

# **District Committee on Ordained Ministry**

## **HANDBOOK**



**North Carolina Conference  
The United Methodist Church**

**2025-2026 Edition**

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## Section 1: The Candidate

*From Inquiring to Certified Candidate*

### NCCUMC Candidacy Checklist

- Member** of UMC or UM affiliated group (such as campus ministry) for one year
- Contact your pastor**, or another Deacon or Elder in the UMC. Read and discuss The Christian as Minister
- Candidacy Retreat**
  - **Getting Started**
    - Register for the Candidacy Retreat ([clergy@nccumc.org](mailto:clergy@nccumc.org))
    - Submit a payment in the amount of \$25 which covers the Candidacy Retreat fee. Checks should be made payable to “Office of Clergy Life” with “Candidacy Retreat” in the memo line or payment may be made online.
  - **Prior to the Candidacy Retreat**
    - Read The Christian as Minister and reflect upon that with your local pastor.
    - Read and review Sessions 1 and 2 of the Candidacy Handbook and complete work.
    - Write and submit a 2-3 page call narrative, detailing how God has been at work in your life to lead you to this place of discerning a call to licensed/ordained ministry. Send this to the Office of Clergy Life Registrar ([registrar@nccumc.org](mailto:registrar@nccumc.org)), copying your District Superintendent.
  - **Attending the Candidacy Retreat**
    - The Candidacy Retreat is offered bi-yearly ( in July and January).
    - You will complete two Sessions with the Mentoring Group during the retreat.
  - **After the Candidacy Retreat**
    - If you are wishing to continue the process, complete your digital file.
    - Submit \$75 for the Background Check fee, and \$150 toward your Psychological Evaluation (this covers only a portion of the cost. The rest is covered by the NC Conference). Checks should be made payable to the “Office of Clergy Life” with “Candidacy Fees” in the memo line. There is an option to pay online as well.
    - Meet with your mentoring group to complete three additional mentoring sessions
- Complete digital file with the Office of Clergy Life**
  - **Complete** the following (forms will be provided):
    - Background Check Forms
    - Disclosure Form (must be notarized)
    - Credit Score
    - Digital Photo
    - Medical form
    - Psychological Assessment
    - Form 102- Biographical Form
    - Candidacy Retreat Mentor Report
    - 310 Questions
- Appear before the Staff-Parish Relations Committee** at your church. If approved:
  - **Appear before Charge Conference** at your church. If approved: Submit Form 104 to Office of Clergy Life.
- Appear before dCOM**

## EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

### Board of Ordained Ministry North Carolina Conference, The United Methodist Church Educational Requirements for Provisional Membership

One course in each area listed below from *The Book of Discipline* must be included in graduate theological education in preparation for provisional membership in the United Methodist Church. Although the North Carolina Conference no longer requires completion of all required courses by December 31st of the year you are interviewing for commissioning, the Board of Ordained Ministry strongly recommends candidates to do so for their benefit. All candidates must complete their educational requirements and have graduated before being commissioned as provisional members at Annual Conference. In addition, completion of an undergraduate bachelor's degree is required prior to any graduate theological course work.

You must complete the following courses in order to seek ordination in the NC Conference of the UMC:

- **Old Testament**
- **New Testament**
- **Theology**
- **Church History**
- **United Methodist History**
- **United Methodist Doctrine**
- **United Methodist Polity**
- **Worship/Liturgy**
  - **must include the theory, and the practice of planning and leading public worship**
- **Preaching (for those on the Elder and Deacon track)**
  - **must include a practicum, laboratory in preparation, delivery, and evaluation of sermons**
- **Mission of the church in the world**
- **Evangelism**
  - **Must take ONE Mission class AND ONE Evangelism class (2 Classes total). Courses that count for both may only go towards Mission or Evangelism - not both.**

**University Senate Approved Schools:** Candidates who are pursuing ordination in the UMC must receive their degree from a University Senate Approved School. <https://www.gbhem.org/education/list-of-approved-seminaries/>

**Policy on Distance Learning:** The NC Conference Board of Ordained Ministry accepts fully online Masters of Divinity programs from The United Methodist Theological Schools listed in the link above. Fully online Masters of Divinity programs are **not** accepted from senate-approved **non**-United Methodist Seminaries.

**Questions about approved courses:** If you wonder if a course will count toward the ordination requirements, please send a copy of the course syllabus to Becki Leeland at [clergy@nccumc.org](mailto:clergy@nccumc.org) and include the requirement you are hoping to fulfill through that particular course.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Applies to inquiring candidates who become certified candidates after January 1, 2025. Inquiring candidates who are certified before January 1, 2025 would only be responsible for the 2016 BGTS requirements.

