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Ordination Paper prepared for The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts  
Commission on Ordination and Standing  
Old Colony Baptist Association

Presented by Min. Victoria Frances Pina  
September 1, 2023

All Biblical quotes are NIV version of the Bible.

47 **Faith Journey, Christian Experience & Call to Ministry**

48

49 **Faith Journey**

50

51 My name is Victoria Frances Pina. I am 47 years old. I was born and raised in Brockton,  
52 MA. My home church is Messiah Baptist Church in Brockton of which I am a lifelong  
53 member. I am divorced, and I have two beautiful daughters, Arianna, age 25 and  
54 Gabrielle, age 15. I have found nothing more rewarding than raising two intelligent,  
55 caring, and capable human beings. My daughter, Arianna, is currently pursuing a  
56 master's degree at Johns Hopkins University and Gabrielle is an honors student at New  
57 Heights Charter School in Brockton. My children represent the 4th generation of our  
58 Pina family to attend Messiah Baptist Church. It is an honor to continue this family  
59 legacy of worship and church affiliation. My present call to ministry has led me to serve  
60 as pastor of First Baptist Church in Hanson. I was installed as pastor on September 4,  
61 2022, and I am blessed to currently serve the church in Hanson in this pastoral role.

62

63 My faith journey began when I was about 5 years old. I was in kindergarten when I first  
64 realized God existed. I asked my parents many questions about God. My parents were  
65 both Christians who shared their belief in God with me. I count it a blessing to be raised  
66 in a family of faith. I attended a Catholic School because my parents believed I would  
67 receive a better education. I was taught prayers: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the  
68 Apostles Creed. My teacher, a nun named Sister Theresa, would read stories from the  
69 Bible and talk about Jesus Christ. Sister Theresa not only had stories, but also songs  
70 and music to accompany her stories. I vividly remember the lyrics to one of these: "You  
71 gave me a heart, and you gave me a smile, you gave us Jesus, and you made me your  
72 child, but I just thank you God for making me, me, Uh huh huh, Oh!"

73

74 Sister Theresa instructed all her students to attend church on Sundays with their  
75 families, emphasizing the importance of having a healthy relationship with God.  
76 Consequently, I went to my parents frequently to discuss my church attendance. My  
77 mother grew annoyed and advised me that we would attend church when she could find  
78 the time. My mother made the house rules, and we were required to follow them.

79 My father was a police officer who worked Sundays, holidays, and often seven days a  
80 week. My mother's field was education and she taught five days a week. She fiercely  
81 believed in education. She was a bookworm; she was always overly studious. She  
82 eventually earned a master's degree in education, graduating with distinction. Sister  
83 Theresa was visibly dissatisfied by my irregular church attendance. She prayed over  
84 me, making the sign of the cross on my forehead. She placed pink plastic rosary beads  
85 around my neck to use for praying at home. I thanked her for the gift and returned to my  
86 seat feeling sad and rejected.

87  
88 When I was in the 2nd grade, I was upset that my classmates were making their First  
89 Communion. I could participate in Mass by singing and reading scriptures, but I was not  
90 allowed to partake in Holy Communion. This really bothered me, so I discussed it with  
91 my mother. I explained to her that communion was important and all my classmates  
92 received it. I was left in the church pew feeling alienated and embarrassed during  
93 communion.

94  
95 I complained about my situation, but my mother kept telling me our religion was  
96 different. I had been blessed as an infant but not yet baptized. I grew frustrated and  
97 impatient with her. I wanted to fit in at Mass and at school. I felt like an interloper. I was  
98 the little black girl at a predominantly white school. I was often misconstrued as having  
99 no religion and apparently no faith. My classmates questioned my belief in God. This  
100 troubled me to my core. When Father Kelleher spoke to my mother about my situation,  
101 she thanked the priest for his good intentions. She refused conversion and said we  
102 were proud Baptists, and she was unwilling to convert to Catholicism. There was no  
103 further discussion necessary. She was not easily influenced or coaxed into anything  
104 contrary to her own beliefs.

105  
106 After my failed attempts to get my mother to understand my plight, I took matters into  
107 my own hands. I read the Bible at home. I dressed in one of her old graduation robes  
108 pretending it was a minister's robe. I took a slice of white bread and removed the cap  
109 from a Coca Cola bottle. I made perfect circles by pressing the bottle cap into the bread.

