

## Clarification Document regarding AMO status and the Burma Diaspora

### Associated Ministry Organization (AMO's)

- **Status.** Status as an AMO means that the organization has status as an ABC organization. This status further means that the organization may use the name “American Baptist,” claim American Baptist status, and use the American Baptist logo.
- **Definition.** According to Article XVII of the ABCUSA bylaws, “An Associated Ministry Organization (AMO) must be a national or sectional American Baptist or other religious organization that indicates its willingness: to support the statement of purpose in the Bylaws of ABCUSA, to cooperate whole-heartedly in such relationships and projects at all levels of denominational life which seem advisable, and to be identified as an organization related to and participating in the life of ABCUSA by use of name and/or logo.”
- **Purpose.** An Associated Ministry Organization shall relate to ABCUSA to foster recognition, communication, assistance and support, and may purchase services or space from ABCUSA as defined in individual agreements.
- **Autonomy.** An Associated Ministry Organization shall be incorporated; must have its own governing board, a substantial portion of whose members are active members of American Baptist Cooperating Churches; define its own ministry; engage staff persons who are accountable to its governing board and insure its own financial solvency. An Associated Ministry Organization shall hold itself out as a separate entity from ABCUSA.
- **Current AMO's are:**
  - American Baptist Assembly
  - American Baptist Historical Society
  - American Baptist Men
  - American Baptist Women's Ministries
  - Chin Baptist Churches USA
  - Kachin Baptist Churches USA
  - Kachin American Baptist Association
  - Karen Baptist Churches USA
  - Ministers Council
  - Rainbow Acres
  - The Center for Career Development and Ministry
  - The Center for Ministry
  - The Midwest Ministry Development Service

### Professional Registry Status

- **Requirements.** The requirements for a person to be in the Professional Registry include the following:
  - The person must be an ABC commissioned clergyperson or an ordained clergyperson whose ordination has been recognized by an ABC region. Only ABC regions can certify regional recognition of ordination. Normally, this work takes place through a “regional commission on the ministry.”

- While a person may be listed in the leadership directory, a person must be commissioned or ordained and serving in parish ministry, mission service, specialized ministry, or staff ministry to be listed in the professional registry.
- **Benefits.** Persons who are listed in the ABC Professional Registry may apply for scholarships and other benefits from ABHMS.

### **Ordination Status (According to the ABC Recommend Procedures for Ordination)**

- **Ordination Tracks.** According to the “Recommended Procedures for Ordination,” adopted by the ABC Ministers Council and the ABC Professional Ministries Team, there are three tracks to ordination, namely the traditional track, the equivalency track, and the regional training track. All of these tracks can lead to ABC ordination, although not all regions recognize all three tracks.
  - The traditional track requires a 4-year college degree and Master of Divinity degree as preparation for ordination.
  - The equivalency track allows for years of pastoral experience (a maximum of 6 years of experience substituting for 3 years of higher education) and alternate degrees to substitute for portions of the traditional track.
  - The regional training track includes regional lay pastor training programs.
- **Special Provision for BWA Constituents.** “A person who has already been ordained through an organization recognized as a constituency of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) should be accepted as a person with a Track I ordination with no additional review of ordination required, recognizing that eligibility for call is a separate issue as outlined in the definitions of this document.” Any AMO person who fits this category should inform one of the ABC regions of their background and seek ordination recognition through that region.
- **International Degrees.** “The credentials of persons holding international degrees who have not yet been ordained should be reviewed using Track II ‘equivalency’ requirements.”
- **Ordination and Call.** “Eligibility for call is a separate issue from ordination. Persons interested in receiving search assistance should contact the region(s) in which they desire a local church pastoral call or position.”
- **Clarification for members of the Burmese Diaspora seeking ordination.**
  - If the candidate has been ordained internationally by a group recognized by the BWA, the candidate should request a meeting with the ABC region’s commission on the ministry in order to explain the candidate’s background and request recognition of ordination with no further work required.
  - If the candidate’s home church is a member of an ABC region, the candidate should work with the region’s commission on the ministry to seek ABC recognition of ordination through one of the three tracks to ordination.
  - If the candidate’s home church is not affiliated with an ABC region, the candidate should encourage the church to affiliate with the region as either a new church plant or existing congregation and work with the region’s commission on the

ministry to seek ABC recognition of ordination through one of the three tracks to ordination.

- ABC recognition of ordination or commissioning is necessary for access to any professional registry benefit.
- College bound students must also obtain membership in an ABC congregation in order to qualify for American Baptist Home Ministry Societies (ABHMS) financial aid or scholarship.

### **Recommendations**

- Church. While AMO congregations share the identify of “American Baptist”, they are encouraged to affiliate with an American Baptist region to more fully engage in the ministry of American Baptists.
- Clergy. Clergy persons serving AMO congregations are encouraged to pursue ordination status within an ABC region.