



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

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.” (§634)

“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.” (§634.1b)

(§634 of *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 chair 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
 - Chairs 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 laity, 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 chair, chairs of the Division of Deacons and Division of Elders (where they exist), chairs of the Order of Deacons, Order of Elders, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, registrars, committee chairs, 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

- 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 (§634.1d)
- 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, ¶360) received from the office of the bishop
- Further information available in Chapter 26

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 25 (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

ADMINISTERING TRANSFERS AND RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO THE CLERGY SESSION

- From other annual conferences or Methodist denominations (§634.2l; §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)

ATTENDING 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 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 certification in specialized ministry careers

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).
- 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 subcommittees of the BOM (§634.1g). These committees share responsibility for enlistment, candidacy, licensing local pastors, and recommending individuals for associate or provisional membership. 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 serves as liaison to the conference retirees. BOM communication with the Board of Pensions happens primarily through the BOM chair 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 councils or other bodies that coordinate 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 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 chair, 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 17)
- 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 which have chosen to establish this or 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 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 chair 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 chair)
- 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 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 chair

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)
- 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 (§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.

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 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
- 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 5.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

- Communicates with the chair 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 chair 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.

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)



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)

ASSOCIATE AND PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Interviews and recommends to the BOM those whom they approve 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 the 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 the 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 the 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

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 dCOM 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).
- Interview discontinued provisional members who are requesting readmission and recommend to the BOM and cabinet those the dCOM approves for readmission to provisional membership (¶364, ¶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 (¶365, ¶366, ¶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)

FROM GBHEM

- The BOM Library (www.gbhem.org/bom-library) contains a variety of information and resources that are helpful to dCOMs and BOMs. Resources include:
 - 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
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* (2016) – Available for candidates and candidacy mentors after setting up a user account in Passage.



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. (See more on page 6 in this chapter.)

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 BOM Handbook, Chapter 4.)



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 past five years that compares retirements, discontinuations, church closures, and mergers with the number of new clergy being licensed or ordained?
- 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 an individual's discernment of their call, both inwardly and outwardly? What key activities led an individual to take steps in exploring candidacy within the UMC?
- What positive or negative experiences were identified during the candidacy and provisional process?
- In what ways can the BOM improve its identification and enlistment of those who are exploring licensed or 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. For individuals beginning the ministry of vocational discernment coordination, the conference is encouraged to provide training and/or connect these new leaders to the VDC network ([see explorecalling.org/vdc](http://explorecalling.org/vdc)).
- Host an annual consultation or conference
 - Include the vocational discernment coordinator, the Connectional Ministries Office,



collegiate ministries, and any additional leaders 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.
- 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, annual conference and the 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, such as Exploration.

IDENTIFICATION AND ENLISTMENT EFFORTS SHALL BE COORDINATED

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 and 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.

- 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 explorecalling.org/yqi.

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 (explorecalling.org/called).
- ***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 (www.explorecalling.org/exploration).
- ***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) (explorecalling.org/jtom and gbhem.org/scholarships).
- ***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 (explorecalling.org/vdc).

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 15.

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
 - 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 (§349.1). 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 a variety of ministry expressions
 - Continue to develop vocationally throughout life's opportunities and challenges
 - Encourage others to be comfortable with in-depth conversations regarding the many facets of vocational and personal development
 - Are open and flexible in adapting candidacy studies to candidates' needs when possible
 - Maintain family relationships and personal lives that are congruent with the standards expected of clergy

TRAINING

- All mentors should be trained once every four years. This 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 duration can vary from a half-day to an overnight retreat, training sessions should include certain components:
 - 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. On occasion, GBHEM staff may be available to provide leadership.



