



CURRICULUM GUIDE



2026-2027

WWW.MISSIONDRIVENCHURCHES.ORG



CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION	I
GUIDELINES	2
ACADEMIC EXPECTATION	4
DESIRED OUTCOMES	5
FAQ	6
CONTACT	10



INTRODUCTION

Mission Driven Churches (MDC) is pleased to announce a new opportunity in theological education for both **pastors and lay leaders**. MDC is collaborating with **Kairos University/Sioux Falls Seminary** to make **ATS-accredited theological training** available to subscribers at an economically reasonable rate. For a **\$25 per month subscription**, students will be able to pursue a **Certificate in Theology**, by participating in online classes through Kairos University.

This opportunity, is known as **M28** (for Matthew 28/Great Commission), is a successor program to the region's **Church Leadership Institute**. As congregations and leaders face new challenges and opportunities today it is believed that this initiative will offer current, accessible, and convenient training for those who participate.

The program itself is ideal for pastors who serve in bi or co-vocational ministry, who may not have had the opportunity to pursue traditional seminary training at the MDiv level. By completing this certification, those pastors will be positioned to pursue ordination recognized regionally; meaning they will become better trained and credentialed for local ministry. In addition, lay leaders who chose to participate will benefit from seminary-level training at an affordable cost and be able to enhance their own congregational service.

Kairos University utilizes a competency-based model of theological education. This means a student's prior competencies in education, leadership and ministry are considered during their initial assessment and the formation of a learning pathway. Each student's path will be crafted as the student, academic dean, and student mentor confer around the competencies needed for a successful and faithful ministry.

Students will take **10 required courses and 2 elective courses** to complete their certification. Ministry competencies will be assessed by a student mentor, who is someone with an MDiv level of education, selected by the student and approved by the region. **It is expected that a lay leader's pastor will serve as their mentor.**

Rev. Ed Owens has been appointed to serve as the **Academic Dean** for MDC students. Please contact him if you are interested in participating in the M28 opportunity at **edo@mdc.org**.

Other ABC regions participating in this endeavour include **ABC of Indiana, Kentucky, Great Rivers and Mission Northwest**.



GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT MENTOR SELECTION

Selection of the right mentor is a key piece in your participation with M28. The following guidelines should be kept to the front of your discernment process. Remember, final approval of a mentor is subject to the Administrator/Dean of each participating Region.

1. Your mentor should be someone with a theological education (preferably an M.Div. or high degree from an accredited theological seminary or ATS accreditation.)
2. Your mentor should be someone with at least five years of professional ministry experience in a like field to which you aspire. If you are a pastor, or hope to serve as a pastor, your mentor should be someone with at least five years of pastoral experience. The same would hold true for those pursuing other vocational calls such as youth ministry, senior adult ministry, chaplaincy, etc.
3. Your mentor should be someone you like, and someone who likes and believes in you. You want to choose someone from whom you wish to learn and are willing to develop a close relationship. This should be someone who will be available to you, hold you accountable, be objective yet constructive, and commit to working with you through the M28 program and regional ordination process, should that be your objective. *Note: This could well be a multi-year relationship. It will work best if the mentor and mentee commit to being co-learners in the process.
4. Your mentor should be someone with a window into your vocational life and ministry context. This need not mean they are involved day to day, but close enough to understand the context, its challenges and opportunities.
5. Your mentor should be someone with available time to devote to this relationship. They should be available for regular conversation, coaching and consultation throughout your coursework; as well as timely in completing assessments as you complete courses.
6. Your mentor should be available to meet with you and the dean/administrator of your Region for onboarding and design of the developmental process via Zoom. Furthermore, he or she should be someone who understands and believes in competency based theological education.
7. Your mentor should be competent in the use of technologies like Zoom calls, Survey Monkey type assessments, and operation of basic office suite programs (Word, Power Point, Excel or their equivalent in other formats).



8. It is expected that a mentor in M28 will have the capacity to help a student evaluate progress toward their identified competency goals with each course, as well as in the overall program. In other words, mentors will help students order their lives to find educational moments within the student's ministry context, adapt assignments to those moments, monitor and evaluate progress toward the goal(s).
9. It is expected that M28 mentors will collaborate with the region's dean/administrator and the student in design of the student's learning path.
10. It is expected that M28 mentors be attentive to student progress, help the student stay on course, and – if/when necessary – spur them forward to greater achievement. (accountability)
11. It is expected that when a student feels prepared to assess their mastery of an educational outcome/course that the mentor will offer timely, personal and constructive evaluation to the student, and report the same to the dean/administrator.
12. It is hoped that all M28 mentors are people who want to contribute toward the development of future ministry leaders and take interest and joy in doing so. This is a “pay it forward” opportunity where reward comes in seeing a colleague grow and develop.



STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC EXPECTATION

M28 is a professional education program of academic achievement and certification. As such it comes with some standards of expected compliance for participating students.

These include:

- Timely completion of courses and assuming realistic course loads. It may be tempting to overreach in effort to move through the program sooner, but it is better to move at a pace where you are able to balance multiple responsibilities.
- Professional presentation of written and submitted assignments, including typewritten papers, projects, presentations, and reports. Such materials should be capable of being electronically shared with one's mentor and region administrator/dean if needed. The use of the Turabian style of academic formatting will serve as a good guide.
- Use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling consistent with a professional standard of writing is expected. Participating students should have a high school diploma, its equivalent, or a higher level of education.
- Citation of sources for quotes, references, and notes is expected. Original thinking and writing are expected. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.
- Respect for a mentor's time and investment by being prepared for meetings and consultations, with adequate notice being given should the need arise to reschedule.
- Mandatory participation in the monthly regional learning community/zoom calls with other M28 participating students.
- Being a self-motivated learner and organized student is expected.
- Maintenance of one's subscription payment to Kairos University, as well as any fees that may be due to your Region.

If a student withdraws from the program or becomes dormant, with no activity for at least six months, but wants to resume participation; a new application review will be required.



DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. A fully forming disciple who is regularly engaged in practices for the purpose of both being disciplined and making disciples of others.
2. An understanding of how to discern and lead change in a church towards healthy disciple making.
3. A developed understanding of the Global Church and the local church as both gathered and scattered on mission to make disciples.
4. A theological framework that is constructed upon the implicit and explicit narrative of Scripture of a God on mission who invites us to join God on mission.
5. An ability to lead the organizational management of the local church in such a way as to demonstrate competencies that strengthen their leadership credibility and do not endanger the congregation in the process.
6. An understanding of the need for personal and professional boundaries in ministry that are both developed and able to be articulated.
7. The ability to comprehend and communicate to others, the unique polity of Baptists and how American Baptist Churches function uniquely within that polity.
8. An exposure to the wider church history the enables a person to leverage our history to better understand our present and prepare God's people for their future.
9. An ability to communicate God's Word in a clear and engaging way that leads to more and better disciples.
10. A skillset that enables a person to provide spiritual care to people in a variety of settings and situations that points them to healing and wholeness in and through Jesus Christ.



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 the Great Rivers, Mission Driven Churches and Mission Northwest. This program seeks to provide quality, ATS-accredited education, to persons currently pastoring smaller 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 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) and Michigan. 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 (co-workers) who wish to gain continuing education and equipping 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 of leadership development into 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 (10 required and 2 elective) in the following disciplines:



Required Areas of Study:

- *Old Testament*
- *New Testament*
- *Theology*
- *Biblical Interpretation*
- *Mission of the Churches*
- *Church Leadership*
- *Preaching & Worship*
- *Pastoral Care & Counselling*
- *Church History*
- *Spiritual Formation*

Elective Areas of Study:

- *Elective One*
- *Elective Two*

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 direct 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 the more traditional Masters' 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/Siou's 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?

For MDC participants, Rev. Ed Owens, Associate Region Minister, serves as the regional administrator for M28. He guides students through enrollment, helps clarify competencies, shapes their learning pathway, and supports them in identifying a mentor.

Ongoing assessment and competency evaluation are carried out by the region in 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 should be M. Div. or higher credentialed clergy, who are familiar with pastoral ministry, of the student's choosing, and approved by the regional administrator/dean. Regional partners can work with students in identifying student mentors, should that be needed. The student 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, entering ministry later in life, and seeking to enhance their reservoir of knowledge for ministry and capacity to think theologically. The ideal student is not looking for a master's degree in theology or 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 that 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.

Are you seeking Ordination? If so, here is the process.

Ordination is the church's way of formally recognizing gifting and calling to ministry. We have established region-wide standards for ordination. MDC recognition of ordination declares to the world that a person has met regional standards and throughout ABCUSA. For more information visit our website at <https://www.missiondrivenchurches.org/documents-forms> in the "Commission on Ordination and Standing" section or contact Rev. Ed Owens at Edo@missiondrivenchurches.org.



CONTACT US

PHONE

+517-332-3594

EMAIL

edo@missiondrivenchurches.org

WEBSITE

www.MissionDrivenChurches.org

ADDRESS

4578 Hagadorn Rd., East Lansing, MI





An ATS Accredited Certificate Program
in Theological Education

ats The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting

