  
166 of God.

### 167 **The Person and Work of Jesus Christ**

168 I believe that Jesus Christ is God, the second person in the Trinity (God the Son),  
169 possessing all the attributes of God. While not giving up His divine attributes, God the Son  
170 willingly became human to accomplish His mission of redeeming humanity. I believe that God  
171 the Son was incarnated as Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the  
172 virgin Mary. According to the Scriptures, I believe that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully  
173 divine—God in the flesh.

174 I believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah—the Anointed One whose life, crucifixion,  
175 burial, and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ was free from the  
176 stain of sin, which qualified Him to be sacrificed in place of sinful humanity. Jesus' redemptive  
177 work on the Cross made salvation and fellowship with God available to all those who willingly  
178 accept His sacrifice as atonement for their sins. In addition, I believe that God has made Jesus  
179 Christ the Lord of all creation, meaning Jesus has supreme authority to rule over everything and  
180 everyone that was created. Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead on the third day affirms that  
181 He is God, that He reigns as Lord of all, and that He can be trusted to keep all His promises.

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184 **The Holy Spirit**

185 I believe that the Holy Spirit is God, the third person in the Trinity, possessing all the  
186 attributes of God. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit had an active role in creating the  
187 universe and in inspiring and empowering people to do God’s will. In the New Testament, He  
188 took part in the baptism and commissioning of Jesus Christ and is even more intimately engaged  
189 in moving people to live according to God’s will and His way. I believe that the Holy Spirit was  
190 prophesied in the Old Testament, promised, and then sent by God to continue the ministry of  
191 Jesus Christ on earth through believers. I believe that the Holy Spirit lives within believers and  
192 that this blessed union takes place the minute a person believes in Jesus for salvation.

193 I believe that the Holy Spirit works to sanctify believers, helping us to become more like  
194 Jesus Christ in every aspect of our being. The Holy Spirit helps believers understand the Word of  
195 God and spiritual truths and aids us in thinking and acting in ways that are consistent with God’s  
196 will for humanity. I believe that the Holy Spirit provides comfort, wise counsel, instruction,  
197 guidance, encouragement, and conviction of sin. Because of our weakness and ignorance, the  
198 Holy Spirit also intercedes for us, aligning our prayers with God’s will.

199 **The Authority of Scripture**

200 I believe that the Holy Bible is the divinely inspired and authoritative Word of God. It is  
201 the final authority on all matters of Christian faith and practice. The Bible points us to Jesus  
202 Christ, who is Savior and Lord of all, and teaches us about God’s will and His plan for all of  
203 creation. The Bible is the standard that every Christian is encouraged to study and use for  
204 preaching, teaching, and training in righteousness. The indwelling Holy Spirit helps believers to  
205 understand the Bible and apply its teachings in our lives.

206 History shows us that holy men of God held ecumenical councils to consider matters of  
207 Christian doctrine and faith, as well as the biblical canon or composition of the Bible. I believe  
208 that the Holy Bible contains sixty-six books—thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven  
209 in the New Testament. The Old and New Testaments are complementary parts in one, grand  
210 story about God and His relationship with His creation. The Old Testament establishes a  
211 foundation for the narrative, highlights God’s covenant people the Israelites, and foreshadows or  
212 prophesies about future events and people. The New Testament builds on the previously laid  
213 foundation, spotlights God’s new covenant people the Christians, and fulfills some of the  
214 promises and prophecies made in the first half of the Bible—most notably, the revelation of  
215 Jesus Christ as the Messiah, whose advent was foretold by Old Testament prophets.

## 216 **Doctrines of Humanity and Sin**

### 217 **Humanity**

218 I believe that God created humankind in His image and likeness, giving us some of His  
219 attributes such as intelligence; a capacity for love and compassion; creative faculties; and  
220 abilities like thinking, reasoning, learning, and teaching, among other things. According to the  
221 Scriptures, I believe that God created humankind and gave them dominion over all the earth and  
222 everything in it. I believe that when God created the first humans (Adam and Eve), they enjoyed  
223 perfect fellowship with God until they sinned against Him. When sin entered the world, it  
224 corrupted the humans and all of God’s creation and resulted in death.

### 225 **Sin**

226 According to the Scriptures, sin is disobedience—a willful or unwitting transgression of  
227 the laws of God. I believe that sin was introduced into the human world when Adam and Eve  
228 chose to disobey God after being tempted by Satan—who is also known as the devil, the father

229 of lies, the accuser of all believers, and the mortal enemy of every living soul. I believe that  
230 when Adam and Eve sinned against God, they experienced a spiritual death, which is separation  
231 from the close fellowship that they once enjoyed with God. Furthermore, their sin resulted in the  
232 curse of death passing to all humanity.