## NCCUMC Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) Eligibility

1. Aid may be granted to students during their junior and senior years in undergraduate school, and in each of their seminary years while working on the basic degree for ordination.
2. Applicants must be **Certified Candidates**, having been approved by their local S/PPRC, their charge conference and the district committee on ordained ministry.
3. Students must be enrolled as “full-time” students. Full-time means twelve (12) hours minimum in undergraduate school, and nine (9) hours minimum in seminary per semester. Exceptions related to certified medical disabilities will be considered
4. Students must attend a University Senate approved school. A list of these schools can be found here:  
  
<https://www.gbhem.org/education/list-of-approved-seminaries/>
5. Students must maintain an overall “C” average throughout their academic career. Students must submit a transcript to the Office of Clergy Life following each semester.
6. Students must be intending to serve in the North Carolina Annual Conference or within the UMC connection for at least five years.
7. Aid may *not* be extended to graduate students in Ph.D., D. Min., Th. M. or other degrees beyond the basic degree.

All Certified Candidates who meet the above requirements will receive at least \$1,000 dollars per year. Additional scholarships will be determined by the NC Conference Scholarship Team. Recipients will need to complete the MEF application annually in order to receive funding. Applications are submitted through the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry from January- March. For question, please contact GBHEM at [umscholar@gbhem.org](mailto:umscholar@gbhem.org) or get more information by going to the website: <https://www.gbhem.org/education/higher-education-and-ministry-grants/>

## BASIC FIVE YEAR COURSE OF STUDY

### COURSE OF STUDY

Course of Study is required for Licensed Local Pastors who have not attended seminary (or those with an MDiv needing additional courses to meet Basic Graduate Theological Studies). Full-Time Local Pastors have 8 years to complete the basic COS, Part-Time Local Pastors have 12 years. Failure to adhere to those timelines may jeopardize one's appointment. For additional information, consult the Course of Study webpage [gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study/](http://gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study/)

THE CURRICULUM <https://www.gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study-curriculum/>

The Course of Study proposes to prepare faithful and effective pastoral leaders for the church. Such leadership is never developed in the abstract but rather in context. The Course of Study curriculum is designed to provide classroom learning that can then be used to deepen and strengthen the pastoral leader's ministry. Course descriptions can be found on the Duke Divinity Course of Study website, as well as that of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

#### FIRST YEAR COURSES

- COS 121: Bible I—Introduction
- COS 122: Theological Heritage I—Introduction
- COS 123: Formation and Discipleship
- COS 124: Transformative Leadership

#### SECOND YEAR COURSES

- COS 221: Bible II—Torah and Israel's History
- COS 222: Theological Heritage II—Early Church
- COS 223: Worship and Sacraments
- COS 224: Administration and Polity

#### THIRD YEAR COURSES

- COS 321: Bible III-- Gospels
- COS 322: Theological Heritage III—Medieval and Reformation
- COS 323: Congregational Care
- COS 324: Preaching

#### FOURTH YEAR COURSES

- COS 421: Bible IV—Prophets and Wisdom Literature
- COS 422: Theological Heritage IV--Wesleyan Movement
- COS 423: Mission
- COS 424: Ethics

#### FIFTH YEAR COURSES

- COS 521: Bible V—Acts, Epistles, and Revelation
- COS 522: Contemporary Theology
- COS 523: Evangelism
- COS 524: Theology of Ministry

#### ADVANCED COURSES

Each year advanced courses are offered in areas that are pertinent to the pastor's role and responsibility in the local church. Students pursuing Advanced Studies as a route to ordination should choose classes based on individual annual conference requirements. NC Conference Educational Requirements may be found on page 3 of this handbook or on the Office of Clergy Life website.

## Section 2: The DCOM and Your Role

“The district Committee on Ordained Ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry.” (§1666.1)

“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.” (§1634.1g)

“The committee shall supervise all matters of candidacy for ordained ministry and licensing for local pastors.” (§1666.6)

### Organization and Membership

Overall membership should include a balance of female and male members as well as racial/ethnic members (§1666.1). 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. Members shall be well versed in missional priorities of the Annual Conference including effective leaders, healthy congregations, congregations for children, anti-racism and unity.

#### 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 of dCOM

dCOM officers are elected at the first meeting following the annual conference session when the members were elected (§1666.2).

#### Chair:

May be held by the BOM representative, but not the district superintendent (§1666.1)

- 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)

#### **Record Keeping/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

The Office of Clergy Life will maintain a service record and file on every local pastor and candidate for ordained ministry. A copy of these files will be shared electronically with members of the dCOM via Google Drive. Any files downloaded are to be deleted immediately following interviews.

#### **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 the election, a list of dCOM officers should be sent to the Office of Clergy Life.

<b>Functions of the Committee</b>
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#### **Interviewing**

- Interviewing is one of the most basic personnel functions used by the church and is at the heart of the work of the dCOM. The dCOM conducts interviews for a number of different purposes.

