

2020 / 2024 Book of Discipline Updates

District Committees on Ordained Ministry and Boards of Ordained Ministry

Note: Because many of the paragraph numbers are new, paragraph numbers referenced in this document are numbers assigned in the redline (draft) version of *Book of Discipline* and subject to change because the 2020/2024 *Book of Discipline* is still undergoing editorial revision. The final publication of the 2020/2024 *Book of Discipline* will be available in January 2025.

All changes go are effective January 1, 2025, unless otherwise indicated.

Candidacy

Course of Study Eligibility

¶ 310.4

Candidates may enroll in Course of Study regardless of their appointment status. (Allows Local Pastors who are not currently under appointment to enroll in Course of Study courses.)

Evaluation of All Candidates

¶ 310.2.d

Removes language in a footnote to align with revisions to ¶161.c and ¶161.g, affirming the role of Boards of Ordained Ministry in evaluating candidates based on their fitness and readiness for ordained ministry.

Voting Thresholds

¶ 314.1, ¶ 314.2

Action to discontinue a certified candidate by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry requires a 3/4 vote.

Action to reinstate a certified candidate's status requires a 3/4 vote.

Certified Candidate Reinstatement

¶ 314.2

Previously certified candidates may pursue reinstatement within the district that previously discontinued them OR through another district, following a transfer of the candidate's file.

Medical Form

¶ 315.1.b, ¶ 323.8, ¶ 346.3.a, ¶ 358.1, ¶ 365.3, ¶ 369.5

Requires the use of a "good health" form prescribed by GBHEM, completed by a physician, as part of file updates for licensed local pastors, provisional membership, transfers from other annual conferences, those returning from voluntary or involuntary retirement, and those being readmitted from honorable or administrative location.

Local Pastors

Interim License

¶ 317

Clarifies interim local pastors may be appointed between annual conference sessions before receiving approval of the clergy session.

Serving on Loan

¶ 317.4

Local Pastors may be appointed in another annual conference for up to 5 years. They relate to the dCOM "in which they are certified candidates for continuation of their certified candidacy." They relate to the dCOM of the conference in which they are appointed "to continue their license and eligibility for an appointment."

Course of Study Requirements

¶ 318.3

Full-Time Local Pastors have 8 years to complete COS and Part-Time Local Pastors have 12 years. Clarifies these time limitations are calculated based on the date they begin COS courses.

Reinstatement of Local Pastor Status

¶ 319.4

Allows Local Pastors seeking reinstatement the option to provide evidence they have been members of a local UM church since the discontinuance of their Local Pastor status. (Current requirements ask for evidence Local Pastors have been members of a local UM church for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement.)

Retired Local Pastors

¶ 319.5

Consolidates retired Local Pastors' relationships and licenses into one paragraph.

Allows candidates beyond the mandatory retirement age to pursue Retired Local Pastor status.

Clarifies voting privileges for Retired Local Pastors under appointment.

Retains the current policy that Local Pastors under appointment should continue in the Course of Study, regardless of retirement status.

Course of Study Online

¶ 321.1, ¶ 323.6.c.1

Removes language restricting online COS course limits for Local Pastors and Associate Members, allowing for fully online completion of the Course of Study.

Associate Members

Election of Chair of the Fellowship of Associate Members

¶ 322.2

Clarifies the process for electing the chair of the Fellowship of Associate Members to bring consistency across conferences. Confirms the right of the Fellowship to elect their own chair from among Associate Members who are qualified and equipped.

Serving on Loan

¶ 345.1

Includes Associate Members as clergy eligible to serve on loan in another annual conferences while retaining membership in their home annual conference.

Transfer of Membership

¶ 346.1

Includes Associate Members as clergy eligible to transfer their membership to another annual conference with consent of the bishops, recommendation of the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and approval of the clergy session.

Withdrawal of Membership

¶ 361.1, ¶ 361.2

Includes Associate Members as clergy able to withdraw from membership to unite with another denomination as well as withdraw from the ministerial office.

Commissioning and Provisional Membership

Candidacy for Licensing

¶ 323.1

Adds time spent as a local pastor as time that counts toward the 1-year requirement for eligibility to pursue provisional membership.

Education of Local Pastors

¶ 323.4.2.c.1, ¶ 323.4.2.c.2

Clarifies language allowing local pastors to pursue one path toward provisional membership, either through Course of Study OR the completion of an equivalent program of study. (Previous language required both paths.)

Basic Graduate Theological Studies (BGTS) Requirements

¶ 323.4

Adds “preaching” to the BGTS as a required course for provisional membership and ordination as deacons or elders. This increases the hours of BGTS courses to 30.

BOMs have discretion in determining additional educational requirements for their candidates.