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.
- Provide information regarding the psychological assessment process.
 - Initiate the psychological assessment process in Passage or through the conference's assessment process.
 - Proctor psychological assessments as requested by the conference.
 - Complete and return psychological assessments and accompanying forms/reports in a timely manner.
- Discuss upcoming P/S-PRC and charge conference meetings with candidates.
- Complete annual mentor reports.
- Meet with the dCOM and candidate at the certification approval meeting.
 - Share mentor report.
 - Record dCOM vote and recommendation in Passage.
- Make sure the BOM candidacy registrar is aware of any status changes for candidates.
- Maintain a Candidacy Mentor file, including all relevant paperwork and reports 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
 - Set of flyers on the Ministry of Deacons, Ministry of Elders, Ministry of Local Pastors and Ministry of Endorsed Clergy
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook*. Mentors may download a Candidacy Guidebook PDF by emailing candidacy@gbhem.org



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 in specialized ministry
 - 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 relationship changes (see Chapter 26)
 - *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 26)
 - *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 full membership
- 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 communication. (¶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 25)
- 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)
- Reports
 - 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.)
- Record Keeping
 - Forwards an acknowledgment of transfer to the pastor of the local church where each newly elected provisional and associate member held their 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. 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 diaconal ministry and the Professional Certification Process
 - *Diaconal ministry*
 - 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*”. (¶634.2t)



- 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



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 – 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 denied approval by the dCOM.

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
- 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
- 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 (§310.2e, §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 – Passage - 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, and 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
- Understand the necessary formation activities to enable 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 gbhem.org/bom-library.
 - 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

Chapters 7 and 8 **Forthcoming**



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 understanding, personal references, performance observations, sermons, reports of projects that demonstrate effectiveness in ministry, 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, IDENTIFY ISSUES, TEST ASSUMPTIONS

- 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 and 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) (§666.7)
- Licensing and annual renewal of license as local pastor (dCOM) (§315.2a)
- Application for associate or provisional membership and recommendation to the BOM (dCOM) (§324.8, .9)
- Application for associate or provisional membership and recommendation to the Clergy Session (BOM) (§324.12)
- Completion of provisional membership and recommendation to the Clergy Session as deacon (BOM) (§330) or elder (BOM) (§335)
- Readmission to provisional or full conference membership (dCOM/BOM) (§365-369)

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

- Transfer from other conferences (§347)
- Leaving and returning from voluntary leave of absence (§354)
- Medical leave due to medical and disabling conditions (§357)
- Retirement, both mandatory and voluntary (§358)
- Honorable location (§359)
- Exiting ordained ministry (§361.1, .2)
- Professional certification in specialized ministry (§634.2u)

RECOMMENDATION FOR AN INVOLUNTARY CHANGE OF STATUS REQUIRES ADMINISTRATIVE FAIR PROCESS, NOT SIMPLY AN INTERVIEW (SEE CHAPTER 26)

- Involuntary discontinuance of provisional membership (upon appeal) (§327.6)
- Involuntary leave of absence (§355)
- Involuntary medical leave (§357)
- Involuntary retirement (§358.3)
- Administrative location (§360)

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,2)

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 (§1335.7).
- 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 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 SPECIALIZED 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 a best practice is providing special skills training for all members of an interview team.

INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Learned and improved through practice and reflection

- Acknowledge the call to function as an interview team with integrity and allegiance to confidentiality and maintaining appropriate confidences.
- Prepare for the interview by creating an appropriate interview setting, developing questions that lead to helpful information from the candidate, and establish a strategy as to which team members will ask these questions.
- Following the interview, give feedback as appropriate at the end of the session as well as by phone within the next day or two. Summarize the interview in oral and written form to share with the candidate and with the registrar for the candidate's records. Identify and detail 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*.
 - As a purpose for each interview is distinct, the team is to know ahead of time why the applicant is interviewing and the proper requirements that must be achieved for each status. For example, an interview for initial certification is distinct from an interview to recommend a candidate to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
 - Interviews between teams and candidates are not meant to be therapeutic, to resolve issues, or to be an inquisition. Rather, interviewing is a process used to identify issues and information needed to make a responsible recommendation.
- **Interview Team Requirements**
 - dCOM/BOM members must establish and offer trust and mutual respect with and for one another. Sufficient training not only attends to the technical skills necessary for effective interviewing, but also affords time for developing genuine collegiality.
 - dCOM/BOM members must be familiar with annual conference policies, disciplinary requirements and the implications of standards.
 - All members of interview teams agree to the responsibilities required to prepare and participate in the interview. A BOM may choose to develop a covenant to establish this practice and expectation.
- **Checklist for team members**
 - ☐ Review appropriate paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline*
 - ☐ Review annual conference policy and the BOM Handbook
 - ☐ Establish a posture of openness 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

STRUCTURING AN INTERVIEW

• Length

- The recommended length for interviews is between 45 to 90 minutes. A shorter time frame isn't sufficient to address all working points; more than 90 minutes leads to a less focused approach and is often unproductive.
- A debriefing time follow each interview allows for immediate evaluation and time to capture the team's recommendations and feedback.

