



Manual of Ordination Procedures

2026 Edition

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Introduction to the 2025 Edition

The 2022 edition is the result of the decisions of the General Conference in 2022 to make licensure a permanent pastoral status. This manual only includes those steps required to move from a licensed pastor to an ordained elder.

It is with deep appreciation for the work done by so many, and in the hope that these documents will continue to assist those who seek to serve in ministry for the Kingdom of God in The Brethren Church that this edition is presented.

The 2025 edition adds standardized form nomenclature.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

A. DIGITAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- All documents will be submitted in either Word compatibility mode (.doc, .xls, .ppt, .pps) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) or adobe (.pdf)
- Tracking candidates is easier if the following naming rules for files is used::
 - Last Name, dash (-), then First Name of Candidate
 - Title of Document
 - Four-digit year
 - Dash (-) then two-digit month
 - OPTIONAL – Dash (-) then two-digit day
 - EX: Smith-Edward Ordination: Call to Ministry 2009-05-12.doc
 - Date is NOT NEEDED if document is not a report, although the date format above is still recommended.
- It is difficult to send by email large documents to some servers. It is therefore advisable to send multiple small files instead of a single large one.
- All audios will be sent in either MP3, WAV, or WMF formats or on a CD.
- All videos will be sent in either AVI, MPEG, or WMV formats or on a DVD.

B. REFERENCE DOUMENTS FOR CANDIDATES, ELDERS AND MENTORS

Manual of Commissioning Procedures

Manual of Licensing Procedures

Manual of Ordination Procedures

Manual of Procedure of the Brethren Church

Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures of the Brethren Church

Brethren Positions on Social Issues

Required Readings for Ordination

Brethren Pastor's Handbook

Brethren Reading Program for Ordination

Brethren Beliefs:

NOTE: *These documents contain guidelines and procedures that inform elders, pastors, and congregations regarding Brethren ordination, governance, organizational structure, and discipline. It is highly recommended that these be in every elder's library.*

C. EDUCATIONAL AND LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION

Those applicants that have not received an advanced degree in the area of pastoral ministry (MDIV, MA Pastoral Studies, MA Applied Bible and Theology), or other similar degrees approved by the National Board of Oversight will in addition to the requirements of this manual also need to complete the Reading Program Requirements, and other requirements as may be established by the appropriate Regional Leadership Team or the National Board of Oversight.

In addition, any candidate for Ordination must have been licensed for minimum of one year, completed the entire Licensure exam, including all forms, Brethren Intensive Classes, and

all sections of the Manual of Licensing Procedures, and all sections in this manual, and received their permanent license before being examined for ordination.

D. IMPORTANT DEADLINES IN THE ORDINATION PROCESS

- ✓ Notification from the RLT that a candidate is desiring to appear to be examined must be sent to Chair of NBO by **January 1st** of the year candidate seeks ordination.
- ✓ All parts of a candidate's written ordination exam, and all parts of a candidate's licensing exam, including references, completion of readings and classes taken, must be sent to the Chair of NBO **February 15th** of the year candidate seeks ordination.
- ✓ A recording of two (2) recent sermons by the candidate must be sent to the Chair of NBO by **February 15th** of the year candidate seeks ordination.
- ✓ The candidate will pay the fee to have all required assessment tests and a background check completed **prior to NBO examination**. Churches and/or regions may absorb this cost.
- ✓ The candidate will be examined by the National Board of Oversight in **May** of the year. The candidate seeks ordination or make special arrangements with the Chair of NBO. NBO meetings require the attendance of individuals from five regions, so special meetings require significant advance notice.

E. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- ✓ All candidates for ordination are required to be licensed for a minimum of one year, and completed all parts of the licensure exam, including the courses of Brethren History, Brethren Doctrine, and Brethren Polity, and core Brethren materials distributed with the Examination packet, and received their permanent license.
- ✓ Individuals seeking ordination shall be in an active Brethren context of significant ministry for at least one year prior to seeking ordination.
- ✓ National Board of Oversight Examinations last about 1 ½ hours, with the spouse being interviewed with the candidate, if available, for the last thirty minutes. The examination is not a test of Brethren knowledge, but a careful assessment of the progress of the candidate through the licensing and ordination process, with special attention to areas of theology, polity, and personal spiritual formation that may present challenges to the candidate's ministry within the Brethren Church. The spouses are interviewed to assure that they are receiving the support and care they need as pastoral spouses, and to assure that each spouse is supportive of the candidate's ministry.
- ✓ The National Board of Oversight may respond to a candidate's examination in the following ways:
 - Approval for ordination
 - Approval, with conditions to be supervised by the RLT prior to ordination
 - Approval, with conditions to be supervised by NBO prior to ordination
 - Conditional approval with request for a future meeting with candidate prior to ordination
 - Delay of approval for period of one year with further examination the following year.
 - Denial of approval for ordination
- ✓ Each Region operates under its own unique system of oversight. The candidate should maintain regular contact with their respective Regional Leadership Team to determine any

additional requirements or expectations that may need fulfilled.

