



ST JOHN



ST JAMES THE GREAT

2025-2028 Board of Ordained Ministry
HANDBOOK

"...live a life worthy of the calling you have received."
— EPHESIANS 4:1 (NIV)



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Chapter 1 Board of Ordained Ministry Organization

“Each annual conference at the first session following the General Conference shall elect for a term of four years a Board of Ordained Ministry.” (§1634)

“This board shall be directly amenable to the annual conference. ... The annual conference council on finance and administration shall recommend adequate administrative funds for the board and its staff in light of its workload.” (§1634.1b)

(§1634, *The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline* details the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry)

Membership

Overall membership should reflect a balance of members across ages, genders, races, and ethnicities. Members are nominated by the presiding bishop after consultation with the chairperson of the board, the executive committee, or a committee elected by the board of the previous quadrennium, and with the cabinet. Members may serve a maximum of three consecutive four-year terms.

CLERGY

- At least six elders and deacons
 - At least one retired clergyperson and one ordained clergyperson in extension ministry
 - Chairpersons of the Order of Deacons, the Order of Elders, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members
 - A district superintendent
- At least two associate members or local pastors who have completed the Course of Study

LAITY

- One-fifth to one-third laypersons, including diaconal ministers
- Laity are to be professing members of local churches within the annual conference

Organization

Although the responsibilities and functions of BOMs are common throughout the church, BOM structure varies from conference to conference. The following suggestions may be adapted to the roles, responsibilities, contexts and resources of each annual conference.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- The BOM shall designate its executive committee, usually composed of the BOM chairperson, chairpersons of the Division of Deacons and Division of Elders (where they exist), chairpersons of the Order of Deacons, Order of Elders, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, registrars, committee chairpersons, and a cabinet representative. The Vocational Discernment Coordinator or other officers or members may also serve on the executive committee.
- Generally, this committee meets before each BOM meeting to review the agenda and address administrative matters. In addition, they may consult with the bishop or take interim action on changes in conference relationships. The executive committee or one of its members will typically relate to other boards and agencies



CONFERENCE RELATIONS COMMITTEE (¶1362)

- This committee, required of all BOMs, reviews requests of clergy for changes in conference relationship
- Shall consist of at least three persons who are not district superintendents (¶1634.1d)
- Receives requests for involuntary discontinuance of provisional members, involuntary leave of absence, administrative location, involuntary retirement, involuntary medical leave or other such matters as may be referred to them by the board of ordained ministry. This committee serves a critical role in the request for an involuntary status change (Administrative Fair Process, ¶1360) received from the office of the bishop
- Further information available in Chapter 25

INTERVIEW TEAMS

- Interview candidates seeking provisional or full membership (generally, all board members participate in this)
- Interview candidates seeking transfer into conference membership and candidates seeking to change their conference relationship (typically assigned to the conference relations committee to make a recommendation to the BOM)
- Interview candidates seeking to transition from one order to the other (e.g., from elder to deacon)
- See Chapter 9 for guidelines on the interview process

DIVISION OF DEACONS AND DIVISION OF ELDERS

- The Division of Deacons oversees the candidacy and ordination process of candidates for the Order of Deacons and may recommend changes in the conference relations of deacons.
- The Division of Elders oversees the candidacy and ordination process of candidates for the Order of Elders and may recommend changes in the conference relations of elders.
- Some BOMs have a Division of Local Pastors and Associate Members. Although such a division is not common practice, it can be useful in conferences that have many local pastors and associate members. Otherwise, the Division of Elders may also assume responsibility for the support and supervision of local pastors and associate members.

PROGRAM COMMITTEES

- All program functions of the BOM, as outlined in *The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline* or identified below, should be assigned oversight by a board member.
- The personnel and resources of the BOM and the significance of the program responsibility determine whether a committee is also necessary.
 - In smaller boards, some of these functions may be combined under one person or committee for the sake of efficiency.
 - In larger boards, the program functions may require many committees to accomplish the work.
- GBHEM staff are available to provide consultative services, training, and other resources in the development of the BOM program and its structure.

Registrars

“The board shall elect a Registrar and such Associate Registrars as it may determine; one such



Associate Registrar to be given responsibility for candidacy, including giving leadership to the training and guidance of mentors in each district. A staff executive may be named by the board to fulfill the Registrar's functions." (§634.3)

- Keep full personnel records for all candidates under the care of the board (§634.3a)
- Forward an acknowledgment of transfer to the pastor of the local church in which each newly elected provisional and associate member held membership (§634.3b)
- Keep a record of the students attending the Course of Study (§634.3c)
- In the case of a provisional member's discontinuance or termination of local pastor status, file a copy of the circumstances with the bishop's office (§634.3d)
- Keep the personnel records of ministerial candidates on behalf of the annual conference using the guidelines provided by the General Council of Finance and Administration. See Chapter 24 (Candidacy and Clergy Files) for more details (§634.3e)

Functions of the BOM

ENLISTMENT AND RECRUITMENT

- Assumes primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ministerial leadership for churches and other ministry settings regarding the inclusive nature of the church by working in consultation with the cabinet and GBHEM (§634.2a)
- Renews a culture of call in the church by providing strategic leadership to annual conferences, districts, congregations, campus ministries, camps and other appropriate ministries, especially among youth and young adults (§634.2b)

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

- Seeks information from theological schools about the personal and professional qualities of all applicants for provisional membership or of a provisional member, with their consent (§634.2c)
- Receives annual progress reports on all students enrolled in theological school (§634.2d)
- Requires an official transcript before recognizing an applicant's educational claims. The board may submit a transcript to GBHEM for evaluation (§634.2e)
- Guides candidates for licensed or ordained ministry who are not enrolled in theological school and who are pursuing the Course of Study (§634.2g)
- Administers the annual conference's Licensing School following a curriculum prescribed by GBHEM

MENTORING

- Annually appoints and trains mentors to work with candidates, local pastors and provisional members (in consultation with the District Superintendent and Vocational Discernment Coordinator) (§349.1, §634.2f)
- Establishes a structure for group candidacy mentoring wherever possible (§349)
- Names a Vocational Discernment Coordinator to coordinate the candidacy mentoring process (§634.1c)
- Holds an annual Orientation to Ministry program for all licensed and ordained ministry candidates (§312)

EXAMINATION, INTERVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provides all licensed and ordained ministry candidates with a written statement on the disciplinary and annual conference requirements for local pastor, provisional membership,



- and full membership (¶634.2i)
- Examines applicants' potential, readiness, and effectiveness for licensed and ordained ministry
- Interviews candidates and recommends approval or discontinuance to the Clergy Session
 - Annual licensing for local pastors (¶634.2j)
 - Provisional and full membership for deacons or elders (¶634.2j)
 - Annual recommendation for students from other denominations (¶318.5)
 - Annual recommendation for clergy serving from outside the Annual Conference (¶346)
- Interviews candidates and recommends approval for extension ministries not already delineated by *The Book of Discipline*
- Interviews applicants and recommends professional certification in the areas administered by GBHEM (¶634.1c, .2u)
- Ensures confidentiality in the interview and reporting process (¶634.2m)

ADMINISTERING CHANGES IN CONFERENCE RELATIONSHIP

- Interviews applicants and makes recommendations concerning changes in conference relationships. Also ensures that the changes are entered into the conference personnel files maintained by the secretary of the conference (¶635.2l).
 - Administrative location (¶360)
 - Discontinuance of provisional membership (¶327.6)
 - Honorable location (¶359)
 - Leave of absence, voluntary (¶354) or involuntary (¶355)
 - Local pastor reinstatement (¶320.4)
 - Local pastor, full-time (¶318.1) and part-time (¶318.2)
 - Medical leave (¶357)
 - Readmission of discontinued provisional members (¶365)
 - Readmission of located persons (¶366)
 - Retirement (¶358)
 - Return to effective relationship from retirement (¶358.7)
 - Sabbatical leave (¶352)
 - Student local pastor appointment (¶318.3)
 - Change either to or from less than full-time ministry (¶338)
 - Transitional Leave (¶354.2c)
 - Withdrawal (¶361)
- Reports any change in the conference relationship to the conference Board of Pensions in a timely manner
- See Chapter 25 for comprehensive review of Conference Relations actions.

ADMINISTERING TRANSFERS AND RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO THE CLERGY SESSION

- From other annual conferences or Methodist denominations (¶634.2n; ¶346.1)
- From other denominations (¶346.2)

DEVELOPING STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION

- Develops standards of effectiveness for ministerial leaders in cooperation with the cabinet and provides a means of evaluating the effectiveness of ministerial leaders, whether ordained, licensed, certified, or assigned (¶634.2q)
- Interprets the high ethical standards of ordained ministry and studies matters pertaining to character (¶634.2r, ¶605.7)



PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR MINISTERS

- Provides support services for all those in ministerial leadership (ordained, licensed, certified, and assigned) for career development (§634.2o)
- Provides personal and career counseling, including:
 - Continuing formation standards and guidelines (§334.2d)
 - Continuing education
 - Continuing spiritual growth in Christ
 - Preparation for retirement
- Gives training and guidance to local church pastor/staff parish relations committees in cooperation with the cabinet (§634.2o)
- Plans an annual meeting for those serving in extension ministries in cooperation with the cabinet (§344.2b)
- Serves as a liaison to retired clergy in the annual conference (§634.2k)
- Works with and supports the Order of Deacons, the Order of Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, including receiving reports, offering financial support, and coordinating their activity with the board's continuing formation offerings (§634.2p)

ADMINISTERING TO NEEDS FOR SPECIALIZED MINISTRIES

- Support and management for diaconal ministers (§634.2t)
- Administration of professional certifications (§634.2u)
- Reports annually to the conference a list of those certified as Lay Ministers (§634.2v)

ADMINISTERING THE MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND (MEF)

Priority for scholarships should be given to seminary students preparing for ordination but may also provide for (§634.2w):

- Enlistment
- Basic professional educational aid
- Continuing formation
- Ethnic ministry and language training
- Professional growth of ordained ministers

PARTNERING WITH GBHEM (§634.2x)

- Interprets current legislation concerning candidacy, licensed and ordained ministry
- Explains and promotes the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF)
- Promotes and observes Ministry Sunday
- Supplies a record of information, recommendations, and action taken on all candidates after each session of the annual conference
- Promotes professional certification for ministry specialization

Relations with Other Boards, Committees, and Agencies**BISHOP AND CABINET**

- **Bishop** – *The Book of Discipline* provides for consultation between the bishop and BOM on several matters, including BOM membership, transfer into the annual conference, ad interim decisions on leave of absence, and appointments to extension ministries. Open lines of communication between the bishop, BOM, and cabinet are critical to effectively addressing their mutual concerns.



- **Cabinet** – The BOM shares many responsibilities with the cabinet, such as addressing involuntary status changes through Administrative Fair Process. Although the bishop names a cabinet representative to the BOM, that representative has a limited role to play when the cabinet requests an involuntary change in conference relationship. When such a change is called for, the cabinet representative may present the argument for change but may not participate in the deliberations or decisions of the BOM (see Judicial Council Decisions 917 and 950). Additionally, whenever the BOM deliberates and votes on the involuntary discontinuance of provisional membership, cabinet members shall not be present (Judicial Council Decision 917) - ¶327.6, ¶355.5, ¶360.2.
- For some conferences, an annual joint meeting of the BOM, executive committee, and cabinet is an effective way to address these concerns. Alternatives include a retreat setting or a joint standing committee. Each conference should look at the options considering its own context to determine how these relationships should be built into the structure.

PASTOR/STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The BOM shares in the responsibility to train and provide resources for the P/SPRC. This work includes equipping committees for enlistment, interviewing and supporting candidates for ordination or for licensing as a local pastor, evaluating clergy performance annually, and supporting individual continuing education programs.

DISTRICT COMMITTEE ON ORDAINED MINISTRY

District committees (dCOM) are a subcommittee of the BOM (¶634.1g). It shares responsibility for enlistment, candidacy, licensing local pastors, and recommending individuals for associate or provisional membership as well as oversight of the Certified Lay Ministers. The importance of a close working relationship between the BOM and the dCOM is underlined by the fact that the BOM is required to assign a representative to each dCOM. Annual dCOM training is essential for effective personnel work in the conference and maintaining consistent standards for candidacy throughout the conference. See Chapter 2 for information about the dCOM.

CONFERENCE BOARD OF PENSIONS AND THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL LEAVE

- The BOM communicates with the Board of Pensions on issues related to pre-retirement programs, medical leave, retirements, pension claims, records and support systems for retirees. One member of the BOM is a liaison to the conference retirees. BOM communication with the Board of Pensions happens primarily through the BOM chairperson and Registrar.
- In addition to this general liaison responsibility, there may be a Joint Committee on Medical Leave that reviews requests to enter and exit medical leave and makes recommendations to the cabinet, BOM, and conference Board of Pensions (¶652).

COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The BOM works with the conference Council on Finance and Administration to provide support for its responsibilities of ministerial enlistment, training and support systems for personal and professional growth.

- As a service agency of the conference, the administrative budget of the board shall be a claim on the operating budget of the annual conference (¶634.4). This budget includes meeting expenses, office expenses, travel, postage, phone, etc.
- Concern for the promotion of the Ministerial Education Fund is shared with the GCFA, since the methods of promoting the fund and the amount contributed may be influenced or controlled by this body.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENCIES

Although the BOM is not a program agency, it may be represented on a council or other body that coordinates the conference's ministries.

- This representation enables the BOM to inform the conference about programs that particularly affect ordained, licensed, certified and assigned ministers (pensions, equitable salaries, insurance, etc.) and coordinate BOM meetings and programs with the conference calendar.
- In many conferences, a professional employed by the conference coordinates many support services for ordained, licensed, certified, and assigned ministry. This person generally meets regularly with the conference coordinating body and the BOM to provide balance and expertise necessary for effective ministerial support. For those conferences, it is a helpful addition to the BOM and conference structure. Conferences may want to consider this option and can consult with GBHEM for more information and communication with others that have developed this staff position.

GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY – The BOM relates directly to GBHEM through the chairperson, Registrar, Conference Relations Committee chairs, and those responsible for many different areas of the BOM's work.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS AND SEMINARIES

- The BOM is responsible for the support of United Methodist theological education, both in guiding candidates and promoting the Ministerial Education Fund. (See more information in Chapter 16)
- The BOM may also need to relate to non-UM theological schools that have been approved by the University Senate if candidates from that Annual Conference attend seminary in those institutions.

COURSE OF STUDY

- Every BOM that has local pastors in Course of Study is invited to visit the school and participate in an annual Board of Advisors or Board of Managers meeting.
- When a BOM sends its students to more than one school, it may wish to participate in more than one board meeting. Such visitation and representation enable a BOM to:
 - Maintain close contact with the local pastors
 - Understand the quality of education and procedures in the schools
 - Recommend policy changes to strengthen the Course of Study program and increase the effectiveness of education for local pastors
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JURISDICTIONAL COMMITTEES ON ORDAINED MINISTRY – General Conference has created an optional committee on ordained ministry within the jurisdictions. In jurisdictions that have chosen to establish this or any similar structures, BOMs are called upon to participate fully in the work and deliberations of those bodies. The jurisdictional committee is free to set its own agenda and to meet and organize based on the jurisdiction's needs.



Chapter 2 District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM)

“The district Committee on Ordained Ministry shall be amenable to the Annual Conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry.” (¶666.1)

“The Board [of Ordained Ministry] shall select from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of each dCOM, which shall function as subcommittees of the board.” (¶634.1g)

“The committee shall supervise all matters of candidacy for ordained ministry and licensing for local pastors.” (¶666.6)

Membership

Overall membership should include a balance of female and male members as well as racial/ethnic members (¶666.1). The district superintendent, in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the BOM, annually nominates dCOM members for approval by the Annual Conference. The District Superintendent also fills interim vacancies.

CLERGY

- The District Superintendent (who shall not serve as the chairperson)
- At least six other clergy in the district, including elders and deacons
 - A deacon or an elder under the age of 36, when possible
 - An associate member, when possible
 - May include one local pastor who has completed the Course of Study

LAITY

At least three professing members of local churches in the district

Officers

dCOM officers are elected at the first meeting following the Annual Conference session when the members were elected (¶666.2).

CHAIR

May be held by the BOM representative, but not the District Superintendent (¶666.1)

- Ensures committee members are properly trained and understand their responsibilities
- Regularly calls meetings and informs members, candidates and local pastors of the time, place and agenda
- Presides over meetings or assigns someone to preside
- Maintains a working relationship with the BOM, especially the Candidacy and BOM Registrar, and others who require information from the dCOM
- Works with the BOM and other dCOM chairs to ensure consistent expectations for candidates and procedures

REGISTRAR

The dCOM elects a Registrar other than the District Superintendent or dCOM chair.

- Serves as custodian for all dCOM files (all files, including psychological assessment reports, belong to the Annual Conference)
- Keeps a separate file on each person for whom the dCOM is responsible



- Informs those responsible which materials are needed
- Instructs the dCOM on what decisions are required for different candidates.
- Immediately informs the BOM Registrar of any actions taken and decisions made.
- Transfers an individual's files to other districts or Annual Conferences upon receipt of a written request by the receiving district or Annual Conference
- Forwards all files to the BOM registrar when a candidate receives approval from the dCOM to interview with the BOM for associate or provisional membership (complete files are sent to the BOM along with any recommendations and do not require written permission of the candidate to provide to the BOM)
- Informs all interviewed candidates of decisions and recommendations both orally and in writing as soon as possible (§666.12)

BOM REPRESENTATIVE

“The BOM shall select from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of each district Committee on Ordained Ministry, which shall function as subcommittees of the board.” (§634.1g)

SECRETARY (optional)

- Records and distributes each meeting's minutes to committee members if there is no Recording Secretary
- The secretary does not have to be a member of the BOM
- Conducts correspondence and business as directed by the dCOM chairperson

ADDITIONAL OFFICERS – The dCOM may appoint or elect other officers as needed (such as an Enlistment or Continuing Education Officer or a Secretary). Immediately following election, a list of dCOM officers should be sent to the BOM Registrar.

Functions

ENLISTMENT

- Encourages those discerning a call to licensed or ordained ministry to enter candidacy, and maintains a list of all current candidates (§666.3) and in coordination with the Annual Conference for the Business of the Annual Conference (BAC) report
- Consults with the district superintendent and the Vocational Discernment Coordinator to assign candidates to a candidacy mentoring group or to a candidacy mentor when beginning candidacy (§310.1b, §349.1)
- Ensures that candidates are invited to register within their annual conference and with GBHEM through the PassageUMC platform (§310.1b)
- Works with the district superintendent to ensure that laity serving in pulpit supply for more than one year begin the certified candidacy process or the application for Certified Lay Minister (§205.4, §266-268)
- Further information provided in Chapter 3 Recruitment and Enlistment.

CANDIDACY MENTORING

- Each candidate is assigned to a candidacy mentoring group, wherever possible, or to a candidacy mentor by the dCOM in consultation with the district superintendent and the Vocational Discernment Coordinator (wherever named).
- Each candidate is expected to continue candidacy mentoring until certification and/or when they begin serving as a local pastor or a provisional member (§349.1a)



- **Candidacy Mentor**
 - Shall be recommended by the Cabinet and selected and trained by the BOM and are accountable to both the dCOM and the BOM – reporting adherence to the process, but not sharing confidential information
 - Encourages and nurtures candidates as they consider different dimensions of vocational and life decisions
 - Serves as co-discerner, consultant and catalyst in a way that provides freedom, confidentiality, flexibility and stability for the candidate in discerning God’s call.
 - Assists candidates through the candidacy stages using *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* or other conference approved candidacy resources
 - Records decisions made about candidates’ progress in the online candidacy system
- **Vocational Discernment Coordinator**
 - Coordinates the Annual Conference’s candidacy mentoring process
 - Ensures that the candidacy process is easily accessible
 - Guides and trains candidacy mentors
 - Implements a group candidacy mentoring process for the Annual Conference wherever possible
- Further information provided in Chapter 4 Candidacy Mentoring.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

- Communicates with the chairperson of the BOM’s Psychological Assessment Committee for the receipt, utilization and return of the psychological assessment report
- Receives psychological assessment reports from the BOM psychological assessment committee for use in the dCOM’s evaluation of the candidate
- Reviews each psychological assessment report for the candidate’s competence and readiness for licensed and ordained ministry
- Honors confidentiality issues as outlined in the “Authorization for Release of Information” signed by the candidate and uses the reports appropriately
- Treats the report as a consultative factor rather than a determinative factor in recommending a decision to approve, defer or deny the candidate
- Returns the report to the Psychological Assessment Committee chairperson for the BOM’s use
- Refers to GBHEM’s “Behavioral Health Guidelines” for guidance in addressing critical issues identified in the report
- Further information provided in Chapter 8 Psychological Assessment and Chapter 24 regarding the work with the MAS and the relationship with the Annual Conference and the BOM.

INTERVIEWING

CANDIDACY CERTIFICATION

- Evaluates candidates for certification after they meet all requirements (§310)
- Informs the BOM Candidacy Registrar of those approved for certification (§666.3)
- Communicates with the BOM to ensure that all candidates participate in Orientation to Ministry at the proper time (§312)
- Approves service settings for certified candidates working toward provisional membership (§324.2)
- Maintains communication with all candidates
- Provides counsel regarding pre-theological studies (§666.5) and encourages candidates to attend a UM theological school (§310.2f)
- Informs candidates about scholarships and educational loans



- Receives transcripts and reports from colleges and seminaries to review academic progress (¶313.2)
- Candidates are encouraged to seek financial support from their local church (¶247.8)
- Information regarding forms may be found in Chapter 6 of the BOM Handbook.

CONTINUATION OF CERTIFIED CANDIDACY

The dCOM annually interviews candidates and evaluates whether their candidacy may be continued (¶313, ¶666.10). Candidates must meet the following conditions for renewal:

- Apply in writing for candidacy renewal (¶666.10)
- Receive recommendation for renewal by their charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the dCOM (¶313.1, ¶666.10)
- Present an official transcript demonstrating satisfactory educational progress and a report detailing the spiritual and financial support of the local church (¶313.2)
- Demonstrate gifts, grace and fruit for the work of ministry (¶313.3, ¶666.10)
- Respond to any feedback or assignments from previous interviews

ASSOCIATE AND PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Interviews and recommends to the BOM those whom they approve to interview for associate membership (¶321, ¶322, ¶666.9)
- Interviews and recommends to the BOM those whom they approve for provisional membership. Each candidate is recommended in writing after a three-fourth majority vote of the dCOM (¶324.12, ¶666.7).

LICENSING OF LOCAL PASTORS

- Approves, continues and oversees the work of local pastors who serve in their district
- Examines certified candidates for licensing as local pastors (¶315, ¶666.9)
- Helps applicants enroll in a licensing school
- Upon approval, recommends to the BOM that the Clergy Session approve a license for those who have satisfactorily completed the requirements (¶315)
- Ongoing communication with the BOM Registrar
 - Provides the names and contact information of all those approved for licensing
 - Refers approved local pastors for enrollment in Course of Study and receives progress reports through the district superintendent
 - Communicates the circumstances of any discontinuance of a local pastor (¶320.1)
- Recommends those who qualify for annual continuance as local pastors to the BOM (¶319.2, ¶666.9). This includes those enrolled in Course of Study and those who have completed it.
- Recommends to the BOM those who qualify for restoration of credentials as a local pastor (¶320.4, ¶666.9)
- Oversees a process of evaluation and supervision for personal and professional growth for local pastors
- Oversees clergy mentoring for local pastors
 - Local pastors in Course of Study are assigned a Clergy Mentor who may or may not have been their Candidacy Mentor. Mentors are recommended by the District Superintendent and trained and assigned by the dCOM (¶349.1b).
 - The local pastor and Clergy Mentor review learning goals and plans the local pastor had as a certified candidate and then establish a learning goals covenant to coincide with new responsibilities.



- The mentor reports annually to both the dCOM and BOM, to maintain communication between the local pastor and the dCOM in helping track the local pastor’s growth and discernment process.
- Conversations between mentor and local pastor are confidential, and information may be released only with written consent of the local pastor and mentor.
- The report is kept in the local pastor’s file maintained by the dCOM and BOM.
- Clergy Mentors are integral to local pastors’ education, both formally and informally, by:
 - Assisting local pastors to reflect and learn from their experiences in ministry
 - Monitoring preparation of material for the Course of Study classes
 - Helping local pastors integrate theology and theory into their practice of ministry
- See Chapter 14 Clergy Mentoring for more information

CERTIFIED LAY MINISTERS

“The committee shall examine all persons who apply in writing to be certified as lay ministers. When there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God’s grace and usefulness, warrant and that they are qualified under ¶ 268, and on recommendation of their charge conference, the committee shall recommend their certification or recertification. The district committee shall report annually to the annual conference through the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry a roster of all persons certified as lay ministers.” (¶ 666.11)

For all other questions related to Certified Lay Ministry, see the resources provided by Discipleship Ministries (umcdiscipleship.org)

READMISSION TO CANDIDACY OR CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

- If candidacy has lapsed or been discontinued, it may be reinstated at the discretion of the dCOM in which the candidate was discontinued (¶314.2). Following General Conference 2020/2024 action, candidates may also pursue reinstatement through another district, following a transfer of that candidate’s file.
- Interview discontinued provisional members who are requesting readmission and recommend to the BOM and Cabinet those the dCOM approves for readmission to provisional membership (¶365, ¶666.9).
- Interview and recommend to the BOM and Cabinet those the dCOM approves who are requesting readmission from honorable location and administrative location, or who have previously exited the ministerial office (¶366, ¶367, ¶666.9)

Resources for dCOM and Candidates

FROM COKESBURY

- *The Christian as Minister: An Exploration Into the Meaning of God’s Call, Eighth Edition* (ISBN# 9780938162636)
- *El Cristiano como Ministro: Explora el significado del llamado de Dios al ministerio, Traducción de la Octava Edición* (ISBN# 9780938162780)
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* (2016) – Available for candidates and candidacy mentors after setting up a user account in Passage UMC.



FROM GBHEM

- The BOM Library (www.bomlibrary.org) contains a variety of information and resources that are helpful to dCOMs and BOMs
- Set of Flyers on the Ministry of Deacons, Ministry of Elders, Ministry of Local Pastors and Ministry of Endorsed Clergy
- Action outlines and file content checklists. The dCOM chair or registrar can use these outlines to guide the dCOM's work
- Glossary of Candidacy Terms



Chapter 3 Recruitment and Enlistment

“[T]he Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry shall” ... “assume the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ministerial leadership for our churches and other ministry settings by working in consultation with the Cabinet and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) to study and interpret the ordained, licensed, certified and assigned ministerial leadership needs and resources of the Annual Conference, with due regard to the inclusive nature of the Church. It shall, with the assistance of the local church committee on pastor-parish relations, conference agencies and every ordained, licensed, certified and assigned leader of the conference, enlist women and men of all races and ethnic origins for ministry as a vocation and guide those persons in the process of education, training and discernment of the most appropriate path for their ministry, recommending colleges and schools of theology listed by the University Senate, licensing school and other approved educational opportunities. Persons recruited should have an understanding of and appreciation for persons of different racial and ethnic heritages.” (¶634.2a)

“To renew a culture of call in the church by giving strategic leadership to Annual Conferences, districts, congregations, collegiate ministries, camps and other appropriate ministries, especially among youth and young adults.” (¶634.2b)

Recruitment Responsibilities

A primary responsibility of the dCOM and BOM is to identify a new generation of Christian leaders, whether young people beginning their vocational discernment, or those leaving other careers to answer God’s call to vocational ministry. Developing programs regarding enlistment is best fulfilled through a team effort, led by the BOM in partnership with the bishop, cabinet, the dCOM, the Vocational Discernment Coordinator, and others engaged in local church ministries with youth and young adults.