#### **Candidacy Certification**

- Candidates seeking to become certified request to meet with the district committee.
- District committee address with the candidates their statement of call and the written responses to the questions in ¶310.2a:
  - o the most formative experience of their Christian life
  - o God’s call to licensed or ordained ministry and role of the church in their call
  - o Their beliefs as a Christian
  - o Their gifts for ministry
  - o their present understanding of their call to ministry as elder, deacon, or licensed ministry; and their support system
- Examine and approve qualified applicants for certification and annual renewal as certified candidates toward election as probationary (provisional) members. (¶¶310, 666.9)
- Inform the BOM candidacy registrar, Becki Leeland, of the names and addresses of all who are issued certificates of candidacy (¶666.3) via the digital action report.
- Recognize and approve the service setting for certified candidates working toward provisional membership (¶324.2)
- Maintain ongoing communication with all candidates:
  - o Counsel them regarding pre-theological studies (¶666.5)
  - o In consultation with the Office of Clergy Life, the dCOM will inform candidates about scholarships and loans for education
  - o Review academic progress (receive transcripts and reports from college/seminary) (¶313.2)

### Continuation of Certified Candidacy

The progress of candidates is reviewed, and certification renewed annually by the dCOM or equivalent body as specified by the district committee following an interview with the candidate and the meeting of the following conditions:

- The candidate has received the recommendation for renewal by their charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the dCOM (§§313.1, 666.10) This action takes place at Charge Conference and is recorded in the minutes
- When requested, the candidate has presented an official transcript from the school the person is attending and demonstrates satisfactory progress and a report detailing the spiritual and financial support of the local church. (§313.2)
- The committee has reviewed the candidate's gifts, graces, and fruits for the work of ministry. (§§313.3, 666.10)
- If a candidacy has lapsed; it may be reinstated at the discretion of the dCOM (§314.2)  
Please contact the Office of Clergy Life for concerns with contacting candidates.

### Local Pastor's License

- Examine qualified applicants for licensing as local pastors (§315, §666.9)
- Help applicants enroll in licensing school by contacting the Office of Clergy Life.
- Recommend to the BOM the issuance of a license to all applicants who have satisfactorily completed the requirements (§315), including candidacy.
- Send the names and addresses of all persons approved for licensing as local pastors to the Office of Clergy Life ([ClergyLife@nccumc.org](mailto:ClergyLife@nccumc.org)).
- Refer local pastors to the appropriate BOM registrar, Becki Leeland, for enrollment in the Course of Study, and receive reports on their progress through the district superintendent
- Recommend to the BOM persons who qualify for continuance as local pastors (§§319.2, 666.9)
- Communicate to the BOM registrar, Becki Leeland, the circumstances of any discontinuance of a local pastor (§320.1)
- Recommend to the BOM those persons who qualify for restoration of credentials as a local pastor (§§320.4, 666.9)
- Oversee a process of supervision of personal and professional growth for local pastors

### Clergy Mentoring for Local Pastors

- Each local pastor who has not completed the Basic Course of Study must be in a clergy mentoring group or a mentoring relationship. These mentors will be recommended by the District Superintendent and be trained and assigned by the Office of Clergy Life.
- In 2026, mentors will be recommended by DS and trained/assigned by OCL. Until that time, each district is overseeing mentoring for their candidates who have not completed COS/MDiv.
- The mentor will make an annual report both to the dCOM and to the BOM, to confirm the participation of the local pastor.
  - Remember that conversations between mentor and mentee are confidential and information may be released only with written permission and signed by both local pastor and mentor.
  - The report will be kept in the local pastor's file
- Mentors are an integral part of the educational program of local pastors, both formal and informal education:
  - They assist local pastors in reflection of their experiences in ministry to help them learn from those experiences.
  - They monitor preparation of material for Course of Study classes.
  - They help local pastors integrate into their practice of ministry theology and theory they have learned.
- The DCOM is responsible for ensuring local pastors are faithfully participating in mentoring.

## Certified Lay Ministers

A certified lay minister (CLM) is “a certified lay servant, certified lay missionary, or equivalent . . . who is called and equipped to conduct public worship, care for the congregation, assist in program leadership, develop new and existing faith communities, preach the Word, lead small groups, or establish community outreach ministries as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person.” (§268.1)