Brethren Church Ordination Candidate Tracking Form

Revised 06/29/2025

The candidate, the appropriate regional leadership team, and the presiding officer of the National Board of Oversight should maintain a copy of this form.

The Candidate is ultimately responsible for the proper submission of all forms and materials.

PLEASE SUBMIT FORMS DIGITALLY IF POSSIBLE

Region Responsible for Oversight: _____

Name of Candidate: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

Church Where Membership Held: _____

Current Ministry Context : _____

Name of Supervising Elder: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS FOR ORDINATION

Revised 06/29/2025

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL DOCUMENTS DIGITALLY IF POSSIBLE

STEP 1: PRE-ORDINATION

~ Also includes recognition of ordination and reinstatement of ordination ~

1. Candidate has been licensed for at least one year
2. Candidate has been serving in an approved Brethren context of ministry for at least one year.
3. Candidate has completed, and the Region and Supervising Elder have certified, that all sections of the licensing exam and all classes and materials required by the licensing program have been completed.
4. Candidate has received their permanent license by their region.

STEP 2: ORDINATION

1. The local church votes to request that the Regional Leadership Team recommends the candidate's examination by the National Board of Oversight and informs the Regional Leadership Team of this action **Use Form Ordination: Request for RLT Examination for Ordination (Local Church) *Must be licensed for at least one year* Date Received: ____/____/____** (
2. The Region will contact the candidate regarding providing all necessary materials by the deadlines specified prior to meeting with the National Board of Oversight.
3. The Candidate appears before the Regional Leadership Team for examination and assessment of readiness to be examined by the National Board of Oversight. All the following must be completed before a candidate can be scheduled to meet with the National Board of Oversight:
 - a. Licensed either by a recognized region or by the Executive Board for a period of not less than one year prior to their examination.
 - b. Service for at least one year in an approved Brethren context of ministry
 - c. Completed all parts of the Licensure exam, including all readings, classes, and exam materials.
 - d. Completion of required educational requirements or completion of the entire Brethren reading program, or a combination of coursework and the Reading program approved by the Regional Leadership Team.
 - e. Completed all parts of the Ordination exam and written application, with all sections, references, resume, sermons, and forms properly completed and turned into the Chair of the NBO by **February 15th of the year seeking NBO examination. Use Form Ordination: Request for National Board of Oversight Ordination Examination (by Regional Leadership Team)**
– Date: ____/____/____
4. No licensed individual may be ordained until ALL requirements for ordination are completed & have been certified as completed by their respective Region and the NBO. The NBO may not require a future meeting to assure completion, but an ordination service cannot take place until all requirements are met. Please see the checklist and other documentation for details.

**REINSTATEMENT OF BRETHREN ORDINATION
AND
STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS LICENSED OR ORDAINED BY OTHER
DENOMINATIONS OR GROUPS**

1. The Brethren Church has no relational agreement for recognition of licensure or ordination from other denominations or groups. Individuals licensed or ordained by other denominations or groups will apply for licensure and ordination using the current approved procedures. Certain requirements in the process may be waived on a case-by-case basis by the Regional Leadership Team with the approval of the National Board of Oversight
2. In the case of a Brethren elder or pastor in “retired Status” who seeks to once again serve in active status, the local church may vote to have the Regional Leadership Team restore the person to active status. Once the Regional Leadership Team has met with the person, they may notify the NBO that they are being returned to active status. If the period of retirement has been longer than five years, The RLT, at their discretion, can request the person complete the Written Exam requirements and appear before the NBO for review.
3. In the case of a Brethren elder whose ordination has lapsed for reasons of inactivity, a leave of absence or other circumstances, the local church may vote to request that the Regional Leadership Team approve that person as a licensed pastor for one year, during which a Brethren elder serves as an advisor. Again, follow the outline as presented in Step 2: Initial Licensing. After one year, the region may reinstate the ordination, or, at the region’s discretion, request NBO review before reinstatement. *The Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures of the Brethren Church has suggested guidelines.*
4. In the case of a Brethren elder whose ordination has been removed (defrocked), the Regional Leadership Team may, after completion of a developed plan for repentance and reconciliation and restoration, license the individual for a period of one year, with a Brethren elder serving as advisor. After one year, the region should request NBO review of the process and approval for reinstatement of ordination, using the same forms for initial ordination, but with the word “REINSTATEMENT” printed prominently across the top of all forms submitted. *The Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures of the Brethren Church has suggested guidelines.*