110 I took a butter knife to extract the circles from the bread. I got juice and poured it into  
111 Dixie mouthwash cups. I sat everything together neatly on a little serving tray. I called  
112 my older sister, Rena, and younger brother, Louis, into the family room to have church  
113 with me. We read scriptures together, sang songs and shared communion. This was our  
114 service on many Sundays. It was enough to placate me for a while. I wanted to be  
115 closer to God, learn more about my religion, and attend church every Sunday.

116

### 117 **Christian Experience**

118

119 My mother's best friend, Auntie Sheryl, attended church frequently at Messiah Baptist  
120 Church in Brockton. My Grandma Louise and Auntie Marty sang there in the church  
121 choir in the 1950's. Mom and Dad were married there on July 15, 1971. I was blessed  
122 as a baby in 1976 at Messiah. Auntie Sheryl brought me to Messiah one Sunday  
123 morning in the Spring of 1983. The church was crowded but we managed to find seats.  
124 I could see the choir, the pastor, and the big cross on the ceiling from my vantage point.  
125 When the choir sang, I began feeling happy inside. A lady named Ms. Molden sang  
126 powerfully enough to seemingly make the angels come down from Heaven. The choir  
127 sang in harmony with her, and I was amazed by their vocal talent.

128

129 When Rev. Walker preached, I listened intently. After the sermon, all the lights went off  
130 in the sanctuary and the cross on the ceiling lit up. I was mesmerized by it. "Auntie, it  
131 lights up," I whispered, completely astonished. She smiled at me reassuringly and  
132 gently rubbed my back. They didn't have a golden cross that lit up where I attended  
133 Mass at school. A revelation came to me that Sunday. I did have a religion and a church  
134 home. I was not an interloper. I remember feeling at peace knowing God was with me.  
135 I felt a sense of belonging and satisfaction. I was not sitting alone feeling deserted in the  
136 church pew. I knew at that moment there was a sweet, sweet, spirit in this place.

137

138 I accompanied Auntie Sheryl to church many more times. I was persistent and kept  
139 pestering my parents. Finally, they conceded that we should attend church as a family.  
140 We attended church weekly and became involved in church life. I attended Sunday

141 School with my siblings. I was 9 years old when I met Deacon Ramona Jackson. She  
142 was my first Sunday School teacher. I was very timid, and I did not like public speaking.  
143 She asked me to read scripture in class and I declined. I declined politely, but that did  
144 not matter. I didn't read at school because I never volunteered. My teacher only picked  
145 on volunteers. Deacon Jackson obviously had a different selection process. She  
146 changed from a sweet old lady into someone who put the fear of God in me. My heart  
147 started racing. She told me that I was to read, and I only had one choice. I read without  
148 further incident. "What's the problem?" she inquired. I explained to her that public  
149 speaking made me feel nervous and anxious. She made me read scripture in class  
150 every single Sunday thereafter. Deacon Jackson taught me to speak boldly with  
151 confidence.

152

153 Rena and I joined the youth choir. I went to Vacation Bible School in the summers which  
154 was taught by my cousin, Rev. Dayann Johnson. When I was 13 years old, she allowed  
155 me to be a teen helper with Sunday School and Children's Church. She recognized my  
156 calling before I ever understood this terminology. She talked with me about all things  
157 spiritual. She prayed for me and blessed me. Min. Kathleen Durham taught me my first  
158 memorization scripture. It was Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and  
159 lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God and God shall  
160 direct your path." This scripture has carried me through dark times in life when I felt  
161 discouraged, hurt, uncertain, or fearful. I would recite this scripture to myself, and it  
162 brought me comfort. Min. Durham taught me to remember and carry the word of God in  
163 my heart.

164

165 When I was 16 years old, I chose to surrender my life to Jesus Christ. I was baptized at  
166 Watch Night service on New Year's Eve on December 31, 1991. I was baptized by  
167 Pastor Walker at Messiah. If ever there was a person who brought Christ in the room, it  
168 is my friend, Pastor Walker. He is a loving, kind, and gentle soul. He has such a  
169 powerful witness that I feel a nearness to God by being around him. Pastor Walker  
170 always has a smile on his face, and he always has something positive or affirming to

171 say to people. Pastor Walker is a man of wisdom and grace. He taught me many  
172 valuable lessons about life and God through his sermons over the years.