- Role of a CLM
  - CLMs serve in diverse roles depending on their gifts and the needs of their congregation. Many serve in their own local church, supporting existing ministries or initiating new ones—such as videography and communication, congregational care, food distribution, youth ministry, preschool programs, or providing worship services in nursing homes or other community settings as a part of the ministry of their church.
- CLM Assignments
  - All assignments are made by the district superintendent and include ongoing supervision by a clergy mentor.
  - Some CLMs are assigned to serve as the lay pastor of a church where they are not a member. These CLMs maintain their relationship with their home church but may be assigned a new clergy mentor for this role: “When a pastoral charge is not able to be served by an ordained or licensed clergy, the Bishop, upon recommendation of the Cabinet, may assign a qualified and trained lay person, lay minister or lay missionary to do the work of ministry in that charge. . . . If the assignment is to continue longer than one year, within that year, the layperson will begin the process of becoming either a certified lay minister or a certified candidate, thus coming under the care of the District Committee on Ministry.” (§205.4)
- Training, Supervision, and Accountability
  - The process of becoming a certified lay minister is one of careful discernment, training, and supervision.
  - Candidates begin by talking with their pastor and seeking the support of their home congregation and district superintendent.
  - Candidates then join a year-long program, guided by a CLM facilitator, that begins with a Day of Discovery in May, includes various prerequisite courses, and continues with a cohort experience from September through April. This program requires a significant commitment, including regular reading, daily assignments, five in-person days in Garner, a culminating presentation celebrating plans for ministry, and intentional work with their local church to discern and plan for ongoing team ministry.
  - In addition to their clergy mentor and mutual ministry team, each candidate is assigned a current CLM to act as a “shepherd.”
- Role of the dCOM for CLM review
  - All CLMs will be reviewed by dCOM every other year, even if they are serving as a pastor of a local church. This process aligns with the Book of Discipline (§ 268.4), and the decision would provide consistency across districts. And at a minimum, a DS would meet with the pastor/CLM once a year.

The Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries oversees this work, in partnership with dCOM and the Office of Clergy Life. The CLM Registrar maintains records throughout the process. Together, these groups ensure that each certified lay minister is equipped, supported, and accountable for faithful and effective ministry in their context.

## Associate Members

- Recommend to the BOM persons who qualify for associate membership. Each candidate must be recommended in writing on the basis of a three-fourth majority vote of the dCOM. (See §321, §322, and §666.9)

## Provisional Membership

- Recommend to the BOM those persons who qualify for provisional membership. Each candidate must be recommended in writing on the basis of a three-fourth majority vote of the dCOM. (¶¶666.7, 324.8)
- Recommend to the BOM and cabinet readmission to provisional membership those persons who have been discontinued and have requested readmission (¶¶666.9, ¶364).

#### **Readmission to Conference Membership**

- Recommend to the BOM and cabinet persons requesting readmission from honorable location, administrative location, or who have previously exited their ministerial office (¶¶666.9, ¶365, ¶366).

#### **Resources for dCOM and Candidates**

- FROM COKESBURY
  - The Christian as Minister: An Exploration Into the Meaning of God’s Call, Eighth Edition (ISBN# 9780938162636)
  - The 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](http://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)

**SUMMARY: ROLE OF THE DCOM**
**Enlistment**

- **Recruitment among local church settings**
- **Recommending potential candidates to the Conference**

**Interviews**

- **Candidacy Certification: Fitness for Ministry**
  - Spiritual fitness
  - Psychological fitness
  - Physical fitness
  - Potential for effectiveness
- **Interviews are required at these points:**
  - Certification Interview following completion of all steps for certification
  - Annual renewal of certified candidacy
- **Licensed Local Pastor: Annual License for Pastoral Ministry**
  - Fitness issues
  - Readiness issues
  - Recommendation for licensing and conference relationship (student, part-time, full-time)
  - Annual renewal of the license for pastor ministry
- **Associate Membership: Effectiveness in Ministry**
  - Assess areas of developing competency
  - Review academic background
  - Consider current practice of ministry
  - How has theological understanding evolved since licensing?
- **Provisional Membership: Readiness for Ministry**
  - Assess areas of developing competency
  - Review academic background
  - Consider field education experiences, internships, other practice of ministry experiences
  - How has theological understanding evolved since certification?
- **Readmission to Conference Membership**
  - Be in touch immediately upon such a request with the Office of Clergy Life prior to any of these interviews.
    - From honorable location
    - From administrative location
    - From those who previously withdrew from the ministerial office.
- **Certified Lay Minister**
  - Assists the pastor in congregational care and program development in the local church.
  - Works as part of a ministry team with supervision by a clergy person.
  - Obtain recommendation for recertification from the district superintendent.
  - Biannually the DCOM interviews the CLM, the committee makes a recommendation to the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries for final recertification by that committee.

## One Year in the Life of a District Committee on Ordained Ministry

### **August – Elect Officers & Interviews**

#### **Elect officers – Chair, Vice-Chair, Registrar**

Review important dates and set schedule for year

Discuss recruiting/enlistment strategies

#### **Interviews**

- Candidates for first-time certification
- Certified Candidates seeking to be recommended to the Board of Ordained Ministry for provisional membership. Such recommendations do not carry over year to year. If someone was previously delayed by the Board, they must be recommended once again by a district committee on ordained ministry.