Developing a Plan for Recruitment and Enlistment

CHALLENGES TO RECRUITMENT

- We live in a time of rapid change. Population and church demographics are shifting; church members and leaders are aging; young people do not depend on the church to meet their spiritual needs. The church is challenged to respond to these changes in relevant and transformational ways with gifted, well-trained and effective leaders.
- As the United States population continues to change, the need to develop diverse leaders for a diverse church cannot be overstated. Additionally, young adults continue to be underrepresented among UM clergy in the United States. In 2024, research from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership documented that there were 458 deacons elders under age 35 in the United States, which is down from 523 from 2023. We must continue to focus attention and work on inviting, enlisting and supporting young adults as they explore God’s call in their lives.

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT COORDINATOR – This position coordinates the candidacy mentoring process and works within the BOM and Annual Conference to encourage and provide resources for those discerning a call to ministry. See Chapter 4 Candidacy Mentoring for more information.



QUESTIONS THAT MAY HELP THE BOM DEVELOP A VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT PLAN

- When was the conference's last study regarding ministerial leadership needs?
- What is the conference area's latest census data regarding racial/ethnic groups?
- How many young adults from a conference are attending colleges, universities, theological schools or seminaries? Who among those may be exploring a call to licensed or ordained ministry?
- Does the BOM have the contact information for UM collegiate ministers and college/university chaplains to connect students to collegiate ministry units and identify those who may be considering a call to vocational ministry?
- Is there follow-up and support for those who have attended national, regional, or conference Exploration events?
- How do the bishop and Cabinet members engage youth and young adults in the practice of vocational ministry? How do the BOM, and dCOMs, support that process?
- Is there data from the last five years to compare retirement, discontinuations, church closings, and church mergers with new licensing and ordination?
- Has the conference identified areas for new church starts, as well as leaders to train in starting new congregations?
- What is the ratio of the supply and demand for pastors in the local church and for persons in specialized ministries?
- How many cross-racial appointments are available within the conference? What areas or situations exist in which one might be appropriate? Which clergy are most likely to be successful in serving these appointments?
- What new ministries are being developed to respond to the needs of new immigrants in the conference?
- Which churches or collegiate ministries are more successful in identifying and nurturing persons into vocational ministry? What factors led to that influence?
- What are the short-term and long-term plans of the conference to identify and nurture youth and young adults for leadership?
- Has the conference BOM identified the qualities and competencies important for ordained and specialized ministries?

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES THAT MAY HELP THE BOM DEVELOP A VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT PLAN

- What major factors influenced their call?
- What was positive or negative about the candidacy and provisional process?
- How can the BOM improve its identification and enlistment of those who are exploring ordained ministry?

SUGGESTED COMPONENTS OF AN ENLISTMENT PLAN

- Designate a BOM Vocational Discernment Coordinator to oversee the candidacy process so that it is inviting and accessible to new candidates.
- Host an annual consultation, conference or webinar
 - Include the Vocational Discernment Coordinator, the Connectional Ministries Office, collegiate ministries, and any involved in youth and young adult ministries.
 - Communicate the supply and demand issues of ordained ministry as well as other specialized ministries and enlistment needs.
 - Alert participants to their role as influencers, individually and collectively.
 - Provide resources for participants to use as they work with youth or young adults in



vocational discernment.

- Create a vocational discernment process that invites people to consider God’s call in various ways (e.g., camping and retreat ministries, youth ministries, mission trips, campus ministries, etc.)
- Provide retreats and workshops, designed in consultation with the Orders of Deacons and Elders, that emphasize the significance of leadership as role models and mentors for those discerning God’s call into vocational ministry.
- Host events at conference and district levels for people at different life stages or educational levels, i.e., high school, college- age, second career, etc.
- Share contact information with the dCOM, BOM, cabinet, and bishop for those considering the candidacy process.
- Maintain a database of names, addresses, school classification and economic need, if possible, of each potential candidate. In this way, a unified plan can be developed for utilizing the support and financial resources of the BOM, conference and Ministerial Education Fund (MEF).
- Train gifted mentors who will guide new candidates in the mentoring program.
- Develop conference-wide initiatives to enhance candidates’ ministerial formation, both before and after candidacy studies are pursued. Events such as retreats for potential candidates and mission experiences for declared candidates may all contribute to their growth and spiritual depth.
- Sponsor an Orientation to Ministry event for ministry candidates to build collegiality and understanding among the varieties of set-apart ministries (deacons, elders, local pastors) (§312).
- Promote discernment-related events and experiences offered by GBHEM.
- Celebrate candidates during the Ordering of Ministry service.
- Explore ideas of other annual conference’s practices to generate similar or new ideas.

IDENTIFICATION AND ENLISTMENT HAS TO BE COORDINATION

Identification and enlistment efforts should be coordinated and shared among local church, district and conference leaders. The future of ministry in the UMC depends on the quality of today’s candidates for licensed or ordained ministry.

Enlistment of Young People

Young adult leadership development is integral in any future planning for conferences and BOMs. The sharp decline in the numbers of young clergy has focused the church’s priority on inviting, training, and retaining young clergy.

Young Clergy Initiative

- At the 2016 General Conference, the Young Clergy Initiative (YCI) was funded for a second quadrennium and “provide[s] support to increase the number of young clergy among the jurisdictional conferences. This begins a three-quadrrennium effort to enable The United Methodist Church to focus efforts on encouraging young adults who wish to respond to the call to ordained ministry to receive a strong theological education in the United Methodist tradition in preparation for ordination. This initiative is in addition to the funds that the church already has budgeted for discernment, recruitment, nurturing, education and support of young clergy leaders.” – excerpt from YCI legislation, 2012 General Conference. Funds remain available for new projects.
- In response to the YCI, GBHEM developed a grant program to encourage opportunities that



leverage for denominational change on systemic and cultural levels through various conversations, events, experiments, resources, research and training. GBHEM sought projects that help:

- Prepare young people to hear and respond to God’s call to licensed or ordained ministry
- Develop young people in spiritual and theological formation
- Nurture young clergy for lifelong transformational ministry
- 148 projects from across the jurisdictions were funded through 2024. Many of the projects fell into these categories:
 - Events enabling young people to explore a call to ministry through both large and small group experiences
 - Experiential learning opportunities, including theological education and mission work
 - Hands-on ministry experiences, including paid and unpaid internships
- A more complete breakdown of awards, progress of current YCI projects and plans for future project funding can be found at gbhem.org/ministry.

GBHEM-Sponsored Events, Programs and Networks Focusing on the Recruitment and Development of Young Adult Clergy

- ***CALLED: One Word, Many Ways*** – The congregational vitality of The United Methodist Church begins in the local church, where faith is formed and nurtured in people of all ages, especially the young. Equipping congregations to speak the language of call and to move intentionally toward discovering and nurturing their vocational goals will contribute to the health and vitality of their own faith, community and of the denomination. God calls everyone into ministry, but ministry means more than ordination. CALLED: One Word, Many Ways is a free resource that helps local congregations explore how to listen for God’s voice, discern what they have heard and respond faithfully. Resources in the CALLED package include a Bible study, children and youth curriculum, liturgical helps, video call stories and more.
- ***Exploration*** – A three-day event for young adults to listen, discern and respond to God’s call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church. Exploration creates sacred space for young adults to be in meaningful fellowship, passionate worship, theological reflection and practical workshops as they discern whether God’s call on their life is to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church and what faithful steps they can take next on their journey.
- ***The Journey Toward Ordained Ministry*** – A leadership development experience for racial/ethnic college and/or seminary students who are interested in ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church. This mentoring and scholarship program provides a \$5,000 scholarship per academic year with continued mentoring through seminary and ordination. Scholars attend an annual three-day retreat. Applications for JTOM are received through the Office of Loans and Scholarships during their regular open enrollment season (typically January-March) See gbhem.org/scholarships for more.
- ***The Vocational Discernment Coordinator Conference*** – An event for annual conference leaders involved in the recruitment of young clergy to gather and engage around the status of young clergy and issues related to young clergy recruitment, and to learn about successful strategies. This event focuses on assisting Annual Conferences to build and implement a plan for nurturing youth and young adults as they consider God’s call to ordained ministry.



Chapter 4 Candidacy Mentoring

“Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth ... Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry ... Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.” (¶349.1)

“There are two categories of mentor: Candidacy Mentor and Clergy Mentor. Each has distinct functions and responsibilities. Candidacy Mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members or local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide counsel and guidance related to the candidacy process.” (¶349.2a, .2b)

For Clergy Mentoring, see Chapter 14, and more on mentoring for local pastors and provisional members.

Vocational Discernment Coordinator

- Identified by the BOM as a primary resource in the work of candidacy mentoring and oversight as well as to develop programs and resources that cultivate a culture of call throughout the annual conference and its local churches (¶634.1c)
 - While some of the candidacy process focuses more on application for ministry (steps such as background checks, meeting with the dCOM and completing written requirements), much of candidacy is meant to focus on vocational discernment as the candidate explores how to respond to God’s call in The United Methodist Church.
 - The role of the VDC enables the BOM, dCOMs, and district superintendents to be involved in the candidacy mentoring process and participate in the work of recruiting, training, and assigning mentors
- The VDC be part of conference staff person’s work or may be assigned to a BOM member
- This role allows for a central contact person who can answer questions; build connections among dCOM’s, BOM’s, and District Superintendents, and to ensure information is consistent, helpful, and timely.

Candidacy Mentors

SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT (¶349.2a)

- The Candidacy Registrar, District Superintendent, and Vocational Discernment Coordinator review the need for Candidacy Mentors in each district
 - The DS, in consultation with the dCOM and district leadership, suggests clergy to be trained as Candidacy Mentors
 - The Candidacy Registrar and Vocational Discernment Coordinator administer the training for Candidacy Mentors and confirm those who have been trained to the Office of Clergy Excellence
 - The DS assigns a Candidacy Mentor after receiving and approving a new candidate’s request for admission into the candidacy process (¶310.1b)

CRITERIA

- It is important for Candidacy Mentors to represent a variety of backgrounds and experiences and to include deacons, elders, and local pastors. Different family lifestyles, ages, genders, and ethnic groups should also be represented. This variety provides opportunities for



candidates to be in contact with church leaders who may represent the community's wider diversity, while also giving candidates access to mentors with whom they can relate to more closely.

- Effective mentors have a mature faith, model effective ministry and possess the skills needed to help individuals discern their call to ministry (§1349.1). As mentors are selected and trained, the following standards are helpful in deciding who should be invited to serve as a mentor.
- Mentors are clergy who:
 - Are spiritually mature and demonstrate a deep and continuing commitment to God and to growing in grace and love
 - Demonstrate a strong understanding of call and commitment to Christian ministry as lived through the church's ministry and appreciate the varieties of lay, licensed and ordained ministry
 - Continue to develop vocationally throughout life's opportunities and challenges
 - Encourage others to be comfortable and discuss in depth the many facets of vocational and personal development
 - Are open and flexible in adapting candidacy studies to candidates' needs when possible
 - Gain respect from colleagues
 - Maintain family relationships and personal lives that are congruent with the standards expected of clergy

TRAINING

- All mentors should be trained at least once every four years. Regular training allows all mentors to know the most recent candidacy, licensing and ordination requirements and the Annual Conference's current mentoring and interviewing structure and procedures
- If your conference wishes to award continuing education credits for training events, note that 10 contact hours of educational time is equal to one CEU.
- While training times can vary from a half-day to an overnight retreat, training sessions should include certain features
 - Theological grounding for mentoring and reciprocal learning.
 - Identifying the differences among supervision, evaluation and mentoring and the role of each in candidate development and assessment
 - Discussion and clarification of the meaning of confidentiality in the relationship among the mentor, candidate and candidacy colleagues within a mentoring group
 - Education about the current candidacy, licensing and ordination process, the use of Passage, the conference's process for psychological assessment and the mentor's responsibilities in these tasks
 - Developing familiarity of the basic candidacy materials, including *The Christian as Minister*, *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* and other conference resources
 - Information about any BOM or dCOM deadlines regarding the application process and interviews
- In most circumstances, the Candidacy Registrar and Vocational Discernment Coordinator organize and lead mentor training. Additional leadership may include experienced mentors, dCOM/BOM members, the District Superintendent or the BOM staff person for the Annual Conference. GBHEM staff is available to provide leadership as needed.



RESPONSIBILITIES

- Pray with and for candidates.
- Talk with candidates to establish covenant and meeting schedules.
- Study and discuss *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* with candidates.
- Establish and maintain confidentiality of mentoring relationship.
- Discuss upcoming P/S-PRC and charge conference meetings with candidates.
- Complete annual mentor reports.
- Meet with the dCOM and candidate at the initial certification interview.
- Make sure the BOM Candidacy Registrar is aware of any status changes for candidates.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Candidacy Registrar and Vocational Discernment Coordinator ensure the continuing quality of the candidacy process and oversee the work of the Candidacy Mentors.
- Most mentors will work well with candidates. However, a few may lose interest or may not have the skills needed for the work. If this is the case, then the registrar or Vocational Discernment Coordinator may find a replacement.
- Primary concerns are to maintain high standards of guidance and mentoring for candidates so that they will have every opportunity to explore their vocational options and to attract the best possible candidates for ministerial leadership.
- The importance of mentoring candidates in the development of future church leaders cannot be overstated. The resources that mentors and the Annual Conference invest in the mentoring program have the potential to effect ministerial leaders throughout their ministry.

Group Candidacy Mentoring

The candidacy mentoring process formerly occurred in a one-on-one relationship between candidates and mentors. As the Study of Ministry Commission looked for ways to streamline the candidacy process, one of the recurring themes was the difficulty in identifying qualified and effective mentors to guide candidates through discernment and certification. Annual Conferences are encouraged to offer candidacy mentoring in a group setting whenever possible. The group setting provides several benefits:

- Maintains a high quality of gifted mentors
- Requires fewer mentors to serve the candidate pool
- Creates more time to focus on discernment
- Allows candidates to learn from each other
- Creates opportunities for mutual support
- Builds community amongst candidates and mentors
- Allows the candidacy requirements to be completed more smoothly and consistently (i.e. psychological assessment, coordinating timing of dCOM and BOM interviews, ensuring that candidates don't miss yearly deadlines for certification and renewal, enrolling candidates in candidacy registry, etc.)

Resources

- BOM Library of Resources and Forms – gbhem.org/bom-library
- Flyers on the Ministry of Deacons, Ministry of Elders, Ministry of Local Pastors and Ministry of Endorsed Clergy
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook*



Chapter 5 Board of Ordained Ministry Registrars

“The Board of Ordained Ministry shall elect a Registrar and such Associate Registrars as it may determine; one such Associate Registrar to be given responsibility for candidacy, including giving leadership to the training and guidance of mentors in each district. A staff executive may be named by the board to fulfill the functions of Registrar.” (§1634.3)

Organization

In some conferences, a paid staff executive assumes many of the duties of the BOM Registrar. In other conferences, however, the responsibilities of the Registrar are divided among several BOM members. Because the tasks and needs vary by conference, the number of Registrars is dependent upon each conference’s needs.

TYPES OF REGISTRARS

- Candidacy Registrar
 - Maintains records on the progress and status of candidates until they are elected into provisional membership, licensed as local pastors, or discontinued from the candidacy process.
 - Collaborates with the Vocational Discernment Coordinator to train and oversee the work of Candidacy Mentors
 - Interprets the process for those seeking certified candidacy
 - Works with GBHEM in maintaining the candidacy application system (Passage)
- Associate Registrars
 - *Deacons Registrar*
 - Maintains complete personnel records on all deacon candidates and those seeking professional certification
 - Maintains records for diaconal ministers
 - Communicates with GBHEM regarding the interpretation of *The Book of Discipline* and assessment of credentials
 - May be the contact person for deacons, diaconal ministers and those with professional certification concerning conference changes (see Chapter 25)
 - *Elders Registrar*
 - Maintains complete personnel records on all elder candidates, associate members and local pastors. This responsibility may be subdivided among other BOM members.
 - Communicates with GBHEM regarding the interpretation of *The Book of Discipline* and assessment of credentials
 - May be the contact person for elders, provisional elders and associate members concerning conference relationship changes (see Chapter 25)
 - *Local Pastors Registrar*
 - Works with the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) to train, support and license local pastors
 - Maintains a personnel file on all local pastors
 - Approves all Course of Study and Advanced Course of Study registrations
 - Keeps records of local pastors attending Course of Study and reports the educational progress to the Annual Conference



- Communicates with GBHEM on the interpretation of *The Book of Discipline* and transcript evaluation for credit in Course of Study or Advanced Course of Study
- *Other Registrars*
 - Some conferences have additional registrars, including one for candidates applying for associate, provisional, or full membership
 - The BOM determines the need for these registrars and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of each

Responsibilities of BOM Registrars (outlined in ¶634.2 and ¶634.3)

- Provides written information to candidates regarding all disciplinary and conference requirements for licensing, associate, provisional and membership in full connection
- Informs candidates of all deadlines and required meetings
- Communicates the recommendations, decisions and reasoning of the BOM to the candidate. Once the dCOM or BOM makes decisions regarding the candidate's progress, the registrar will promptly communicate these decisions with the candidate in written and verbal form. (¶666.11)
- Keeps full personnel records for all ministerial candidates under the care of the board (¶634.3a) (See GCFA guidelines for record keeping in Chapter 24)
- Shares pertinent information and recommendations concerning each candidate with the annual conference (¶634.3b)
- Ensures the confidentiality of the interview process for the candidates and provides necessary and required information to members of the BOM and the Clergy Session (¶634.2m)
- Attends to required reports and record-keeping
 - Completes the Business of the Annual Conference (“BAC”) report, containing all BOM recommendations for conference actions
 - Copies of the report shall be retained and shared with appropriate church bodies (e.g., GBHEM, GCFA, the Conference Secretary's office, etc.)
 - Forwards an acknowledgment of transfer to the pastor of the local church where each newly elected provisional and associate member held membership (¶634.3b)
 - Keeps a record of Course of Study students and reports their progress to the conference (¶634.3c)
 - At the completion of Course of Study work, a grade report and student performance information is sent to the registrar.
 - At the beginning of the calendar year, an annual report on the status of every local pastor is sent from GBHEM's Course of Study Registrar to the Local Pastors Registrar, who maintains a file on every local pastor which includes all Course of Study reports. Local pastors' progress in Course of Study is reported each year to the Clergy Session.
 - Files a copy of any circumstances involving discontinuance of provisional membership or termination of local pastor status (¶634.3d). One copy is placed in the bishop's office and another in the Annual Conference's permanent personnel files.
- Administering the Professional Certification Process
- Oversight of Diaconal ministry, as needed
 - The BOM is to “provide continuing support and management of consecrated diaconal ministers using the policies described in ¶301-317 of 1992 *The Book of*



Discipline". (§1634.2t)

- Conferences may choose to have the registrar for the Division of Deacons administer the diaconal ministry and professional certification process. Some may have an additional registrar to care for these responsibilities.
 - Maintains files including the candidate's application, biographical material, statements of academic progress, college and seminary transcripts, report of completed study, application for consecration, charge conference letter, health report, record of certification and/or commissioning, service record, annual report and all BOM recommendations.
- *Specialized ministry* – Maintains files on each candidate for professional certification including a complete application for certification, a service record, a biennial review of professional leadership and all BOM recommendations. For more information, see Chapter 17 Certification



Chapter 6 Candidacy and Candidacy Forms

“Individuals discern God’s call as they relate with God and their communities, and the Church guides and confirms those callings. Calls – and the discernment and confirmation of them – are gifts of the Holy Spirit.” (¶301.2)

“The Wesleyan tradition has, from the beginning, encouraged a culture of call and a community of discernment, which affirms and supports the ministry of all Christians and identifies and authorizes persons into ministries of the ordained.” (¶302)

“The licensed and ordained ministry is recognized by The United Methodist Church as a called-out and set-apart ministry. Therefore, it is appropriate that those persons who present themselves as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry be examined regarding the authenticity of their call by God to set-apart ministry.” (¶310)

The Candidacy Process

Candidacy is a vocational discernment and decision-making process recognized by the UMC to assist candidates and Annual Conferences in discerning and affirming an applicant’s call to licensed or ordained ministry. Candidacy is the first formal step toward annual conference membership, ordination as a deacon or an elder, or licensing for pastoral ministry. Candidacy begins when the potential candidate inquires about ministry and continues until that person is commissioned as a provisional member, or is approved, appointed and licensed as a local pastor. Candidacy also ends if a person withdraws from candidacy or is not recommended by the dCOM for certification.

BEGINNING CANDIDACY (¶310.1)

- Prior to entering the candidacy process, an individual is to be a professing member in good standing of the UMC for a minimum of one year. Alternatively, an individual may be a baptized participant of a recognized UM campus ministry or other UM ministry setting for at least one year. Additionally, there is to be on file record of graduation from an accredited high school or a certificate of equivalency.
- Inquiring candidates are to write to the district superintendent to request admission to the candidacy process, study candidacy resources as directed by the conference BOM, and submit a written statement of call to the candidacy registrar. Additionally, candidates are to request registration through the district superintendent with GBHEM through the UMC Candidacy Registry.
- In preparation for certification, declared candidates are to request a meeting of the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee (P/S-PRC) to consider recommendation for candidacy (¶310.1d). In some situations, the dCOM may specify an equivalent alternative body to consider recommendation for candidacy.

CERTIFICATION AS A CANDIDATE (¶310.2)

- Meet with the charge conference (the dCOM may specify an equivalent alternative) to be approved by a two-thirds written ballot and to receive a written recommendation for certification (¶310.1.e)
- Request a meeting with the dCOM
 - Prepare a written response to the information requested in ¶310.2a (i-vi).



- Complete and release required background checks (psychological, criminal and credit)
- Provide any further information the dCOM may require
- Agree to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in the UM Social Principles (§§103-105; 160-164)
- The dCOM interviews the candidate regarding these prepared materials and completed tasks.
- A candidate becomes certified upon receiving a three-fourths majority approval of dCOM members present. The vote must be completed by written ballot (§310.2.e, §666.7).
- To ensure the recorded completion of candidacy, the certified candidate's qualification for GBHEM scholarships and seminary receipts of MEF funding, the decision about certification recommendation must be recorded in the online candidacy system following the dCOM decision.

CONTINUATION AS A CERTIFIED CANDIDATE

- Orientation to Ministry (§312)
 - A BOM-sponsored event to which attendance is required for all candidates
 - Offers a place where those discerning a call can receive a clear explanation of the various types of ministries
 - Builds collegiality among those interested in serving in different types of ministries
 - Guides candidates to discern which path of ministry to take in the church
 - Takes place early in the candidacy process, either before or after certification depending on the decision of the BOM
- A certified candidate may continue in this status under the supervision of the dCOM for one to 12 years before becoming a provisional member of the Annual Conference, receiving an appointment as a local pastor, withdrawing or being discontinued from candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry. (§314, §324.1)
- During this time, candidates continue to work with Candidacy Mentors who monitor the candidates' educational, spiritual and vocational goals.

FLEXIBILITY OF CANDIDACY PROCESS

- Applicants must complete all requirements in §310 before becoming a certified candidate. However, the timing of the steps may be altered.
 - Some candidates have already made most of their vocational decisions and are preparing for ordination as a deacon or an elder through college or seminary studies.
 - Some candidates may be deciding how they are called to pursue ministry as a second career, entering candidacy with English as a second language or discerning among local pastor, elder or deacon ministry.
- It is important to consider background, experience, education, training and circumstances. Allow flexibility to move through the candidacy process (§310.2b).
- Most candidates will likely meet with a mentor before being recommended as a candidate by the P/S-PRC and the charge conference (or equivalent bodies). However, some candidates may receive a charge conference recommendation before applying for candidacy through the district superintendent. Conferences may be flexible with the order in which a candidate moves through the beginning stages of candidacy, provided that the requirements of §310 are complete prior to certification by the dCOM.



Goals of Candidacy

GOALS FOR THE CANDIDATE

- Explore the vocational options of lay, licensed or ordained ministry within the UMC
- Understand the personal and professional ministry development needed to reach decisions that best reflects the individual's gifts and graces and express a faithful response to God's call while partnering with the annual conference to discern ways to serve in ministry

GOALS FOR THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND THE GENERAL CHURCH

- Provide the environment and opportunity to discern God's call
- Offer thoughtful resources and settings to examine and affirm personal and vocational gifts and choices, whether for lay, licensed or ordained ministry
- Enable the church to provide pastoral care to candidates and their families, friends and ministry settings
- Examine the calling, grace, gifts and potential effectiveness of those who present themselves as candidates for lay, licensed or ordained ministry
- Enlist, assess, encourage and recommend candidates with the potential to serve as effective clergy leaders

Candidacy Resources

- *The Christian as Minister: An Exploration into the Meaning of God's Call* – Discusses the call to ministry and the many ways to serve in the UMC. It is based on the concept of servant ministry and servant leadership that is affirmed in baptism.
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* – An exploratory and procedural study for candidates to discuss in a mentoring group or with a candidacy mentor. Candidacy Mentors are trained through the BOM and assigned by the dCOM, in consultation with the District Superintendent and Vocational Discernment Coordinator. Available in English and Spanish through GBHEM's online candidacy system upon registration for candidacy.
- Passage – The central information point for all applicants pursuing certified candidacy (www.passageumc.org)
- The BOM Library website – Forms that may be helpful as dCOMs track the progression of candidates through the process are posted at www.gbhem.org/bom-library/candidacy-resources
 - Form 102: Biographical Information Form
 - Form 103: Medical Report
 - Form 104: Declaration of Candidacy
 - Form 105: Application for Clergy Relationship
 - Form 109: Theological School Recommendation
 - Form 114: Candidate's Disclosure Form



Chapter 7 Background Checks

The Book of Discipline requires a criminal background check and a credit check for all seeking appointments in the UMC. All who apply for certified candidacy (§310), license for pastoral ministry (§315), provisional membership (§324) or transfer from another denomination (§347) are required to release reports on:

- Criminal background and credit checks
- Sexual misconduct and/or child abuse

They are also required to submit a notarized statement on a form provided by the BOM that either:

- Details any written accusations or convictions for felony, misdemeanor or incident of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse
- Certifies that they have neither been accused in writing nor convicted of a felony, misdemeanor or incident of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse

The required background checks and Candidate's Disclosure Form must be completed and approved by the dCOM or BOM before a candidate is certified, or before a clergyperson receives an appointment.

Companies Used by Annual Conferences to Provide Background Check Services

GBHEM does not provide endorsement for any of the companies listed below. This list is to provide names of companies used by annual conferences to perform background and credit checks. An annual conference needs to fully vet any potential company before contracting its services.

- Oxford Document Management Company, Inc. (www.oxforddoc.com)
- Safe Gatherings Training Events (www.safegatherings.com)
- Trak-1 (www.trak-1.com)
- Best Hire (www.besthire.com)
- Ministry Safe (www.ministrysafe.com)
- Screening One (www.screeningone.com)
- Trusted Employees (www.trustedemployees.com)

Types of Background Checks

CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD CHECKS

There is no nationwide up-to-date repository of criminal history records available to most employers or the general public. Though the FBI maintains the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, it can only be accessed by law enforcement agencies and by employers in specific industries mandated by federal and state law.