233 I believe that because of Adam and Eve’s fall in the Garden, all humans since have been  
234 born with a natural tendency to sin—a state that is known as having a “sin nature.” This means  
235 that people are naturally inclined toward sinful thoughts and behaviors. This also means that  
236 humans are inherently disobedient and antagonistic toward God, which prevents us from being in  
237 fellowship with God and from coming into alignment with His will for our lives.

238 Sin committed on a large-scale, communal basis is known as corporate or systemic sin.  
239 This type of sin is that which is embedded within organizations or social systems. Examples  
240 include the following: slavery and segregation in America; the discriminatory practice of  
241 “redlining” (in which lending agencies deny credit to neighborhoods based on race); and  
242 corporate customs that allow male employees to earn a higher wage than their equally qualified,  
243 equally tenured female counterparts. Because of its pervasive and insidious nature, systemic sin  
244 impedes and prevents the Kingdom of God from advancing in this world, which makes it  
245 exceedingly wicked.

246 I believe that just as He did with the Old Testament prophets, God is calling out to  
247 believers today, imploring us to repent of our complicity in systemic sin and work to bring an  
248 end to injustice, cruelty, and wickedness of all kinds. As Christians, we are to seek the salvation  
249 of others, and part of that must be to rescue people from sinful institutions, systems, and  
250 governments and restore them to wholeness in God’s Kingdom.

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### **Salvation**

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According to the Scriptures, I believe that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prophesied about the coming of the Messiah, one who would save the world by defeating the power that sin held over people and reconciling sinful humanity back into relationship with a holy and loving God. I believe that Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity, is the Messiah whom God sent to save the world. Jesus Christ, who had never sinned but was perfectly holy and righteous, willingly took the punishment for the sins of the world by sacrificing Himself. I believe that Jesus' death on the Cross, His burial, and resurrection were all done to redeem humanity back to God. I believe that Jesus Christ's atoning death paid the price for all the world's sins—past, present, and future—and that nothing can undo His finished work on the Cross. Furthermore, I believe that Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead guarantees that those who accept His sacrifice for their sins will one day be resurrected to eternal life just as He promised.

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I believe that when people genuinely accept that Jesus died for our sins, our human spirit is regenerated, and we are fully justified (i.e., made free from the guilt and penalty of sin and made righteous through Christ's atoning sacrifice). At the same time, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside our hearts, marks us with a seal to show that we belong to God, and ensures us of our eternal salvation. I believe that those who do not accept Christ as their Savior are condemned to suffer the penalty for their sin and will experience eternal separation from God or the second death.

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### **Christian Eschatology**

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I believe that the Scriptures teach that all creation had a beginning and that there will also be an end of all things as they presently are. According to the Scriptures, I believe that at some

275 future point known only to God, Jesus Christ will return to Earth to set up His eternal kingdom.  
276 I believe that the present Heaven and Earth will pass away and that there will be a New Heaven  
277 and a New Earth where righteousness will dwell, and the curse of sin no longer exists. There will  
278 be no more sin, darkness, sickness, death, weeping, pain, or suffering in this renewed creation.  
279 I also believe that Christ will resurrect to eternal life all those who put their faith in Him for  
280 salvation. He will also resurrect all those who did not accept His atoning sacrifice for their  
281 sins; however, they will be condemned to suffer everlasting torment, sorrow, and punishment  
282 in the Lake of Fire along with Satan and those fallen angels who joined him in his rebellion  
283 against God.

#### 284 **Definition of the Church**

285 I believe that, according to the Scriptures, the Church consists of all believers everywhere  
286 throughout all time. God always intended for the Church to be united under the leadership of  
287 Jesus Christ as the apostle Paul explained in his letter to the Ephesians. I believe that God calls  
288 the Church—which is the people and not the buildings they worship in—to reflect His love in the  
289 world and to draw people to Himself through living righteously, preaching and teaching the  
290 Gospel, and consistently demonstrating God’s compassion, peace, and justice.

291 I believe that Scripture teaches that Christians should be affiliated with local bodies of  
292 believers to carry out the mission and mandate of God for the Church universal. These individual  
293 churches should serve as small-scale representations of Christ’s eventual reign over all the world.  
294 I believe that churches should consist of regenerate believers who accept the Lordship of Christ.  
295 The local church is a place where believers come together for a variety of faith practices,  
296 including the following: worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible study, missions, evangelism, the  
297 discovery and development of gifts, and equipping for ministry. Individual churches have the job

298 of continuing Christ’s mission to seek and save that which is lost and build the Kingdom of God  
299 on the earth.