### **January/February – Certification, Local Pastor Continuance**

#### **Interviews**

- Candidates appearing for first-time certification
- Certification renewal and recommendation to attend Licensing School (particularly for those candidates who plan to attend Licensing school in May and receive an appointment)
- Continuance of License for Local Pastors
- Other interviews as needed (CLM's, certified candidates transferring from other annual conferences, etc.)

### **March – Local Pastor Continuance**

- Continuance of License for Local Pastors
- Continuation Interviews for Certified Candidates who are planning to attend licensing school in May

### **April/May Interviews**

- First time Certification interviews for candidates (as well as recommendation for licensing in some cases)
- Continuation interviews for Licensed Local Pastors (as necessary)
- Individuals seeing first time certification as a Certified Lay Minister

### **November Interviews**

- CLM Renewal Interviews ONLY

<b>IMPORTANT NOTES FOR THE DCOM</b>
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- Some people are better utilized as lay persons. By virtue of our baptisms, all people are called to ministry, but not all people are called to serve as licensed/ordained ministers. The dCOM should carefully assess whether or not they believe candidates have the gifts and evidence of fruit necessary for licensed/ordained ministry or if they are better suited to serve the church as a lay person.
- Paperwork required by the conference and the *Book of Discipline* needs to be in place before candidates are certified. **No candidate should be certified "contingent upon" anything.** The Office of Clergy Life will provide the necessary paperwork to DCOM members (ideally two weeks prior to the scheduled interviews).
- All candidates must have a credit score report in their district file. If that score is 650 or below, the candidate is required to narrate the reasons for the score, present a plan to address the issue, and/or document evidence that their finances are more stable. Candidates may update their credit score report with the Office of Clergy Life at any time. Financial health is one of several considerations a dCOM should make when deliberating one's readiness for ministry.
- Certified Candidates need to update their contact information in the NC Conference's On-Line Data Collection System.
- When the DCOM approves and recommends candidates for licensed ministry, the District Superintendent should make candidates aware that before they can be licensed an appointment must be identified and they must complete licensing school. Dates of licensing school can be obtained from the Office of Clergy Life.
- Convey to candidates that MEF grants are only for candidates who intend to serve at least five years in the UMC. Certified candidates (who have received approval from SPRC/PPRC , Charge Conference and dCOM) are eligible to receive these funds.
- All Local Pastors (who have not completed seminary or Course of Study) are required to have a clergy mentor in accordance with the *Book of Discipline* ¶1317.4.

## dCOM INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

### Guidelines for preparing for an interview

- Allow ample time prior to interviews to review the files, the written documents, the psychological assessments of the candidates. Identify concerns and issues that need to be addressed in the interviews.
- Decide on the most important questions and who on the interview team will ask each question (do not have the chair or only one person ask all the questions).
- Decide on the size of the interview group. DCOM can subdivide, into groups no less than 6, for most interviews and then report back a recommendation to the total committee for final decision.
- Refer to the dCOM Handbook to make sure all items are in the file prior to the interview.
- Decide how long the interview will be
  - One hour for 1<sup>st</sup> time certification and recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry (45 minutes for interview, 15 for discussion afterward)
  - 30 minutes for continuation of local pastors and certified candidates
    - If a local pastor has completed the basic course of study or has an MDiv, they may be interviewed in a group setting with other local pastors who have met the same requirements. Both the pastor and the dCOM have the right to request an individual meeting with the dCOM for the yearly interview.

### Role of the Chair

- Make sure that prior to scheduling an interview, the necessary papers have been submitted and the psychological assessment is in the file. *Review the psych report and suggested questions on the report.*
- Welcome the candidate to the interview. State the purpose of the interview (Introductory Interview, Certification Interview, for recommendation for provisional or associate membership, etc.)
- Ask members of the DCOM to introduce themselves.
- Ask someone to begin with a prayer.
- State the time available for the interview and be the time-keeper.
- The chair may want to ask the first question. A possible first question might be: "Tell us about yourself, your sense of call, and where God is leading you."
- Be careful to involve the members of your committee in asking the questions. After the first question, the chair should focus on process and time-keeping rather than asking questions.
- Ask someone to close with prayer.

### Things to remember

- Create hospitable space! Be aware of room temperature, how the room is arranged, the way questions are posed, and what sort of non-verbal cues are conveyed.
- Decide how to begin the interview. Do not begin with the psychological assessment.
- The candidate does most of the talking.
- Do not allow other committee members to answer questions or to engage in an argument or discussion with the candidate.
- This is not a therapy session.
- Recommendations should be determined by the whole committee after the interview, rather than individual committee members offering advice during the interview and must be put in writing.
- Decide how the decision of the DCOM will be communicated: a phone call and/or a letter (email)
- Evaluate the interview. What was effective in the interview? What would we do differently next time?
- Were any questions asked that were inappropriate?
- Remember the distinction between candidates on the elder and the deacon track. Ask appropriate questions.