- **Federal District Searches**
 - Cover crimes such as mail fraud, civil rights violations, and white-collar offenses.
 - Records are often incomplete and stored in hard-to-access locations.
 - Despite challenges, federal searches are vital for thorough screening.
- **Statewide Searches**
 - Offer broader coverage than county-level searches.
 - Access and quality vary widely between states.



- May omit misdemeanors or pending cases.
- **County Searches**
 - Provide the most complete and up-to-date information.
 - Quicker turnaround times.
 - Recommended when state-level data is unavailable or insufficient.

Note: A comprehensive approach often includes federal, state, and county checks to balance coverage and detail.

MOTOR VEHICLE RECORD CHECK

Conducted if the candidate is expected to operate a vehicle for ministry purposes. MVRs:

- Reveal moving violations, DUIs, and accident history.
- Help verify address and identity information.

CREDIT BUREAU CHECK

Recommended for candidates managing financial resources or assets. These checks:

- Show debt, payment history, and public financial records (e.g., bankruptcies, liens).
- Help assess financial responsibility and verify identity.

Keys to a Successful Criminal History Records Check

- **Verify Identity and Geography:**
 - Use Social Security number (via the credit report) to confirm name, aliases, and location history.
 - Be aware of name variations (e.g., maiden names, nicknames, suffixes).
- **Conduct Thorough Checks in Appropriate Jurisdictions:**
 - Ensure searches align with confirmed residence and employment history.
- **Investigate Discrepancies:**
 - Any inconsistencies between self-reported information and background reports should be reviewed

Evaluation of Results

The presence of a past offense does not automatically disqualify a candidate. The BOM should consider:

- Nature and seriousness of the offense
- Candidate's age at the time
- Context or contributing societal conditions
- Likelihood of reoffending
- Evidence of rehabilitation

False statements or attempts to conceal information should result in disqualification.

Refer to the "Behavioral Health Guidelines" in the BOM Library for evaluation standards and procedures.

Developing Policies and Procedures

The BOM, in consultation with the conference chancellor, must:

- Determine relevant offenses and disqualifying criteria
- Set policies on:
 - Data access and confidentiality
 - Duration of data retention



- Repeat background checks during ongoing service
- Ensure all staff handling this process are properly trained

A designated intake person should screen authorization forms for completeness and legibility before submission.

The Importance of Due Diligence

Responsible background checks:

- Ensure clergy fitness for ministry
- Safeguard congregations and communities
- Protect the integrity of the church

The cost and time required are minimal compared to the potential risks and long-term harm of incomplete screening.



Chapter 8 Psychological Assessment

The Psychological Assessment / Ministerial Assessment Process

WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

Psychological assessments are a key tool used by Boards of Ordained Ministry (BOMs) and district Committees on Ordained Ministry (dCOMs) to evaluate the readiness and fitness of candidates for licensed or ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church. These assessments provide insight into a candidate's emotional, psychological, and vocational health and readiness for ministry.

WHEN ASSESSMENTS ARE REQUIRED

Psychological assessments are conducted when:

- An individual applies for certification as a candidate for ministry
- A provisional or full member seeks to transfer into the UMC from another denomination
- A clergy member returns from leave (especially for psychological or emotional health)
- A referral is made by the BOM, District Superintendent, or through self-referral

Components of the Assessment Process

Psychological Testing

- Standardized, self-report instruments are administered
- Common instruments include:
 - 16 Personality Factor (16PF, 5th Ed.)
 - Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2)
 - Incomplete Sentences Blank
 - Personal Data Inventory (PDI) – Form 102
 - Reference forms
- Additional instruments may be used at the discretion of the Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS) in consultation with the BOM

Clinical Interview

- Conducted by the MAS after test results and references are submitted
- Provides time to review test results, assess fitness for ministry, and allow for diagnostic and interpretive insight

Final Evaluation Report

- Includes evaluation of candidate's readiness and any areas for growth
- Shared only with authorized persons upon the candidate's written consent

Based on written assessments, interview data, and denominational criteria

Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS)

The MAS is a licensed professional trained in assessment, counseling, and ministry-related evaluations. Each MAS:

- Must meet standards set by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)
- Participates in GBHEM trainings and remains in good standing with professional organizations
- May work individually or as part of a team to meet required competencies

Required Competencies:

- Psychological assessment skills (test theory, scoring, interpretation)



- Psychotherapy and pastoral sensitivity
- Knowledge of ministry contexts and United Methodist structures
- Report writing for non-clinical readers (BOM and dCOM)

The Four Major Stages for Psychological Assessments:

Psychological assessments are used for the selection, nurture and support of candidates and clergy. Throughout the process, all procedures must be appropriate and fair to the church and candidate. Comparisons need to be based on empirical research with both female and male candidates and must be sensitive to culture, language and heritage of the candidate and corresponding groups in the church.

Assessment Stages by Ministry Phase

Candidacy

Evaluates gifts, character, and personality for initial ministry suitability

Provisional Membership

Assesses knowledge, interpersonal and professional skills, and spiritual formation

Full Membership

Examines continued effectiveness and readiness for ordained ministry

Continuing Ministry

Evaluates ongoing fitness and growth in active ministry

Uses of the Assessment Report

- Assists BOM and dCOM in identifying interview questions
- Provides information on psychological and interpersonal functioning
- Offers recommendations for supporting candidate growth
- Descriptive rather than predictive in nature

The MAS interprets results for the candidate in plain language during a face-to-face consultation.

Oversight and Accountability

BOM Psychological Assessment Committee

Each BOM can designate a committee and chair to:

- Manage the psychological assessment process
- Train dCOM and BOM members
- Coordinate contracts with MAS professionals
- Oversee confidentiality and appropriate sharing of reports
- Provide training in interpreting reports

dCOM Liaison

A designated liaison to:

- Communicate with the BOM committee chair
- Ensure proper use and understanding of the report
- Participate in ongoing training on assessment use



Application Process Summary

For Provisional Membership

- Conference Registrar prepares applicant list
- Applicants complete testing and interview with MAS
- MAS submits written report to the Psychological Assessment Committee
- Results shared with:
 - Candidate (in interview)
 - BOM Psychological Assessment Committee
 - Additional mental health professionals if requested by the candidate

For Full Membership and Ordination

- Same process as for provisional membership
- MAS report reflects on development since previous assessment and ministry effectiveness

Confidentiality and Ethics

- Reports are shared only with authorized persons
- Candidate signs acknowledgment and release forms prior to assessment
- Assessment files are maintained according to BOM policies and ethical standards

Confidentiality and respect for the candidate's dignity must be maintained throughout the process. For more information, see Chapter 24 – Candidate and Clergy Files.



Chapter 9 The Interview Process

The Interview Process

Personal interviews are central to the BOM's work. Information needed for interviews may include autobiographical statements, statements of call, written theological responses, personal references, performance observations, sermons, reports of projects that demonstrate effectiveness in ministry, reflections on doctrinal statements, academic records, psychological assessment reports, credit and background checks and medical reports. All of these inform the discussion for the personal interview.

Purposes of the Interview

CONNECT WITH THE CANDIDATE

- Good interviewing is an exploration of the candidates' gifts and graces for leadership and personalizing the discernment journey for everyone pursuing the candidacy process.
- Face-to-face interviews help identify and test any assumptions about the candidates that may have been identified in reviewing the contents of their files.
- The interview team is required to read any information presented about the candidate beforehand to confirm or challenge any preconceived notions about the candidate based on the interview's outcome.

GIVE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

- Interviews offer guidance and support to the candidate, providing open and honest feedback that is not patronizing or condescending.
- When the candidate disagrees with the interview results, receiving encouragement and affirmations may be difficult, as the interview team may be seen as blocking the candidate's desires. Under such circumstances, concern for the individual must be communicated, alternatives explored and committee expectations clearly delineated.
- When remedial action is recommended, the difference between tasks-to-be-done and change-to-be-manifested must be made clear. If the candidate completes the recommended tasks, but has not manifested changes that the BOM required, the recommendation does not change.
- The BOM's responsibility to provide guidance and support does not always end at the interview's conclusion. Ongoing responsiveness may be helpful for someone who has experienced severe criticism, delay or discontinuance. Sometimes an interview team member can provide this continued relationship. When this is not possible, the BOM can assure that a pastoral presence is provided by someone who is not a part of the interview process.

RECOMMEND BOARD OR CONFERENCE ACTION

- Most interviews result in a BOM recommendation for conference action.
- Conference standards for licensed or ordained ministry provide criteria to establish recommendations, and these standards are to be communicated to interviewees, as well as those making decisions about the interview team's recommendations.
- Conference standards for ministerial leadership provide the foundation for feedback. These standards define expectations for all ministerial leadership, including ordained, licensed, certified and assigned leadership. The BOM develops expectations and shares them with all dCOM and BOM members and those being interviewed. Standards offer consistent criteria for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of applicants and provide the context in which



changes in conference relationship are considered.

When Interviews Occur

INTERVIEWS ARE REQUIRED AT VARIOUS STAGES IN THE CANDIDACY, LICENSING AND ORDINATION PROCESS BY EITHER THE DCOM OR THE BOM

- Certification as candidate for licensed or ordained ministry (dCOM) (§1666.7)
- Licensing and annual renewal of license as local pastor (dCOM) (§1315.2a)
- Application for associate or provisional membership and recommendation from the dCOM to the BOM (§1324.8, .9)
- Application for associate or provisional membership and recommendation to the Clergy Session (BOM) (§1322.1, §1324.12)
- Completion of provisional membership and recommendation to the Clergy Session as deacon (BOM) (§1330) or elder (BOM) (§1335)
- Readmission to provisional or full conference membership (dCOM/BOM) (§1365-369)

INTERVIEWS ARE NOT REQUIRED FOR A VOLUNTARY STATUS CHANGE, BUT THE BOM MAY FIND THEM HELPFUL IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES

- Transfer from other conferences (§1347)
- Leaving and returning from voluntary leave of absence (§1354)
- Medical leave due to medical and disabling conditions (§1357)
- Retirement, both mandatory and voluntary (§1358)
- Honorable location (§1359)
- Exiting ordained ministry (§1361.1, .2)
- Professional certification in specialized ministry (§1634.2u)

RECOMMENDATION FOR AN INVOLUNTARY CHANGE OF STATUS REQUIRES ADMINISTRATIVE FAIR PROCESS, NOT SIMPLY AN INTERVIEW (SEE CHAPTER 25)

- Involuntary discontinuance of provisional membership (upon appeal) (§1327.6)
- Involuntary leave of absence (§1355)
- Involuntary medical leave (§1357)
- Involuntary retirement (§1358.3)
- Administrative location (§1360)

Types of Interviews

Interviews occur at different stages of the candidacy and ordination process, so the BOM must establish different standards for each type of interview.

CANDIDACY: FITNESS FOR MINISTRY (GIFTS)

- The focus of the dCOM's interview is fitness for ministry and potential for effectiveness
- Material required includes statements of call, statements of faith, recommendations, psychological assessment report and background checks. Explorations of the candidate's call to ministry, relationship with God and the ability to relate to people are fundamental.
- At this stage, a candidate is not evaluated based on standards of readiness to serve or effectiveness in leadership, but for the potential they have for developing into an effective clergy leader. The substance of this interview provides a reference point in later interviews.
- Chronic physical limitations are to be evaluated considering the disciplinary requirement that, "Disabilities are not to be construed as unfavorable health factors when a person with



disability is capable of meeting the professional standards and is physically able to render effective service as a provisional member.” (§1324.6)

- The dCOM shall seek ways to consider cultural and ethnic/racial realities and language translation as a candidate meets these requirements including interviews, psychological assessments, criminal background and credit checks. (§1310.2b)

PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP: READINESS TO SERVE (GRACE)

- Determines readiness for provisional membership and service in appointive ministry
- Explores and discusses developing areas of competency
- Considers the applicant’s academic background, theological statement and seminary reports, including field education internships
- Those applying for provisional membership are evaluated on their fitness and readiness to serve an appointment. Addressing skills that will need to be developed for effectiveness may also be a part of the interview. However, developing skills for full membership and ordained ministry is an ongoing process.

FULL MEMBERSHIP: EFFECTIVENESS IN MINISTRY (FRUIT)

- Assesses growth in effectiveness in ministry
- Material required includes the DS’s and P/S-PRC’s (or other employer’s) reports and evaluations
- Evaluates the candidate’s participation in the BOM’s residency program for provisional membership
- During the provisional period, BOMs work with provisional members to support and evaluate their progress in meeting the full membership requirements for deacons (§1330.4) and elders (§1335).
- Provisional members who serve in appointments where there is no Personnel Committee should establish an Advisory Committee related to the appointment setting for the purpose of giving support and supervision. This committee’s report should include observations of the applicant’s ability to lead and effectively serve as a full member of the Annual Conference.
- Provisional members who apply for full membership must demonstrate effectiveness in their appointments based on standards that have been developed by the Annual Conference. When a provisional member is determined to be ineffective or there are unresolved questions of fitness and readiness, the applicant is not ready for full membership.

LICENSE AS A LOCAL PASTOR

- The dCOM conducts the interview to determine the candidate’s fitness and readiness for licensed ministry.
- Material required includes documentation from candidacy certification, Orientation to Ministry, the local pastor’s licensing school, DS recommendations and other sources as determined by the dCOM and BOM.
- The dCOM meets with the local pastor annually to review and approve continuation of the license.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION FOR MINISTRY

- The BOM conducts the interview to evaluate the skills, education completed, knowledge about United Methodist curriculum or programming and resources identified in the area of specialization.
- Those with appropriate specializations may assist in these interviews.



Interview Teams

TRAINING

Needs vary based on the ability of the interviewers, but an interview team requires special skills training. Annual Conferences are encouraged to complete a full BOM training at the beginning of the quadrennium and at points of transition or restructuring.

FOUNDATIONAL INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Learned and improved through practice and reflection

- Function with integrity
- Keep confidences
- Prepare for the interview
- Create an appropriate interview setting
- Ask questions that lead to helpful information from the candidate (beyond yes/no questions that only require surface level answers)
- Test assumptions formed through reading the candidate's information presented before the interview
- Give feedback
- Summarize the interview in oral and written form
- Keep notes and records
- Form helpful recommendations for the candidate and BOM

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

- **Identify the interview's purpose**
 - The team must inquire how candidates meet ministry standards established by the BOM as guided by *The Book of Discipline*.
 - They must know why the applicant is interviewing and the proper requirements that must be achieved for each status.
 - The interview is not meant to be therapeutic, a resolution of issues or an inquisition. Rather, it is a process used to explore issues and gather information needed to make a responsible recommendation.
- **Interview Team Requirements**
 - dCOM/BOM members must establish trust and mutual respect with each other.
 - Team members must be trained in developing skills for a variety of situations.
 - They must be familiar with Annual Conference policies, disciplinary requirements and the implications of standards.
 - They must agree to the responsibilities required to prepare and participate in the interview.
- **Checklist for team members**
 - Review appropriate paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline*
 - Review Annual Conference policy and the BOM Handbook
 - Enter into an open and trusting relationship with dCOM/BOM members, the Cabinet and candidates
 - Understand and clarify the purpose of each interview beforehand
 - Participate in skills training related to interviewing
 - Be prepared to make difficult decisions
 - Review the candidate's file ahead of time
 - Apply appropriate certification, licensing, associate, provisional or full membership standards to the interview's content and discussion



- Work with the interview team to build interview structure and content
- Take notes for the interview file and BOM report
- Abide by the requirement of confidentiality in all interviews – even if the candidate chooses not to
- Deadlines for files and written work submissions should be clear to all candidates. Only those candidates with full and complete files are to be scheduled for interviews.

STRUCTURING AN INTERVIEW

- **Length**

- The recommended length for interviews is 45-90 minutes. A shorter time frame does not allow time to adequately deal with all working points, while more than 90 minutes tends to be unproductive.
- A debriefing time should follow each interview. This allows for immediate evaluation and time to record the team's recommendation.

- **Interview Team Size** – An interview team should have about three or four members to allow for good representation from BOM members without becoming too overwhelming for the candidate.

- **Phases of the Interview**

- **Team Briefing** – Time just prior to the candidate's arrival when the team reviews its working points, questions and strategy.
- **Opening** – This short time establishes the climate for a good working relationship among candidate and interviewers. Include a greeting and prayer, a summary of the recommendation being sought and a time to develop an understanding of the candidate's situation. The candidate and interviewers may express any feelings about the interview, and the team may recognize the candidate's anxiety and take that into account. The team also conveys how any decisions made or information shared will be used.
- **Middle** – This is the most substantial portion of the interview and involves using working points that have been agreed on in the team briefing. An effort is made to identify and come to consensus about issues, strengths and problems that will assist the team in making a recommendation. Although team members may be concerned about the candidate, the primary focus of the interview is to gain insight. The team maintains a balance between concern for the schedule and desire for adequate communication. Team members should keep extraneous conversation to a minimum to accomplish the interview's purpose.
- **Summation** – Near the end of the interview, a summary of perceptions should be offered by the candidate and the interview team. This summation might be made after the interview team has had time apart from the interviewee to reflect on the individual perceptions of team members. Such a break time also allows the person being interviewed a time of reflection prior to the end of the interview.
- **Closing** – The team briefly reviews the interview's significant points with the candidate. They inform the candidate when to expect a report – both oral and written – on the BOM's recommendation and honor this commitment. They discuss the candidate's response and allow time for the candidate to make final comments or raise any final questions.
- **Debriefing** – The team, without the candidate present, reviews the interview, makes decisions and prepares a report for the BOM, including notes useful to future interviewing committees.
- **Follow-up** – Some interview team or other dCOM/BOM members should be available to



talk with each candidate immediately following the interview. If the interview has been difficult, this gives team members a chance to show they care about the candidate. Additionally, allow time and space for those who desire to be alone. The BOM then discusses and initiates short-term and long-range follow-up procedures, including communication with the dCOM/BOM and DS as needed.

STANDARDS AND CONSISTENCY

- *The Book of Discipline* details the requirements for certification, licensing, associate, provisional and full membership, while the BOM establishes the expectations for the evaluation of all requests for candidates and clergy in the Annual Conference
- The process and expectations the BOM establish for interviewing and determining voluntary and involuntary status changes must apply consistently to all candidates and clergy. Through a well thought-out, well-run interview process, the BOM can make recommendations to the Clergy Session and insure consistent treatment of all candidates and clergy.

The Decision-Making Process

- The interview team's recommendation to the BOM must be in writing. The registrar files notes and other appropriate materials in the candidate's file.
- The interview team's recommendation must be acted on by the BOM, regardless of the interview process. Accountability for all recommendations is shared by the full BOM. The full BOM may choose to also meet with the candidate before a recommendation is made or after the recommendation is acted upon.
- The Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS) provides a psychological assessment report. If possible, the MAS should be available to the BOM during deliberations. This allows for clarification of any issues raised, and the MAS may function as an observer and offer useful critique of the BOM.
- The DS should receive decisions immediately about BOM recommendations and any future requirements of the candidates. The BOM and Cabinet have shared responsibility for candidates and clergy members and should share information about status decisions and interview recommendations.

Interview Feedback

- Open and clear feedback (both during and after the interview) helps people understand how they are being evaluated. Feedback is offered in the interview setting and in written summation afterwards.
- Feedback following the interview is to be done orally and in writing.
 - The oral communication is timely contact with the person after the interview is completed and BOM recommendations are decided.
 - The written feedback is provided both for the candidate's and BOM's file to note the interview's results and any BOM recommendations. Additionally, written feedback provides information to the candidate and the dCOM/BOM of how to address problematic issues. The written record also shows progress over the period that someone is a candidate. Identical information and expectations should be conveyed in the oral and written feedback.



Responsibilities after the Interview

FOLLOW-UP

- Plan for continuing contact with and nurturing concern for the candidate, regardless of the decision. This is especially true when a difficult decision is made that discourages the candidate from continuing
- May explore vocational alternatives and may assist in finding other employment
- Inform candidates about pastoral care services that are available (for those who experience difficulties in dealing with the dCOM or BOM's recommendation)

FILES

Shall be kept in accordance with the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) guidelines (see Chapter 24)

CONFIDENTIALITY

- The candidate has the right to expect that information shared with the dCOM or BOM will be kept confidential among the dCOM, BOM and Cabinet.
- At the request of the Clergy Session, information that is necessary to assist the Clergy Session in deciding about a BOM recommendation may be shared with the clergy members in full connection within an Annual Conference. (§634.2m)
- It is the ethical responsibility of dCOM/BOM members and the Cabinet to keep all information related to candidates who are being evaluated in strictest confidence. When confidential information is requested by and shared with the Clergy Session, the ministerial covenant binds all members to keep such information in confidence as well – even if the candidate chooses not to.



Chapter 10 Licensed Ministry

“All persons not ordained as elders or deacons who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry.” (¶315)

LICENSED MINISTRY

Licensed pastors may perform all the duties of a pastor listed in ¶340, including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, as well as the service of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, confirmation and membership reception, while appointed to a particular charge. A charge is defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served” and not simply the members of a local church.

- Steps toward Licensing
 - Participate in the Orientation to Ministry and complete the conditions for candidacy certification (¶310.2.1, .2) (See Chapter 6 – The Candidacy Process)
 - Complete the licensing studies prescribed by GBHEM, or one-third of their work for a Master of Divinity degree at a University Senate-approved theological (¶310.2.3)
 - Undergo review, examination, and recommendation by a three-fourths majority vote by the dCOM for certification and approval for licensing.
- Categories of local pastor
 - Full-time local pastors (¶318.1) – Serves full time in the charge to which they are appointed and receive a salary equal to or more than the minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time local pastors. While enrolled in the Course of Study, they must complete four courses per year and shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years (¶319.3). They are subject to annual review by the dCOM, cabinet, and BOM, and must be approved annually for continuation of their license.
 - Part-time local pastors (¶318.2) – Serves less than full time in the charge to which they are appointed and are not guaranteed the minimum base salary established for full-time local pastors. While enrolled in the Course of Study, they must complete two courses per year and shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within 12 years (¶319.3). They are subject to annual review by the dCOM, cabinet, and BOM, and must be approved annually for continuation of their license.
 - Student local pastor (¶318.3) – Enrolled as a pre-theological or theological student in a college, university or school of theology listed by the University Senate and are appointed to serve in an Annual Conference other than the conference where listed as a certified candidate. They must make appropriate educational progress and may be appointed to full-time or part-time settings. They are responsible to the dCOM where they serve for continuation of their license and shall be responsible to the dCOM in the conference where they are certified for continuation of their candidacy.
 - Local Pastors Serving on Loan (¶318.4) – Local pastors may be appointed for up to 5 years as part-time or full-time local pastors in a conference other than the conference in which they are certified candidates. These pastors relate to the district committee on ordained ministry in the conference in which they are certified candidates, and they shall be responsible to them for the continuation of their certified candidacy. They relate to the dCOM of the conference in which they are appointed to continue their license and eligibility for an appointment.



LOCAL PASTORS

- May serve in full-time or part-time appointments under the supervision of a district superintendent, and have pastoral authority that is limited to their appointment setting (§315.2, §318)
- Shall be assigned a clergy mentor while in Course of Study or seminary (§317.4, §349.2b)
- Shall attend Annual Conference session as clergy members of the Annual Conference, and may vote on all matters except constitutional amendments and matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy
- Are eligible to vote to elect delegates to General, jurisdictional or central conferences if they have completed all educational requirements and have served a minimum of two consecutive years immediately preceding the election (§35)

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Itinerant members of an annual conference who hold a permanent license for pastoral ministry that is not restricted to a charge nor dependent upon an appointment by the bishop (§315.2b, §321)
- Are available for appointment on a continuing basis and granted the same security of appointment as elders
- Shall attend annual conference and are eligible to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments and matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy (§321.1)
- May retire under the provisions of §358 and retain their license for pastoral ministry for service in the local church and their relationship as retired clergy members of the Annual Conference (§322.3)

PROVISIONAL ELDERS

- Upon commissioning, shall receive a license for pastoral ministry, be appointed by a bishop (§326), and receive supervision by the district superintendent within their district. Clergy have pastoral authority that is limited to their appointment setting (§315.1, §326.2)
- Serve a minimum of two years full time (or the equivalency) following the completion of the educational requirements for full connection before ordination. Assigned a Clergy Mentor by the BOM (see Chapter 11 of the BOM Handbook) and participate in the Residency in Ministry process established by their annual conference
- May vote on all matters except constitutional amendments and matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy. Eligible to vote to elect delegates to General, jurisdictional or central conferences if they have completed all educational requirements and have been elected to provisional membership (§35).
- May serve on any board, commission or committee of the Annual Conference, except the BOM (§327.3). Ineligible for election as delegates to the General, central or jurisdictional conferences.

DEACONS AND ELDERS IN FULL CONNECTION WHO ARE CHANGING ORDERS

- Continue as full clergy members of the Annual Conference (§309.3)
- Surrender their ordination certificate as a deacon to the Conference Secretary when they are ordained as an elder
- Shall serve in the ministry of an elder for at least two years after having



- Informed the bishop and DS of their intention
- Applied in writing to the BOM
- Articulated their call to the BOM and Annual Conference into the ministry of the deacon or of the elder
- Completed all academic and other requirements for admission to the Order of Elder or Deacon

CLERGY FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS WHO HAVE TRANSFERRED

- When an ordained minister is transferring membership into the UMC, the Clergy Session may, upon recommendation of the BOM, receive them as provisional members or local pastors. When the educational requirements for provisional membership (§1324) are not met, an annual conference may grant clergy being transferred from another denomination the license for pastoral ministry until they qualify for provisional membership (§1347)
- If an ordained minister from another denomination is serving within an annual conference but is not seeking to transfer membership, that person serves under the provisions of §1346.2.
- The accountability of clergy transferring into conference membership as local pastors may be under the dCOM or the BOM.
- Serves by virtue of a license with pastoral authority limited to within the particular charge where they are appointed
- Shall have the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to the General, central or jurisdictional conferences, and all matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy

RECORD KEEPING

- The dCOM recommends and records local pastors who have been approved for a license each year.
- Approvals from the dCOM are recommended to the BOM and included in the report approved by the Clergy Session
- Licenses that have been approved based on provisional membership or transferring into the Annual Conference are recorded by the BOM Registrar and presented for approval each year to the Clergy Session.



