

The Ministry of Licensed Local Pastors

Full-time and part-time licensed local pastors under appointment are clergy members of the annual conference in which they are appointed. Those who are licensed for pastoral ministry and appointed to the local church shall preach, conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor.

—¶¶ 602, 315, Book of Discipline

Licensed to Word, Sacrament, and Service

The licensed local pastor has answered the call from God to serve the mission of Jesus Christ through the work of the local congregation in The United Methodist Church. The licensed local pastor while appointed to a particular charge shall perform all the duties of a pastor, including proclamation of the Word of God, leading in worship and liturgy, performing the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, the services of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, confirmation, and membership reception. The licensed local pastor has the authority of a pastor only within the setting and during the time of the appointment and shall not extend beyond it.

Licensed not Ordained

The licensed local pastor is not ordained in The United Methodist Church but is licensed for pastoral ministry to perform the duties of a pastor as described previously. In order to receive a license for pastoral ministry one must:

- complete the candidacy process, becoming certified as a candidate for ministry.
- be recommended by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM).
- complete the studies for the licensed local pastor. (A licensed local-pastor school is normally conducted within the bounds of each conference.)
- be approved by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
- provide the annual conference with a satisfactory certificate of good health and other evaluations as required by the annual conference.
- be approved by the clergy session of annual conference.
- be licensed and receive an appointment from the bishop.

Licensed to Order the Life of the Congregation(s)

Within the setting of the appointment, the licensed local pastor shall oversee the total ministry of the congregation(s) on the charge in its nurturing ministries and in fulfilling its mission of witness and service in the world. The licensed local pastor will give pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership and help them fulfill the ministry to which they are called. The licensed local pastor is to provide ministry within the charge and to the world by using the process of goal setting and planning through which the laity take responsibility for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. The licensed local pastor is to have administrative oversight of the charge and to supervise the working program of the congregation(s) on the charge. (Duties are outlined in ¶340 in the *2008 Book of Discipline*.)

Local Pastor Relationships

- Bishop—the bishop of the conference will issue the license for pastoral ministry once all requirements have been met and will make the appointment where one serves in ministry.
- District superintendent—the district superintendent will have supervision over the process of education and the appointment within the district.
- Local pastor registrar—this person is a member of the conference board of ordained ministry and works directly with local pastors.
- District Committee on Ordained Ministry—a group within the district where the local pastor is appointed who guides one in education, formation and conducts



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annual review and makes recommendations about continuing as a licensed local pastor.

- Clergy mentor—a person assigned to assist the local pastor in all areas of ministry and in the Course of Study.
- Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members—an organization within the conference to offer support for its members while in ministry in The United Methodist Church.

Academic Qualifications

Licensed local pastors must have graduated from an accredited high school or have received a certificate of equivalency before becoming a certified candidate.

The licensed local pastor must pursue theological education through an approved seminary or in the Course of Study.

The Course of Study is a basic theological education program prescribed by the *Book of Discipline* and offered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), the Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM). It includes licensed local-pastor school (see above). The Course of Study also includes the five-year basic Course of Study and the advanced Course of Study.

The basic Course of Study is a five-year curriculum with four courses each year. The curriculum is as follows:

Year one:

- The Pastor As Interpreter of the Bible
- Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit
- Pastoral Care for Spiritual Formation
- Pastoral Leadership and Administration

Year two:

- Hebrew Bible I
- Theological Heritage: Early and Medieval
- Formation for Discipleship
- Practice of Preaching

Year three:

- New Testament I
- Theological Heritage: Reformation
- Our Mission: Evangelism
- Pastoral Care and Counseling

Year four:

- Hebrew Bible II
- Wesleyan Movement
- Worship and Sacraments
- Personal and Social Ethics

Year five:

- New Testament II
- Contemporary Theology
- Our Mission: Transforming Agent
- Theology and the Practice of Ministry

A full-time local pastor shall complete the basic Course of Study within eight years of when they were licensed and a part-time local pastor shall complete the basic Course of Study within 12 years of when they were licensed. Students who complete the five-year Course of Study, have 60 semester hours of undergraduate credit, and have served four years as full-time local pastors may apply for associate membership in the annual conference. (§322)

The **Advanced Course of Study** is a curriculum that enables a local pastor to meet the educational requirements for provisional membership, full conference membership, and ordination as an elder in The United Methodist Church. It consists of 32 semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM (see ¶324.6 of the *2008 Book of Discipline*). Included in this curriculum must be United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity for a minimum of two semester hours in each field of study. There are other guidelines regarding the Advanced Course of Study, and it is important to seek this information from the conference and GBHEM, DOM.

The basic Course of Study and some Advanced Course of Study courses are offered through the Course of Study schools located in several regions in the United States. The list of the schools, including the directors names and addresses, are found on the Web site www.gbhem.org/ministry.

Students Appointed as Local Pastor

Student enrolled as pre-theological or theological students in a college, university, or school of theology listed by the University Senate may be appointed as part-time or full-time local pastors.

For further information contact:

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