## Interview for: Candidacy Certification for Ordained or Licensed Ministry

### Requirements prior to interview

1. Call Statement
2. Credit Score Report (not to be confused with the consumer credit report) must be on file with dCOM and the Office of Clergy Life; candidates with a score of 650 or below should be delayed until there has been some progress made stabilizing the candidate's financial status.
3. Background Check on file
4. Form 103 Medical Report completed in file
5. Candidate's Disclosure Form (notarized)
6. Form 104 in file, indicating recommendation by the candidate's home church charge conference
7. Graduation from an accredited high school or certificate of equivalency
8. Member of the United Methodist Church for one year (prior to exploring candidacy) and have served in leadership in the church
9. Written report from mentors indicating completion of the six mentoring sessions
10. Written response to statements in ¶310.2a
11. Psychological Assessment report completed.
12. Form 102- Biographical Form
13. Digital Photo

**No candidate shall be certified "contingent upon" completion of any requirement!**

### **Suggested Questions**

- 🎬 Tell us about your journey, your call to ministry.
- 🎬 What did you learn about yourself in the psychological assessment process?
- 🎬 Tell us about your network/community of support.
- 🎬 What spiritual practices/disciplines are sustaining you?
- 🎬 What areas of your spiritual life may need to be strengthened?
- 🎬 What is your understanding of the distinctive characteristics of United Methodism?
- 🎬 What means of grace are you experiencing?
- 🎬 What is your understanding of itinerancy and the role The Bishop & District Superintendents play in your future service in the United Methodist Church?
- 🎬 Questions about theology and sacraments.
- 🎬 Share a leadership experience you have had this year.
- 🎬 What seminary classes have opened up new opportunities for reflections & growth? (for students)
- 🎬 What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- 🎬 What are your plans/goals for the year ahead?
- 🎬 Tell us about your personal strengths...your areas of growth.

### **Action Required**

Individual **written ballot**, three-fourths majority required to certify.

**Criteria:** Spiritual fitness; Psychological fitness; Physical fitness; Potential for effectiveness

## **Interview for: Licensing for Pastoral Ministry (Local Pastor) – i.e. recommending to attend Licensing School**

### Requirements prior to interview

1. Certification as a candidate for ministry (see requirements for Candidacy Certification). Note that this recommendation may take place in the same interview as for Candidacy Certification but that action comes first.

### **Suggested Questions**

- Tell us about your journey, your call to ministry.
- Describe your understanding of God's grace.
- What is your understanding of the distinctive characteristics of United Methodism?
- What are your plans for the future, ...personally, ...for the church?
- Share about your devotional life. How are you growing spiritually?
- Tell us about your personal strengths...your areas of growth.
- What disciplines/practices are in place to guard you against burnout and promote well-being?
- What are your goals for the year ahead?
- Questions about theology and sacraments.
- What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- Talk about your social support. Who are the truth tellers in your life?
- What do you do to take care of yourself physically?
- Share a conflict situation in which you have been involved and how you dealt with it.
- Share a leadership experience you have had this year.

### **Action Required**

Three-fourths majority required to recommend for licensing; licensing is contingent upon an appointment being identified by the Bishop & Cabinet as well as the completion of Licensing School requirements

**Criteria:** Spiritual fitness; Psychological fitness; Physical fitness; Readiness for Ministry; Potential for effectiveness

Also note that the vote here is pending completion of Licensing School.

## **Interview for: Renewal of Certified Candidacy (annually)**

### **Requirements prior to interview**

**Note: The district committee must let the candidate know what is required. The candidate has the responsibility for requesting these reports be sent to the district committee/submitted to the Office of Clergy Life.**

1. Annual recommendation of the candidate's home church charge conference in Online Data Collection
2. An official transcript from the school, college, or seminary (if applicable)
3. If the candidate is in a field education program in seminary, a copy of the field education report (called by various titles at different schools) or a written report from the supervisor in that setting

### **Suggested Questions**

- What are you learning about God and yourself during this season of candidacy?
- When do you anticipate taking the next step towards licensing and/or provisional membership?
- Tell us about your leadership experiences of this past year.
- What are your plans for the future, ...personally, ...for the church?
- Share about your devotional life. How are you growing spiritually?
- Tell us about your personal strengths...your areas of growth.
- Questions about theology and sacraments.
- What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- What are the most stressful aspects of ministry for you?
- What do you do to take care of yourself physically?
- Share a conflict situation in which you have been involved and how you dealt with it.
- Tell us about your seminary classes (for students).