Chapters 11 Provisional Membership and Residency

“A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the Annual Conference by three-fourths majority vote of the Clergy Session on recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry.” (§1324)

“Commissioning is the act of the church that publicly acknowledges God’s call and the response, talents, gifts and training of the candidate. The church invokes the Holy Spirit as the candidate is commissioned to be a faithful servant leader among the people, to lead the church in service, to proclaim the Word of God and to equip others for ministry.” (§1325)

Provisional Membership Requirements (§1324)

Eligibility for provisional membership within an annual conference requires:

- **Written recommendation** by the dCOM to the BOM, based on a three-fourths majority vote of the dCOM
- **Background check**, psychological assessment (if due for renewal), written doctrinal exam, and an interview with the BOM
- **Recommendation** by the BOM to the Clergy Session, based on a three-fourths majority vote of the BOM, and approval by the Clergy Session, based on a three-fourths majority vote

Provisional Members Appointed Service (§1326)

- **Appointed** to serve in a local church, extension ministry, or appointment beyond the local church
- Upon commissioning, a provisional elder or deacon is to serve a minimum of two years of full-time under appointment (or the equivalency). Clergy may serve as provisional members for no more than eight (8) years (§1327)
- May be appointed to attend school or as instructors, professors, or administrators at United Methodist-related colleges, universities, or theological schools
- **Provisional elders** receive a license for pastoral ministry
- Requirements for clergy proposing an appointment to extension ministry settings, including self-employment:
 - Detailed description of the proposed setting
 - Explanation of their sense of calling to that ministry, gifts, and evidence of God’s grace for it
 - Explanation of how the proposed appointment fulfills the ministry emphases of the United Methodist deacon
 - Description of accountability structures related to the proposed ministry setting
 - For self-employment, the formation of an advisory committee in consultation with the District Superintendent for support, supervision, and evaluation
 - See BOM Library for guidance on Extension Ministry Appointments



- Provisional elders and deacons in extension ministry settings are accountable to the annual conference for the practice of their ministry. They must provide an annual report with evidence of annual evaluation and describe the structures in their appointment that provide accountability
- During the provisional period, all members are supervised and evaluated by both the district superintendent and the BOM

All members apply to the BOM for recommendation for ordination and full membership, based on their demonstration of effectiveness in ministry. Each annual conference determines the specific steps necessary for the application.

BOM Residency Program

The BOM is required to develop a residency curriculum, and all provisional members are required to participate. Special attention should be paid to accommodating provisional members in extension ministry or appointments beyond the local church.

RESIDENCY CURRICULUM (¶1326)

Intended to extend theological education, build provisional members' understanding of and participation in their covenant with the church and its clergy and provide an opportunity for reflection on the theory and practice of ordained ministry, whether that ministry takes place primarily in congregations or in other settings. Includes covenant groups and clergy mentoring.

BUILT AROUND THREE MAJOR COMPONENTS

- Growth in effectiveness in ministry
 - Growing in effectiveness is a lifelong process. The residency program builds effectiveness during provisional membership and helps provisional members develop practices and disciplines to continue growth in effectiveness even after ordination.
 - Peer groups, mentors and education support the identity formation of provisional members in their vocational and personal lives.
 - Life covenants, such as marriage/family and personal friendships, may be adjusted and refined during this time.
- Assessment of growth
 - The BOM and Cabinet must prepare and distribute to provisional members the conference's standard of effective ministry and clear assessment criteria.
 - Effectiveness is measured using data and impressions, with clear criteria and processes to help provisional members understand the Annual Conference's expectations.
 - The residency curriculum intentionally nurtures growth in ministry effectiveness as defined by the conference.
 - Effectiveness is also evident in how the provisional member integrates theory and practice.
- Covenantal relationships
 - Provisional membership is a time for developing relationships within the covenant membership of the conference
 - Confidentiality, seeking and providing help, mutual support, accountability and



practicing shared leadership all contribute to relationships that help clergy grow in faith and ministry effectiveness.

- Provisional members seek help from and provide help to others, learning through mutual engagement.

STRUCTURE AND DISCIPLINARY COMPONENTS

- Supervision
 - Provisional members are supervised by both the BOM and the district superintendent, including regular meetings and annual reports evaluating their work.
 - Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees or other employing agencies shall provide an evaluation of the provisional member's performance.
 - The BOM oversees the provisional and ordination process, setting interview times and developing expectations for effectiveness in ministry.
- Continuing theological education
 - Learning throughout ministry has been vital to the Methodist movement and remains key to effective ministry.
 - Provisional membership provides time for deepening habits, attitudes and practices of theological study.
 - The BOM expects churches or employers to provide time for study for the provisional member.
- Mentoring
 - Clergy Mentors are selected, trained and assigned by the BOM (§349)
 - The mentoring process fosters vocational identity and effective ministry through a covenantal relationship based on support and accountability.
 - Spiritual discernment regarding the provisional member's call and authority is central to this process.
- Covenant and peer groups
 - Covenant groups, a key characteristic of Wesleyan discipleship, are central to the residency curriculum.
 - Covenant groups help provisional members develop the habit of sharing ministry joys and concerns with other clergy, while providing support and accountability.
 - These groups prepare provisional members for participation in the life of the order of deacons or elders.

SUPERVISION

During provisional membership, clergy face many expectations. From demonstrating effectiveness in ministry, to assimilating into the culture and responsibilities of the annual conference, to serving successfully in an appointment setting, demands are high. The BOM has the unique opportunity to develop a residency program that will shape the future ministry of its participants, as well as the future quality of annual conference leadership.

The residency program and supervisory processes must remain separate yet complementary, ensuring that provisional members receive the support, nurture, mentoring, education, and supervision they need.



Project that Demonstrates Fruitfulness

Provisional members are to present a project “that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church’s mission of ‘making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.’”

- The BOM will define the project’s components of “fruitfulness,” “making disciples,” and “transformation of the world” with flexibility in implementation.
- Requirements for the project include:
 - Defining and measuring fruitfulness in relation to the mission.
 - Possible project requirements: reporting deadlines, mid-course feedback, and criteria for assessment.
 - The project will involve collaboration with community leaders, church members, etc.
 - Report mediums can include narrative descriptions, written reports, or audiovisual presentations.

The BOM may provide training in goal setting, organizing volunteers, and budgeting to support the project.



Chapter 12 Deacons

“Within the people of God, some persons are called to the ministry of deacon This ministry exemplifies and leads the Church in the servanthood every Christian is called to live both in the church and the world. Those called to the ministry of deacon are called to witness to the Word in their words and actions, and to embody and lead the community’s service in the world for the sake of enacting God’s compassion and justice.” (¶305)

“Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the Church and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice, to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two. Deacons exemplify Christian discipleship and create opportunities for others to enter into discipleship. The work of deacons is a work of justice, serving with compassion as they seek to serve those on the margins of society. In the congregation, the ministry of the deacon is to teach and to form disciples and to lead worship together with other ordained and laypersons.” (¶329)

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, the term “deacon” in this chapter applies to both ordained and provisional deacons.

Duties of Deacons

The office of deacon, like the office of bishop, extends back to New Testament times. In the middle of the 20th century, an ecumenical movement called for the restoration of the ancient form of the diaconate, a leadership role (associated closely with the bishop) that embodied the servant ministry of the baptized and led the church in acts of compassion and justice.

GENERAL DUTIES

The ministry of a deacon is characterized not by a specific job but by compassion and justice leadership and commitment to the ordained relationship to the church.

“Ordination confers a new identity in the life of the church, as well as authority for ministry Ordination has to do with who the person is in the life of the church, as well as what the person does in ministry.” (Services for the Ordering of Ministry in The United Methodist Church, The United Methodist Publishing House)

Whether appointed primarily to a congregation or primarily outside the church, the deacon holds leadership in both, connecting the people of God to the needs of the world.

DUTIES WHILE SERVING IN A CONGREGATION

- Lead the people of the congregation into ministries outside the walls of the church
- Teach, form, and equip the people to love God and neighbor
- Proclaim the Word
- Assist pastors in worship and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion and lead where contextually appropriate
- May lead in a specialized ministry
- Conduct weddings and funerals

DUTIES WHILE SERVING IN EXTENSION MINISTRY



- May be appointed to a setting outside the church, such as a social service agency, a school, a mission agency, an institution, or other settings
- May lead ministries that care and advocate for the marginalized and vulnerable, organize or serve in mission work, raise funds for justice and compassion ministries, teach, empower, advocate, counsel, coach, serve as chaplains, develop new ministries, serve church-related institutions and agencies, and much more

SACRAMENTAL AUTHORITY

Following the action of General Conference 2020/2024, the provision requiring deacons to receive permission from their bishop to preside over the sacraments was removed.

¶328 details the process by which deacons are to assist elders in the administration of the sacraments as well as discern when they may preside according to contextual needs

- May provide and preside at the celebration of the sacraments “when contextually appropriate and duly authorized” by the bishop of the Annual Conference where the deacon is appointed.
- This is done “for the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the church and offering the means of grace to the world.” The deacon requests this authorization directly from the bishop. (¶328)
- Provisional Members are still limited to presiding over the sacraments in their ministry setting

Appointments and Reporting

LOCATION OF APPOINTMENT

- The location of an appointment is a place where a deacon provides servant leadership, fulfills their call, establishes a clear distinction between the work to which all Christians are called and the work for which deacons are prepared and authorized and where supervision, goals and evaluation of the deacon’s work is acceptable to the bishop, cabinet and BOM. (¶331.3, ¶331.4)
- May be appointed to congregations where they lead in equipping Christians for service and lead the congregation’s mission to the world
- May be appointed to settings beyond the local church; for example, church agencies, schools or institutions, ecumenical agencies or organizations that extend Christ’s love in the world and connect the church with those most needy, neglected and marginalized

APPOINTMENT PROCESS

- The deacon, bishop, District Superintendent or an agency requesting service may initiate an appointment, but the bishop appoints deacons and provisional deacons.
- Suggested questions to determine appropriate appointments to extension ministry:
 - How will the deacon fulfill the vows of ordination to Word, Service, Compassion and Justice in this setting? How would the deacon be a representative of God’s love in this setting?
 - How does the proposed ministry setting provide an opportunity to maintain a relationship and accountability with the Order of Deacons and the structure of the church?
 - How is the proposed ministry congruent with the church’s ministry to the world?



- Does this person possess the gifts, training, education and experience required for the proposed ministry?
- How will the deacon lead others into ministry through this appointment?
- What are the accountability structures in this setting? What structures would the cabinet and BOM recommend?
- If the bishop and cabinet determine an appointment is not in the best interest of the church, the bishop may choose not to make the appointment. The bishop consults with the deacon and the BOM. The deacon shall proceed in one of the following ways (§1331.2c)
 - Seek another appointment
 - Request a personal LOA, a transitional leave, or another voluntary LOA
 - Relinquish his/her credentials
 - Be terminated. Involuntary termination shall follow the procedures for fair process in administrative hearings (See Chapter 25, BOM Handbook)

EXTENSION MINISTRY

Following General Conference 2020/2024, deacons are no longer required to maintain a secondary appointment while serving in extension ministry. For deacons whose appointments are beyond the local church

Membership of Deacons

MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve as members in full connection with all the responsibilities, rights and privileges accorded to all full clergy members of the Annual Conference
- Have voice and vote in the Annual Conference where membership is held
- Eligible to serve as clergy, including as an officer, and on boards, commissions or Annual Conference committees.
- Eligible for election as a clergy delegate to General, central or jurisdictional conference; right to vote for clergy delegates to these conferences
- Required to attend Clergy Session and Annual Conference
- Votes on matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy
- Participates as a member of the Order of Deacons after ordination. See Chapter 20 for more information on the Orders and Fellowships for clergy.
- Provisional deacons serve as provisional members of the Annual Conference, with the same rights and responsibilities as provisional elders

ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

- Deacons may be appointed in conferences other than where they hold membership.
- When deacons receive appointments to a different conference, they maintain membership in their home conference.
- In this case, the bishop of the conference where membership is held makes the appointment in consultation with the bishop of the area in which the appointment is located.
- Deacons submit annual reports to both bishops.

CHARGE CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP



- Charge conference membership provides conference clergy connection and accountability to their annual conference (the charge conference is a recipient of the deacon's annual report).
- Deacons appointed to congregations, charges or cooperative parishes shall be members of that charge conference.
- Deacons appointed to extension ministry shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they hold membership.
- Deacons retain their home annual conference membership if appointed to another denomination.

Accountability

Deacons are accountable to the Annual Conference and the bishop for their ministry and leadership, and the fulfillment of their ordination vows. They serve under appointment by the bishop. Accountability can be provided by a board connected to the ministry or by a church related to the ministry ([¶331.6a](#)).

ANNUAL EVALUATION

- Deacons and elders who serve congregations undergo a process of annual evaluation with the District Superintendent.
- Deacons appointed to extension ministry
 - Have an annual conversation with their District Superintendent about their ministry
 - Appointment settings should include supervision with goals, evaluation and accountability acceptable to the bishop, the Cabinet and the BOM

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEACON

- Completed by all deacons every year
- Includes a copy of their performance evaluation from their employer
- Available for download from <http://www.gbhem.org/forms-library>
- Deacons in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling or coaching ministries may pursue endorsement from the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA). They may submit the annual report as their UMEA report.
- Sent to the recipients listed on the form
- This is a requirement of accountability and connection and helps the general church maintain accurate records that can benefit the deacon.
- The BOM should be sure to make the forms available and remind full and provisional deacons to complete the form annually.
- Deacons in good standing who are between appointments may request a voluntary leave of absence. ([¶354](#))
- Transitional Leave ([¶354.2c](#)) is now limited to 12 months.
- If the market does not/is unlikely to allow a deacon to find appointable employment within 12 months, a deacon may request Personal Leave ([¶354.2a](#)) or an appointment to a volunteer role through which the deacon ministers in Word, Service, Compassion and Justice.

Less than Full-Time ([¶331.3](#)) and Non-Salaried Appointments ([¶331.2d](#))

- Deacons may receive a less than full-time or non-salaried appointment at their own request.



- Less than full-time appointments
 - Require the consent of the cabinet and the BOM
 - The deacon shall provide a written request, at least 90 days prior to the Annual Conference at which the appointment is made to the bishop, District Superintendent and the BOM, including a rationale for the request.
 - Reappointment to less than full-time service must be requested annually. At the deacon's request, the bishop may make midterm appointments to less than full-time service, with the recommendation of the BOM Executive Committee.
- Non-salaried appointments
 - Intended to express the church's concern for ministry among the poor and for advancing emerging needs of the future

Termination Guidelines for Deacons Serving in Local Churches (¶331)

- The District Superintendent and bishop must be consulted before a church terminates a deacon's employment, because the bishop makes appointments for deacons.
- Termination procedures must allow time for deacons to seek a new appointment because they are not guaranteed an appointment. Notification of dismissal must be made at least 90 days prior to final termination of employment, except for causes listed in (¶2702).
- The deacon and the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the district superintendent and the bishop must consult before the dismissal of a deacon. (¶331.6e)



Chapter 13 Elders

“Within the people of God some are called to the ministry of elder Those called to the ministry of elder are called to bear authority and responsibility to preach and teach the Word, to administer the sacraments and to order the life of the church so it can be faithful in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” (¶305)

Elders are ordained to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. By the authority given in their ordination, they are authorized to preach and teach the Word of God, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion and to order the life of the Church for service in mission and ministry.

NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, the term “elder” in this chapter applies to both ordained and provisional elders.

Functions of Elder Ministry

Ordained ministry is rooted in servant leadership. Elders equip Christians for their ministry of service in the world. (¶340)

- Proclaims and teaches the Word of God
- Leads worship and administers the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion
- Provides pastoral care and counsel
- Leads marriages and funerals
- Serve as pastors, superintendents and bishops, who lead the church’s ministry in the world

Appointments

THE ITINERANT CLERGY SYSTEM

The method by which elders and associate members are appointed by the bishop to ministry settings. All elders and associate members shall accept and abide by these appointments. Bishops and Cabinets shall commit to and support open itineracy and the protection of the prophetic pulpit and diversity (¶338).

- The distinguishing mark of elders in Methodism is the willingness to offer themselves “without reserve to be appointed and to serve” (¶333).
- Elders commit themselves to full-time service in the connection under the bishop’s authority.
- Elders in good standing who continue to fulfill professional responsibilities shall be continued under appointment unless they are on leave (¶337.1).

MINISTRY SETTINGS

- Pastor in Charge
 - Oversees the local church’s ministry, including administrative oversight, evangelistic leadership and worship, programmatic planning and ensuring spiritual nurture and pastoral care in the congregation (¶340)
 - Sets the vision and direction of the congregation for witness in the world and leads the church in worship and liturgical life



EXTENSION MINISTRY

- “Elders, associate members, provisional elders and persons licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to ministry settings that extend the ministry of the UMC and the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice in the world... Such ministry settings shall include teaching, pastoral care and counseling, chaplaincy, campus ministry, social services and other ministries so recognized by the BOM and approved by the bishop” (§337.3)
- Categories of extension ministry (§344)
 - Connectional structure appointments (§344.1a)
 - GBHEM endorsed appointments (§344.1b and Chapter 19, BOM Handbook)
 - General Board of Global Ministries service appointments (§344.1c)
 - Other extensions of the Christian ministry of the church (§344.1d)
 - School attendance or participation in clinical pastoral education (§338.4)

LESS THAN FULL TIME (§338.2)

- Full-time service shall be the norm for ordained elders, provisional elders and associate members. However, at the initiative of the bishop and Cabinet, or at his or her request, an elder, provisional elder or associate member may receive a less than full-time appointment.
- The bishop, Cabinet and BOM agree upon the less than full-time appointment. The bishop makes the appointment and notifies the clergy at least 90 days prior to final termination of the current appointment. The Clergy Session approves the appointment by a two-thirds majority.
- Must be approved annually and shall not be granted for more than a total of eight years, except by a three-fourths vote of the Clergy Session.

INTERIM APPOINTMENTS (§338.4)

- The bishop may make interim appointments to charges that have special transitional needs.
- These may be made outside the Annual Conference where membership is held and are for a specified length of time that is established in advance of the appointment being made.

Membership**PROVISIONAL AND FULL MEMBER ELDERS**

- Provisional elders serve as provisional members of the Annual Conference, while ordained elders are members in full connection with all the responsibilities, rights and privileges accorded to all provisional or full members of the Annual Conference.
- Attend the clergy session and Annual Conference
- Have voice and vote in the Annual Conference where membership is held
- Eligible to serve as clergy on boards, commissions or Annual Conference committees
- Eligible to vote for clergy delegates to the General, central or jurisdictional conferences

FULL MEMBER ELDERS

- Vote on matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy
- Eligible to serve as clergy delegates
- Participate as members of the Order of Elders after ordination. See Chapter 20 for more information on the Orders and Fellowships for clergy



Accountability

Accountable to the Annual Conference and the bishop for their ministry and leadership and serve under appointment by the bishop

- Elders are guaranteed an appointment from year to year and therefore have professional responsibilities (§334.2)
 - Participate in an annual evaluation process with P/S-PRC and DS (or comparable authorities). This evaluation must reflect continuing effectiveness in their ministry setting
 - Grow in professional competence and effectiveness through continuing education and formation, for which the BOM determines the minimum standards and guidelines
 - Assume supervisory and mentoring responsibilities within the connection when requested
 - When an elder’s effectiveness is in question, the bishop completes the procedure as outlined in §334.3 to determine a plan for developing effectiveness or recommending Administrative Location (see Chapter 25, BOM Handbook).

Guidelines for Appropriate Appointments to Extension Ministry (§344.1d)

- Those seeking extension ministry appointments shall submit a written statement to the Cabinet and BOM that describes the proposed ministry setting, and shares how they are called to that ministry, their gifts for that setting and how that setting allows for the intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows.
- Suggested questions provided by GBHEM to Annual Conferences can help determine if an extension ministry setting is appropriate for the elder’s ministry and is a true extension of the church’s ministry.

RECOMMENDED QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE A MINISTRY SETTING REQUEST

- Is there evidence that the person is responding to a call to the particular form of ministry being proposed?
- Does the ministry enrich the church’s effectiveness in mission?
- Is the ministry congruent with the Annual Conference’s missional commitment to the world?
- Is the ministry one in which the ordination vows of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service can be fulfilled?
- Does the person possess the gifts, training, education and experience required?
- Does the setting provide the kind of accountability that allows for responsible participation in covenant community?
- Is this person prepared to accept an appointment to a local church if requested to do so?

RECOMMENDED QUESTIONS FOR THOSE SEEKING EXTENSION MINISTRY (§344.1d)

- How is the proposed ministry one in which the vows of ordination to Word, Sacrament, Order and Service can be fulfilled?
- Within the context of your call to ordained ministry, identify your sense of call to this particular ministry.
- How does ministry in this setting enrich the church’s effectiveness in mission?
- In what ways does serving in this setting minister to the world’s needs as related to the church’s mission?
- In reference to the intentional fulfillment of your ordination as an elder to Word, Sacrament, Order and Service: How do you intend to proclaim and teach the Word of God in this setting?
- How is the ministry of sacraments important in this ministry setting? What opportunities exist



for providing the sacraments?

- How will your ministry be a witness to the church's involvement with persons on behalf of the community of faith?

Accountability and Support in Extension Ministries

Appointments in these settings should provide a balance of support and accountability.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Elders are amenable to the Annual Conference and are to have a charge conference relationship in their home Annual Conference.
- Annual report
 - Details service and continuing education
 - Provided to the bishop, DS, charge conference and BOM
 - Includes an evaluation from their ministry setting (§337.3)
 - For appointments outside of home conference, the report must also be filed with the affiliate charge conference and the bishop of the area where they serve because elders are to have an affiliate charge conference in the area where they serve.
 - Endorsed clergy file an annual report with the United Methodist Endorsing Agency.
- See Chapter 19 for information on Clergy Endorsement

SUPPORT

- The bishop, representatives of the cabinet and an endorsed representative from extension ministries within the BOM are to meet annually with clergy in extension ministries. (§344.2b)
- The church has a responsibility to develop structures and programs that support extension ministers, and the BOM is to provide “maximum contact with and support of persons” (§634.1e) in such appointments.
- Suggestions for BOM support
 - A BOM member maintains contact with elders in extension ministry and reports their concerns. Alternatively, the BOM could establish a committee to support extension ministries when possible.
 - Primary areas of support
 - Transition into and out of extension ministry appointments
 - Communication and contact with appointed elder
 - Advocacy and interpretation of issues and concerns
 - Functions in these primary areas of support (may include but are not comprehensive)
 - Receiving and responding to annual reports
 - Interpreting extension ministry through the BOM's annual report
 - Assisting in the placement of extension ministers on conference boards and agencies; assisting them in making their talents and skills available to the conference and the local church
 - Act as a liaison with GBHEM's United Methodist Endorsing Agency regarding the endorsement of conference members



Chapter 14 Clergy Mentoring

“Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth... Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry... Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.” (¶349.1)

See more about candidacy mentoring in Chapter 4 of the BOM Handbook.

Clergy Mentoring

- Helps local pastors and provisional members focus on ministry practice and developing effectiveness. This is distinct and different from Candidacy Mentors, who work with candidates to discern their calling and guide them through the candidacy process.
- Provisional deacons, provisional elders and those transferring from other denominations are assigned mentors during their provisional membership period. Local pastors (both part-time and full-time) are assigned mentors while enrolled in Course of Study.
- Begins when a local pastor or provisional member receives an appointment.
- The BOM may assign local pastors and provisional members to a mentor or a mentoring group.

Clergy Mentors

Clergy Mentors are nominated by the Cabinet. The dCOM, in consultation with the District Superintendent, assigns local pastors to a mentor or a mentoring group. The BOM assigns provisional members to a mentor or a group mentoring.

Mentors are not supervisors, experts, counselors or “just friends.” When done well, clergy mentoring helps establish and maintain healthy practices for developing in effectiveness throughout ministry.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND GIFTS OF GOOD MENTORS

- Spiritual maturity
- Calling and commitment to ministry
- Vocational development
- Understand the different roles of mentoring and supervision
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Respect of colleagues

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Meets with the clergy to establish a covenant and schedules for regular and ongoing meetings
- Prays for the clergy
- Maintains negotiated confidentiality in the mentoring relationship, building it on trust
- Makes at least one onsite visit to the workplace of the provisional member or local pastor each year
- Encourages the clergy to reflect on their growth in discernment of vocation

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LOCAL PASTOR MENTORS

- Becomes familiar with Course of Study and Extension School for local pastors and the educational materials used
- Discusses Course of Study work with the local pastor and consults on matters of pastoral responsibility. Discusses specific assignments from Course of Study instructors



- Offers feedback about coursework
- Knows the resources, contact people and procedures relevant to continuation as a local pastor, including any dCOM deadlines related to the application process for continuation and interviews
- Writes annual mentor reports for the dCOM

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBER MENTORS

- Learns about the conference's Residency in Ministry (RIM) program and the materials it uses
- Knows the resources, contact people and procedures relevant to the provisional process, including any BOM deadlines related to the application process and interviews
- Writes annual mentor reports to the BOM

Training Clergy Mentors

- The BOM is responsible for training mentors. Chairs of the Orders and Fellowship, the RIM Process Coordinator or others also may participate in the training event. Additional leadership may include District Superintendents or the Annual Conference's staff person who relates to the BOM. On occasion, GBHEM staff may be available to provide leadership.
- All mentors should be trained once every four years (even if they have previously undergone training). This allows them to learn the updated requirements for provisional membership and local pastor credentialing, and the Annual Conference's current mentoring and interviewing procedures.
- The BOM may also want to consider inviting both mentors and clergy entering into mentoring relationships to be trained together. Experienced mentors are valuable resources for training new mentors.
- Clergy mentoring has dual areas of responsibility that include mentoring both provisional members and local pastors; the BOM may want to consider different training for each category of mentor.
- Continuing education credits may be awarded for participation in these training events. Ten contact hours of worship or educational time is equal to one (1) CEU.
- The duration of training may vary from several hours to an overnight retreat, but training should include certain information.
 - Information on reporting, confidentiality and role clarity
 - Differences among supervision, evaluation and mentoring, and the role each of these has in clergy development and assessment
 - Information about current licensing and ordination processes, the ongoing approval and interview process for local pastors and provisional members and the mentor's responsibilities in these tasks

Establishing Accountability

- The BOM is responsible for the continuing quality of the clergy mentoring process and overseeing mentors' work.
- If any mentors lose interest or appear not to have the skills needed for the work, the BOM should find replacements.
- It is important to maintain a high standard of guidance and mentoring for new clergy so that they will have every opportunity to develop in effectiveness in ministry. The relationships built among clergy and mentors have the potential for positive impact throughout a clergyperson's ministry. Those who serve as mentors provide a great gift and serve in a much-needed area of ministry on behalf of the Annual Conference.



Chapter 15 Licensing School

Visit the Course of Study webpage (gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study/) for additional information about these programs.

Studies for License as a Local Pastor

A certified candidate is eligible for appointment as a local pastor upon completion of License for Pastoral Ministry (¶311). All persons not ordained as elders or deacons who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry. (¶315)

The BOM (¶634.2h) may recommend to the Clergy Session the licensing of local pastors who have completed the following as noted in (¶315):

- The conditions for candidacy certification in ¶310.1-2
- The Orientation to Ministry
- The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by GBHEM or one-third of the M.Div. degree
- Examination and recommendation by the dCOM

Licensing School schedules and locations are posted on the GBHEM website. A candidate who cannot attend a school in one conference may attend in another conference and receive recommendation to their home dCOM from that school's faculty.

AUTHORITY AND INITIATIVE

The Studies for License as a Local Pastor are a joint enterprise among the dCOM, the BOM and GBHEM. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry prescribes the curriculum for licensing a local pastor and offers guidelines based on competence in the skills of ministry rather than academic achievement. Each annual conference manages the operation of a licensing school and has latitude as to method, time, place, instructors, accents, and interest.

