

FORWARD

This document is a “covenant making” tool for American Baptist congregations and ministerial leaders to use during the process of extending a call of ministry to a new leader. The use of this agreement will help establish and maintain a healthy relationship between the congregation and leader by making clear and specific the terms and benefits of employment. Affirmation of the Code of Ethics for American Baptist ministerial leaders is an affirmation of service to Christ, and love for God and neighbor. The Code of Ethics also serves to connect the congregation and leader to the wider circle of colleagues in American Baptist life.

THE CHURCH AND MINISTER AGREE

Spiritual Support

In awareness of the support needed for ministry together, the congregation and minister mutually agree to support one another in private and public prayer.

Ministry Priorities

Recognizing that the church has identified certain opportunities and needs and the minister has specific gifts and abilities, we agree to work together on the following identified areas of ministry:

Building the Relationships

To develop the relationships and trust necessary to a long-term minister-church partnership, the church and minister agree to involve the region staff in the process of reviewing and building the relationship.

THE CHURCH AGREES

Compensation

In awareness of the cost of living, and the experience and education of the person we are calling, we agree to provide total annual compensation of \$_____ in the form of cash salary and suitable housing.

- a. The annual cash salary shall be \$_____.
- b. The housing arrangement shall be:

An annual housing allowance of \$_____, which shall be used as determined by the minister, to buy or rent a home including utilities, furnishings, and appurtenances to the home.

OR

A church-owned parsonage (the fair market value of which is determined by appraisal and reviewed annually), together with all utilities shall be provided without cost to the minister, the total estimated annual value of these being \$_____.

An equity allowance (to partially compensate the minister for the loss of opportunity to participate in the investment advantage of home ownership) shall be paid annually to The Annuity Supplement Plan offered by the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB), an IRA, or some other trust account. The suggested formula is 1% of the appraised value of the parsonage being set aside on an annual basis.

Reimbursement of Professional Expenses

The church shall reimburse the minister for professional expenses incurred in the exercise of his/her ministry as follows:

- a. Automobile expense will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate.
- b. The expenses incurred by the minister as a delegate to the annual regional convention and the Biennial ABCUSA convention.

- c. The annual reimbursement for the minister's continuing education up to \$_____ and _____ weeks for study away from home, cumulative up to three years if mutually agreeable.
- d. Other professional expenses: reimbursement for items such as professional society dues, books, periodicals, etc., up to \$_____.
- e. The costs of a sabbatical study leave every seventh year of the minister's career, including the costs of interim ministry and the minister's tuition, travel, room/board and regular compensation (the dollar amount and length of leave to be negotiated).

Fringe Benefits

Retirement and Health: to provide the full MMBB benefits and protections for the minister and family.

- a. The ABC Retirement Plan and Death Benefit Plan premiums will be paid by the church. It is understood that the cost of this is 16% of the total annual compensation (cash salary, housing, utilities, and Social Security offset).
- b. Premiums for a quality medical plan, such as coverage offered through MMBB, will be paid by the church to provide coverage for the minister and family.
- c. The church will cooperate with the minister in any salary withholding arrangements as may be desired, e.g., his/her membership in The Annuity Supplement Plan of the MMBB.
- d. The church agrees to provide a Social Security offset for the minister in the amount equal to one half of the self-employment Social Security tax.

Disability

- a. In the event that the minister is disabled from illness and/or accident and unable to continue the responsibilities required, the church agrees to coordinate benefits with those available through Social Security and the MMBB in order to safeguard the well-being of the minister and his/her family.
- b. If the period of disability is for a period of three months or less, the church agrees to continue full salary and benefits.
- c. If the period of disability extends beyond three months, the church agrees to work with the MMBB to make application for disability benefits and reach an agreement for service and remuneration which would safeguard both the interests of the minister and the church.

Family and Medical Leave

- a. The church agrees to provide the minister a Family Leave upon the birth or adoption of a child, with salary and benefits continuing throughout the leave. Typically, Family Leave falls between four to six weeks, if there are no medical complications.
- b. Because the circumstances surrounding each birth and adoption are unique, the church and minister are encouraged to be both sensitive and flexible in determining the length of the leave.
- c. A leave of absence will also be given to the minister when she/he is unable to work due to a serious health concern or to care for an immediate family member with a serious health concern. The Family and Medical Leave Act indicates that leave may be up to 12 weeks unpaid.
- d. Because of the difficult and complicated nature of such situations, the church and minister are encouraged to be both sensitive and flexible in determining the length of the leave.

Vacation

To provide an annual paid vacation of _____. The minister shall coordinate the use of vacation time with the appropriate church body, but it is understood that the minister has the option of using the entire vacation time in one continuous segment. The church will arrange for and pay the cost of pulpit supply. A reasonable amount of time devoted to sharing in regional and national work, continuing education experiences, giving leadership at camps and conferences, and similar activities shall not be considered as part of the vacation period.

Day/Days Off

To permit and encourage the minister to spend two days each week free from ministerial duties, in the interest of his/her well-being and that of his/her family. An average weekly service in the range of 50-55 hours is the maximum expectation. A Sabbatical period is encouraged every seventh year of service.

Moving

To pay the full cost of moving expenses for the minister's household goods and family from _____, _____, to _____, _____. The cost of this is estimated to be \$_____.

Review

This covenant should be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Relations Committee or other appropriate body to consider any needed revisions.

In case of disagreement over conduct or interpretation of this agreement or the Covenant and Code of Ethics, the church and/or the minister will seek the services of region staff.

THE MINISTER AGREES

1. To provide ministerial leadership for the _____, beginning _____.
2. To work a minimum of _____ hours/week in the ministry of this congregation and regularly report the use of his/her time.
3. To seek to maintain a cooperative relationship with the _____ Association/Area, the _____ Region, and the American Baptist Churches, USA.
4. To endeavor to fulfill the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the ABCUSA, including the Code of Ethics.
5. To assume responsibility for participation in the Social Security program as a self-employed person.
6. To serve in the ministerial relationship with the church until such time as it is terminated in accordance with the constitution and/or bylaws of the _____ Church, _____, _____. It is understood that the termination by either minister or church requires _____ days' notice, unless a shorter notice is mutually agreeable.

Signed/Dated
(*moderator or church clerk*)

Signed/Dated
(*minister*)

NOTE: Churches and ministers in special situations may wish to add statements defining such matters as bivocational ministry, outside employment, multiple staff, dual alignment, non-ordained ministers, disability considerations, etc. Employment policies developed by congregations should be regularly reviewed by legal counsel for compliance with federal, state, and local laws.

Also available from the Ministers Council is a companion piece entitled "Together in Ministry: The Body of Christ." It presents commitments (Covenant and Code of Ethics) for both the pastor and congregation, and mutual standards for life and ministry together. Churches are encouraged to consider this document along with Minister-Church Covenant.

RESOURCES

Additional resources are available from:

Ministers Council: PRC training video; Compensation Workbook; Suggested Severance Agreement for Termination; Evaluation Forms; Sabbatical Information

Ministerial Leadership Commission: PRC Booklet; Policy Statement on Ordained Ministry; information on recognition of ordination

MABB: data on current compensation numbers; equity allowances and reimbursement arrangements.

Copies of this document are available from the Ministers Council.

The Ministers Council
PO Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851
1-8000-222-3872, ext. 2333

[Www.ministerscouncil.com](http://www.ministerscouncil.com)

Prepared by the Ministers Council 2003