### **Action Required**

Majority vote, not written ballot.

## Interview & Guidelines for: Accepting Certified Candidates from another Annual Conference

¶313.4, *The Discipline* states that “a person who is a certified candidate or who is in the candidacy process may have her or his status or studies accepted by another district committee in the same or another annual conference.

1. The candidate requests that his/her file be sent to the Office of Clergy Life, 700 Waterfield Ridge Place, Garner, NC 27529 or [clergyliife@nccumc.org](mailto:clergyliife@nccumc.org).
2. The file must include all of the items required by the North Carolina Conference for certification as a candidate, listed as follows:
  - 🌐 validation of enrollment in candidacy studies
  - 🌐 expanded background check
  - 🌐 medical report
  - 🌐 candidate’s notarized disclosure form
  - 🌐 record of the Charge Conference approval
  - 🌐 the psychological assessment
  - 🌐 the written responses to questions from ¶310.2
  - 🌐 mentor report
  - 🌐 recommendation from the former district Committee on Ordained Ministry
  - 🌐 annual renewal of candidacy, if applicable.

For a **licensed local pastor**, all preceding items plus

- 🌐 documentation of licensing (copy of the license)
  - 🌐 annual renewal of the license for pastoral ministry
  - 🌐 transcripts showing progress in the course of study
  - 🌐 transcripts of undergraduate education if applicable
  - 🌐 recommendation from the current district superintendent.
3. The district Committee on Ordained Ministry reviews the candidate’s file.
  4. An interview is required prior to acceptance of candidacy.
  5. If the candidate is certified and is requesting local pastor status, the district Committee makes a recommendation regarding licensing by The North Carolina Conference. Licensing is dependent upon the person receiving an appointment in The North Carolina Conference.
  6. The district committee’s approval/disapproval is communicated to the Office of Clergy Life by submitting an Action Report.

## **Interview for: Local Pastor Continuance (annually)**

### **Requirements prior to interview**

Note: The district committee must let the local pastor know what is required. The local pastor has the responsibility for requesting these reports be sent to the district committee/submitted to the Office of Clergy Life.

1. Evidence of satisfactory progress in the required studies:
  - a) Local pastors preparing for provisional membership shall complete the Local Pastors' Licensing School and then present annually to the district committee on ordained ministry an official transcript from college, seminary, or Course of Study.
  - b) All other local pastors shall complete the Local Pastors' Licensing School and present annually until completion an official transcript from the five-year Course of Study (must be completed within eight years for Full Time Local Pastors and in twelve years for Part-time Local pastors, see ¶1319.3). Part-time local pastors must complete two courses of COS annually, ¶1318.2.
2. Annual written report of the clergy mentor.
3. Recommendation of the district superintendent.

### **Suggested Questions**

Focus on the candidate's areas of strength and areas for growth rather than spending a lot of time on what is going on or not going on in their church. Be careful to not spend the time evaluating the church/charge but keep the focus on the local pastor and his/her role.

- What/where are your support systems?
- Describe your vacation time over the past year. In what ways do you protect your vacation times?
- What are the means of gracious accountability in your life and ministry?
- Did you establish any goals or objectives for personal or professional growth last year (in consultation with your mentor)? What were they? What did you do toward accomplishing these goals and how well did it work?
- What were your points of growth over the past year?
- How do you equip laity in your church? Share some specific examples.
- What are your plans for the future? Continuing education plans? Plans for ordination?
- What was your Course of Study focus last year? Did you find it helpful/useful? What changes or improvements to your practice of ministry can you identify as a result of the Course of Study?
- In what ways have you grown the most in the past year, both personally and as a pastor? What do you feel were the causes of this growth?
- Were you assigned a clergy mentor to work with you during the past year? If so, describe the relationship and what you worked on with your mentor. If not, is there someone you look upon as your mentor? Was this a helpful relationship? If not, why not? Can this committee be of any help in providing a more helpful mentor relationship?
- What was the most difficult challenge you faced as pastor this past year and how did you meet it?
- What did you learn from it? How do you feel you have grown as a result of it?
- What is the single most important thing you need at this point in time to become a better pastor?
- What is the greatest joy you experienced in the past year? Why do you feel this was so?
- How do you integrate your personal and professional responsibilities? Do you experience tensions between family and church expectations of you?