The purpose is to provide the best quality of this initial preparation for ministry. Studies should be relevant to the Annual Conference while establishing high educational standards. While GBHEM prescribes the basic curriculum, offers the resources currently available in the church, and maintains a system of supervision and accountability.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF LICENSING STUDIES

Most candidates' first education about the practice of ministry comes through the licensing studies. However, they are not a substitute for seminary education or the Course of Study schools. They provide an opportunity for full and active members of the Annual Conference to take part in the initial preparation of future colleagues.

The school assumes that candidates have been certified for ministry (¶315.2a) and have already explored the basic vocational questions of call and the meaning of ministry. These studies are a crash course for those who may be appointed when license studies are completed. The license permits regular appointment and should not be granted unless the faculty recommends that a candidate is fit and has the basic competencies to be a pastor in charge. Although most local pastors will be appointed to a charge, they also may receive an appointment to an extension ministry. (¶317.1)



Further, granting the license is only the initial stage in ministry. The 80 hours required for completion of studies for licensing does not give adequate preparation for the full breadth of church work. A candidate who is granted a license must continue in education for ministry, either through college and seminary or through the Course of Study school. (§1319.1)

LIMITATIONS OF THE LICENSE

- After the candidate meets study requirements, the school’s faculty and/or administrator can certify the completion of the prescribed studies; the dCOM and BOM can recommend the license; and the clergy session can approve the license. However, the license shall not be awarded until an appointment to a pastoral charge is made in accordance with §1337 (§1318).
- The license is limited by three specific provisions that are repeated for emphasis several times in the *The Book of Discipline*:
 - Authority extends only within the appointment or extension ministry and does not extend beyond that charge.
 - The local pastor is under specific and direct supervision of the DS.
 - Continuation of the license is subject to annual renewal by the dCOM and BOM.

Those who are licensed must exhibit minimum competencies before the dCOM and BOM recommend an appointment. These studies are not simply a formality. They provide the knowledge and skills the church considers essential to the practice of ministry.

Every pastor recognizes these competencies are never perfected, but work begun in the license studies is developed through the practice of ministry. The studies offer basic preparation for new candidates to receive their first appointment.

DURATION, SETTINGS AND FACULTY

The BOM decides where licensing schools are held, for how long, and who leads and instructs. Once decided, the BOM should send the dates, location, and director’s name with contact information to GBHEM for posting on the GBHEM website.

DURATION AND MODALITY

A minimum of 80 contact hours is required. Studies may be offered in an intensive residential school or a hybrid residential/ online school. The BOM decides the modality that best meets the Annual Conference’s needs. In addition to setting a time frame, one of the first tasks of the school is to find ways to add enrichment and additional studies for students from a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds.

FACULTY

Deacons and elders have a continuing responsibility to support the preparation of new candidates. They can fulfill this responsibility by sharing practical knowledge and skills, enhancing theological education and illustrating the shared responsibility of BOMs and schools of theology to prepare candidates for ministry.

There is not a set number for faculty. They should be able to share their skills with new candidates and should have experience and expertise in leading prayer and worship, preaching, church administration, education, and pastoral care. Some faculty may have experience in specialized ministries, counseling, chaplaincy, and Christian education. The teaching team should include diversity in gender, ethnicity, and theology.



Every school should have a director to oversee registration and secure the location, instructors, and materials. At larger schools, a registrar or other administrative personnel can be helpful. These persons will communicate registration procedures to the dCOM, DS, registrars, and others who keep records for the BOM.

Practice varies among schools for paying faculty. Generally, expenses are paid for those with minor or brief responsibilities, while a modest honorarium may be appropriate for those who have broader responsibilities. This should be considered part of the basic pastoral responsibility of the clergy involved and not considered vacation.

MENTORING

The assignment of Clergy Mentors to local pastor candidates attending licensing school is a vital part of the educational process.

- District Superintendents identify and invite clergy members in the district (full conference members, associate members, and full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study) to be trained and serve as clergy mentors to local pastors.
- The dCOM assigns clergy mentors to those attending licensing school, and the mentors' names are included on the registration form. If a group mentoring process is used, the local pastor candidate's mentoring group and group leader will be assigned.
- Mentors may be asked to be present at a licensing school and participate in a class on mentoring which reviews their responsibilities and provides practice in the process of theological reflection.
- Upon completion of the licensing school and appointment of a local pastor, the local pastor and the clergy mentor (or local pastor group and the mentor group leader) develop a covenant for ministry within the initial few meetings of the mentoring pairing or group formation.
- It is the local pastor's responsibility to initiate contact with the assigned mentor to establish their meeting schedule. If a group mentoring process is used, the group mentor will initiate contact with the members of the group.

TEACHING METHODS AND RESOURCES

Instructors and school directors have latitude in establishing teaching methods and resources so that the licensing school will be relevant to the students' context and needs. A wide variety of teaching methods should be used. Written resources should be practical and current, and each instructor should recommend applicable materials. Basic texts listed below are required; however, each licensing school will decide what additional resources to add. This varies from school to school.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*
- *The New Interpreter's Study Bible (NRSV), The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), NIV Study Bible, or NRSVUE Study Bible*
- *The United Methodist Book of Worship, 1992* – umcdiscipleship.org/book-of-worship
- *The United Methodist Hymnal, 1989*
- **Administration in the Small Membership Church* – John Tyson
- **Christian Education in the Small Membership Church* – Karen Tye
- **From Pew to Pulpit* – Clifton F. Guthrie
- **Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church* – James L. Killen Jr.



- **Worshipping with United Methodists (Revised Edition) – Hoyt Hickman*

**These texts can be ordered in a bundle from Cokesbury (“Licensing School Required Texts” by Killen, Tyson, Tye, Guthrie, Hickman)*

Instructors should design courses based on students’ needs, experiences, cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and theology. Include opportunities for community building throughout the school. The knowledge/skill competencies expected at the completion of licensing school are listed below and based on demonstrated practical ministry needs. Instead of giving required course outlines and teaching methods, consider the desired results and design courses to achieve these outcomes.

Basic Minimum Competencies

BASIC SKILLS

A candidate’s effectiveness in an appointment or in other educational settings is dependent upon reading, math, and language skills. Since proficiency in these areas is not always apparent, BOMs should make efforts to determine whether they have basic skills required for pastoral ministry.

Where deficiencies are found, the student shall be encouraged to seek remedial help. Support is often available through the adult education program of a local high school or community college. The licensing school instructors, dCOM, and BOM shall be aware of the reading and language needs of the students. When applicable, the director of the Course of Study school the local pastor attends may also need to be made aware of those needs

Although deficiencies in basic educational skills do not automatically disqualify a person for licensing, they do indicate a review is necessary to determine the student can meet skill levels necessary to serve a local church. Deficiencies are normally regarded as indications remedial work is necessary. In some cases, students may be required to make progress in their tutorial work before being allowed to register for Course of Study courses.

REPORTING AND OTHER ACCOUNTABILITY

GBHEM prescribes the outline and supervises administration of the studies for licensing (§ 315.2.a.3). At the completion of licensing school, a recommendation is made and a report given by the licensing school to the student, the dCOM, the BOM Local Pastor Registrar, and GBHEM that indicates if a student has successfully completed the coursework. The report indicates the student’s strengths and areas of growth. The coordinating director submits a list of students to GBHEM who have been recommended for licensing and, when requested, an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the school. This information is reported on the Licensing School Faculty Evaluation and Recommendation Form.

FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH LOCAL PASTORS AND MENTORS

Local pastors are clergy members of the Annual Conference (§1602.1) and no longer listed as certified candidates. They do not continue with candidacy mentors but are assigned a Clergy Mentor. (§1311) The licensing studies begin a lifelong process of preparation for the effective practice of ministry. No one expects these studies to be an end unto themselves or serve as the completion of the process for ministry preparation.

Clergy mentors are assigned to each local pastor or group of local pastors in the Course of Study to



support the local pastor in ongoing ministry formation.

The Clergy Mentor

- Works with the local pastor(s) while in the Course of Study program or in seminary (§1317.4)
- Develops a covenant of supportive accountability for growth and decision making in the pursuit of effective ministry
- Supports and counsels the local pastor(s) regarding preaching and teaching the Scriptures, celebration of the sacraments and other services of worship, ordering the life of the congregation for nurture and care, and all other aspects of the practice of ministry

The selection and assignment of effective clergy mentors is important for the local pastor's ongoing formation. Where possible, mentors should be present for at least part of the license studies and during faculty evaluation so mentors may gain insights into the strengths and the needs of the local pastors they will mentor.

The Book of Discipline requires that each local pastor make satisfactory progress in the Course of Study. At a minimum, each part-time local pastor will complete at least half the basic assignments that are expected in an academic year (two courses), and a full-time local pastor will complete a full year of Course of Study work each academic year (four courses). (§ 337)

The dCOM has an ongoing responsibility for the care and supervision of candidates throughout and after the Course of Study through the annual recommendation to renew the local pastor's license. The dCOM must keep track of students' progress as well as their current ministry practice.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND FUNDING RESPONSIBILITIES

Although the DOM provides materials and guides for the licensing schools, all funding for the school comes from the Annual Conference, district, local church, or students. Many conferences find this is a legitimate and valuable use of the 25% of the Ministerial Education Fund retained by the Annual Conference. Other conferences apply resources set aside for leadership development.

Conferences that offer residential schools have found that candidates' local churches are often willing to support their candidacy by offsetting a portion of the registration fees, room and board, or travel expense. When a seminary or college campus is used, the costs of these institutions must be considered. Finally, it is important the student makes a financial investment.

THE UNITED METHODIST COURSE OF STUDY

The Course of Study is a basic theological education program of GBHEM. Participants in the program shall have been certified as candidates, completed the studies for license as a local pastor and approved for license by the dCOM.

The Course of Study is offered at regional Course of Study schools. Most courses are offered in a variety of formats that allow both full-time and part-time local pastors to attend. Many of the regional schools have extension centers for part-time local pastors only. To increase course access, regional schools and GBHEM offer online courses. The Course of Study can be completed through online courses.



EVALUATION OF TRANSCRIPTS FOR APPLYING PREVIOUS COURSEWORK TO COURSE OF STUDY

A candidate may request work completed at a recognized school of theology be evaluated by GBHEM for transfer to the Course of Study curriculum. The evaluation request must come from the BOM, and a transcript must be supplied. Requests, along with transcripts, should be emailed to cos@gbhem.org.

No undergraduate credit is recognized in Course of Study unless the BOM requests an exception for missional purposes. However, some graduate studies in counseling, business, and education may be applied to the Advanced Course of Study as elective credit.

GBHEM policies allow a limited number of credit hours from a regionally accredited graduate program to be applied to the Advanced Course of Study. Graduate transcripts must be sent to GBHEM for evaluation before such credit is granted.

ORDINATION

Local pastors who complete the Course of Study may continue their preparation for full conference membership and ordination as elders through the Advanced Course of Study program.

The Book of Discipline requires local pastors seeking ordination (§324):

- Earn a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate, or in some instances, for missional purposes, a minimum of 60 semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit
- Must have completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent
- Complete the Course of Study
- Complete 32 semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM that shall include the Basic Graduate Theological Studies as prescribed in §324.4. United Methodist History, Doctrine and Polity classes must be taken at an approved school of theology or through GBHEM's online program.

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOLS

Regional Course of Study schools are held on the campuses of United Methodist theological seminaries. Extension Course of Study Schools are held in locations throughout the jurisdictional conferences. Consult the GBHEM website at gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study/ for the list of schools, dates, and contact information.



Chapter 16 Seminary Relations and the Ministerial Education Fund

BOM and Seminaries

The BOM partners with seminaries to educate church leaders in ministry and theological reflection. Strong partnerships between the seminaries and church strengthen this process. The BOM maintains ongoing communication with the seminaries to create a formation process that begins with calling and candidacy, continues through theological education, and is completed during provisional membership and the residency in ministry program. There are various points when interaction between the BOM and seminary is critically important, especially during recruitment and candidacy. The BOM, in conjunction with dCOMs, assist students as they pursue theological education by:

- Encouraging candidates to attend a UM seminary (§1310.2f). The BOM, dCOM and the Vocational Discernment Coordinator should make materials available highlighting opportunities at the 13 UM seminaries and help students understand the added value of attending a UM seminary. Visit gbhem.org/education/united-methodist-theological-schools/ for more information about the United Methodist Theological Schools.
- Creating opportunities for UM seminary representatives to meet with prospective students, candidates for ordained ministry, clergy, and BOM leaders.
- Guiding students who are unable to attend a UM seminary to one of the University Senate-approved seminaries. This list is maintained on the GBHEM website
- Helping students understand disciplinary requirements for ordination related to theological education (§1324). The BOM needs to know the various educational requirements for deacons, elders, and local pastors who seek to be ordained as elders.

UNITED METHODIST SEMINARIES

The BOM should maintain close ties with the UM seminaries located within their particular Annual Conference or geographical area by:

- Maintaining an ongoing dialogue with seminaries that serve its students. This may include inviting faculty from the seminaries to participate in continuing education and formation events in the Annual Conference.
- Conducting regular campus visits, including conversations with administration, faculty, and students.
- Providing adequate feedback between the BOM and seminaries concerning students. Seminaries are limited by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) rules in how much information they are allowed to disclose about particular students, so a common understanding is needed between seminaries and BOMs about the type of information the BOM can expect seminaries to share. The BOM should also provide opportunities to hear seminaries' concerns.

In addition to formal dialogue, UM faculty from the seminaries can assist the BOM, Cabinet and Annual Conference. Many UM seminary faculty members are willing to work with the BOM and frequently serve as BOM members.



The provisional membership period is a minimum of two years and no longer than eight years following the completion of educational requirements. During provisional membership, new clergy complete a residency program that includes mentoring, covenant or peer groups, supervision and continuing education. The continuing education requirement can often be completed in collaboration with seminaries.

- UM seminaries continue to work closely with GBHEM and BOM leaders to shape ways in which the seminaries can assist the BOMs.

NON-UNITED METHODIST SEMINARIES

The BOM also relates to approved non-UM seminaries where candidates are enrolled.

University Senate’s Commission on Theological Education (CTE)

The CTE evaluates and approves a select number of non-UM seminaries to assist in training UM students. This is a quadrennial evaluation process that includes a review of information on the full program of the school. These reviews focus on the school’s ability to offer theological education that honors the UM tradition.

The Commission’s review of an institution is confidential, and its content is held between the CTE and the individual school. However, the bishop and the BOM of the conference where the school is located will be asked to evaluate the school during the review process, and information on the final decision is provided to the BOM. The CTE regards the evaluations given by BOM leadership as critical for the decision-making process.

The University Senate’s Organization, Policies and Guidelines contain working rules of the CTE and the criteria for evaluating non-United Methodist Schools of Theology. This handbook should be shared with the full BOM.

A current list of all University Senate-approved theological schools, as well as current University Senate guidelines are available at gbhem.org/education/.

The Ministerial Education Fund (MEF)

By providing needed scholarships and program support, the MEF is one of the great strengths of the UMC regarding theological education and clergy preparation.

The MEF has generated more than \$682 million in the past 40 years and has funded the theological education of thousands of ministers. The BOM should create opportunities to tell the story and promote the MEF’s work within each Annual Conference.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

Twenty-five percent of funds raised by the MEF apportionment remain in the Annual Conference for recruitment, training, and support of ordained deacons and elders. Funds may also be used to support local pastors, diaconal ministers, and those in



certified ministries; however, the BOM's administrative costs are funded by the Annual Conference, not the MEF.

The BOM is encouraged to promote the MEF with conference leaders, particularly the Council on Finance and Administration and the Conference Treasurer, and to collaborate with them to determine the best way to promote the MEF as part of the Annual Conference's apportionment commitments. The placement of the MEF in the conference budget, the ways in which apportionments are assigned to the local church, and an understanding of conference apportionment procedures are vitally important to the BOM's work of supporting candidates for ministry and funding continuing education for clergy.

MOST ANNUAL CONFERENCES USE THE MEF FOR CERTAIN COSTS

Student Financial Aid

The MEF's first priority is scholarship assistance for seminary students who are completing basic theological education to prepare for ordination. Local pastors in the Course of Study may also receive assistance. Policies for fund distribution are developed and approved by the Annual Conference and should be reviewed quadrennially.

Call and Enlistment

The BOM may use MEF funds for programs that help potential candidates hear and respond to God's call to ordained ministry. Across the church, there is an urgent need to recruit racial/ethnic and younger candidates for ordained ministry (see Chapter 3), and enlistment is one of the BOM's priorities. MEF funds may underwrite discernment events in each Annual Conference or region.

Continuing Education

The second most common use of the MEF is continuing education for appointed clergy. *The Book of Discipline* (§1350) sets continuing education standards (see Chapter 19), and the BOM administers the funds.

Support of the Orders for Ministry

The BOM is responsible for the Order of Deacons (§1306), Order of Elders (§1306) and Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members (§1323) to provide ongoing formation, support and covenant building among licensed and ordained clergy. The BOM provides program funds for the Orders and Fellowship.

Clergy Care

Additional services for clergy may include career counseling, training in clergy sexual ethics, out-placement of persons leaving ordained ministry, etc. These services should not detract from the primary recruitment and theological education purpose of the fund, but the BOM should seek to respond to the clergy needs throughout ministry to strengthen their profession and vocation.



General Church MEF

Of the 75 percent of the MEF received by the general church, more than 75 percent supports the 13 UM seminaries (75% of 75%). The balance supports the work of GBHEM in general services to the church relating to the call, education and support of clergy leadership (25% of 75%).

MEF PROMOTION

The BOM is responsible for interpreting and promoting the MEF throughout the Annual Conference and for helping local churches understand how each church benefits from the fund through the recruitment, training and support of licensed local pastors and ordained deacons and elders. Materials for interpretation, including bulletin inserts, brochures and videos, are available through the Division of Ordained Ministry.

MEF COORDINATOR AND COMMITTEE

The BOM should appoint an MEF Coordinator to oversee its promotion in the Annual Conference. The MEF was created by a layperson and often laity are the best advocates for the fund GBHEM recommends the coordinator be a layperson — either a BOM member or someone who advocates for the MEF and reports to the BOM. An advocacy committee comprised of BOM and non-board members should be appointed and funded to carry out this task.

MEF coordinator responsibilities may include:

- Understand the history and purpose of the MEF
- Track the use and performance of the MEF in the Annual Conference
- Understand the way the MEF is apportioned in the Annual Conference, the financial processes of the CFA and how to influence that process
- Promote and interpret the MEF on behalf of the BOM
 - Use members of the BOM, conference publications and events to communicate the importance of the MEF
 - Use personal stories of those who benefit from the MEF (seminary students, continuing education grant recipients, counseling services) encourage support of the MEF
 - Ask seminary students to encourage their home church to contribute to the MEF as a way of supporting them and underwriting their expenses for theological education
- Develop materials specifically for the Annual Conference
- Involve lay leadership in promoting the fund
- Become familiar with UM seminaries, particularly those in the area and those where students from their annual conference attend

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTION OF THE MEF

- Regularly and publicly acknowledge and thank congregations that support the MEF
- Distribute MEF promotional materials to each church and the Annual Conference session
- Emphasize support of the MEF in the BOM report at the clergy session of Annual Conference
- Develop a listing of continuing education opportunities supported by the MEF
- Publish articles for conference e-newsletters and publications that tell the story of seminary students from the conference who have benefitted from the conference's MEF support
- Focus on ways the MEF benefits the local church



- Schedule a time for an MEF report to be shared at the Annual Conference session
- Recognize clergy who have attended events with continuing education grants
- Introduce seminary students who have received grants and scholarships
- Include a reference to the MEF in relation to the granting of local pastors' licenses
- Work with the Council on Finance and Administration to ensure that the MEF stands out on the apportionment statement in the local church
- Encourage pastors and other clergy to educate congregations about MEF
- Ask those applying for continuing education funds if their church has paid the MEF in full
- Include a reference in grant materials indicating that funds come from the MEF
- Include a note with all continuing education awards reminding recipients that these are MEF dollars



Chapter 17 Professional Certification in Ministry

Qualifications for Professional Certification in Ministry

- Called to specialized ministry
- Committed to meeting the standards for academic training
- Experienced in a particular area
- Committed to continuing education and development in specialized ministry
- Dedicated to achieving and maintaining ministerial excellence

Standards for Certification

- Faith formation
- Academic training
- Experience
- UMC membership
- Continuing study in the area of specialization

PROFESSIONAL – graduate-level training for lay, licensed or ordained leaders who have an undergraduate degree and take graduate level courses

- Master’s degree in the area of specialization
- Bachelor’s degree that includes the required certification courses
- Bachelor’s degree and five graduate-level certification courses

Certification Process

- The process for Professional Certification is in transition for 2026. GBHEM is working to equip annual conferences to work directly with candidates and the BOM to enroll, interview, and approve certifications.
- More information to come regarding this new procedure.

Certification Interview

- The interview committee should explore the candidate’s interpersonal and leadership skills, emotional and spiritual maturity, dedication to and understanding of The United Methodist Church, commitment to continuing education and development and ability to apply his or her education to ministry.
- A certification interview need not be as thorough as an interview for clergy credentialing.
- A written report of the interview, including the team’s recommendation to the BOM, should be placed in the applicant’s file.
- **Suggested interview questions**
 - Describe the nature and mission of the church. How will your ministry further this mission?
 - In what ways do you fulfill your call and commitment to the church’s ministry as a certified ministry specialist?
 - Describe the ministry setting in which you are involved. How is your ministry specialty important in this setting?
 - How does your work contribute to a vital, healthy congregation?
 - Describe how you make use of United Methodist resources in your ministry.
 - How would you contribute to healthy ministry partnerships among staff at your ministry setting?



- How do you anticipate your field of ministry will develop in the next 10 to 15 years?
- Share some positive and negative experiences in both your ministry and personal life this last year. How have these led to growth for you, in your spiritual, ministry and personal life?
- What are your plans for continuing education for personal and professional growth?
- Do you have any questions for the interview team or BOM?

Role of the BOM in Certification

- Assigns a committee or board member to fulfill governance responsibilities for certification ministry careers following the GBHEM guidelines (¶634.1c, ¶634.2u, ¶1406.9)
- Administers the certification process in cooperation with the appropriate general agency for each certification
- Maintains records of all who have been certified in areas of specialized ministry and in each even-numbered, year reports their names, addresses, status and areas of certification to GBHEM. Official reporting forms, resources and guidelines for the certification process can be downloaded from www.gbhem.org/education/certification
- In consultation with GBHEM, determines whether applicants meet the standards for certification in a specialized area of ministry
- Interviews candidates and administers psychological assessments and background checks
- Recommends approval to the BOM and Annual Conference session for those who have met certification standards
- Renews or discontinues professional certification based on a biennial review (in even-numbered years) and an evaluation of all certified ministry specialists
- Provides support to ensure opportunities for continuing education and professional growth and addresses matters pertaining to morale, fulfilling employment and ministry settings
- Publishes the roster of all clergy and laity currently certified in areas of specialized ministry in the conference journal annually

Certification Renewal

- All certified ministry specialists must renew their certification every two years (even-numbered years) to maintain active certification, regardless of when the candidate received initial certification.
- Registrar's responsibilities
 - Sends renewal forms (HE4004) with cover letter giving deadline date for return to those certified
 - Presents returned forms to the reviewing committee for evaluation and reports to the BOM
 - Submits recommendations on renewal to the BOM executive committee for the committee's approval
 - Reports the BOM's decision to those renewing their certification
 - Reports the names and specialties of those whose certification has been renewed to the Annual Conference for recording in the conference journal
 - Reports the BOM's decisions on renewal requests to GBHEM

Transfer of Certification to Another Annual Conference

- The certified ministry specialist who is moving to a ministry setting in another conference may transfer his or her certification credentials. The specialist writes to the receiving and



sending conference's BOMs, asking that certification credentials and records be transferred between the Annual Conferences.

- The receiving conference BOM may wish to interview the certified person before requesting or approving transfer of credentials.
- The sending conference BOM sends file with cover letter to the registrar of the receiving conference BOM and sends copy of cover letter to the certified person.
- Both conferences report the transfer in their Annual Conference report with dates of transfer in or out and send notification and contact information of the certified person to GBHEM.
- The receiving conference's BOM is responsible for maintaining these files and making sure that the transferring person is included in renewal reminders, in conference journal reports, etc.

Certificate Replacement

Those who have lost their original certificates may request a new one through the BOM. The BOM shall confirm that the person's certification remains in good standing and send a written request to GBHEM for a replacement certificate. GBHEM will send the replacement to the BOM to give to the individual.



Chapter 18 Continuing Education

“Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development and spiritual formation and growth to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities. These practices embody the Wesleyan emphasis on lifelong growth in faith, fostered by personal spiritual practices and participation in covenant communities. Each Annual Conference, through the chairs of the clergy Orders and Fellowship or other leaders designated by the bishop, shall provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders and local pastors.” (¶351.1)

The BOM’s continuing education responsibilities are listed in ¶634.2o-q. The BOM provides support services for the ordained minister’s career development and works with the Orders of Deacons and Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to offer financial support for continuing education and coordination of formation activities with BOM activities.

Responsibilities of the BOM regarding Continuing Education

- Identifies and sets expectations for the continuing education of clergy throughout ministry
- Sets standards that consider the needs of the Annual Conference, the clergy’s ministry settings and the clergy’s individual needs
- Establishes standards of effectiveness with the bishop and Cabinet and provide events that support these standards
- Designs a holistic continuing education plan
 - Set clear goals that support clergy effectiveness as well as development of leadership skills
 - Cultivate a culture of growth in discipleship
 - Identify the Wesleyan heritage of lifelong learning as a spiritual discipline
 - Nurture global leadership by encouraging educational opportunities in the Annual Conference and outside the Annual Conference
 - Promote educational opportunities online and in more traditional settings

CONTINUING EDUCATION PLAN

- Considers the needs of all clergy, including groups that are represented (i.e. female or male clergy, young clergy, second- career clergy, local pastors, deacons, extension ministers, etc.)
- Develops working relationships with the chairs of the Orders of Deacons and Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to help identify each group’s needs
- Considers how to enhance learning opportunities for people at different career stages and offers events that meet the needs for those who are newer in ministry, more experienced, approaching retirement, etc.
- Ensures that educational opportunities are available for clergy in all geographical areas of the conference. This may occur through offering a variety of online courses, as well as onsite educational experiences
- Establishes guidelines that consider the Annual Conference’s goals, the required amount of continuing education and the units that will be awarded for participation in different events



- What are the goals for continuing education in the conference, and how do proposed events contribute toward meeting those goals?
- Who is included under the guidelines for continuing education? Most conferences require continuing education for all clergy under appointment.
- How many hours/continuing education units (CEUs) are required annually for each clergyperson? Do requirements meet or exceed the current disciplinary standards listed in ¶1351? Are provisions made for clergy who may seek sabbatical leave (¶1352)?
- Does the Annual Conference have an established practice for awarding CEUs? A CEU, according to the Association of Leaders in Lifelong Learning for Ministry (ALLLM), is defined as “10 contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction and qualified instruction.” (see alllm.org)
- Ensures the quality of continuing education events offered or approved for clergy
 - Determines acceptable settings for continuing education (on-site, online, reading groups, clergy peer groups, etc.)
 - Provides guidance for the District Superintendent, P/S-PRC, and the clergy in determining what type of continuing education events clergy will attend
 - Provides financial assistance using the guidelines established by the Annual Conference. MEF funds may be used. (¶1816)
 - See Chapter 16 for more information regarding the Ministerial Education Fund.
- Establishes accountability of the clergy mentoring plan
 - Maintains at least the minimum requirements listed in *The Book of Discipline* (¶349)
 - Determines the annual report, which documents continuing education, which clergy must complete
 - Requires a report from each clergyperson to detail what was learned, how the information will be used and any necessary follow-up steps to assess the value of a particular event
 - Monitors annual reports for variety in subject matter and teaching methodology (self-directed, leader or peer-directed, online education)
 - Seeks feedback from participants after every continuing education event the Annual Conference offers

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOM CONTINUING EDUCATION TEAM

- Attends continuing educators’ consultations for leadership development and networking such as GBHEM-sponsored meetings
- Consults with the cabinet regarding established standards for effectiveness and the kinds of continuing education events that will contribute to clergy in ongoing effectiveness
- Encourages the use of online continuing education through the UMC’s Cyber Campus
- Supplies a list of retreat centers or other organizations that offer high quality events
- Encourages sabbatical, study or renewal leaves when appropriate
- Awards Ministerial Education Funds (¶634.2w) based on conference guidelines
- Develops an accountability system to confirm that clergy complete continuing education
- Shares information with the Annual Conference about continuing education programs offered by nearby seminaries
- Contracts with a seminary, the Division of Ordained Ministry or other agency for consultant services



RESOURCES

- The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE): An interfaith organization devoted to providing education and improving the quality of ministry and pastoral care
- The Association of Practical Theology: Promotes critical discourse that integrates theological reflection and practice (practicaltheology.org)
- [United Methodist Theological Schools](#): A list of the UMC's theological schools



Chapter 19 Clergy Endorsement

CLERGY ENDORSEMENT

Definition

- Endorsement, as used by government agencies, professional associations, and employers, denotes that a person is ecclesiastically qualified and authorized to provide religious ministry and spiritual care in specialized settings as a representative of their faith group.