- **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** – A brief time at the onset 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 and the intention regarding confidentiality.
- **Middle** – As the most substantive portion of the interview, the team uses working points that have been agreed on in the team briefing to guide the conversation. 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 25)

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 to disclose information on their own.



Chapter 11 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

- 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, one 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 12 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 IN FULL CONNECTION WHO ARE CHANGING ORDERS

- Continue as full clergy members of the annual conference (§315.4, §309.2e)
- 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 elder
 - Completed all academic and other requirements for admission to the Order of Elder



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 (§324) 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 (§, §347)
- 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 §346.2.
- 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 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 12 and 13 **Forthcoming**



Chapter 14 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)

- Proclaim and teaches the Word of God
- Lead worship and administers the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion
- Provide pastoral care and counsel
- Conduct 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 20, 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 (§331.6d)

- 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 (§331.6d)

- 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

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 26, 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.

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” (§635.1e) in such appointments.
- Suggestions for BOM support
 - A BOM member maintains contact with elders in extension ministry and reports their concerns. Or the BOM should 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 15 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.” (¶348.2)

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 growing 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 clergy person'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.

Resources

- *Clergy Mentoring: A Manual for Commissioned Ministers, Local Pastors, and Clergy Mentors*, GBHEM.
- “From Readiness to Effectiveness: The Residency Program for Provisional, Commissioned Members of The United Methodist Church – Principles and Guides for annual conferences,” GBHEM.
- “From Readiness to Effectiveness: Preparation for Professional Ministry in The United Methodist Church – Tool Kit for annual conference Leaders,” GBHEM.



Chapter 16 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 (§ 602.1) and no longer listed as certified candidates. They do not continue with candidacy mentors but are assigned a Clergy Mentor. (§ 311) 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 (§317.4)
- 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 cosregistrar@gbhem.org.

No undergraduate credit is recognized in the 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 17 **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 (§310.2f). 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 (§324). 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* (§350) 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 (§306), Order of Elders (§306) and Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members (§323) 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. As the MEF was created by a layperson, 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 18 Forthcoming

Chapter 19 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.” (§1350.1)

The BOM’s continuing education responsibilities are listed in ¶635.2o-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

- Identify and set expectations for the continuing education of clergy throughout ministry
- Set standards that consider the needs of the annual conference, the clergy’s ministry settings and the clergy’s individual needs
- Establish standards of effectiveness with the bishop and cabinet and provide events that support these standards
- Design 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 ¶351? Are provisions made for clergy who may seek sabbatical leave (¶352)?
- Does the annual conference have an established practice for awarding CEUs? A CEU, according to the Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry (SACEM), is defined as “10 contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction and qualified instruction.”
- 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. (¶816)
- Establishes accountability of the clergy mentoring plan
 - Maintains at least the minimum requirements listed in *The Book of Discipline* (¶350)
 - 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

- umccybercampus.com: UMC Cyber Campus is a gateway to theological and higher education which provides a single-entry point through an online catalog and aims to enhance global access to free and affordable high-quality educational resources
- facebook.com/clergy lifelong learning: Facebook page of the Clergy Lifelong Learning at GBHEM that provides continuing education opportunities
- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC): Provides continuing education for those serving in hospitals, nursing homes and as pastoral counselors
- 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
- [Clergy Lifelong Learning](#): GBHEM's Continuing Education web page
- Faith and Wisdom: An ecumenical listing of continuing education events
- [United Methodist Theological Schools](#): A list of the UMC's theological schools.

Chapter 20 **Forthcoming**



Chapter 21 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.” (¶634.2p)

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 and 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 chair. The chairs coordinate the Orders’ activities and are voting members of the BOM executive committee. The chairs are members of the BOM Executive Committee. (¶1308.1a)

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 chair, who leads the Fellowship and reports its activities to the BOM. The chair is a member of the BOM executive committee. (§634.1a)

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. (§350)

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. Contact the GBHEM Director of Deacon Ministry Support (deacons@gbhem.org) for help in making those connections.

- **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 (§350) 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. 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.

Chapters 22 through 27 **Forthcoming**



