

Accreditation¹

Accreditation means:

1. That a local church has seen evidence in a person of a calling to and gifts for pastoral ministry involving the sincerity, faith, character, morality, ability, doctrinal understanding, understanding of Seventh Day Baptist polity, and training, to call this person to ordination,
2. That an Ordination Council, including delegates from sister churches as well as official representatives of the General Conference, has agreed with that determination, and found the candidate's beliefs in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief, and discovered the person fit for the ordained ministry, and
3. That General Conference has reviewed the actions of the local church and ordination council and recognizes that the person meets the requirements of education and service.

¹ "Accreditation," Conference Minutes, SDB Yearbook (1995), p. A32-A33, revised by Conference action 2004.

Purpose of Accreditation

1. To provide a list of ordained individuals who have reached acceptable standards in education and service; this list is maintained for the information of Seventh Day Baptist churches.
2. To provide a standard of education and service toward which ministers and ministerial students may strive.
3. To indicate the worthiness of a minister to be recommended for service among Seventh Day Baptists. The judgment of a minister's worthiness is based on his or her general reputation and good report. The continued worthiness of an accredited minister is assumed, apart from the verification of charges against the minister which are brought to the attention of the General Conference.
4. To provide an official listing of Seventh Day Baptist ministers for interdenominational, intraprofessional, business, and government groups and organizations, verifying the minister's accredited standing with the General Conference.

Requirements for Accreditation

1. Five years as a member in good standing of a church holding membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference shall be required.
2. The candidate must present evidence of education and service that meets one of the following sets of requirements:

EDUCATION	SERVICE IN MEMBER CHURCH ¹
Completion of 3 year Master of Divinity at a COM approved school	1 year of acceptable and continuous pastoral service
TIME: Senior Pastor Program ²	4 years of service experience as a called senior pastor
B.A. or B.S. in pastoral ministry at COM approved school	6 years of acceptable and continuous pastoral service
Incomplete seminary training (M. Div. level, approved school)	10 years with 2 year reduction per completed academic year
TIME: Associate, Assistant, and Youth Minister Programs	8 years of service experience
One-year Certificate: seminary	8 years of service as a called senior pastor
One-year Certificate: Bible college	9 years of service as a called senior pastor
None of the levels listed above	10 years of acceptable and continuous pastoral service

¹ Service must be in a member church of the General Conference or a church working toward membership in the General Conference as the senior pastor after completion of education.

² Graduates of the previous TIME program will be required to complete six (6) years of service.

3. The candidate must have a thorough acquaintance with Seventh Day Baptist history and polity, as well as, Sabbath Theology, by way of Summer Institute courses offered through the School of Ministry.

4. The candidate must present evidence of ordination or recognition of ordination by a church which is a member in good standing of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference. The ordination council (called by a local church) must examine the doctrine of the candidate in order to decide if the candidate's beliefs are in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief. This is also the best opportunity to review the character and moral lifestyle of the candidate. Since General Conference does not employ or supervise local church pastors, ordination councils and local churches must seek to maintain the high standards of ministry.
5. The candidate will affirm that his/her beliefs are in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief on the application for accreditation.

Procedures for Accreditation

1. The Council on Ministry has oversight of the accreditation process of ordained Seventh Day Baptist leaders. As ordination is a prerequisite for accreditation, the Council on Ministry should be invited by the local church to be represented in the ordination process, especially on the Ordination Council.
2. At a business meeting, the church must take action to recommend the pastor for accreditation. Before taking such a step the local church should review the sincerity, faith, character, doctrinal understanding, understanding of Seventh Day Baptist polity, morality, ability, and training of the pastor. The church should also determine that the candidate's beliefs are still in accord with those beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief. The submission of the application attests to the fact that the local church has found the candidate for accreditation fit for ministry as an accredited Seventh Day Baptist pastor. Applications are to be submitted to the Council on Ministry no later than January 1, of the year in which the General Conference is to consider an application for Accreditation. (last sentence added by vote of Conf 2006)
3. A recommendation for accreditation will be based on a review of the candidate's application, including service and education requirements, the actions of the Ordination Council, ordination by the local church, and the continuing good reputation of the candidate.
4. The Council on Ministry, based on a review of the candidate's credentials, may grant a recommendation for accreditation to the General Council. General Council, in turn, makes its recommendation for accreditation to General Conference and its Ministerial Interest Committee. The General Conference in session votes on the recommendation for accreditation.

Suspension of Accreditation

1. Situations which might require review of accreditation shall be handled through the Council on Ministry with the understanding that only General Conference has the authority to remove accreditation.
2. An accredited minister who is no longer a member of a recognized Seventh Day Baptist church, or a church working toward membership in the Conference, shall be reviewed and may be suspended as an accredited Seventh Day Baptist minister by action of the Council on Ministry.

3. An accredited minister who leaves pastoral service but remains as a member in good standing of a recognized Seventh Day Baptist church, or a church working toward membership in the Conference, will remain accredited unless the minister requests a suspension.
4. The Council on Ministry will act on requests for voluntary suspensions and voluntary restorations of accreditation.