Role of GBHEM

- **GBHEM** provides endorsement on behalf of the United Methodist Church (§1406.11) for chaplains and other ministries of pastoral care in settings such as the military, healthcare, prisons, children's homes, retirement homes, workplaces, and counseling centers.

Endorsement Certification

- Clergy endorsed by GBHEM should be appointed under (§344.1.b).
- Endorsement certifies that:
 - The setting is a valid Christian ministry.
 - The endorsee has demonstrated giftedness for ministry in that setting.
 - God has called the individual to fulfill their ordination vows within that setting.

THE UNITED METHODIST ENDORSING AGENCY (UMEA)

Role and Function

- UMEA is the official endorsing agency of the United Methodist Church (§1406.10) and the sole representative of the church recognized by the government and professional associations.
- UMEA is an integral component of GBHEM.
- UMEA advises and guides individuals interested in endorsed ministry settings.

ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

Application Steps

- Begin the online application at methodist.smapply.io.
- The application process includes:
 - **A written application**, including an autobiography and statement explaining the applicant's understanding of their call to ministry.
 - **Status and reference checks.**
 - **An interview.**
 - Clergy seeking endorsement in chaplaincy are normally expected to join the **appropriate professional pastoral care organization** and **receive professional certification** from that association.
- **Bishop's Role**
 - **The Endorsing Committee** will send a letter to the bishop requesting agreement to appoint the endorsed individual. The process is terminated if the bishop is unwilling to appoint the individual.

NOTIFYING THE BISHOP

- UMEA informs the bishop when the endorsement is either **granted** or **denied**. If the endorsement is withdrawn for any reason, the bishop is notified immediately.
- UMEA sends **a list of endorsed clergy** to each bishop annually and requests **their reappointment**.



NOTIFYING UMEA

- Since endorsement requires that a person be in **effective relationship** with the annual conference, it is essential that **cabinet members** and the **BOM** notify UMEA when any endorsed clergy has a change in status including location, leave, or retirement.
- UMEA requests that Annual **Conferences review the list of endorsees** annually and provide feedback when warranted.

Retired Clergy

- Retired clergy may retain their endorsement but are only considered **active** when under appointment.

CLERGY RECOMMENDED FOR ENDORSEMENT

Encouragement to Inquire

- BOMs should encourage clergy to **inquire with GBHEM** as soon as they express an interest in ministry in an endorsed setting. Understanding the requirements for ministry in endorsed settings before clergy begin their specialized training is crucial. Delaying contact with GBHEM may result in missed deadlines and wasted effort.

RESOURCES

- For more information and the complete Endorsement Policy Handbook, visit: gbhem.org/ministry/clergy-leaders/chaplain-and-endorsement-resources/.

NOTIFYING THE UMEA (AGAIN)

- Since endorsement requires that a person be in effective relationship with the Annual Conference, it is essential that cabinet members and BOMs notify UMEA when any endorsed clergy has a change in status including location, leave, or retirement. Endorsement may be continued in retirement with the approval of the bishop.

ELDERS AND DEACONS RECOMMENDED FOR ENDORSEMENT

Encouragement for Elders and Deacons

- BOMs should encourage elders and deacons to seek endorsement when their appointment setting makes them eligible.

RESOURCES

- For more information and a list of the current endorsement settings, visit: gbhem.org/ministry/chaplaincy-endorsed-ministries/.



Chapter 20 Order of Deacons, Order of Elders and Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members

“There shall be in each Annual Conference an Order of Deacons and an Order of Elders. ... An order is a covenant community within the church to mutually support, care for and hold accountable its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church.” (¶1306)

“[The Board of Ordained Ministry shall] work with and support the Order of Deacon, the Order of Elder and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members (see ¶1323), including receiving reports, offering financial support and coordinating these groups’ activities with the continuing formation offerings of the board. The board may delegate continuing formation responsibility of the groups by mutual agreement, with final approval, evaluation and budgeting remaining with the board.” (¶1634.2p)

ORDER OF DEACONS AND ORDER OF ELDERS

- The orders were established in 1996.
- They are covenant communities that provide mutual support, care and accountability for their members, in this case for the sake of the life and mission of the church.
- Every ordained deacon becomes a member of the conference Order of Deacons upon election to full membership. Every ordained elder becomes a member of the conference Order of Elders upon election to full membership.
- Acceptance of the status of full membership entails a commitment to regular participation in the life of the Order.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ORDERS (¶1307)

- Provide theological and biblical reflection and study of the issues facing the church and society for regular gatherings that offer continuing spiritual and vocational development.
- Assist in plans for individual study and retreats
- Develop a bond of unity and commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the Annual Conference
- Build trusting and supportive relationships among members
- Hold members accountable to these purposes

ORGANIZATION OF THE ORDERS (¶1308)

- The bishop shall convene and provide continuing support for each Order. This does not limit meetings to only when the bishop is available. However, the bishop might consider an annual meeting with the Orders (collectively or separately).
- The BOM is to provide financial support for the Orders’ activities through its budget and other appropriate sources.
- Each quadrennium, the BOM nominates, and the Orders elect from its members, a chairperson. The chairs coordinate the Orders’ activities and are voting members of the BOM executive committee. The chairs are members of the BOM Executive Committee. (¶1634.1a)

FELLOWSHIP OF LOCAL PASTORS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS (¶1323)

- All local pastors and associate members shall be members of and participate in the conference Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members.
- The Fellowship’s purpose is to provide mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church.



FUNCTIONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

- Provides theological and biblical reflection and study of the issues facing the church and society for regular gatherings that offer continuing spiritual and vocational development.
- Encourages associate members and local pastors in continuing education beyond Course of Study
- Develops a bond of unity and commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the Annual Conference
- Builds trusting and supportive relationships among members

Organization of the Fellowship

- The bishop convenes the Fellowship. As with the Orders, this does not limit the Fellowship to meeting only when the bishop is available. The bishop might consider convening an annual meeting with the Fellowship or a combined meeting with the Orders and the Fellowship.
- The BOM nominates and the Fellowship elects from its members a chairperson, who leads the Fellowship and reports its activities to the BOM. The chair is a member of the BOM executive committee. (§634.1a)
- New language from General Conference 2020/2024 permits the Fellowship a role in electing its chair. “Quadrennially, the board, with guidance from the present Fellowship Chair, shall nominate for chairperson of their Conference Fellowship at least one local pastor who has completed education requirements and/or Associate member, not to exceed 3 nominees, to then be elected by the Fellowship members present during a gathered meeting of the annual session of the Fellowship” (§323.2).

Activity and Covenant Groups

- These groups should have as their purpose spiritual and vocational development, as well as building bonds of trust, support and accountability. Conferences should avoid impressing other agendas upon these groups. Confidentiality, trust, respect and honesty should be part of their agreed-upon rule. Experience in well-organized covenant groups should help newer clergy interact well in ongoing clergy small groups.
- Given the comparative sizes of the Order of Deacons and Order of Elders in most Annual Conferences, it is often easier for the smaller Order of Deacons to organize and meet with some regularity.
- Given the itineracy of elders, those groups will need to adjust themselves to changing membership.
- Beginning in 2017, the BOM, through the Orders and Fellowship, is to provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders and local pastors. (§351)

Additional Considerations

- ***Elders serving in extension ministry and deacons serving appointments beyond the local church*** – Consider the needs of deacons appointed beyond the local church and elders appointed to extension ministry when offering Orders’ meetings and activities. Work schedules are often different than for those who are serving in local churches. Be creative in finding ways to pray for and include these members in the life of the Order (retreats, meeting times, conference calls, etc.).



- **Long distance and small numbers** – Conferences and districts whose clergy are located several miles apart may consider using distance meeting technology to conduct small-group meetings. In some conferences, the number of deacons is so small that there is no real “Order” for them. The BOM should support these small numbers of deacons by helping them to connect with larger Orders who are eager to provide support and relationships for isolated deacons in other conferences.
- **Annual gathering** – Several BOMs hold annual gatherings of Orders with the bishop. The Order chairs may work with the bishop on an agenda. The best use of this time might be relationship-building, inspiration and renewal. Time for the Orders to meet (to build deacon/elder collaboration) and separately, as well as time to hear from the bishop, could be built into the agenda. It is appropriate to include the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members in such gatherings.
- **Continuing education requirement** – All appointed clergy are now required (¶351) to take continuing education and spiritual growth leave at least one week each year and are encouraged to take at least one month during one year of every quadrennium. The Orders can help suggest locations or plans for such leaves and hold their members accountable for taking these leaves. The BOM might develop goals for its clergy continuing education and spiritual formation and recommend resources and opportunities that support these goals.

CHANGING ORDERS

- Full members in good standing who wish to transition Orders follow the steps listed in ¶309.2. Provisional members wishing to change their ordination track may apply for transition following the steps listed in ¶326.4.
- During the transition period, ordained clergy retain their credentials and full membership while provisional members receive the appropriate license for ministry and retain their provisional membership.
- The BOM may approve the clergyperson for ordination to the other Order after the clergyperson completes the disciplinary requirements to the BOM’s satisfaction. Upon ordination to the other Order, the transitioning clergyperson retains their membership certificate and surrenders to the conference secretary the ordination credentials of the Order from which they are leaving.



Chapter 21 Clergywomen in Ministry

“We support both gender equality and gender diversity as important goals...guaranteeing that paid positions and leadership opportunities are distributed equally for all...We exhort congregations, pastors, boards of ordained ministries, bishops, and other church officials to implement concrete efforts to nurture and promote the leadership of all people, regardless of gender” (Social Principles ¶162.F)

Role of Board of Ordained Ministry

ENLISTS

- Features the presence, images and preaching of clergywomen to reach out to younger generations
- Highlights female leadership in each district and annual conference
- Implements strategies to recruit racial-ethnic women for licensed and ordained ministry
- Visits female students during BOM seminary visits

EQUIPS

- Provides resources or training for Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees about gender inclusiveness in the church
- Ensures that BOM members know the denomination’s and annual conference’s policy regarding sexual ethics (See BOM Handbook Chapter 23 Ethics for more information.)

NURTURES

- Assigns mentors who have demonstrated openness to women in ministry to female candidates
- Establishes a system to provide role models for women in ministry
- Develops a support system to address specific needs for female provisional members or local pastors in their first appointments

ADVOCATES

- Ensures substantial female representation on the BOM, including racial-ethnic women
- Provides educational opportunities for the Cabinet and local churches regarding the support of women in ministry

EXAMINES

- Periodically designates funding to research issues related to women in ministry
- Monitors issues including retention rate, salary, benefits and appointment patterns compared to male colleagues

ENSURES

- Confirms that less than full-time service and leaves of absence options are not used by the Cabinet to avoid appointing clergywomen and clergy couples
- Assures that maternity/paternity and/or family leave are available for women, men and clergy couples

ASSESSES

- Communicates to Ministerial Assessment Specialists, mentors, District Superintendents, and



district Committees on Ordained Ministry that psychological assessments are to be free of potential bias toward female candidates

- Ensures that all candidates are treated fairly throughout the entire ordination process (e.g., some conferences have contracted with female psychological testing personnel, which has helped women to discern their gifts and call to ministry.).
- Verifies that interview questions are the same for female and male candidates. The BOM cannot assess women and men using a different set of questions.
- Ensures interview teams, BOM committees and the Conference Relations Committee include both women and men

Additional Resources

- gbhem.org/ministry/clergy-leaders/clergywomen/ - UMC Clergywomen landing page
- gcsrw.org - General Commission on the Status and Role of Women



Chapter 22 Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry

Christian and Denominational Commitment to Diversity

“Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergyperson’s own racial/ethnic and cultural background. Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. When such appointments are made, bishops, cabinets and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergy persons so appointed and for their congregations.” (¶425.4)

- Christians are called to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- “The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth.” (¶14, Article IV)

ITINERACY

- “The itinerant system is the accepted method of The United Methodist Church by which ordained elders, provisional elders and associate members are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor. All ordained elders, provisional elders and associate members shall accept and abide by these appointments. Bishops and cabinets shall commit to and support open itineracy and the protection of the prophetic pulpit and diversity.” (¶338)
- The United Methodist Church will continue to face the challenges and opportunities for mission and ministry in a multiracial and multicultural society. Considering these challenges, The United Methodist Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity to be an inclusive church with the formation of open itineracy
- “Annual conferences shall, in their training of Pastor/Staff - Parish Relations Committee, emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status or age.” (¶425.1)
- The 2016 General Conference added requirements for the dCOM to “make reasonable accommodation for cultural and ethnic/racial realities and language translations as candidates meet the requirements for candidacy, including interviews, psychological assessments, criminal background and credit checks. (¶310.2b (2) and ¶666.4)

The BOM and Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Consider how demographic changes may affect the church’s leadership needs in each Annual Conference
- Examine assumptions related to racial and cultural differences that may exist in the interview process.

EXAMINING THE PROCESSES AND PRACTICES OF THE BOM

- What assumptions and expectations may exist regarding appropriate behavior in interpersonal relationships (i.e., eye contact, relationship to elders, authority in the family, the use of power in the community, cultural boundaries, space between



- people, relationship to the opposite sex, etc.)?
- How do these assumptions and expectations vary from one culture to another? How does this inform the way the BOM relates to candidates?
- In what ways are the BOM's practices congruent with its intentions about developing diverse leadership?
- What practices need to change?

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Implement a process that allows and encourages feedback about the BOM's practice from a variety of sources.
- Have trained leaders guide the BOM to reflect on its theology and practice in matters of race and culture.
- Assign a monitor who can observe BOM meetings and notice what is left out of discussions regarding issues of race and culture. The monitor's report may help the BOM members to engage in a dialogue about these issues.
- Provide training to the BOM members using The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), an instrument that measures people's orientation toward cultural difference. A licensed facilitator can administer and interpret the IDI for BOM members.

QUESTIONS FROM LEGISLATION ADDED BY 2016 GENERAL CONFERENCE

- What expectations exist regarding English proficiency for individuals whose first language is not English? What guides those assumptions and expectations? How are they communicated to candidates? How are they communicated to the BOM and dCOM?
- How does the BOM examine its practice of ministry regarding issues of racism?
- How does it seek feedback and from whom?
- What anti-discrimination or multicultural training is required for BOM and dCOM members?
- Does the examination of candidates consider a person's ability to work effectively in cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments?
- Every community has unique characteristics. Does the BOM consider a candidate's ability to understand different community contexts and the implications of demographics for ministry as a part of its assessment of readiness for ordination?
- What support systems are available to help challenge and cope with the reality of racism in society and as it exists in the church? What support systems might the BOM sponsor or advocate in assisting clergy and churches to address the issues of racism?

IMMIGRATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Considerations when working with clergy or candidates who are immigrating into the United States
 - Immigration status: How does the BOM check the immigration status of clergy or candidates for ordained ministry?
 - Immigration law: Is the BOM ready to assist clergy or candidates with their immigration status according to current immigration law?
 - Working with the Cabinet: Does the BOM have an on-going consultation with the Cabinet and Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees regarding clergy or candidates with immigration status needs?
 - Language: Are there guidelines on English language proficiency in the Annual Conference?



- Financial assistance: What are the policies for providing financial assistance for clergy or candidates who need to improve their language proficiency?
- Salary and benefits: Are all clergy receiving adequate salary, housing and health and pension benefits?
- Orientation program: Does the Annual Conference provide an orientation program for clergy or candidates who recently immigrated to the United States?
- Training opportunities: What training opportunities does the BOM provide concerning immigration and cultural diversity?

Resources

- gcorr.org – General Commission on Religion and Race of The United Methodist Church
- Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) – contacting licensed individuals who may be contacted to administer and interpret the IDI.
- iljnetwork.org – Immigration Law and Justice Network
- uscis.gov – U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service



Chapter 23 Ethics

Candidates seeking to become certified for licensed or ordained ministry shall: “d) agree for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of their influence as clergy, to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in ¶103-105; ¶160-164. To this end, they shall agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God.” (¶310.2d)

This chapter provides guidance for the BOM’s consideration of ethics in its work with candidates and clergy. The BOM’s duties include interpreting “the high ethical standards of ordained ministry set forth in the Discipline and to study matters pertaining to character.” (¶634.2r)

This chapter covers:

- Professional ethics and the role of clergy
- Fiduciary duty and sacred trust of ministry
- Power and vulnerability in the ministerial relationship
- Sexual ethics curriculum in seminary and Course of Study
- Sample interview questions
- Misconduct of a sexual nature
- Sexuality in the lives of clergy

These issues are discussed in the context of the following BOM responsibilities:

- Role in addressing complaints against clergy
- Providing sexual ethics education and continuing formation for clergy
- Interviewing candidates about professional ethics and sexual boundaries
- Considering readmission of clergy after an allegation of sexual misconduct
- Addressing discrimination in the interview process
- Monitoring for inclusivity, diversity and discrimination in the BOM and cabinet’s work

These lists are a portion of the BOM’s responsibilities and ethical concerns. Confidentiality and conflicts of interest are among the many ethical issues not addressed. Please see additional resources listed at the end of the chapter.

Professional Ethics and the Role of Clergy

The standards for clergy ethics in the UMC are distributed throughout **The Book of Discipline** and **The Book of Resolutions**. What is the role of the BOM in maintaining these standards among clergy?

- **Moral Example:** One approach to clergy ethics is to expect clergy to serve as moral examples for the laity. For example: “All clergy to be appointed shall assume a lifestyle consistent with Christian teaching as set forth in the Social Principles.” (¶337.2)
- **Professional Ethics:** Another approach is to view ministry as a profession. Ministers must be more than just model laypersons. Licensed and ordained ministers have



obligations distinct from those of laypersons. Ministers must maintain the integrity of the ministerial relationship.

- **Sacred Trust:** Ministry is a sacred trust (§1363), and those serving in set-apart ministry must be able to exercise the basic obligations of this trust without harming others, much like physicians keeping the Hippocratic Oath. Clergy have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of those whom they serve. When a potential conflict of interest exists, it is the responsibility of the clergyperson to address this conflict in a way that protects and alerts all parties involved.

Power and Vulnerability in the Ministerial Relationship

Clergy are given the authority to represent the church and have inherent power in relation to laity due to their role, education and training. Ministers have a choice in how they will use their power. Power is the ability to influence another person's thoughts and actions. For many, clergy represent God – through both grace and judgment.

- **Power of the Ministerial Role:** Clergy have the power to hear intimate spiritual concerns and to speak with authority on those concerns. They are invited into the most vulnerable times in a person's life (i.e., birth of a child, death of a loved one, marriage, relationship problems, job loss, etc.).
- **Ethical Obligation:** The BOM recommends individuals to the Annual Conference to grant the authority of licensing and ordination. With this authority comes considerable power and influence. Clergy must be willing to put others' needs before their own, maintain appropriate interpersonal boundaries, and responsibly use the power and authority of their office. These are primary ethical obligations. Clergy must always recognize the power and vulnerability in the ministerial relationship.

Sexual Ethics Education and Continuing Formation of Clergy

In 2012, General Conference affirmed its support of a program of ministerial readiness regarding professional ethics, sexual ethics, healthy boundaries and self-care as a standard aspect of theological education. These new requirements detail expectations that have been in place since 1996. Seminaries are “to provide training on the prevention and eradication of sexual harassment, abuse and misconduct within the ministerial relationship” (BOR 2012, p. 140). Beginning with the entering class of 2013, every student attending a University Senate-approved seminary or Course of Study school is expected to fulfill the following goals (see also the 2012 BOR, pp. 149-150):

- Understand healthy interpersonal boundaries as integral to enabling the trust necessary for ministry
- Recognize sexual ethics in ministry as an issue of appropriate use of power and avoidance of abuse rather than exclusively an issue of “sexual morality”
- Understand the importance of professional ethics, including one's own denominational policies and expectations
- Learn the role of judicatories in prevention and response to clergy misconduct
- Become knowledgeable about human sexuality, one's own sexual self and how to deal with sexual feelings that may arise for congregants and vice versa
- Appreciate how sexual integrity contributes to spiritual wholeness and realize that this is vital to ministerial formation and personal health
- Become familiar with scriptural and theological resources for all of the above



It is important for BOMs and dCOMs to communicate these expectations to those seeking to become candidates for licensed or ordained ministry. As the church expects candidates to achieve these goals, it must also inform candidates of them as they enter theological education. Furthermore, every candidate is expected to achieve the following while completing basic graduate theological education (BGTS) or Course of Study:

- Practice healthy life-choices and work/life balance
- Be self-aware, including sexually self-aware
- Become comfortable talking about issues of sexuality
- Develop skills to provide pastoral care and worship leadership on sexuality issues
- Be committed to sexual justice in the congregation and in society at large

When interviewing candidates, the BOM expects knowledge and understanding of the following topics taught in seminary and Course of Study:

- Theology of power, privilege and abuse (including inherent power, fiduciary duty of ministry, professional ethics paradigm, conflicts of interest, healthy boundaries, predators vs. wanderers). Candidates will be able to clearly state the difference between boundary crossing and boundary violations.
- Human sexuality (including dating, intimacy, and work/life balance; pregnancy, birth control, and abortion; pornography and objectification of persons; shame and abuse; consent and vulnerability; genetic, cultural and physiological aspects of gender and sexuality)
- Sexual misconduct in ministry (including boundary violations, judicatory processes of justice-making, secrecy, inappropriate uses of social networking and communication technologies)
- Pastoral care (including working with victims of sexual violence and abuse; transference, counter-transference and sexual attraction; supervision and accountability; dual relationships; confidentiality and stewardship of information; referrals)
- Best practices of ministry (including cyber-safety, Safe Sanctuaries, healthy communications, clergy self-care, life-long sexuality education, ministering with sex offenders)

It is vital that clergy exhibit a solid understanding of, and ability to live out, healthy interpersonal boundaries and sexual ethics for ministry before receiving their first appointment. What is the candidate's plan for tending to this professional responsibility throughout ministry?

The “Behavioral Health Guidelines”

Since ministry is a sacred trust, the church seeks to discern how candidates and clergy can be strengthened in their practice of ministry. Where negatives exist, can they be sufficiently healed and transformed with the available resources to enable a candidate to incarnate love in ministry? Where positives exist, can they be used to strengthen trust, enable safety and express grace and love in relationships without giving in to temptations and distortions?



To address these concerns, the Division of Ordained Ministry’s Advisory Committee on Candidacy and Clergy Assessment (ACCCA) offers Behavioral Health Guidelines as a resource in candidate selection and clergy accountability. As the title suggests, these are general guidelines rather than hard-and-fast regulations. They relate to behavioral health issues, broadly defined, that the committee believes are critical to effectiveness in ministry and the avoidance of misconduct. It is strongly suggested they be used to provide starting points for conversation about issues such as alcohol and/or chemical abuse/ dependency; physical health and mental illness; legal issues and personal finances; divorce, infidelity, family violence and pornography use; sex-related crimes and sexual misconduct.

Misconduct of a Sexual Nature

Sexual misconduct by clergy is a violation of sacred trust that offers few second chances. The ability to understand and maintain healthy boundaries is vital to the duty to do no harm. Sexual misconduct is never simply an “affair”; rather, it is a violation of the power and authority of the professional role.

- **Sexual Misconduct Definition:** Sexual misconduct within ministerial relationships is a betrayal of sacred trust. It includes behaviors such as child abuse, adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape, sexual assault, unwelcome touching, and the misuse of the pastoral position to exploit others' vulnerability. (*BOR, p. 136*)
- **Power Relationship:** Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Clergy must maintain boundaries between their personal and professional lives to protect the integrity of the pastoral relationship. The roles of lover and clergy are not compatible.

Sexuality in the Lives of Clergy

Single clergy will likely date in search of love and companionship. The realities of clergy divorce and later marriages mean that BOMs will increasingly deal with clergy who want to date. Effective boundaries/sexual ethics training for clergy should include frank discussions about dating.

- **Clergy and Parishioners:** Based on the definition of sexual misconduct, it would appear that a single clergyperson dating their parishioner is a form of sexual misconduct. The ministerial relationship is inherently asymmetrical, and sexual relationships within it are unethical due to the imbalance of power.
- **Annual Conference Policies:** Annual conferences have diverse ethical standards regarding clergy dating. Some explicitly prohibit relationships between clergy and parishioners, while others allow dating with safeguards. The BOM should be involved in developing conference sexual ethics policies and providing ongoing education in sexual ethics.



Ethics for the BOM

The BOM is ethically responsible for how it conducts its business. It has positive ethical duties to demonstrate inclusiveness and address discrimination.

- **Inclusivity and Recruitment:** The BOM has the responsibility to study and interpret the ordained, licensed, certified, and assigned ministerial leadership needs of the annual conference, with due regard to inclusivity. This includes enlisting men and women of all races and ethnic origins and valuing an understanding of persons from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (¶1634.2a).
- **Ethical Responsibility:** The BOM should ensure that its processes, including appointments and committee compositions, reflect inclusivity and fairness, particularly regarding gender, race, and ethnicity. It must work to prevent discrimination and engage in fair processes in its responsibilities.

Websites

- General Commission on the Status and Role of Women: umsexualethics.org and gcsr.org
- General Commission on Religion and Race: gcorr.org



Chapter 24 Candidate and Clergy Files: Personnel and Supervisory Files

Personnel Record Guidelines For Clergy, Candidates, and Diaconal Ministers in The United Methodist Church *Effective Date: August 18, 2017*

The guidelines that follow have been prepared by the General Council on Finance and Administration to fulfill the requirements of ¶ 606.9 of *The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline*. The guidelines are intended for use by annual conferences in relation to personnel records they maintain with respect to candidates for licensing as local pastors or ordination as deacons or elders, deacons and elders in full connection, provisional members, associate members, affiliate members, diaconal ministers, local pastors, and ministers of other denominations under appointment. They have not been prepared for use in relation to files or records that may be kept for other lay employees or volunteers in local churches, districts, annual conferences, or denominationally related agencies or institutions. The General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church also maintains a separate set of guidelines for supervisory files, *Supervisory File Guidelines for Clergy, Candidates and Diaconal Ministers in The United Methodist Church*. Those supervisory guidelines are to be used by the bishops and cabinets.

