

# CERTIFICATION

in Specialized Ministries in  
The United Methodist Church



**HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY**

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



## Ministry with People with Disabilities

### Educational Requirements

Individuals seeking professional certification in Ministry with People with Disabilities 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 Ministry with People with Disabilities. 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 Ministry with People with Disabilities, 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 MINISTRY WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. Ability to understand and apply biblical, theological and denominational principles to the practice of ministry with people with disabilities
2. Ability to apply skills in advocacy, education and empowerment to assist the church in creating a culture where people with disabilities are welcomed and fully included in all aspects of worship, leadership and ministry, as well as in the broader community
3. Knowledge of the nature of disabilities, history of disability, attitudes, theories, laws, policies, strategies, care skills and practices for ministering effectively with people with disabilities and their families
4. Awareness of models for ministry with people with disabilities and how to plan for and implement these models, including ways to adapt worship, education and the physical environment to facilitate participation.
5. Ability to assist people with disabilities to discern their call and use their gifts in ministry as full participants in the body of Christ.

## REQUIRED COURSES FOR MINISTRY WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

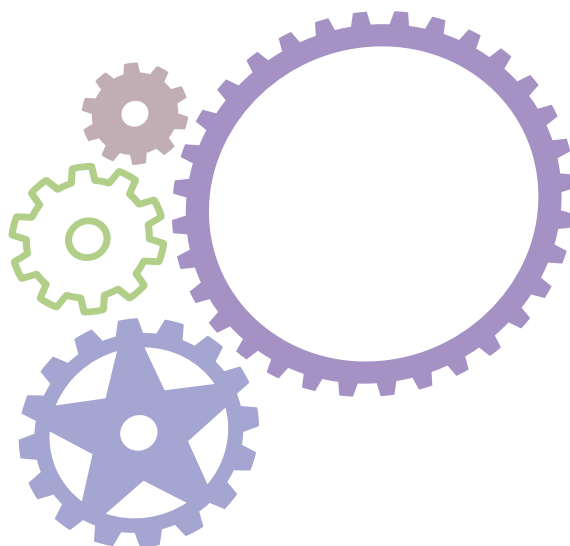
- 1. Theology for the Practice of Ministry:** An overview of theological issues, basic theological concepts and methods. Understandings of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the church, as well as issues of revelation, salvation and eschatology. Provides a theological foundation for the practice of ministry, relating theology to relevant issues of disability and faith development. Engages students in theological reflection relating to tradition and experience and explores a theology of disability.
- 2. Disability, the Bible and the Church:** This course examines the relationship with people with disabilities, taking into account key biblical texts that may come to bear on this relationship.
- 3. Disability Awareness:** This course covers the nature of disabilities through the lifespan. It includes the history of disability, theories, laws, policies, attitudes and resources.
- 4. Ministry with People with Disabilities:** Presents approach to creating hospitality and developing effective ministries with people with disabilities and their families. Teaches strategies, care skills, and practices for ministering effectively with physical disabilities in the church and in the world.
- 5. 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).

GBHEM may accept the two (2) courses in Bible and theology required for other areas of certification as meeting the requirements for Ministry with People with Disabilities certification when these courses have been taken within the past ten (10) years and a special assignment related to Ministry with People with Disabilities is completed in consultation with GBHEM. The course Teaching/Learning is common to both Ministry with People with Disabilities and Children's Ministry.

## 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.



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