ORDINATION: REQUEST FOR EXAMINATION FOR ORDINATION BY
LOCAL CHURCH AND REGION
FORM 301

Completed by Local Church, Candidate, and Regional Leadership Team

Date: _____

TO: The Regional Leadership Team of the _____ Region:

_____ is a member in
good standing and full fellowship of the _____ Brethren

Church located in _____.
We request that the Regional Leadership Team recommend this licensed candidate's
examination for ordination by the National Board of Oversight, believing the candidate to be
sound in faith, having the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:2 -7 and Titus 1:5 - 9.

This request was approved by the congregation in a business meeting on ____/____/____.

The result of the secret ballot vote was _____ affirmative and _____ negative,
with _____ qualified voters present.

Signed:

Pastor: _____

Moderator: _____

Secretary: _____

Deacon(ess): _____

Deacon(ess): _____

Candidate:

I hereby indicate my desire to be examined for ordination for the Gospel Ministry in The
Brethren Church by the National Board of Oversight.

Signature of Candidate: _____ Date: _____

Regional Approval on next page ...

This candidate has been licensed and supervised by the Regional Leadership Team, since _____(mm/dd/yyyy) under the mentoring/supervision of _____(mentor/supervisor).

The Local Church has requested, and the Regional Leadership Team recommends, that the National Board of Oversight examine this candidate for ordination.

Signed:

Date of Regional Examination: _____

RLT Chair: _____

RLT Member: _____

Mentor/Supervisor/RLT Member: _____

Instructions: Local church and candidate complete form and send to RLT. RLT completes regional portion of form and send a copy to NBO.

A Formal Letter of the National Board of Oversight's Decision will be included in the candidate's permanent file following examination.

If the approval was conditional, the specifications of those conditions and evidence of their completion will be included.

ORDINATION: CONFIDENTIAL REFERENCE FORM

FORM 306

(Revised 4/30/2018)

To Be Completed by three References

TO THE CANDIDATE: Forward one of these questionnaires to the following -- your pastor, church moderator, and one other person who knows you well (none of whom is a family member}.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDENTS: Please complete all items of this evaluation with reference to the candidate named below, who has applied for either Ministerial licensing or Commissioning for a Special Ministry in the Region. Your candid response will enable the Regional Leadership Team to give recognition in areas of strength and counsel in areas of weakness. Your prompt response will be appreciated. All evaluations are confidential.

Please return before _____ (date) to the following:

The _____ Regional Leadership Team

Address Line 1: _____

Address Line 2: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Thanks in advance.

Candidate's full name: _____

Respondent's name and title: _____

Respondent's Address: _____

Respondent's City, State, Zip: _____

Respondent's Phone: _____

~ Questionnaire Begins on Next Page ~

1. How long and how well have you known the candidate?

2. How do you perceive the candidate's parental and family relationships?

3. How do you perceive the candidate's marital relationship (if married)?

4. What contribution has the candidate made to the ministry of the local church?

~ Questionnaire Continues on Next Page ~

Instructions: Place an "X" in the column which best describes the candidate. In the case of very high or very low marks, a supplemental comment, using the back of this form, would be helpful.

Characteristics	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Personal Appearance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal Financial Management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adaptability in New Situations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional Stability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal Initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self Discipline	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self Confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self Understanding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tact	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conduct and Character	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Punctuality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participation in the Church	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dependability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Skill in Verbal Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Skill in Written Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creativity and Resourcefulness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching Skill	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tolerance for Others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
General Intelligence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Faith and Commitment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Harmony in Relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall Promise as a Christian Leader	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Other comments or insights that might be helpful in evaluating this candidate's effectiveness in Christian Ministry (use other side if desired).

Thanks again for completing this questionnaire.
Please return to address on first page by due date.