- I. **PERSONNEL RECORDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ITS MISSION.** The relationship between the annual conference and its candidates, clergy, and diaconal ministers carries with it an obligation to ensure that the personnel records the conference maintains for those persons are kept with integrity and in a manner that will foster and enhance an atmosphere of trust. Records and files are kept as a service to candidates, clergy, diaconal ministers, the annual conference, and The United Methodist Church connection.

Records that are accurate and complete will contribute to fulfilling both the obligations of the conference to its personnel and the mission of the annual conference in several ways:

 1. Conference agencies and officers who are responsible for the preparation, deployment, and support services for the clergy and diaconal ministers related to the conference will be assisted in their tasks. The goal of these agencies and officers is to fulfill their tasks in a way that will enable those ministers to serve with maximum effectiveness in all of the settings in which the conference seeks to be in mission and ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.
 2. Such files can help to protect the clergy and diaconal ministers from decisions which might otherwise be less fully informed. Likewise, the annual conference can be protected from legal liability that might result from undocumented or poorly documented decisions or decisions not based on fact.
 3. Clergy and diaconal ministers can be assisted as they seek to evaluate and assess their own personal and professional growth and to plan for continuing education and other experiences that will further that growth.
 4. Where consistent, with limitations to access as defined in these guidelines, such records may serve as a source of data for research and study.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE 2020/2024 EDITION OF THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church describes the basic task of keeping personnel records



and sets forth certain principles related to that task:

¶ 606.6. The secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer named by the annual conference shall keep a complete service record of ordained and diaconal ministry personnel in the annual conference. Service records shall include but not be limited to biographical information supplied by the individual, a list of appointments, and a record of annual conference actions with regard to conference relationships. In addition to service records, the secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer named by the annual conference shall keep descriptions of circumstances related to changes in conference relationships, credentials surrendered to the bishop or district superintendent, and confidential trial records.

¶ 606.9. All records of candidates and ordained and diaconal ministry personnel maintained by the conference secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer named by the annual conference, Board of Ordained Ministry, board of pensions, and the district committee on ordained ministry are to be kept on behalf of the annual conference in conformity with guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and the following principles: a) The annual conference is the owner of its personnel records and files; b) individuals in whose name a record is kept shall have access to the information contained in a record or file, with the exception of surrendered credentials and information for which a right of access waiver has been signed; c) access to unpublished records by persons other than the bishop, district superintendent, conference secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer or the Board of Ordained Ministry, through its chair, board of pensions, through its chair, the district committee on ordained ministry, through its chair, counsel for the Church, and the committee on investigation, through its chair, shall require written consent of the person in whose name a record is kept; access to trial records shall be governed by the provisions of ¶¶ 2712.5, 2713.5.

Other sections of The Book of Discipline (especially those dealing with conference relationships of clergy and diaconal ministers and judicial proceedings) contain provisions related to content of and access to personnel records. These guidelines are intended to be in conformity with those provisions; in the event of any conflict, the provisions of The Book of Discipline take precedence.

II. DEFINITIONS. In these guidelines certain terms are used with specific meanings, as follows:

1. The terms “personnel” and “referent(s)” are used interchangeably to denote the candidates for licensing as local pastors or ordination as deacons or elders, deacons and elders in full connection, provisional members, associate members, affiliate members, diaconal ministers, local pastors, and ministers of other denominations under appointment, related to the annual conference and in whose name the records are kept.
2. “Personnel files” and “personnel records” denote the files and records kept on clergy and diaconal personnel related to the annual conference. The terms as used in these guidelines do not refer to any other files or records which may exist in relation to other lay employees or volunteers in the annual conference, its districts, agencies, or institutions related to it.
3. “Candidacy records” and “candidacy files” denote the personnel records kept on personnel during the period prior to their licensing as a local pastor, admission into associate membership, or membership in full connection. (See Section XI for guidelines governing disposition.)



4. “Permanent records” and “permanent files” denote the personnel records and files kept on personnel after they are admitted into associate or full connection membership (or, as local pastors, have chosen to remain in the local relationship to the annual conference), or have been consecrated as diaconal ministers.

III. SECURITY. Personnel records and files are confidential and not to be made available to any person or organization except under the limited circumstances stated in these guidelines. Files shall be preserved from unauthorized access and guarded carefully against accidental damage and destruction. The ethical importance of maintaining proper security cannot be overemphasized. Access to digital files should be limited to those with a right to view the file and appropriate precautions should be taken, including maintaining appropriate cybersecurity systems and password protecting files.

IV. OWNERSHIP AND CUSTODY. The Book of Discipline clearly identifies the annual conference as the owner of its personnel files and records, while the custodian may be the conference secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer designated by the conference to perform this task (for permanent records); the district committee on ordained ministry, the Board of Ordained Ministry (for candidacy records); or the conference board of pensions (for material specifically related to current or potential pension and/or benefit claims).

- Appointment outside the home conference - If the referent receives an appointment in another annual conference or is appointed in a missionary conference while retaining membership in his or her home annual conference, the conference where membership is held (“home conference”) should forward to the conference where appointed (“appointive conference”) a copy of that portion of the file that would be sent in the event of a transfer.
- During the period when the person is serving such an appointment, the appointive conference should have authority to add to that copy of the file material related to service in that conference. A copy of any such material added to the file should be sent to the home conference. Officers and agencies of the appointive conference responsible for deployment and support services for ordained clergy should have similar rights and responsibilities in relation to the file during the referent’s period of service there as the corresponding officers and agencies of the home conference.
- Transfer. If the referent transfers from one annual conference to another, all of the files, records and proceedings, and candidacy information, unless specifically prohibited by The Book of Discipline, should be sent to the receiving conference.
- Candidacy and Provisional Members files.
 - While a person is a candidate or local pastor the district committee on ordained ministry shall be the custodian of the candidate’s file. Once the person applies for associate or provisional membership the complete file should be transferred to the Board of Ordained Ministry. None of the file should be retained by the district committee on ordained ministry.
 - Once a local pastor becomes an associate member the complete file should be held by the officer designated by the annual conference. Once a provisional member becomes a full member, the complete file should be held by the officer designated by the annual conference. The Board of Ordained Ministry does not retain files for applicants once clergy become associate or full members.



V. CONTENT

1. To fulfill the purposes for which personnel records are kept, their content should meet certain criteria:
 - a) The information they contain should be relevant to the purpose for which they are to be used.
 - b) The kinds of information to be maintained should be consistent for all personnel.
 - c) The records should be complete, in the sense that information which meets the tests of relevance and consistency shall not be intentionally or arbitrarily excluded from any individual's record.
2. Content of a file:
 - a) Identifying/directory information: Name, address, telephone number, and e mail address.
 - b) Census-type information: Gender, ethnic origin, birth date, and educational background (limited to the names of higher educational institutions attended, the dates of enrollment in those institutions, and degrees earned).
 - c) Family data: Marital status, date(s) of marriage, names of spouse and children, birth dates of spouses and children, date(s) of dissolution of marriage (if any). The custodians of the records, in consultation with those who need and are authorized to use them, may want to make decisions as to whether all of these kinds of family data are needed. Any such decisions should be applied consistently for all referents; information gathered and kept for some persons should be sought and maintained for all.
 - d) Candidacy information: Files and records maintained by the district committee on ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry during the candidacy period and the period during which persons are provisional members or otherwise are in the process of qualifying for associate or full membership in the annual conference.
 - e) Conference relationship information: Dates of admission to associate, provisional, and/or full connection membership, full time and part time local pastor membership, ordination, transfers into or out of the conference, leaves, termination of membership, retirement, and other changes in conference relationship shall be entered in the file. Correspondence or other documents related to circumstances surrounding entry, voluntary termination, or other voluntary changes in conference relationships should be included in the file only under one or more of the following circumstances: if required by The Book of Discipline; if requested to be included by the annual conference, another agency, or officer empowered to do so by The Book of Discipline (such as the bishop, district superintendent, conference board of pensions); or if requested in writing to be included by the referent. The inclusion of documentation related to involuntary terminations or changes in conference relationship shall be included as set forth in the applicable provisions of The Book of Discipline.
 - f) Appointment information: A list of appointments served (or, in the case of diaconal ministers, service appointments), including the beginning and ending dates for each.
 - g) Judicial proceedings records: Records related to complaints, investigations, church trials, and appeals related to them should be kept only as required by, and in strict conformity with, the requirements of The Book of Discipline, and with special attention to the Discipline's provisions related to their confidentiality and



- limitations on their accessibility.
- h) Surrendered credentials: Surrendered credentials shall be collected and filed in accordance with the provisions of The Book of Discipline.
 - i) Optional data: With the permission of the referent, a conference may collect and maintain in its personnel files other biographical or personal information furnished voluntarily by the referent; examples of such information would be continuing education, awards, publications, military service, prior employment, board and committee membership, interests, and activities. Because such information is optional and supplied voluntarily, it need not be consistent for every individual.

VI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION. Identifying/directory information, census-type information, family data, and any optional data should be supplied by the referent. Conference relationship information should be supplied by the Board of Ordained Ministry and/or from the official record of the conference session at which the action was taken.

Appointment information should be entered, in the case of appointments fixed at the conference session, from appointment lists certified as accurate by the bishop and cabinet. In the case of interim changes of appointment, such changes should be entered from official written notices received from or certified by the bishop or district superintendent.

The inclusion and sources of records of judicial proceedings or surrendered credentials is governed by applicable provisions of The Book of Discipline.

VII. ACCESS TO INFORMATION. Access to personnel records should be governed by the purposes for which they are maintained; within the context of those purposes, the individual's rights of privacy must be protected by procedures and security that will guard against unauthorized access to or disclosure of information.

Only annual conference officers and agencies responsible for overseeing preparation, deployment, and support services for personnel in the annual conference may have access to all or specific parts of the material in personnel files, depending on their assigned function and the special nature of the various types of material. These officers and agencies include: the bishop and district superintendents; secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer of the conference who has been designated by the conference to keep the personnel records under the provisions of ¶ 606.6 and 606.9; the Board of Ordained Ministry, through its chair; the board of pensions, through its chair; and the district committee on ordained ministry. The district committee on ordained ministry may only have access to the personnel file during the candidacy process or while someone is serving as a local pastor. The counsel for the Church, and the committee on investigation, through its chair, shall require written consent of the person in whose name a record is kept; access to trial records shall be governed by the provisions of ¶¶ 2712.5, 2713.5. The referent will also have access to all the material in his or her own file except: 1) surrendered credentials; 2) material to which he or she has waived right of access in writing prior to its placement in the file; and 3) material to which The Book of Discipline specifically denies such access.

The Book of Discipline specifically delineates when information in a candidate's file



may be shared during an executive session of the clergy members in full connection with the annual conference (see ¶ 635.2m).

Except for the material which is defined below as “public information,” no one other than the agencies and persons listed above should have access to personnel files, unless access is specifically permitted by The Book of Discipline or granted in writing by the referent. A written record of access, showing the dates of access, the names of the persons who were granted access, and the basis for their access, should be kept with each file.

1. Public information. The following data is to be considered public information and, as such, may be printed in the conference journal, used in news stories or releases, or otherwise disclosed at the discretion of the custodian of the files:
 - a) Identifying/directory information, excluding personal address (see VI.2.a above);
 - b) Census-type information (see VI.2.b above),
 - c) Dates (only) of admission to conference membership, ordination, retirement, termination of conference membership, and other significant changes in relationship to the conference;
 - d) Appointment information (see VI.2.f above).
2. Optional data. Biographical or personal information supplied voluntarily by the referent (see VI.2.i above) may be treated as public information.
3. Limited Access Information. Access to all records, data, and documents not defined as “public information” should be limited to the persons, officers, and agencies listed in the first paragraph of this section. Those persons, officers, and agencies should only have access to the portions of a file which are relevant to their functions and responsibilities, and only when acting in their official capacity. Whenever The Book of Discipline specifically authorizes or limits access to particular kinds of information, its provisions shall take precedence over these guidelines.
4. Restricted Material. Surrendered credentials shall be retained in a place where access can be strictly controlled; no access shall be allowed to them unless they are reissued upon readmission of the individual to annual conference membership. Access to records related to judicial proceedings is governed by applicable provisions of The Book of Discipline.

VIII. **ACCURACY OF INFORMATION.** All information included in a file should be accurate. Persons in whose name files are maintained should have a periodic opportunity to review for accuracy all of the material defined above as “public information” and all of the family data. If errors are discovered, the individual should report them in writing to the conference officer responsible for maintaining the records. If the requested correction is not in agreement with source documentation available in the conference’s files, the individual should be asked to submit documentary evidence corroborating the correction.

Referents may also review any of the “limited access” material to which they are permitted access under the guidelines for access. If an individual believes any of that material to be in error, he or she may submit a signed statement outlining the points of disagreement. If the source of the challenged material and the individual challenging it are in agreement, the material in question may be corrected by



addition, deletion, or substitution. If they are not in agreement, the referent's statement should be placed in the file and retained along with the challenged material.

Except for surrendered credentials and material related to judicial proceedings, the source(s) of any information, documents, or other material may review items they have placed in a file and, when acting in an official capacity and within their assigned functions and responsibilities, ask that additions and/or corrections be made. The referent should be notified of such changes in any material to which he or she is entitled to access. A written log of additions and/or corrections, showing the dates of changes, the types of information changed, the source of the correction or addition, and the type of any documentation submitted, should be kept with each file.

IX. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORTS. Assessment reports prepared during the candidacy period by the conference's ministerial assessment specialist, (who is a psychologist, psychiatrist, or pastoral evaluation specialist with proper credentials), and released to the Board of Ordained Ministry with the written permission of the referent should become a part of the candidacy records of the annual conference. The ministerial assessment specialist should retain all test scores and raw material data and provide only a written assessment report to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Test scores and other data from psychological assessment should be governed by a contractual arrangement between the annual conference and the ministerial assessment specialist. This contractual arrangement should be established prior to the gathering of psychological data and be consistent with the general guidelines of record keeping above. When a Board of Ordained Ministry discontinues a relationship with a psychologist, psychiatrist, or pastoral evaluation specialist, test scores, data, and copies of reports should be given directly to another ministerial assessment specialist retained by the annual conference. With the written permission of the referent, blinded copies of test scores, and other relevant assessment data may be released for research, archival entry, or longitudinal study.

X. RETENTION AND DISPOSITION. Records and files should be actively maintained so long as, and only so long as, they are required for the personnel support and decision making of the annual conference and as long as required by any judicial requirements or court order. If a candidate discontinues from the candidacy process for any reason, the candidate's file should be retained by the custodian of the conference's personnel files for twenty-five (25) years following the discontinuance. Other candidate/clergy files are maintained using the following guidelines.

The files of the district committee on ordained ministry should be forwarded to the Board of Ordained Ministry when a candidate or local pastor applies for associate or provisional membership in the annual conference. The files of the Board of Ordained Ministry should be maintained until a candidate becomes an associate or full member. At that time, all of the Board of Ordained Ministry files and records should be forwarded to the officer designated by the annual conference as the custodian of its clergy personnel records. The district committee on ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry should not maintain any candidate or clergy files once the candidate has moved to the next stage of membership. The custodian should not retain candidate information that is no longer relevant. However, no material deemed by the custodian, after consultation with the Board of Ordained



Ministry, to be significant for future evaluation of the practice of ministry should be destroyed. At a minimum, psychological assessment reports, medical reports, and background checks should be retained in the personnel file. Each conference should establish consistent standards for what candidate records to retain and what records to destroy.

The files of the conference board of pensions shall be maintained until all claims or potential claims on pension funds have been exhausted.

The permanent personnel records and files of the annual conference, as maintained by its designated custodian, should be deposited with the conference commission on archives and history when no longer required for personnel support and decision-making. The custodian/conference commission on archives and history should retain the file twenty-five years after a clergy person retires or no longer has a relationship with the conference, or as long as required by any judicial requirements or court order. After this period of time, the file should be destroyed.

Supervisory File Guidelines For Clergy, Candidates, and Diaconal

Ministers in The United Methodist Church *Effective Date: August 18, 2017*

I. SUPERVISORY RECORDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ITS MISSION. The deployment of personnel within an annual conference carries with it an obligation to ensure that the supervisory records maintained by the cabinet are kept with integrity and in a manner that will foster and enhance an atmosphere of trust. Records and files are kept as a service to candidates and personnel, local churches, the annual conference, and The United Methodist Church.

Records that are accurate and well kept will contribute to fulfilling these obligations in several ways:

1. Bishops and cabinets, which are responsible for the appointment, support, and supervision of personnel, will be assisted in their tasks. The goal is to fulfill their tasks in a way that will enable clergy to serve with maximum effectiveness in all of the settings in which the conference seeks to be in mission and ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.
2. Such files can help to protect personnel from decisions, which might otherwise be less fully informed. Likewise, the local church, cabinet, and the annual conference can be protected from legal concerns, which might result from undocumented or poorly documented decisions.
3. Well-kept records can be used to assist personnel as they seek to evaluate and assess their own personal and professional growth and to plan for continuing education and other experiences that will further that growth.
- 4.

II. REQUIREMENTS OF THE 2016 EDITION OF THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE. *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church describes the basic responsibilities for keeping supervisory records:

Specific Responsibilities of Bishops:

¶ 416.7. To keep and maintain appropriate supervisory records on all district superintendents and other records on ministerial personnel as determined



by the bishop or required by the Discipline or action of the annual conference. When a district superintendent is no longer appointed to the cabinet, the bishop shall give that person's supervisory file to the superintendent of record. Supervisory records shall be kept under guidelines approved by the General Council of Finance and Administration. The supervisory records maintained by the bishop are not the personnel records of the annual conference.

Specific Responsibilities of District Superintendents:

¶ 419.8. The superintendent shall maintain the appropriate records of all clergy appointed to or related to the charges on the district (including clergy in extension ministry and ministry beyond the local church), as well as records dealing with property, endowments, and other tangible assets of The United Methodist Church within the district.

Other sections of *The Book of Discipline* (especially those dealing with records and archives, conference relationships of diaconal ministers and ordained clergy, and judicial and administrative proceedings) contain provisions related to content of and access to clergy personnel records as distinct from the supervisory records of the bishop and cabinet. Since these records are kept under a separate set of guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration, **it is important that the Supervisory File Guidelines not be confused with the Personnel Record Guidelines.** While the Supervisory File Guidelines are to be used by the bishop and cabinet, the Personnel Record Guidelines are intended for use by the annual conferences in relation to personnel records they maintain with respect to candidates for licensing as local pastors or ordination as deacons or elders, deacons and elders in full connection, provisional members, associate members, affiliate members, diaconal ministers, local pastors, and ministers of other denominations under appointment.

III. DEFINITIONS. In these guidelines certain terms are used with specific meanings, as follows:

1. The terms “personnel” and “referent(s)” are used interchangeably to denote the candidates for licensing as local pastors or ordination as deacons or elders, deacons and elders in full connection, provisional members, associate members, affiliate members, diaconal ministers, local pastors, and ministers of other denominations under appointment, related to the annual conference and in whose names supervisory records are kept. Supervisory records are not only kept for those under appointment to a local church, but those in appointments in extension ministries or beyond the local church, those on leave of absence or location, those attending school or on sabbatical, and those who are retired.
2. “Supervisory files” and “supervisory records” denote the files and records kept by the bishop and cabinet on clergy and diaconal personnel related to the annual conference. They are not the permanent personnel records of the annual conference which are kept under a separate set of guidelines from the General Council on Finance and Administration, nor do they refer to any other files or records which may exist in relation to other lay employees or volunteers in the annual conference, its districts, or agencies or institutions related to it.



IV. **OWNERSHIP AND CUSTODY.** Supervisory records are owned by the office of the bishop. Each bishop is the custodian or should designate the custodian of his or her files.

- V. **CONTENT.** To fulfill the purposes for which supervisory records are kept, their content should meet certain criteria:
1. The information they contain should be relevant to the purpose for which they are to be used.
 2. The kinds of information to be maintained should be consistent for all clergy personnel.
 3. The records should be complete, in the sense that information that meets the tests of relevance and consistency should not be intentionally or arbitrarily excluded from any individual's record. Records that contain information that is the same as the personnel file should be consistent.

Content of a file:

1. Appointment information:
 - a). A list of appointments served (or, in the case of diaconal ministers, service appointments) including the beginning and ending dates for each;
2. Evaluative information:
 - a) As deemed relevant, documents, conversations, agreements, and supervisor perceptions and any actions which relate to them;
 - b) Letters and comments solicited and unsolicited, information from the local church, clergy personnel and committees on pastor (staff) parish relations or other clergy personnel committees for those serving in appointments to extension ministries;
 - c) Appraisals and summaries written by the district superintendent.
 - d) The eight-year assessment as required in ¶ 349.3.
3. Biographical information:
 - a) Identifying/directory information: name, address, and telephone number;
 - b) Census-type information: gender, ethnic origin, birth date, and educational background (limited to the names of higher educational institutions attended, the dates of enrollment in those institutions, and degrees earned);
 - c) Family data: marital status, date(s) of marriage, names of spouse and children, birth dates of spouses and children, date(s) of dissolution of marriage (if any)
4. Conference relationship information: Dates of admission to associate, provisional, and/or full connection membership, full time and part time local pastor membership, ordination, transfers into or out of the conference, leaves, termination of membership, retirement, and other changes in conference relationship should be entered in the file when deemed appropriate. Correspondence or other documents related to circumstances surrounding entry, voluntary termination, or other voluntary changes in conference relationships may be included at the discretion of the bishop or superintendent.
5. Complaint and administrative fair process procedures records: Materials related to potential complaints or involuntary status changes; copies of complaints and charges; recommendations of the Board of Ordained Ministry; requests for involuntary status change; and decisions of the annual conference or trial court.
6. Surrendered credentials: Surrendered credentials should be collected by the district superintendent in accordance with the provisions of The Book of



Discipline but should be placed in the personnel files kept by the conference secretary or other officer designated by the annual conference. A record of the receipt and a notation on the forwarding of the credential should be made by the district superintendent and placed in the supervisory file of the referent.

7. **Optional data:** With the permission of the referent, bishops or district superintendents may collect and maintain in their supervisory files other biographical or personal information furnished voluntarily by the referent; examples of such information would be continuing education, awards, publications, military service, prior employment, board and committee membership, interests, and activities. Because such information is optional and supplied voluntarily, it need not be consistent for every individual.

Note that The 2016 Book of Discipline, in ¶ 324.12, requires a notarized statement from all entrants (qualifications for provisional membership) detailing any convictions for felony, or misdemeanor, or written accusations and its disposition of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or certifying that the candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse. This statement should be maintained in the supervisory file. If a bishop requests a signed disclosure statement from all members similar to the statement required by ¶ 324 for entrants, then this statement should be maintained in the supervisory file. If the entrant or member provides a response or explanatory statement regarding such matters, this statement also should be maintained in the supervisory file. “Sexual misconduct” is defined by General Conference in The Book of Resolutions ¶2044 and annual conference policies.

- VI. **SOURCES OF INFORMATION.** Information pertinent to the appointment making process comes from a variety of sources: bishop, cabinet, clergy personnel, committees on pastor (staff) parish relations, and other relevant sources.

Identifying/directory information, census-type information, family data, and any optional data should be supplied by the referent.

Conference relationship information should be supplied by the Board of Ordained Ministry or from the official record of the conference session at which the action was taken.

- VII. **ACCESS TO AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.** Access to supervisory records shall be governed by the purposes for which they are maintained. Superintendents and bishops should disclose to committees on pastor (staff) parish relations (or to appropriate boards and agencies in the case of clergy appointments in extension ministries) pertinent information regarding all admissions or current or past complaints brought to or charges from the Committee on Investigation, regarding financial misconduct or misconduct of a sexual nature. Disclosure of other types of information, including complaints about other types of clergy misconduct or performance issues, should be made when such information might be helpful in predicting the conduct of a person under appointment or assisting the receiving entity to extend care and concern to the clergy person, or when it may affect the reception of the clergy person in his/her appointment. Superintendents and bishops, in cooperation with the referent, also are encouraged to disclose other matters that may affect his/her reception in an appointment. Within the context of the purposes of supervisory files, the right of privacy for clergy and those who have furnished material for the supervisory files of clergy must be protected by procedures and security measures that guard against



unauthorized access to or inappropriate disclosure of information. Access to digital files should be limited to those with a right to view the file.

The bishop and cabinet are responsible for overseeing the appointment and support of clergy personnel in the annual conference and have a right of access to all or specific parts of the material in the supervisory files of the cabinet and the personnel files of the annual conference, boards of pension, Boards of Ordained Ministry, and district committees on ordained ministry. Access to supervisory files should be granted to the referent at the discretion of the district superintendent, bishop, or cabinet except that the referent should not have access to: 1) material to which he or she has waived right of access in writing prior to its placement in the file; 2) material to which The Book of Discipline specifically denies such access; 3) material determined by the district superintendent, bishop, or cabinet to be of a confidential or privileged nature for which permission to share has not been granted by the author; and 4) materials that the district superintendent, bishop, or cabinet believe to be of a confidential, privileged, or private nature (including, but not limited to, notes of meetings, conversations, personal notes, comments, or observations). If the files are digital it is advised to have information that is often retained in both the supervisory file and the personnel file only in the personnel file with access to this information given to the holder of supervisory files as well, thus limiting repetitive data and ensuring accuracy.

If the referent wishes to be transferred from one annual conference to another or to receive an appointment to a church under the provisions of ¶ 344 or be appointed in a missionary conference while retaining membership in his or her home annual conference, the cabinet of the conference where appointment is anticipated (“appointive conference”) should, with the permission of the referent, request from the cabinet of the conference where membership is held (“membership conference”) a statement on the referent’s fitness for ministry and copies of any grievances, complaints, or other relevant records contained in the supervisory files. When the cabinet of the membership conference receives such a request for information from its supervisory files, it should, with the written permission of the referent, send to the cabinet of the appointive conference a statement of fitness and any information on grievances and complaints.

The supervisory file of a referent appointed under the provisions of ¶ 344 should be retained by the district superintendent of record in the membership conference while under appointment in another annual or missionary conference. However, it is recommended that the supervisory files be kept along with the personnel files in a depository approved by the annual conference whenever the referent’s conference membership is transferred or terminated.

- VIII. **SECURITY.** Supervisory files are confidential and are not to be made available to any person or organization except under the limited circumstances stated in these Guidelines. Files shall be preserved from unauthorized access and guarded carefully against accidental damage and destruction. The ethical importance of maintaining proper security cannot be overemphasized. Access to digital files should be limited to those with a right to view the file and appropriate precautions should be taken, including maintaining appropriate cybersecurity systems and password protecting files.
- IX. **ACCURACY OF INFORMATION.** All information included in a file should be relevant, accurate, and up to date. Corrections made in the personnel files of the annual conference should also be made in the supervisory files.