300 **The Place of the Church in History and Its Purpose in the World Today**

301 Throughout history, the Church has been and continues to be challenged by those  
302 opposing Christian efforts to influence and lead the rest of the world to understand who God is  
303 and who He wants them to be. I believe that Jesus said it best in the Sermon on the Mount when  
304 He said that Christians should be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (found in  
305 Matthew 5:13-16). Salt enhances the flavor of our food, it has curative properties, and it serves  
306 as a preservative. Simply put, it is intended to have a positive impact on whatever it touches. In  
307 the same way, I believe that Jesus was telling His disciples then and now that we must positively  
308 influence the people and places that we touch each day with the love and goodness of God. Just  
309 as light is turned on in a dark room so that people can see their way through it, I believe that  
310 Jesus was instructing Christians throughout all time to shine the Light of Christ that is within  
311 us—the truth of God’s Word, especially about our Savior and Lord—to help others clearly see  
312 their way out of darkness and into God’s marvelous light.

313 Some of the ways that the Church has positively influenced the world and illuminated the  
314 pathway to Christ includes fighting for social and political justice in our society; building  
315 hospitals, schools, orphanages, and shelters; providing feeding, clothing, and other social welfare  
316 programs to aid the poor. Other organizations also offer these services to improve the quality of  
317 life of people in our world; the key difference between their work and that conducted by the  
318 Church is that our work should be done to point people to Christ as the Savior of the world and  
319 to bring glory to God. Though the Church may have assumed a variety of roles in society  
320 throughout time, I still believe that its main purpose is to be a change agent for the Kingdom of

321 God and a beacon that lights the way to Jesus Christ. I believe that will remain its purpose until  
322 the end of the age.

323 **The Ordinances**

324 I believe that the Bible teaches there are two ordinances that Jesus left the Church to  
325 observe as a demonstration of a believer's faith and commitment to obey Christ. They are  
326 baptism and the Lord's Supper.

327 **Baptism**

328 According to the Scriptures, I believe that Jesus commanded that all His followers be  
329 baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is an outward  
330 sign of an inward transformation that occurs the minute a person accepts Jesus Christ's atoning  
331 sacrifice for his/her sins. In this way, it is a symbolic representation that publicly attests that  
332 one's salvation has already taken place; however, baptism is not necessary for salvation to occur.  
333 I believe that the Scriptures teach that baptism is for those who understand that it is an act of  
334 coming into a new life in Christ. I also believe that baptism by full immersion symbolizes that a  
335 believer has been united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

336 **Holy Communion (The Lord's Supper)**

337 I believe the Scriptures teach that the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion is an ordinance  
338 established by Christ Himself. It continually reminds believers of why and how Christ died.  
339 During Communion, believers consume bread and wine or other similar elements (such as  
340 crackers and grape juice) to symbolize Christ's body that was broken for us and His blood that  
341 was shed for the remission of our sins. Because of the gravity of this event, the Scriptures  
342 admonish believers to earnestly examine ourselves to make sure that they have dealt with any  
343 unrepentant sin. By doing this, believers ensure that they are not partaking in this holy ritual in

344 an unworthy manner. For this reason, I also believe in discouraging nonbelievers and those who  
345 do not understand its significance from taking part in Communion.

346 **The Church in its Ecumenical Relationships**

347 While I embrace a Baptist identity, I recognize the diversity among the followers of Jesus  
348 Christ. According to the Scriptures, God accepts those who receive the truth about Jesus and His  
349 atoning sacrifice into His family. Scripture also likens the Church to a human body that has  
350 many distinct parts. Though there are various parts of the Body of Christ (i.e., the Church), we  
351 are still one.

352 Because we are one body, it makes sense that we would work together to advance the  
353 building of God’s Kingdom here on earth. An African proverb teaches that “many hands make  
354 light work.” When the Church collaborates through ecumenical relationships, we increase our  
355 impact in the mission field, social justice efforts, political agenda-setting, and so much more. It is  
356 also beneficial to local churches to connect with other Christian congregations for the purpose of  
357 fellowship, worship, and community outreach.

358 **The Roles of the Minister and the Laity**

359 According to the Scriptures, I believe in the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian  
360 has direct access to God through Jesus Christ, equal standing before God, a voice in church  
361 matters, and gifts that enable them to minister to one another and in the mission field. As such,  
362 all believers are called to service in God’s Kingdom. The laity (i.e., all Christians who are not  
363 ordained or professional clergy) is to participate in all aspects of church life, such as teaching,  
364 evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, worship, missions, and outreach. They should work as if  
365 unto God and be faithful in all that they do.

366 While I believe in the priesthood of all believers, I believe that the Scriptures also teach  
367 that God has specifically called and set apart some people for special ministry roles and  
368 assignments. Ministers or clergy are to use our gifts to provide leadership, guidance, counseling,  
369 education, training, and encouragement to help disciple others and equip them for the work of  
370 building God’s Kingdom. I believe that ministers may hold different roles within the local and  
371 broader church communities, such as pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Ordination is a solemn  
372 process that a church uses to formally acknowledge and commission those whom God has  
373 already called into special service in His Kingdom. Though there are many roles that clergy  
374 serve in within local churches and throughout the broader Church, the Bible only mentions two  
375 ordained offices: pastors and deacons.