173

174 I attended Cardinal Spellman High School where I received many awards. As a  
175 sophomore, I was inducted into the National Honor Society. As a junior, I tutored  
176 students, and I was voted Senior Class Vice-President. All these honors and distinctions  
177 were meaningful. However, Sister Thomasine, the school principal said that since the  
178 existence of Cardinal Spellman High School a non-Catholic student had never received  
179 the Religious Academic Excellence award. Although I was Baptist, she stated I excelled  
180 in all four years of my religious studies receiving "A" grades. She said it was an honor to  
181 bestow the award upon me because I demonstrated the love and acceptance of Christ.

182

183 On Baccalaureate night, there was thunderous applause from the entire audience  
184 along with a standing ovation. I glanced at my parents, and I could see the look of pride  
185 on their faces as I walked on stage to accept my award. A loving nature and attitude to  
186 serve others was something cultivated in me by both of my parents. They helped to  
187 shape, mold, and nurture me by their love, concern, and guidance. When I was growing  
188 up over the years, my parents made many sacrifices for me. They were kind and  
189 generous people who taught me by example. Louis and Frances Pina will always be a  
190 blessing in my life. I praise God for them. My father is deceased, and I miss him  
191 immensely. My mother currently suffers from Alzheimer's disease, and it is painful to  
192 watch her decline. Our faith as Christians has helped our family to navigate this terrible  
193 disease. I am privileged and proud to call myself their daughter.

194

### 195 **Call to Ministry**

196

197 After graduating from Cardinal Spellman in May of 1994, I matriculated to Tufts  
198 University pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in English. During my studies at Tufts, I took Old  
199 Testament and New Testament courses. The professor was a visiting lecturer from  
200 Boston University School of Theology. He expanded and challenged my mind. I prayed  
201 daily; I read the Bible daily. I always had ideas and questions when attending class.

202 It was during this time as a 19-year-old college student that I knew with certainty God  
203 had a plan and a purpose for my life. I expressed an interest in pastoral ministry to my  
204 father. He was surprised but encouraged me to follow my heart.

205  
206 I have matured and grown spiritually over the years, and I feel God has equipped me for  
207 all I have been called to accomplish. The Holy Spirit convicted me of this during my 3  
208 years of study at TABCOM School of Ministry. My period of testing and discernment.  
209 I gained foundational knowledge and experience at TABCOM School of Ministry. I am  
210 currently enrolled at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary working toward a Master of  
211 Divinity. I want to preach the gospel and spread the good news. I wish to be ordained  
212 because I want to be consecrated and set apart to complete this work. I feel called to  
213 pastoral ministry and I am truly blessed to carry out this call in the performance of my  
214 duties as pastor of First Baptist Church in Hanson.

215

## 216 **God**

217

218 God is the Creator of all that exists. God reigns in Heaven and earth. God is the alpha  
219 and the omega. God was, God is, and God is to come. God is a divine being, a spirit  
220 without the limitations of space, time, or location. God is faithful, merciful, and forgiving.  
221 God loves us unconditionally. God is righteous and just. God is truth. Those who love  
222 God put their hope, trust, and faith in seeking to understand truth. Truth is that which is  
223 consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God. Truth is the self-  
224 expression of God. Truth is theological; the definition of truth flows from God. Truth is  
225 fundamentally spiritual. God never deviates from truth.

226

227 Although the word trinity is not found in the Bible, it is accepted by many Christians as a  
228 way of explaining and understanding the triune God. There is God the Father, God the  
229 Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three facets of one God. All three persons are separate,  
230 but all three persons are equal. All three persons work together. The will of the Father is  
231 the will of the Son and the will of the Holy Spirit. We relate to the trinity, but there is only  
232 one God. Our God is holy. God renders a holy response to the unholy, a just reaction to

233 the unjust. God detests sin and corruption. God is to be treated with total reverence-  
234 worshipped and glorified by all creation.

235

### 236 **Jesus Christ**

237

238 Jesus is the second being of the trinity. Jesus is God incarnate. “The word became flesh  
239 and dwelt among us full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus was sent into the world  
240 to redeem the sins of humanity. Our sinfulness damaged our relationship with God, but  
241 Jesus repaired our relationship with God. Jesus lived a life both human and divine.  
242 He was pure and holy without sin or blemish. We are no longer slaves to sin because  
243 Jesus paid our debt on Calvary. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice by willingly laying  
244 down His life. We were ransomed by His blood. Jesus was raised from the dead three  
245 days after suffering from death by crucifixion. Our faith in Jesus secures our salvation.  
246 We must acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Those who believe in Him shall  
247 not perish but be given eternal life. Jesus intercedes for us to make us righteous before  
248 God. Yeshua is His name in Hebrew, and it means, “the Lord saves.” Jesus is also  
249 referred to as Emmanuel which means, “God with us.”

250

### 251 **Holy Spirit**

252 The Holy Spirit is a divine being and the third being of the trinity. The Holy Spirit is “the  
253 Helper” whom Jesus sent into the world when returning to the Father. Jesus did not  
254 leave us to live in the world without help or hope. The Holy Spirit is a divine intercessor  
255 who acts on our behalf. The Holy Spirit takes on distinct roles in our lives. As “the  
256 Comforter”, the Holy Spirit provides support in our times of uncertainty and sorrow. The  
257 Holy Spirit also convicts us of our sinful nature and guides us to repentance. The Holy  
258 Spirit offers revelation, wisdom, and guides us to truth.

259

260 The Holy Spirit is an indwelling and powerful presence at work in every Christian  
261 believer. We each benefit from the fruits of the spirit which are gifts intended to build up  
262 the church and strengthen our connection to God.

263



264 **Humanity**

265

266 Humanity is a special creation made in God's own image and likeness. We are the  
267 crowning glory of God's creation. We each carry God's breath of life inside of us which  
268 is how we are made in God's image. There is sanctity of all human life because all  
269 humanity has intrinsic value and worth. Our mind, body, and soul are created to glorify  
270 God. Humanity is viewed equally in the eyes of God. There is no superior gender or  
271 race. These sinful man-made distinctions are used to justify exploitation and  
272 oppression. God has no partiality. God loves all of us equally and unconditionally.  
273 We were not created to be creatures of solitude. Human beings need interaction with  
274 one another to give mutual support and encouragement. We are expected to live a life  
275 that is holy and pleasing to God.

276

277 **Salvation**

278

279 We receive salvation by God's grace. There was nothing that humanity could do to save  
280 ourselves from sin, so God devised a plan. If we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and  
281 Savior, then we are saved by faith through God's grace. "If you declare with your mouth  
282 that Jesus is Lord and know in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall  
283 be saved" (Rom. 10:9). God freely offers salvation to us despite our unworthiness. God  
284 has given us all free will, so it is our choice to accept Jesus or to reject Him. The  
285 Christian gospel of salvation is a gift from God for all humanity. There is no other source  
286 of salvation besides Jesus Christ and only the gift of salvation bears an eternal value.

287

288 **Scripture**

289

290 "All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and  
291 training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for  
292 every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible is the divinely inspired word of God to  
293 be studied by all Christians. It offers insight and knowledge detailing how to live a life

294 that is righteous and pleasing to God. It contains information that is reliable and useful  
295 for guidance and putting our faith into practice.

296

297 The Bible continuously points to Jesus Christ as the means of salvation. The Bible is  
298 holy, and its scriptures possess meaning and authority. The word of God endures  
299 because it is trustworthy and dependable. It is always relatable and applicable to every  
300 human situation or life circumstance. As Christians, we are taught not to be conformed  
301 to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds through  
302 scripture. The Bible provides believers with timeless wisdom and valuable instruction.

303

### 304 **Church**

305

306 The church is the body of believers who put their faith in Jesus Christ. The church has  
307 responsibilities which include: preaching the gospel, administering ordinances, offering  
308 fellowship, and supporting members of the congregation and the community at large.

309 The church strives to be welcoming and accepting toward all people by demonstrating  
310 the love of Christ. It is important to create Christian communities that promote unity and  
311 offer numerous opportunities for fellowship. The church provides a peaceful refuge to  
312 escape the conflict and chaos of this world. The church is called to assist people with  
313 spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. The needs of people must be identified in order  
314 to minister effectively. The church responds by offering swift and restorative assistance.  
315 These efforts support and transition people from brokenness to wholeness. There is  
316 restoration, healing, and wholeness in Christ. The role of the church is to serve and to  
317 connect people to Christ.