ORDINATION: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

FORM 303

(Revised 10/14/2022)

***NOTE: A COMPLETE RESUME' WITH PICTURE IS TO BE COMPLETED
IN ADDITION TO THIS FORM***

Date this profile was completed ____ - ____ - ____

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION (UPDATE FROM LICENSING EXAM)

Name _____ Date of Birth ____ - ____ - ____
Last first middle initial MM DD YYYY

Address (where to send correspondence)

(Street Address)

(City) (State) (Zip Code)

Telephone number: ____ - ____ - ____ (H) ____ - ____ - ____ (W)

____ - ____ - ____ (Mobile)

Email: _____@_____

1. Pastoral Status Region: _____

Congregation: _____

Date of Licensing _____

Date of Ordination _____

Date of Commissioning _____

If non-Brethren, please provide contact information for verification purposes.

Name:

Phone:

Email: _____

2. Current church membership _____
3. Current ministry position _____
4. Family Description: Single _____ Married _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____
Spouse's name _____ Date Married ____/____/____
Child(ren)'s name(s) _____

5. Have you been married more than once? _____ (If yes, please explain circumstances using additional page)
6. Current or recent community Involvements (please list with years served)
7. Current district or denominational involvements (please list with years served)

Number of years of full-time ministry as a licensed or ordained pastor _____ yrs.
Part-time ministry will be prorated as one year of service for every two years of part-time work.

REFERENCES: List the names and addresses of four people who are familiar with your pastoral ministry.

Name	Phone (day-time)	(evening)
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

B. SAMPLES OF RECENT SERMONS

Please provide two sermons on CD – audio is okay; video is preferred.

C. YOUR SPIRITUAL PROFILE:

Please list key areas of giftedness

Please list areas in which you do not feel gifted

1. What are the results of your DISC Assessment?
2. What are the results of your Myers Briggs Personality Inventory?

D. MY PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

– If you have previously written a philosophy of ministry and it is appropriate to use as part of this application, please attach. Please consider whether the following areas have been addressed at least in part in that philosophy of ministry. Please limit this paper to 3 – 5 pages.

1. Describe your experience with and/or plan for developing vision and goals for ministry.
2. Describe your expectations of and desired relationship with each of the following, The Board, The Deacon Ministry, The Staff, Committee chairpersons. In other words, your understanding of local church polity.
3. Describe how you foster commitment and accountability.
4. Describe your experiences in, or plans for, discipling or mentoring.
5. Describe your prayer life – successes and challenges.
6. Describe your experience with, and/or plan for, developing prayer in the life of a congregation.
7. Describe your experience with, and/or plan for, developing outreach ministries.
8. Describe your experience with and/or plan for developing educational opportunities in the local church including ministry to children, youth, families, and adults.
9. Worship
 - a. My understanding of the purpose of worship is...
 - b. My preferred worship style is... (for instance - contemporary, blended, traditional, liturgical, formal or informal)

- c. My preferred preaching style is (evangelistic, manuscript, topical, exegetical) ...
 - d. Lay participation in worship services should include...
10. What ways would you use to get acquainted with the congregation?
 11. Do you prefer working with any particular age group in the church? Do you have, or have you had, difficulty working with any particular age group in the church?
 12. Describe the process you use for sermon preparation.
 13. Your definition of the church, both local and denomination.
 14. Your understanding of the Mission (Purpose) of the church, both local and denomination.
 15. What are your core values (Biblical non-negotiable principals, such as worship, discipleship, etc.)
 - 16: What are the roles of the pastor/leader and the laity?
 17. What is the responsibility of the pastor's spouse in service to the congregation?

E. EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT

1. I have completed an accepted course of study approved by the National Board of Oversight (attach transcripts, or other proof of completion).

Candidate Initials: _____ Date _____

-OR-

2. I have completed all sections of the Brethren Reading Program for Ordination (attach all forms for each section completed)

Candidate Initials: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____.

ORDINATION: GUIDELINES FOR REGIONAL ORAL EXAMINATION FOR APPLICATION FOR ORDINATION

(revised 10/10/2022)

The Oral Examination is designed for a group interview before the Regional Leadership Team. Any information that is requested by the Written Exam for Ordination: Personal Information and Pastoral Profile is considered appropriate areas of discussion. It is understood that not every area may be considered, but that the RLT has the freedom to select questions and to ask additional questions. This examination is also in preparation for examination by the National Board of Oversight. Additionally, the candidate may be asked questions in the following areas not covered in the Written Exam or Ordination: Personal Information and Pastoral Profile, so the candidate may wish to review these areas prior to any Oral Examination.

Those who are conducting the Oral Exam are encouraged to have available some time prior to the interview the candidate's Written Exam and Ordination: Personal Information and Pastoral Profile. The completion of the Written Exam is not required until examination for ordination, however, it is helpful for the candidate and the RLT to discuss regular progress in its completion, and to use the Written Exam as an important source for questions during the Oral Exam.

