

Frequently Asked Questions

What is M28?

M28 is a partnership in certificate level theological education between Kairos University (Sioux Falls, SD) and several American Baptist Regions, including ABC of Indiana & Kentucky, ABC of Michigan, ABC of the Great Rivers, ABC of Ohio, and Mission Northwest. This program seeks to provide quality ATS accredited education to persons currently pastoring smaller ABC congregations or who may aspire to do so. The program may also prepare these pastoral candidates for a Regional level of ordination within their home ABC Region should they choose to pursue it.

A laity training track is also available for congregational leaders through M28 and may also be pursued toward full certification.

Why is the Region transitioning from the prior (CLI) model?

American Baptist Regions have long been involved in leadership and theological education with their churches. Many Regions have historically offered some version of a certified lay ministry program that provided lay leaders with skills and knowledge to serve as leaders in their home church.

Over time, as more bi- and co-vocational congregations became the norm, finding quality dedicated and American Baptist friendly leadership to serve them as pastoral leaders grew more challenging. Several of these lay ministry training programs began to be used and looked to for the education of bi-vocational or part-time pastors.

This shift in focus put more and more weight on the various programs, requiring Regions to devote additional resources (time, finance and staff) to ensure quality and consistency in value. At the same time, most Regions have faced their own shortfalls in funding and reduction in staff.

M28 embraces a return to the partnership between the church, Region and academy at a certificate level of academia. It allows Kairos University to provide high quality ATS accredited education and training, while the local church or ministry serves as a training ground and learning context for leaders, and the Region helps broker and administer the relationship between the partners. The partnership helps alleviate some of the financial and staffing strain former models were feeling, while providing an affordable, flexible and quality alternative it is believed people will readily embrace.

Who are the partners in this project?

The various partners in M28 are as follows:

Kairos University (aka Sioux Falls Seminary) is the theological education institutional partner. Kairos, through its staff and administration, will provide a broad range of coursework available to students online and deliverable both in synchronous and asynchronous video format.

Kairos is an ATS accredited institution that has a historic affiliation with the North American Baptist denomination. Kairos serves students in 60+ countries from 70+ denominational backgrounds. More about Kairos University and the Kairos Project can be found at www.kairos.edu.

Some American Baptist Regions will also be partners. *M28* was initiated by Executive Ministers in the Great Lakes Fellowship of ABC Regions, which includes Indiana Kentucky, Great Rivers (Illinois-Missouri), Michigan, and Ohio. Mission Northwest and other ABC Regions beyond this geographical footprint may also soon join.

Regional partners will provide administrative oversight to the program and be responsible for the design and assessment of student participation and advancement. Each Region will determine its own staffing. For example, the Indiana-Kentucky Region has contracted a dean to provide program leadership.

Certificate Level Students constitute a third partner. This includes local clergy who wish to pursue certification in theological education which may lead toward Regional ordination. It is believed that the contextual nature of the program, as well as its competency-based approach and affordability, will prove attractive to many such pastors and ministry leaders.

The program is also open to congregational lay leaders who wish to gain continuing education and become more equipped in areas of leadership and ministry.

Student Mentors are the final partner. Each participating student must identify and work with a mentor to move through the program. The mentor position is a voluntary one, where a mentor is making a “pay it forward” contribution and investment in leadership development of a mentee’s life and for the good of the greater church. (See more on Mentors below.)

What is Competency Based Theological Education (CBTE)?

Competency based theological education, or CBTE, differs from traditional academic theological education in a fundamental way. In CBTE, students focus on developing mastery of outcomes within their program of study.

Learning is contextually connected to one’s place of ministry vocation (church or other ministry) and follows a learning path that features built-in flexible and practical learning opportunities. Students will work with the Regional administrator/dean and their mentor to assess competency and desired outcomes, leading to the design of the educational path of their program.

Certified graduates of *M28* will demonstrate ministry competency in a range of areas that typically require a pastor’s vocational attention. These areas will coincide with the required course work a student pursues.

What courses of study will be required and/or offered in *M28*?

To achieve certification through *M28*, a student will need to complete twelve (12) courses (9 required and 3 elective) in the following disciplines:

Required Areas of Study:

- New Testament
- Old Testament
- Theology
- Pastoral Care
- Organizational Management (Church Admin)
- Preaching
- Leadership
- Missiology/ Ecclesiology
- Discipleship/Disciple Making

Elective Areas of Study:

- Elective One
- Elective Two
- Elective Three

Regional partners may also require completion of additional prerequisites for those candidates pursuing Regional ordination recognition, such as:

- Baptist History & Polity
- Professional Boundaries Training

What if I am in the middle of the former Region program?

Consideration for students who enroll in *M28* with prior certification credit or achievement from a prior Regional program will be built into the initial assessment process. This may mean granting credit for some prior course work.

What is the cost of this program?

The *M28* Certificate in Theological Education being offered follows a subscription-based model. A subscription fee of \$25/month will be paid directly to Kairos University. Each Region may consider additional fees to offset administrative costs. Under the subscription model, a student may take one or more courses each month. The program is self-paced and will require personal initiative and dedication to complete.

What if I am interested in more traditional Master's level theological education?

If you are looking to pursue ABCUSA recognized ordination, you will need to follow a more traditional path such as the M.Div. or M.A.T.S. ABCUSA has several partner seminaries that provide such paths today in multiple ways. Kairos University/Sioux Falls Seminary also provides Master's level degrees using the CBTE model. The subscription rate for those programs is \$300/month.

How will the program be administered in our Region?

Each ABC Region will determine how it intends to administer the program. In some Regions, such as ABCINKY, the Executive Minister has appointed a dean for the program. This Dean/Administrator will work with students as they enroll, determine competencies and a learning path, and select their student mentor. Student assessment/competency evaluation will be the domain of the Region in close collaboration with each student's mentor.

What is the mentor role?

Each participating student must identify and work with a mentor to move through the program. Mentors of the student's choosing, but also to be approved by the Regional administrator/dean, should be M.Div. or higher credentialed clergy who are familiar with pastoral ministry. Regional partners can work with students in identifying student mentors should that be needed. The student's mentor will be integral to a student's academic assessment and should be willing to companion a student candidate through the Regional ordination process.

Who should consider enrollment in *M28*?

Enrollment in *M28* is ideal for the pastoral or ministry leader in a smaller congregation who may be bi- or co-vocational, perhaps entering ministry later in life, and seeking to enhance their reservoir of knowledge for ministry and their capacity to think theologically. The ideal student is not looking for a Master's degree in theology nor seeking ABCUSA nationally recognized ordination but values gaining greater competency in ministry and the pastoral role. Prospective students should be self-motivated learners who are able to make participation in *M28* a priority and have the backing of the congregation where they serve.

If you are uncertain if this describes you or if you are a good fit for this program, you are encouraged to visit with your Region staff for further discernment.

Will certificate graduates of *M28* automatically receive ordination recognition?

Completion of the *M28* certification program does not automatically translate to Region recognized ordination. In ABC life, ordination is always an act of the local church in partnership with the Regional body. Each Region has its own ordination recognition process and guidelines that candidates must follow. It is believed, however, that those students who complete this certification will be well-positioned to move through the Regional process.