

# DEGREES RELATED TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

Through the years Southern Baptist churches have not required levels of education for ordination. However, preparation for effective ministry requires a balance of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional growth. Therefore, an emphasis on academic preparation for ministry is appropriate.

The following information will help the search committee understand more about educational degrees most often held by persons in pastoral ministry. Not all degree programs offered by Baptist seminaries are included here. The ones listed include the degrees most often listed on the biographical profiles of Baptist pastors.

## **Degree Terminology**

### **Associate of Divinity (ADiv) or Diploma in Theology (DipTh)**

Requirement: two years of full-time study for someone who is 30 years of age or older without a college degree

### **Bachelor of Divinity (BD) or Master of Divinity (MDiv)**

Requirement: a college degree plus three years of seminary training. The MDiv has replaced the BD in Baptist seminaries.

### **Master of Theology (ThM) or Master of Systematic Theology (STM)**

Requirement: a college degree, an MDiv, and one additional year of graduate work

### **Doctor of Ministry (DMin)**

Requirement: a college degree, an MDiv, and a minimum of one year of graduate work emphasizing practical aspects of pastoral ministry, plus a written project

### **Doctor of Theology (ThD), Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD), or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

These degrees are primarily earned by those intending to teach in colleges, universities, or seminaries. However, some pastors earn these degrees. Requirement: a college degree, an MDiv, and a minimum of two years of graduate work, plus a written academic thesis

## **Honorary Degrees**

Most honorary degrees are conferred to recognize outstanding service rather than academic achievement. The most familiar of these is the Doctor of Divinity (DD). The value of the degree varies according to the integrity and excellence of the institution conferring the degree.

## **Certificates and Diplomas**

Many pastors respond to God's call at a time in life when age, family responsibility, financial considerations, and other factors make it unreasonably difficult to secure a basic college degree as a prerequisite for seminary study. Often they bring to ministry a background in business, industry, or military life that may help compensate for the lack of a college or seminary degree. These individuals may enroll in seminary courses designed especially for them.

Seminary Extension of the six Southern Baptist seminaries offers a variety of biblical, theological, and practical courses at extension centers and by independent study using CD-ROMs or the Internet. Basic Bible-study courses lead to certificates. Courses leading to seminary-extension diplomas are available for those with high-school through seminary educational background.