Additional Possible Areas of Discussion:

- 1) Childhood impacts on personal development
- 2) Spiritual condition of parents and their relationship to the church
- 3) Share your personal spiritual journey
- 4) Demonstrate the steps used to lead someone to Christ, including scriptures normally used.
- 5) Describe the most influential person in your life.
- 6) Describe your current spiritual disciplines.
- 7) Describe your current relationship with your local church.
- 8) State your personal and professional life goals.
- 9) Name the five (5) main objectives you have for your life.
- 10) State why you feel called to ministry in The Brethren Church instead some other group.
- 11) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Bibliology (Revelation, Inspiration, Canon, Authority, Infallibility and Inerrancy, The relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, Principles of Biblical Interpretation).

- 12) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Theology (Trinity, Attributes).
- 13) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Anthropology (Human Nature, Sin, relationship to God).
- 14) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Christology (Virgin Birth, Trinitarian Views, Humanity and Deity of Jesus Christ, Lordship).
- 15) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Pneumatology (Work of the Holy Spirit, Spiritual Gifts).
- 16) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Soteriology (Justification, Adoption, Regeneration, Eternal Security, Calling, Election, Predestination, and Foreknowledge).
- 17) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Ecclesiology (Nature of Church, Relationship of Church to Israel, Church Polity, Ordinances, Practices, Elders, Deacons,
- 18) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Brethren Distinctives (Communion, Feet-Washing, Baptism, Anointing, Confirmation, Nonconformity, Nonviolence, and Nonswearing).
- 19) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Eschatology (Rapture, Tribulation, Millennial Reign, and Prophecy).
- 20) Please state your views in the areas of the field of Demonology (Possession, Exorcism, Spiritual Warfare, Personhood, and Existence).
- 21) Share your views on issues of current social concern (Women's Rights, Abortion, War, other areas covered in the Written Application or Ordination: Resume' and Pastoral Profile).
- 22) Share your views on issues of current religious concern (Women in Ministry, Charismatic Movement, Church Growth Movement, Cults and the Occult, Church and State Issues).
- 23) Share your personal insights from any of the areas listed in the Written Exam dealing with your personal Philosophy of Ministry.

ORDINATION: REVIEW SURVEY

This review will happen the first year a Brethren Pastor/Elder serves in a local congregation and then every three years thereafter.

Write a paragraph for each of the questions below. You may be contacted by a member of the Regional Leadership Team to discuss your responses.

Name: _____
Current Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____
Email Address: _____
Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Business/Office Phone: _____

1. What have you been reading? What individuals are you following on other sources (podcasts, blogs, social media)?
2. What special events and conferences have you attended (including Brethren events)?
3. What are you reading devotionally? How are you growing spiritually?
4. What are you doing for self-care? (mental, emotional, physical, marriage, family)
5. Describe your current ministry context, including your primary responsibilities and activities within the context.
6. Describe your interactions and relationships with those you serve in your current ministry context.
7. What other Brethren pastors, leaders or congregations have you been in relationship with?
8. We want to help you in your ministerial and spiritual growth. What areas can we walk alongside you in? How can we resource you better?

This review will happen the first year a Brethren Pastor/Elder serves in a local congregation and then every three years thereafter.

GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL BOARD OF OVERSIGHT ORAL INTERVIEW AND EXAMINATION

(Revised 4/11/2024)

The National Board of Oversight members will review the Written Exam, Ordination: Personal Information and Pastoral Profile, and all other documents submitted prior to the Oral Interview and Exam. This review by each member will be the foundation for the questions asked of the candidate, although other questions may be asked by any member. The purpose of this interview and examination is to support and encourage the candidate in their ministry while affirming that all areas of study and potential future concern have been addressed.

Generally, the interview and exam of a candidate takes this format:

Personal History

Spiritual Journey

Current Ministry Context and Status

Current Personal and Family Status

Review of Questions raised by Written Exam

Review of questions raised by Philosophy of Ministry

Other questions from NBO Members

Additionally, the spouse of the candidate may come and meet the National Board of Oversight to be interviewed. **This is not a spousal examination: the spousal interview is not to determine the approval of the candidate, and the candidate will be present when their spouse is introduced.** The purpose of meeting the spouse is to assure that the spouse understands the support and encouragement that are available. Areas of discussion may include, but are not limited to:

Support of the candidate's call and ministry

Resources available to help with stresses of being a pastoral family

Questions about setting aside time for exercise, relaxation, and continued development of the marital relationship.

Possible areas where additional support can be offered.