- X. **RETENTION AND DISPOSITION.** Supervisory records and files should be actively maintained so long as the clergy is in a relationship with the annual conference. When a conference member is placed on honorable or administrative location and membership is transferred to a local church, the pastor in charge is expected to begin a new supervisory file for the located clergy. Such files are to follow these guidelines and access to the files is available to the district superintendent and bishop of record. When a clergyperson retires, dies or no longer has a relationship with the conference, the supervisory file should be given to the secretary of the conference for retention for a period of twenty-five years.

Updated and adopted by GCFA on August 18, 2017



Chapter 25 Changes in Conference Relationship

Clergy Status Changes

Clergy status changes may be requested for a variety of reasons, both voluntary and involuntary. The process for these changes will vary, and the BOM, Cabinet, and bishop have different roles in coordinating recommendations, monitoring, and approving the necessary changes.

APPROVAL PROCESS

- The BOM Executive Committee may approve many status changes that occur between Annual Conference sessions, with final approval voted on by the Clergy Session.
- The District Superintendent (DS), bishop, and BOM are informed in writing when there is a consideration or need for a status change, regardless of the nature of the change.
- Status changes are not appointments made by the bishop (Judicial Council Decision 1273).

RESOURCES ON STATUS CHANGES

- In all cases, the appropriate paragraph in The Book of Discipline should be consulted. Should conflicts exist between the BOM Handbook and the Discipline, the Discipline is the primary authority.
- Judicial Council Decisions that affect clergy status, as well as any errata published for the Discipline, may impact conference relations decisions. Pay attention to Judicial Council Decisions throughout the quadrennium and note any errata sheets. When referring to the Discipline, consider the footnote references to Judicial Council Decisions and include them in conference relations matters.

CONFERENCE RELATIONS COMMITTEE

- Committee Composition and Responsibilities
 - o All Boards of Ordained Ministry must have a Conference Relations Committee (CRC) of at least three persons to hear requests for discontinuance of provisional members (when the discontinuance is appealed), involuntary leave of absence, administrative location, involuntary retirement, involuntary medical leave (§357) or other matters assigned to them. (§362.1, §634.1d)
- District Superintendents shall not serve on the CRC.
 - o When clergy seek a change in conference relationship, the CRC should meet with the clergy to discuss the request, consider the needs surrounding the request and inform the clergy member of the process related to changing their active status. The CRC should also inform the clergyperson of the steps required to return to active status in the future (§353).
 - o Committee membership shall ensure racial, ethnic and gender diversity.
 - o The CRC members and chair may participate in any BOM interviews, deliberations or votes regarding membership (provisional or full) – even if a matter before the BOM eventually may be referred to the CRC for a fair process hearing.
 - o The CRC chair manages any recommendations for involuntary status change through an administrative fair process hearing (§362.2).
 - o Status Change Process Overview: A summary of the status change processes is available in the Conference Relations Changes Chart, posted on the BOM Library at gbhem.org/bom-library



Voluntary Status Changes

FORMATIONAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH LEAVE (¶351.3)

- Available to clergy who have served full-time appointments for at least six years
- May last up to six months while the clergyperson continues to hold their appointment

Procedure: Approved by the P/S-PRC, church council and DS

SABBATICAL LEAVE (¶352)

- Available to associate or full members who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years or serving less than full-time in an appointment that is equivalent to six consecutive full-time years

Procedure: Clergy must submit a written request to the BOM that includes plans for study or travel with copies to the bishop and DS at least six months prior to the annual conference session.

PERSONAL (¶354.2A) AND FAMILY LEAVES (¶354.2b)

- Personal leave is granted when clergy are temporarily unable or unwilling to continue in a ministry appointment for personal reasons.
- Family leave is granted when clergy are temporarily unable to continue in an appointment due to the need for full-time care of an immediate family member
- Notes
 - While on leave, the clergyperson designates a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference where they will relate and submits an annual report.
 - Voluntary leave counts toward the eight-year time limit allowed for provisional membership.
 - Clergy on voluntary leave are eligible to serve on conference committees and to vote for and serve as General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference delegates.
 - Voluntary leave of absence must be made voluntarily without coercion. The possibility of involuntary leave should not be used to coerce or intimidate a clergy member into requesting voluntary leave of absence (Decision 1216).
 - A request for voluntary leave cannot be made until any active complaints or charges have been resolved.

Procedure:

- Clergy must submit a written request to the BOM at least 90 days prior to the Annual Conference session, with copies to the bishop and DS.
- Leave may be granted by the Clergy Session upon the BOM's recommendation.
- Personal and family leave must be approved annually upon written request by the clergy member.
- Requires a majority vote of the Clergy Session for up to five consecutive years. For leaves lasting six or more years, a two-thirds vote is required..
- The BOM may interview the clergy member to assess the need for leave.
- Between Annual Conference sessions, leaves may be granted by the BOM Executive Committee after consultation with and approval by the bishop and district superintendents.

TRANSITIONAL LEAVE (¶354.2C)

- Eligibility: Available to provisional or ordained deacons in good standing who need to secure an appointable position. It is also available to provisional elders, ordained elders, or associate members transitioning between extension ministries or from a local church



appointment to an extension ministry appointment.

- Reporting Requirements: Every quarter during the leave, the clergy member must report efforts to find an appointment to the bishop and BOM Executive Committee.

Procedure:

- Clergy request transitional leave.
- The BOM Executive Committee and bishop approve the leave.
- A 90-day notice is not required for moving from an appointment to transitional leave or from transitional leave to an appointment (§1354.3 and §1354.11).
- Transitional leave ends upon appointment by the bishop.

ENDING VOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- Request for Ending Leave: The clergy member must submit a written request to the BOM at least six months prior to the Annual Conference session.
 - The BOM reviews whether the conditions for the leave have been alleviated or resolved. If not, the clergy member has several options:
 - Stay on voluntary leave of absence.
 - Take honorable location.
 - The bishop and DS may recommend involuntary leave of absence, administrative location, or involuntary retirement.
 - Administrative fair process is required if the request to end voluntary leave is denied and the clergy member does not wish to remain on leave or take honorable location (Judicial Council Decision 689 and 782).

MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE (§1356)

- Eligibility and Duration:
 - Granted by the bishop, Cabinet, and BOM Executive Committee to any clergy requesting leave at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for adoption.
 - Compensation is maintained for no less than the first eight weeks of the leave, and the clergy's Annual Conference relations and health and welfare benefits remain intact throughout the leave.
 - The leave may not exceed three months.

Procedure:

- The clergy files a request with the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (P/S-PRC) in consultation with the District Superintendent (DS) and sends copies to the BOM Executive Committee at least 90 days before the leave begins (whenever possible).
- Pastoral responsibility during the leave is managed by the P/S-PRC and the DS.

VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT (§1358.2)

- Eligibility: Available at three different levels depending on age and years of service (as outlined in The Book of Discipline).

Procedure:

- Requests must be submitted in writing to the bishop, Cabinet, and BOM at least 120 days prior to the effective date of retirement (unless waived by the bishop/Cabinet).
- The BOM makes the recommendation for retirement to the Clergy Session for approval.

HONORABLE LOCATION (§1359)

- **Eligibility:** Available at the request of a deacon, elder, or associate member in good standing who intends to discontinue service in appointive ministry.



- **Notes:**
 - Honorable location is not to be used as an alternative to filing a complaint or recommending an involuntary status change.
 - Clergy on honorable location may be retired (§359.3) and may qualify for pension benefits (Judicial Council Decision 717).
 - Clergy on honorable location retain ordination credentials but surrender membership in the Annual Conference. Membership certificates are deposited with the Conference Secretary.
 - Clergy designate a charge conference within the Annual Conference where membership will be held and reports will be made.
- **Ministerial Functions:**
 - Ministerial functions are permitted with written consent from the pastor in charge of the charge conference where membership is held.
 - Clergy on honorable location must report all ministerial services performed to the charge conference and remain amenable to the Annual Conference for their conduct and continuation of ordination.

Procedure:

- Clergy requests honorable location through the BOM.
- BOM and Clergy Session ensure the clergy is in good standing with the Annual Conference.
- The BOM recommends the motion to the Clergy Session.
- Honorable location is granted by majority approval of the Clergy Session.
- Between Annual Conference sessions, appointments as local pastors are permitted when approved by the BOM Executive Committee.

WITHDRAWAL

- **To Unite with Another Denomination (§361.1):**
 - Clergy must be in good standing.
 - Clergy requests withdrawal and retains ordination credentials but surrenders membership credentials to the bishop or DS for deposit with the Conference Secretary.
 - The Clergy Session votes to approve the withdrawal.
- **To Withdraw from the Ordained Ministerial Office (§361.2):**
 - Clergy must be in good standing.
 - Clergy requests withdrawal and surrenders ordination and membership credentials to the bishop or DS for deposit with the Conference Secretary.
 - Membership may be transferred to a local church.
 - The Clergy Session votes to approve the withdrawal.
 - When withdrawing between Annual Conference sessions, the written request and appropriate credentials are given to the bishop or DS for deposit with the Conference Secretary. The action is reported at the next Clergy Session.
 - The effective date of withdrawal shall be the date of the withdrawal letter (Judicial Council Decision 691).

INVOLUNTARY STATUS CHANGES

- Procedure: When a request for involuntary leave is made, the BOM shall follow the procedures outlined in §364 for the disposition of recommendations for involuntary status changes and administrative fair process hearings (§362.2).



- Refer to the Checklist for Recommendation of Involuntary Status Change posted at the BOM Library (www.gbhem.org/bom-library/) for administrative process details, including votes and considerations for different involuntary status change recommendations.
- A DS shall not be present for deliberations or the vote and shall not discuss substantive issues with the BOM or its committees in the absence of the clergyperson in question (Judicial Council Decision 917).

INVOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE (¶355)

- **Request for Involuntary Leave:** Requested by the bishop and DS under two circumstances:
 1. When a written and signed complaint is not resolved through “Supervisory Response” (¶363.1b, c), “Referral of a Complaint” (¶363.1e), or the trial process within 90 days, or clearly cannot be resolved within 90 days.
 2. When allegations of incompetence, ineffectiveness, or inability to perform ministerial duties need to be addressed (¶364).
- **Approval:** Involuntary leave shall be approved annually by the Clergy Session upon written request by the District Superintendents and shall not be approved for more than three years in succession (¶355.4).
- **Notes**
 - If the DS and bishop do not intend to appoint after three years, refer to (¶355.11).
 - Involuntary leave may be requested between Annual Conference sessions (¶355.6).

Procedure:

- The bishop and DS may request this status without the consent of the provisional, associate, or full member and shall give the clergy and the BOM specific reasons for the request in writing.

INVOLUNTARY RETIREMENT (¶358.3)

- **Eligibility:** Recommended by the Cabinet or BOM without the consent of the clergyperson. This option should only be used when all other options have been exhausted and with extreme caution.

Procedure:

- Written notice of the intended action must be given to the clergyperson by the BOM at least 180 days prior to Annual Conference.
- The fair process for administrative hearings (¶366.2) must be followed.
- The Clergy Session must approve the recommendation by a two-thirds majority vote.

ADMINISTRATIVE LOCATION (¶360)

- **Eligibility:** If the bishop determines that a deacon, elder, or associate member will no longer be effective in set-apart ministry, they may request administrative location without the clergyperson’s consent.
 - The BOM may also recommend this when involuntary leave of absence is ending and the requirements for coming off leave have not been met (¶355.10).
- **Notes**
 - Clergy on administrative location may be retired (¶360.4).



- Clergy on administrative location retain ordination credentials but surrender membership in the Annual Conference.
- Clergy designate a charge conference within the Annual Conference where membership will be held and reports made.
- Ministerial functions are permitted with written consent from the pastor in charge and P/S-PRC with approval by the DS and bishop.

Procedure:

- When an associate or full member’s effectiveness is in question, the bishop completes the procedure outlined in (¶360.1).
- If this process does not yield sufficient improvement, the bishop and District Superintendents send the specific reasons for the request to the clergy and the BOM in writing.
- If a clergyperson on involuntary leave of absence reaches the three-year limit and the BOM determines that the reasons for the leave have not been alleviated, the BOM will pursue administrative location (¶355.10).
- The fair process for administrative hearings (¶362.2) must be followed for all requests.
- The Clergy Session must approve the recommendation by a two-thirds majority vote.

WITHDRAWAL UNDER COMPLAINTS OR CHARGES (¶361.3)

- **Eligibility:**
 - Clergy named as respondents to a complaint as listed in ¶363.1(e) may withdraw and surrender their ordination and membership credentials.
- **Notes:**
 - Withdrawal may occur between Annual Conference sessions and becomes effective on the date of the letter of withdrawal (Judicial Council Decision 691).
 - The withdrawal is reported to the Clergy Session.
 - An ordained minister who withdraws under complaints or charges forfeits the constitutional right to trial (Judicial Council Decision 691).

Procedure:

- The clergy respondent requests withdrawal in writing.
- The clergy surrenders ordination and membership credentials to the District Superintendent (DS) for deposit with the Conference Secretary.
- “Withdrawn under complaint” or “Withdrawn under charges” shall be written on the face of the credentials.

SUSPENSION (¶363.7)

- **Eligibility:**
 - When a clergyperson is accused of an offense, one of the actions that may be taken is suspension from all clergy responsibilities but not from an appointment for a period not to exceed 90 days. With the approval of the BOM Executive Committee, the bishop may extend the suspension for one additional 30-day period (¶363.7).
 - During the suspension, salary, housing, and benefits continue, and conference membership rights are retained.
- **Notes:**
 - The bishop or Cabinet may not suspend a clergy member without first obtaining approval from the BOM’s Executive Committee. The decision to suspend is



reserved for the BOM Executive Committee, but urgent matters may prompt immediate action through a phone conference.

- The bishop should promptly carry out the supervisory response process and make decisions regarding involuntary status change and/or whether a complaint should be dismissed or referred to counsel for the church.

Procedure:

- The bishop requests the recommendation for the suspension from the BOM Executive Committee.
- Upon the committee’s recommendation, the bishop may immediately suspend the clergyperson.

PROCEDURES FOR STATUS CHANGE THAT MAY BE EITHER VOLUNTARY OR INVOLUNTARY DISCONTINUANCE OF LOCAL PASTORS (§320)

- **Eligibility:** Local pastors are not guaranteed an appointment. They may withdraw from licensed ministry at their own request, or they may be discontinued at the discretion of the bishop upon written notice by the bishop or DS. If a local pastor does not receive an annual recommendation for continuation of license from the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) or the approval of the BOM, that person shall not be continued.

Notes:

- Licenses cannot be transferred from one Annual Conference to another. If a local pastor wishes to serve in a different Annual Conference, approval for a new license must be obtained from the dCOM where the person will be appointed.
- Once a local pastor has been discontinued from an Annual Conference, reappointment may be reinstated through the dCOM where the discontinuance occurred or in another annual conference upon sharing verification of qualifications and information about the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of the local pastor status (§320.4).

Procedure:

- **Voluntary Discontinuance**
 - The local pastor may retire and be recognized as a retired local pastor (§320.5).
 - The local pastor may voluntarily decide to discontinue service.
- **Involuntary Discontinuance**
 - The bishop may discontinue a local pastor’s appointment.
 - The dCOM may decide not to recommend the local pastor for annual continuation of license.
 - The BOM or Clergy Session may decide not to approve the dCOM’s recommendation.
 - The dCOM shall report the circumstances of discontinuance to the BOM, which shall report them to the bishop (§320.1).
 - The BOM Registrar shall place a copy of the report in the local pastor’s personnel file.
 - **Surrender of Credentials:** Discontinued local pastors shall surrender their license to the DS for deposit with the Conference Secretary.



DISCONTINUANCE FROM PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP (¶1327.6)

- **Eligibility:** Provisional members may be discontinued at their own request or by recommendation of the BOM without consent of the provisional member.
- **Notes:**
 - Judicial Council Decision 917: District Superintendents, including those serving as a liaison to the BOM, shall not be present in deliberations or votes related to involuntary status changes, including discontinuance of provisional membership.
 - Written communication notifying the provisional member of the recommendation to discontinue and the right to appeal should also include a deadline for requesting the appeal.
- **Procedure:**
 - **Voluntary Discontinuance**
 - The BOM interviews the provisional member to determine the reasons for discontinuance and records the rationale in the personnel file.
 - **Involuntary Discontinuance**
 - The BOM recommends involuntary discontinuance and advises the provisional member of the right to a fair process hearing.
 - If the provisional member appeals the recommendation, the procedure for administrative fair process (¶1361.2) is followed.
 - If a provisional member is not approved for full membership within eight years, provisional membership is automatically terminated.
 - The BOM may recommend a provisional member be discontinued and approved to serve as a local pastor. This action is noted in the personnel file.
 - **Surrender of Credentials:**
 - When a provisional member discontinues or is discontinued, they must surrender their provisional membership certificate and license to the DS for deposit with the Conference Secretary.

MEDICAL LEAVE DUE TO MEDICAL AND DISABLING CONDITIONS THAT PREVENT PERFORMANCE OF MINISTERIAL DUTIES (¶1357)

- **Eligibility:** Medical leave may be granted or required for clergy unable to perform their ministerial duties due to medical and disabling conditions.
- **Notes:**
 - Medical leave may be granted or required between Annual Conference sessions.
 - The BOM and Joint Committee on Medical Leave should communicate about the progress of the medical leave request.
 - Contact the Annual Conference benefits officer or Wespath Benefits and Investments for health insurance or disability benefits queries.
- **Procedure:**
 - **Voluntary Leave**
 - The clergy member may request this leave at any time.
 - **Involuntary Leave:**
 - May be initiated by the Cabinet without consent of the clergy.
 - The administrative fair process provisions of (¶1361.2) shall be followed in the event of unresolved issues.



- The Joint Committee on Medical Leave grants the leave following an appropriate investigation.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT (§358.1)

- **Eligibility:** Every clergy member of an Annual Conference who attains age 72 on or before July 1 shall be automatically retired at the Annual Conference held that year. Those reaching 72 after July 1 will be automatically retired at the following year's Annual Conference.
- **Procedure:**
 - Retirement requests must be made in writing to the bishop, Cabinet, and BOM at least 180 days prior to the effective retirement date, unless waived by the bishop and Cabinet.
 - The BOM shall provide guidance and counsel to clergy as they transition into retirement (see Chapter 27).

THE ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE (§635)

- **Composition:**
 - Each Annual Conference shall have an Administrative Review Committee (ARC) composed of three clergy members in full connection and two alternates who are not members of the Cabinet, the BOM, or their immediate family members.
 - The bishop nominates the committee, and it is elected quadrennially by the Clergy Session.
- **Purpose:**
 - Its only purpose is to ensure that disciplinary procedures are followed throughout the process related to recommendations for involuntary status change.
 - Does not assess the merits of the case but simply ensures disciplinary procedures have been followed.
 - May make recommendations to remedy any mistakes made in the process or determine that any mistakes made were harmless or did not affect the outcome of fair process.
- **Reporting:**
 - Makes a report to the Clergy Session before any final vote is taken regarding a recommendation for involuntary status change.
- **Confidentiality:**
 - Has the right to retain a confidential and complete record of the matters it reviews.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES (§363)

- **Purpose:**
 - Whenever clergy members of an Annual Conference are accused of violating the sacred trust granted to them in licensing, commissioning, ordination, or conference membership, their credentials and conference membership shall be subject to review.
 - The primary purpose of this review is a just resolution of any violations of this sacred trust.
- **BOM Responsibilities:**
 - The bishop shall notify the BOM chair when the supervisory response is initiated (§363.5).



- The BOM Executive Committee may need to respond to a request for suspension.
- The BOM and CRC may need to process a request for an involuntary leave of absence if time is needed to process the complaint.
- **Notifications:**
 - The complainant and the respondent shall receive, in writing, an account of the process that will be followed (Judicial Council Decision 974).
- **Supervisory Response (§362.1a, b):**
 - The bishop manages the supervisory response and investigates allegations before deciding how to respond to the complaint.
 - The complaint is treated as an allegation during the supervisory response period.
 - The respondent may have someone accompany them to any supervisory response meetings.
 - The bishop may choose to include a third-party mediator, the S/P-PRC, superintendency committee, or other experienced committees or persons who may be helpful.

JUST RESOLUTION (§362.1c)

- **Eligibility:**
 - A process for just resolution may begin at any point in the supervisory, complaint, or trial process. It is not an administrative process or judicial proceeding.
 - Any just resolution agreement must satisfy all parties, and a written statement of the agreement must be signed by all parties.
 - A just resolution agreement is the final disposition of the related complaint.
- **Resources:**
 - Resources are available to assist the bishop and Annual Conference in negotiating a just resolution in a complaint.
 - If complaints involve sexual misconduct, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women can provide assistance and information.
 - For general conflict mediation, the JustPeace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation is one source of support. JustPeace prepares and assists United Methodists in engaging conflict constructively, aiming for justice, reconciliation, resource preservation, and restoration of community in the church and world.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Intimidation Prevention:**
 - Efforts should be made to avoid intimidation of the complainant by the clergy or friends of the clergy. For the complaint process to function properly, the complainant must feel safe and be safe from any intimidation or pressure.
- **Contact Restrictions:**
 - The bishop and/or DS should instruct both the respondent and complainant not to have contact with each other (in writing, in person, or otherwise). If either party attempts contact, the other should decline and promptly inform the DS, the advocate, or the counsel for the church.
- **Controlled Communication:**
 - There may be instances in the complaint process where controlled communication is desirable (e.g., meeting with advocates and counsel to present mediation).



However, there should be no contact without third parties being present to monitor the interaction.

- **Reconciliation and Forgiveness:**

- The Book of Discipline emphasizes the importance of efforts to achieve reconciliation and a just resolution of complaints. The parties involved must abide by these directives, but reconciliation does not necessarily end a complaint process nor imply that no penalty should be imposed on the respondent.
- Reconciliation at the supervisory level may result in the end of the matter if the bishop believes the clergy person is fit to continue in ministry. However, if the allegations are serious and the bishop believes the clergy is unfit, the bishop may proceed with the complaint even if the complainant forgives the clergy person.



Chapter 26 Retirement Planning and Relationships

Retirement Planning and Relationships

Purpose

- The BOM, along with the Annual Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBPHB), has the responsibility for assisting clergy and spouses as they prepare for retirement. This includes pre-retirement counseling, guidance during the transition into a new relationship with the Annual Conference, and the organization of groups to support clergy during retirement (§358.4).
- The BOM and CBPHB may relate to the Annual Conference Association of Retired Ministers or similar organizations. If such organizations do not exist, the BOM shall take the initiative to assist retirees in establishing them.

BOM RELATIONSHIP TO RETIRED CLERGY AND SPOUSES

General Overview

- For many Annual Conferences, the most visible reminder of this relationship is the recognition of retired clergy and spouses at the Annual Conference session. Many boards actively plan this event, holding a dinner for retirees and printing a program listing their service to the church. However, many retirees may feel rather ignored by the church after this final recognition.

Required Liaison

- The Book of Discipline requires a liaison to retired clergy in the conference (§635.2k). The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) requests the name of the retired clergy liaison.
- A retired clergy member on the board can address the needs and concerns of retired clergy and spouses by:
 - Meeting with representatives from the retired clergy association, Cabinet, BOM, and CBPHB to identify concerns and resources, and to coordinate a conference response.
 - Keeping retired clergy, spouses, and surviving spouses up-to-date with current pension, Social Security, and health insurance information.
 - Inviting retired clergy and spouses to participate in district events.
 - the availability of continuing education for retired clergy.
 - a structure to enhance the creative and productive use of retirement years.
 - Surveying retired clergy and spouses on a quadrennial basis to discover their concerns, needs, and desires for serving in the conference.

IDEAS FOR BOM CONSULTATION AND SUPPORT

Suggested Actions for BOM

- Identify a BOM member to serve as the retired clergy liaison.
- Establish a cooperative relationship between the BOM and Wespath Benefits and Investments. Your conference benefits officer will know the Wespath liaison or relationship manager assigned to support your Annual Conference.
- Create and/or encourage participation in an Annual Conference retired clergy and spouses' association.
- Post current information on retirement issues, volunteer opportunities, and job



opportunities for clergy and their spouses on the conference website.

- Encourage local churches to plan a yearly retiree day.
- Develop a clergy/spouse volunteer talent pool to be available to both church and community.
- Foster multigenerational dialogue between youth/young adults and retired clergy/spouses.

Theological Considerations

- People are living longer and healthier lives. Clergy often identify strongly with their active role in the church. Retirement can significantly affect clergy's identity and self-image. It is important to remember that retirement is a transition, not a termination, in ministry.
- An initial step in an effective program is for BOM members involved in pre-retirement assistance to articulate and model a theological understanding of retirement. The ambivalence of BOM members about their own retirement can sometimes block the development of an effective and helpful program.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR A PRE-RETIREMENT PLANNING PROGRAM

Program Development

- If your conference does not offer pre-retirement seminars, this list and the proposed seminar models at the end of this chapter can serve as a starting point. Consult with your CBPHB to develop a program and let Wespath know your resource needs as you begin planning. Wespath has benefits education personnel who will participate in seminars and assist with communication materials and benefit projections for registrants.

Program Components

- Clarify the responsibilities of the BOM and conference BPHB.
- Include retired clergy and spouses to draw upon their experience, as well as those within five years of retirement, to address the questions they face.
- Include clergy and spouses in all planning. Survey those approaching retirement to learn their questions and identify areas requiring more information.
- Balance presentation time between practical concerns (such as pension, housing, and health insurance) and less tangible areas (such as psychological, spiritual, and theological reflection on aging and retirement).
- Contact the Social Security Administration at www.ssa.gov/agency/ask-for-a-speaker.html for a speaker on Social Security retirement benefits.
- Your conference or area foundation may be able to provide a financial planner, investment advisor, or estate planner, or recommend a fee-based financial planner to present at seminars. A fee-based planner or advisor will typically provide more objective information than someone who has a product to sell.
- Consider holding the same event at different locations to reach more clergy and spouses.

Additional Seminars

- Consider midlife seminars for clergy and spouses 10-15 years from retirement, including financial planning for retirement.
- Consider early-career seminars for clergy and spouses in their first 5-15 years of ministry. Include personal financial planning concepts, debt management, and techniques for saving for retirement. Retirement planning can never start too early.

HELPFUL ITEMS LEAST OFTEN INCLUDED

- Biblical-theological reflection on aging and retirement.



- Spiritual growth in retirement.
- Retired clergy ethics, such as how to build new relationships with a local church and its pastor, and how to relate to the charge conference.
- Wellness approach to health in retirement years.
- New careers, hobbies, and volunteerism in retirement.
- Managing new roles and personal time for clergy and spouse.
- Preparation for the loss of a spouse.
- Inclusion of diaconal ministers and other lay church professionals.
- **Additional Considerations**
- Consider inserts in conference mailings to raise financial planning issues.
- Consider an annual conference display to publicize pre-retirement seminars and encourage planning early for retirement.
- Evaluate each seminar and use the evaluations in planning future events.

THE BOM'S ROLE IN TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

Ongoing Support for Retired Clergy

- The BOM works with candidates and clergy throughout their ministry—from recruitment, application, and evaluation of membership, to conference relations decisions and retirement. As clergy transition from active to retired status, the BOM has the opportunity to support them in managing and thriving in this new stage of ministry and life.
- The Annual Conference and general church have many resources to support BOMs as they develop and implement a holistic, meaningful program of transition and ongoing support for retired clergy.