### 376 **The Movement of the Gospel to the World**

377 According to the Scriptures and Christian history, believers were persecuted for  
378 preaching the Gospel, which subsequently resulted in the spreading of the Gospel. In Acts 2,  
379 the Holy Spirit fell on the believers gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem on the Day of  
380 Pentecost. At that time, the apostle Peter preached the Gospel, and more than 3,000 people  
381 accepted the truth about Jesus. After that, Jews and Romans began to persecute the followers of  
382 Jesus so severely that it forced Christians to flee to other regions of the world to save their lives.  
383 Nevertheless, wherever they landed, they continued to share the Gospel and draw others to Jesus.

384 Since that time, persecution has been a major force behind the spread of the Gospel to the  
385 world. In many cases, the oppression of others *by* Christians led to its spread. Examples include  
386 European countries who conquered smaller nations, the forced religious and cultural assimilation  
387 of the Indigenous people of America, and the enslavement of Africans and others in this country.  
388 Christians have also advanced the Gospel message through foreign missions.

389 **Understanding of Mission and Evangelism**

390 According to the teachings of Scripture, I believe that Christians have been commanded  
391 to seek the good of others by engaging in mission and evangelism. Evangelism is the preaching,  
392 teaching, and publishing of the Gospel, which is the Bible’s message about Jesus’ life, death,  
393 burial, and resurrection (i.e., the Christian belief about eternal salvation). Jesus Christ Himself  
394 commanded His disciples to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of others. Similarly,  
395 mission work involves, in part, dispatching Christians to share the Gospel and compassionately  
396 engage in the lives of those brought to Christ through their evangelistic work.

397 **Understanding of Justice in the Life of Society**

398 *(Candidate should choose one or more social issues as example.)*

399  
400 According to the Bible, I believe that God intended for the world to be a place where His  
401 way of thinking and doing things—i.e., the way of love, peace, justice, holiness, and  
402 righteousness—would prevail. Unfortunately, however, with each generation, people’s hearts  
403 grow farther away from God’s will and His ways, plunging our society into deeper depths of  
404 moral depravity. The perverting of justice in various sectors of society is just one of the many  
405 effects of humanity’s growing opposition to God’s rule.

406 Social justice is the idea that there should be equity in distributing or accessing material  
407 goods, opportunities, rights, and privileges within a society. I believe that this balancing of the  
408 scales of justice is a biblical mandate for the people of God. Throughout Scripture, God’s people  
409 are instructed to show compassion and to seek justice for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and  
410 those otherwise oppressed.

411 As Christians, there are many ways that we work to bring about justice in the world. One  
412 example would be the ongoing efforts to stamp out racial injustice and violence in our  
413 communities. According to the Scriptures, I believe that every human being is made in the image

414 and likeness of God, which gives them intrinsic worth and entitles them to be treated with  
415 dignity and respect. Many ethnic and racial groups—particularly African Americans in this  
416 country—have long been denied the honor and civility that their humanity merits. Racial  
417 injustice is fueled by ethnic and racial hatred, which stems from people’s failure to recognize that  
418 all humanity bears God’s image. I believe that Christians should follow the way of Jesus  
419 Christ—a way that promotes peace, love, justice, and healing. And that means that we should  
420 pray for and actively seek ways to end racial violence and injustice.

### 421 **Reasons for Seeking Ordination within the ABC-USA**

422 I am seeking ordination within the American Baptist Churches because I am called to  
423 pastoral ministry, and this denomination is both a theological and a personal fit for me.

424 One of the theological reasons why I have aligned myself with the American Baptists is  
425 their focus on mission. As an advocate for “the least of these,” I always felt deeply moved by the  
426 pain and suffering of others, especially when they have been marginalized or oppressed by  
427 wicked or unjust people, institutions, or society, in general. This attitude has consistently moved  
428 me to more than just tears; it has led to action in my personal life and ministry. I believe that  
429 Christians must recognize the suffering of others and seek some way to alleviate it, and  
430 American Baptists have always engaged in mission-minded work that aids the poor, the  
431 oppressed, and the marginalized.

432 In addition, I am personally encouraged by the denomination's validation of women who  
433 have been called as pastors and ministry leaders. I have witnessed the acceptance, approval, and  
434 activation of women pastors and ministers within the American Baptist Churches, and it gives  
435 me hope for my continued growth, development, and ministry expression. It is a place where I  
436 feel I can thrive as a hearer, doer, and preacher of the Word of God.