Alternate Education Route for Deacons

¶ 323.4.b.3.a

Replaces an age requirement with 4 years (or equivalent of relevant years) of “employment in the area of specialized ministry” as an equivalent to some of the educational requirements within the alternate ordination route for deacons. The bachelor’s degree requirement is retained in ¶ 323.3.

Deacons

License for Pastoral Ministry

¶ 315, ¶ 315.4

Removes the requirement for deacons in full connection to hold a license for pastoral ministry. Adds deacons to those who are ordained and exempt from needing to hold a license.

Authority of Provisional Deacon

¶ 325.1

Clarifies the authority of provisional deacons is limited to the appointment setting during provisional membership. This parallels the authority for provisional elders.

Sacramental Access

¶ 327

Removes the requirement for deacons to request permission from the resident bishop to consecrate sacraments.

The four-fold office of the deacon was not revised and remains Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice.

Secondary Appointment

¶ 330

Removes the requirement for deacons to have a secondary appointment with a local church. Creates parity between deacons and elders serving in extension ministry or who are Appointed Beyond the Local Church.

Definition of “Pastor”

¶ 338

Adds provisional deacons and deacons in full connection to the definition of “pastor”.

Extension Ministry

¶ 342, ¶ 343

Includes deacons in the description of clergy who may be appointed to settings beyond the local church.

Ordination and Full Membership

Transition between Orders

¶ 309.2.e

Clarifies requirements for transitioning between deacon and elder's orders, specifically removing the requirement to be licensed while completing the minimum 2 years of required service "in a context related to the order to which they are transitioning."

Alternate Route for Deacons

¶ 329.3

Replaces an age requirement with 4 years (or equivalent of relevant years) of "employment in the area of specialized ministry" as an equivalent to some of the educational requirements within the alternate ordination route for deacons.

Local Discernment

¶ 339.2, ¶ 340.6

Clarifies no clergy are required to perform, nor prohibited from performing, "any marriage, union, or blessing". Clarifies clergy have the right to "exercise and preserve their conscience when requested to perform any marriage, union, or blessing."

Transfers from Other Annual Conferences

¶ 346

Allows ordained clergy, associate members, or provisional members from other annual conferences to transfer into full, associate, or provisional membership.

Mentoring and Mentors

Mentors After Course of Study

¶ 317.2

Part-time local pastors are required to participate in mentoring until educational requirements are completed, unless continued mentoring is requested by the clergyperson or the district superintendent.

Assigning Clergy Mentors

¶ 349

Clarifies the role of cabinet members and Boards of Ordained Ministry in the recruitment and training of mentors as well as encouraging the use of spiritual directors, coaches, pastoral counselors, and vocational mentors for clergy.

Conference Relations

Modify Administrative Processes

¶ 326.6, ¶ 354.5, ¶ 359.2

Specifies members of various groups (members of the cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Relations Committee, and Administrative Review Committee) “shall not vote in clergy session on recommendations for discontinuance, if previously involved in any prior discussions, communications, proceedings, and/or decisions concerning” discontinuance, involuntary leave, or administrative location.

Fair Process Appeal

¶ 326.6

Clarifies “to receive a fair process hearing, the provisional member shall notify the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry in writing no later than [45] days preceding the beginning of the annual conference session.”

Less-Than-Full-Time Appointments Appeal

¶ 337.2.a.3

Clarifies “[for] any Bishop initiated appointment to less-than-full-time-service to which the clergy person so appointed objects, cabinet members and board of ordained ministry members who reviewed this appointment shall not vote on the matter during the clergy session.”

End of Transitional Leave

¶ 353.2.c.2

Clarifies “transitional leave ends when the clergy member begins an appointment or at the conclusion of [12] months, whichever comes first.”

Clergy Withdrawal

¶ 361.1

Identifies documentation necessary for withdrawal from the UMC to unite with another denomination as well withdrawal from the ministerial office.

¶ 361.2

Clarifies the distinction between conference membership and ordination.

Provisional Membership Readmission

¶ 365

Permits provisional clergy whose membership was previously discontinued by one annual conference to pursue readmission with another annual conference. Allows BOMs to seek information from the previous annual conference about the provisional member’s qualifications and discontinuance.

Readmission after Termination

¶ 367

Outlines the readmission process for persons “who have been terminated, surrendered, or have had their membership and license for ministry revoked... for celebrating a same gender wedding or union”.

This revision is effective immediately.

Certification in Specialized Ministries

Certification in Specialized Ministries

¶ 634.2.u, ¶ 634.3, ¶ 634.4

Clarifies annual conferences “care for the administration of certification in specialized ministry” and “approve[s] candidates for certification in specialized ministry” while GBHEM establishes standards for certification in specialized ministry.