



**HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY**

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# MINISTRY OF LOCAL PASTORS



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## Licensed to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service

Local pastors answer God's call by serving a local congregation or extension ministry. When appointed, local pastors perform the pastor's duties, including preaching and teaching; leading in worship and liturgy; receiving new members; administering the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion; and officiating at the services of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, and confirmation. Local pastors' authority is limited to the appointment setting. Local pastors serve by virtue of a license for pastoral ministry after completing certified candidacy, licensing school, and annual conference requirements. Local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference.

## Licensed to Order the Life of the Congregation(s)

Local pastors oversee the Church's ministry to fulfill its mission of witness and service in the world where appointed. Local pastors give pastoral support and guidance, equip Christians for lives of service, have administrative oversight of the charge, and supervise programs within the appointment.

## Local Pastor Relationships

Local pastors are supervised by a district superintendent and bishop and meet regularly with a clergy mentor and the district committee on ordained ministry (dCOM) for annual approval to serve. Most local pastors receive theological education through the Course of Study. After completing the Course of Study, local pastors may pursue the Advanced Course of Study for provisional membership. Along with associate members, they participate in the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members for ongoing peer support.

## Students Appointed as Local Pastors

Students who are enrolled in pre-theological or theological studies in a college, university, or a University Senate-listed school of theology may be appointed as local pastors. Students may be appointed to serve either in the annual conference where their certified candidacy is held or in another annual conference where they attend school (§ 318.3).

## First Steps – Local Pastor

- Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* with a clergyperson or candidacy mentor. This book is available at [Cokesbury.com](http://Cokesbury.com).
- Contact the pastor of your church, another elder or deacon, or the district superintendent to inquire about admission and invitation into the candidacy process.



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- Participate in a candidacy mentoring group or meet with a candidacy mentor (as assigned by the annual conference) to study [Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook](#) and refine your call to ministry.

## Becoming a Certified Candidate – Local Pastor (¶310)

- Be a member of the UMC or active in a United Methodist ministry setting for at least one year.
- Follow your annual conference’s process for enrolling as a certified candidate.
- Complete all required steps to become a certified candidate as listed in ¶¶310-314 and determined by the annual conference.

## Educational Requirements and Academic Qualifications – Local Pastor (¶¶315.2, 319)

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- Licensing school or completion of one-third of a Master of Divinity degree at a University Senate-approved school of theology.
- [Basic Course of Study](#) – A prescribed course of required theological education for Local Pastors.

- [Advanced Course of Study](#) (optional) – 32-semester hours of graduate theological study which begins after the Basic Course of Study is completed.

## Continuing Steps – Local Pastor

- Annual renewal of the License for Pastoral Ministry through the district committee on ordained ministry (dCOM) with approval by the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) and the Clergy Session.
- Receive appointment from the bishop.
- Local pastors may continue to serve in that capacity after completing Course of Study or may apply for associate membership after meeting additional requirements.
- Local pastors or associate members may apply for provisional membership after completing Advanced Course of Study and meeting additional requirements.

The candidacy process is listed in ¶¶310-314 in [The Book of Discipline](#). The ministry of the Local Pastor is described in ¶¶315-320 and ¶340 in [The Book of Discipline](#).