

# CERTIFICATION

in Specialized Ministries in  
The United Methodist Church



## Older Adult Ministry

### Educational Requirements

Individuals seeking professional certification in Older Adult Ministry in The United Methodist Church must meet the standards set by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry (GBHEM). These include successful completion of five (5) certification courses relating to Older Adult Ministry. Specialized ministers are certified by the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM), in cooperation with GBHEM.

Courses are designed to provide a graduate academic foundation. Other requirements for certification include personal and church qualifications and experience in the area of Older Adult Ministry, as determined by GBHEM. The five courses include theories and methods of teaching the Bible, exploration of the pedagogical and theological bases for ministries and equipping people as disciples for the transformation of the world. Courses also include an understanding of The United Methodist Church, its structure, curriculum and resources.

Each course must be offered for no less than two (2) semester (or equivalent quarter) hours of graduate academic credit. All certification courses must be taken at a United Methodist seminary or approved graduate school. Exceptions may be made for other seminaries on the University Senate-approved list in consultation with an annual conference BOM and GBHEM.

Three of the five courses may be taken online. Candidates may participate in more than one course each year. A maximum of ten (10) years is allowed for the certification studies in ministry careers. Two years' experience working in a specialized area is required for certification.

Experience is defined as a contractual agreement with supervision, accountability, evaluation and continuing education in a specialized ministry area. Sufficient experience is approved by the annual conference BOM and may also require pre-approval.

### CORE COMPETENCIES FOR CERTIFICATION IN OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

1. An understanding of the aging process and biological, psychological, sociological, and theological aspects of aging
2. An understanding of the myths and realities of an aging society and implications for the church
3. Knowledge of faith development, generational theory and the spirituality of older adults
4. Ability to effectively guide the teaching and learning with older adults
5. An understanding of models for ministry with older adults and how to plan for and implement these models
6. Ability to equip older persons to be in ministry and to fulfill their call to serve Christ
7. Individual experience in older adult ministry by participation in workshops, conferences and study events in an area related to older adult ministry, such as health care, death and dying, care of aging parents; needs of women and ethnic minorities as they age; examination of church facilities for accessibility, etc.

## REQUIRED COURSES FOR OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

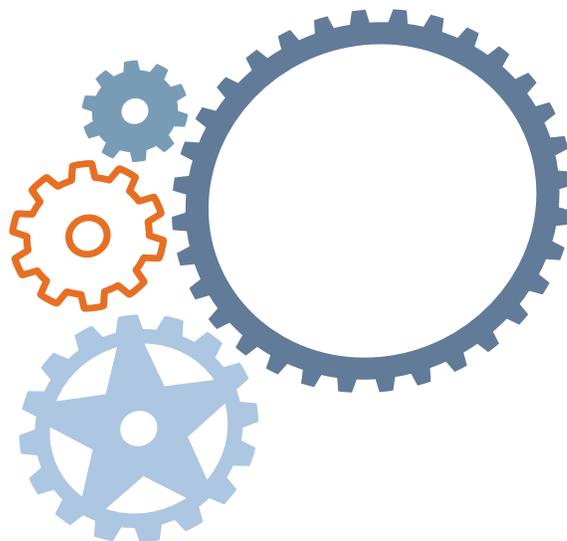
- 1. Theology for the Practice of Ministry:** This course provides an overview of theological issues, basic theological concepts and methods and provides exploration of understandings of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the church, as well as issues of revelation, salvation and eschatology. This course also provides a theological foundation for the practice of ministry, relates theology to relevant issues of aging and faith development, engages students in theological reflection on tradition and experience, and explores a theology of aging.
- 2. Biblical Foundations for Ministry:** This course examines the nature of the Bible and its role in congregational contexts, as well as origins, critical methods and theological understandings of the Bible. It includes a survey of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and how the biblical story informs the life of faith and older adult ministry, and explores ways of teaching the Bible and engaging adults in a Bible study and critical reflection. Students will study biblical implications for aging and the church's response.
- 3. Planning a Comprehensive Ministry with Older Adults:** A biblical and theological basis for ministry with older adults and consideration of models such as Stephen Ministry, Shepherd Centers, senior programs, intergenerational models and others are the focuses of this course. Students will examine ways congregations can work creatively and meaningfully with older adults, particularly teaching and learning with older adults and providing pastoral care to older adults. Students will also learn how the aging of the United States population affects the church and strategies for advocacy and accessing resources to assist in an effective ministry with older adults.
- 4. United Methodist Studies:** Understanding of and grounding in United Methodist doctrine and polity, and the practice of ministry. The course may include a study of doctrine, the General Rules, Social Principles and polity of the UMC as found in The Book of Discipline, or historical issues in UMC polity (organization and structure of contemporary United Methodism).
- 5. A fifth course will be designed by the seminary or theological school offering certification courses in older adult ministry to reflect one or more specific areas of study related to older adults.**

GBHEM may accept the two (2) courses in Bible and theology required for other areas of certification as meeting the requirements for Older Adult Ministry certification when these courses have been taken within the past ten (10) years and a special assignment related to Older Adult Ministry is completed in consultation with GBHEM.

## SHOULD I SEEK PROFESSIONAL OR PARAPROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION?

Professional certification is available to people with an undergraduate degree and graduate credit courses at a United Methodist seminary or approved graduate school, or to students graduating from a United Methodist-related college, where they have completed the required courses in an area of specialization and have served two years in a specialized ministry area.

Paraprofessional certification is available to people who may or may not have an undergraduate degree and are working in areas of specialized ministry. Paraprofessional certification does not carry academic credit and is designed for people seeking training in a specialized ministry as a worker or volunteer.



### HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Nashville, TN 37212

[www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)