318

### 319 **The Ordinances of Baptism & The Lord's Supper**

320

321 Baptists observe two ordinances which are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a  
322 public expression of faith. The Believer's Baptism is typically performed when an  
323 individual is old enough to fully understand the complexity of surrendering one's life to  
324 Christ. This is an event where traditionally one is immersed in water to symbolize the

325 change the Holy Spirit has made in an individual's heart. All who follow Christ are called  
326 to be baptized. As commanded by our Lord, "Go and make disciples out of all nations  
327 baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).  
328 The water of baptism symbolically washes away our sins and cleanses us from  
329 unrighteousness. We die to our former selves and become new creations in Christ.

330

331 The Lord's Supper is an ordinance that we engage in as a way of remembrance.  
332 Communion is a time to examine ourselves and reflect on our lives and walk with God.  
333 We serve a God of mercy and forgiveness. We come together in common union to  
334 remember Christ's unfailing love and forgiveness. We remember the sacrifice Jesus  
335 made on the cross at Calvary. The Lord's Supper emphasizes the love of Christ. This  
336 ordinance affords us the opportunity to offer gratitude and praise for this extraordinary  
337 sacrifice.

338

### 339 **ABC USA, Ecumenical Witness, Code of Ethics & Ministerial Concerns**

340

#### 341 **ABC USA**

342

343 I believe in the values of the American Baptist Churches, USA. The Baptist identity is  
344 structured around four freedoms: Biblical, Soul, Church, and Religious. I believe that in  
345 keeping with Baptist principles, local church congregations should remain independent  
346 and autonomous. No archdiocese interprets scripture for the local church or dictates its  
347 practice in the Baptist Church denomination.

348

349 I also believe it benefits churches to affiliate with our regional branch which is The  
350 American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts and the local branch of Old Colony  
351 Baptist Association. These branches exist to offer support and resources to churches,  
352 but they do not dictate practice, policy, or procedure. When we collaborate with our  
353 regional or local branch associations, we can accomplish larger goals and missions.  
354 We can reach and minister to a greater number of people through fellowship, training,  
355 and unified missions.

356 **Ecumenical Witness & Interfaith Witness**

357

358 It is valuable for the local church to join with other Christ-centered congregations for the  
359 purposes of unity, fellowship, and cooperative mission. It is beneficial to work together  
360 in a spirit of unity. The universal nature of the Body of Christ inspires us to collaborate  
361 through worship, shared resources, and missions. As a church leader, I have the  
362 responsibility to build connections and foster ecumenical relationships. We must work  
363 far beyond the four walls of our home church to impact others. I also support  
364 collaborative interfaith efforts as it is necessary to cultivate good relationships in the  
365 community.

366

367 **Code of Ethics**

368

369 I am a member in good standing at Messiah Baptist Church and First Baptist Church of  
370 Hanson. A code of ministerial ethics is important for providing accountability among  
371 ministers and necessary to promote guidelines for acceptable conduct. I have read,  
372 understood, and agree to uphold the Code of Ethics of the American Baptist Churches,  
373 USA. I have supplied a signed copy of the ABC Ministers Council Covenant and Code  
374 of Ethics to the commission chairperson.

375

376 **Ministerial Concerns & Compassion**

377

378 As a minister of the gospel, I have a passion for social justice. Our God is a just God.  
379 I feel it is my duty and obligation to speak out against institutions, systems, laws,  
380 practices, and programs that are unjust. My concern is that all people should be treated  
381 equitably with human decency and respect. I am drawn to help women and single  
382 parents, especially because I personally understand their struggles and frustrations.  
383 I have compassion for them and an awareness of the unique challenges they face.

384

385 I am also sympathetic to the issues of immigrants. If we are not creating dialogue or  
386 seeking solutions to address problems, then we ourselves are contributing to the

387 problem. We must create change which begins with dialogue. We need to have those  
388 discussions that are difficult and uncomfortable. My job as a minister of the gospel is to  
389 help the lost, the lonely and the left out. I must provide encouragement and hope to  
390 those who have been stepped over and stepped on by our society.

391

392 The church has a duty to advocate for marginalized people- the women and  
393 children, the elderly, the poor, and the immigrants. We must speak up as a voice for the  
394 voiceless and protect those who are the most vulnerable in our communities. It is not an  
395 easy task, but change has never come easily. It takes hard work, commitment, sacrifice,  
396 and determination. We need to have a willingness to be about God's business.