

CABF Credentials Committee Annual Report
September, 2023

The introduction to the policy that guides the work of the CABF Credentials Committee states the following:

The Committee shall be the first official contact for a candidate requesting accreditation, as association licence, or seeking ordination. The Committee shall be a nurturing one, assisting the candidate to meet the standards desired within the CABF... It shall advise the CABF of any application for ordination and the need for an Ordination Examining Council.

Over the last year, these words have continued to guide the work of the Committee.

The Committee shall be the first official contact for a candidate requesting accreditation

Activity on the Credentials Committee has picked-up over the last year, particularly in response to actions taken by the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada. Since our 2022 report, the Credentials Committee has granted credentials to two new candidates in Alberta and one in British Columbia. However, that notes a completion in the process—there are many more candidates in the process.

Currently, three candidates (two in Alberta and one in Saskatchewan) have submitted applications and are awaiting interviews with the Credentials Committee. In addition, the Committee is having conversations with an additional fourteen candidates from AB, SK, BC, NB, and NS.

Many of these candidates are clergy in churches that are also engaged in conversations about joining the CABF. Each clergy/church is approaching these conversations in their own unique way—some clergy are pursuing credentials while their church discerns membership, others are awaiting opportunity to apply for credentials following a congregational decision to join CABF.

Since our last report, the CABF has been recognized as a religious body by Vital Statistics in Alberta. We are awaiting confirmation of recognition in British Columbia any week now and continue to provide the Marriage Office in Ontario required documentation for provincial recognition. We anticipate application to Saskatchewan before the close of 2023 and possibly New Brunswick in 2024.

It shall advise the CABF of any application for ordination and the need for an Ordination Examining Council.

An Ordination Council was called in November of 2022 to consider the ordination of Rev. Arla Johnson. That Committee recommended to First Baptist Church Halifax that the congregation proceed with ordination. Arla was ordained on April 2, 2023, becoming the first openly gay Baptist minister ordained in Canada.

Two individuals are in conversation about their congregations partnering with CABF in the ordination process (note there is a distinct difference between ordained clergy transferring credentials and individuals engaging our process for ordination in partnership with their congregations).

Growing Pains.

There is much to celebrate as CABF extends its reach across Canada, providing a welcoming association for churches and clergy. However, this growth comes with a significant increase in responsibility for the Credentials Committee, especially in the next year or two of transition for many LGBTQ2S+ inclusive congregations and clergy. Not only do we have an increase in applicants to process, but now we have new responsibilities with each Province where we are a recognized religious body. Each Province has their own set of regulations and requirements for regular reporting.

Thus, the Credentials Committee is requesting that the Committee have at least one member from each Province where we hold recognition. The intent is to structure the committee so that someone from each Province will serve as a contact with their provincial office, keeping track of clergy in their province and fulfilling CABF reporting requirements.

Respectfully Submitted
Rev. Dr. Rusty Edwards
Chair, Credentials Committee