### **Action Required**

Majority vote required; continuance is contingent upon an appointment being identified by the Bishop & Cabinet

## **Interview for: Recommendation for Provisional Membership (RBOM i.e. recommending to the Board of Ordained Ministry)**

### **Requirements prior to interview**

1. Annual renewal of certified candidacy or license for pastoral ministry.
2. Certified candidate or licensed local pastor for at least one year.
3. Service requirement – demonstrated gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the dCOM.
4. Met the educational requirements of the NC Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (outlined as educational requirements in ¶324) which include an undergraduate degree.
5. Or for those applying under ¶324.4 and completed the 5 year Course of Study, and 32 semester hours of graduate theological study and met the educational requirements of the NC Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
6. If this is also the interview for candidacy renewal or local pastor continuance, see the requirements on those pages.
7. Submit a 5 page essay to the dCOM for consideration of readiness to interview with the BOM. Questions can be found on the OCL website.
8. An up to date and complete file with the Office of Clergy Life. Candidates should check their On-Line Data Collection System portal for the status update of their psychological evaluation, background check, credit score, and medical report.

### **Suggested Questions**

- 🎬 All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to ordained ministry.
- 🎬 Who or what brought clarity of call regarding your participation in the Order of Deacons/Order of Elders?
- 🎬 What is your understanding of the role The Bishop & Cabinet play in your appointment?
- 🎬 Reflect on your understanding and commitment to itinerancy (if on the Elder Track)?
- 🎬 What steps are you taking to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels?
- 🎬 Describe how you have partnered with the Holy Spirit & community of faith to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ
- 🎬 Explain the role and significance of the sacraments
- 🎬 At this point, the Board is looking for **readiness for ministry**. Readiness will be evaluated in four areas: call, theology, personal growth and development, and practice of ministry.
- 🎬 How has your theology changed since you have been in seminary/Course of Study?
- 🎬 Where/what are your support systems?
- 🎬 What did you learn about yourself and about ministry through the CPE experience (if elected and completed)?

### **Action Required**

Written ballot with three-fourths majority vote.

**Criteria:** Areas of developing competencies; Academic background; Consider field education experiences, internships, other practice of ministry experiences; Review how theological understanding has evolved since certification; Review carefully educational requirements. Contact the Office of Clergy Life with any questions.

## Interview for: Recommendation for Associate Membership (¶321, 2020/2024 Discipline)

### Requirements prior to interview

1. Annual renewal of license for pastoral ministry with service as a full time local pastor for four years (or equivalent if approved by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry).
2. Reached the age of 40.
3. Completed the five year Course of Study
4. Completed a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree in an accredited college or university.
5. Declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment.
6. Submitted psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse
7. If this is also the interview for local pastor continuance, see the requirements on that page.

### **Suggested Questions**

- 🎬 All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to associate membership?
- 🎬 Why are you seeking associate membership?
- 🎬 What is your understanding of the role The Bishop & Cabinet play in your appointment?
- 🎬 Reflect on your understanding and commitment to itinerancy ?
- 🎬 What steps are you taking to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels?
- 🎬 Describe how you have partnered with the Holy Spirit & community of faith to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ
- 🎬 Explain the role and significance of the sacraments
- 🎬 Questions that would integrate their theology with their practice of ministry.
- 🎬 For associate membership, the Board is looking for **effectiveness in ministry**. Effectiveness will be evaluated in four areas: call, theology, personal growth and development, and practice of ministry.
- 🎬 Questions that make the connection between their Course of Study education and their practice of ministry.
- 🎬 How has your theology changed since you have been in the Course of Study?
- 🎬 Where/what are your support systems?

### **Action Required**

Three-fourths vote, recorded on the NC Conference Form, with a written narrative by the chair of the dCOM attached to the form describing the candidate's areas of strength and areas of growth submitted directly to the Office of Clergy Life.

Criteria:

- 🎬 Areas of competencies
- 🎬 Academic background
- 🎬 Consider current practice of ministry
- 🎬 Review how theological understanding has evolved since licensing
- 🎬 Effectiveness will be evaluated in four areas: call, theology, personal growth and development, and practice of ministry.

## **Interview for: Recommendation to become Certified Lay Minister**

**Candidates for initial certification are interviewed in the spring (usually April or May)** in order to be recognized at Annual Conference.

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry is responsible for conducting the interview, evaluating the candidate's readiness, and determining whether to **recommend** certification to the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries. DCOM may also recommend additional coursework or other forms of support to strengthen the candidate's effectiveness in ministry. At the time of the interview, dCOM will be provided with all documentation completed toward certification to date.

The Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries will receive dCOM's recommendation and ensure all requirements for initial certification are complete prior to certification. These requirements include:

1. Recommendation by the pastor and the church council or charge conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership;
2. Completion of LSM prerequisites, including the Basic Course in Lay Servant Ministries, Living Our United Methodist Beliefs (UM History), and Life Together in the United Methodist Connection (UM Polity);
3. Completion of CLM coursework, including: Module 1: *The Call and Covenant for Ministry*, Module 2: *The Practice of Ministry*, Module 3: *Organization for Ministry*, and Module 4: *Connection for Ministry*;
4. Completion of additional requirements as determined by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, including: Mental Health and Wellness Assessment, background check, Safer Sanctuaries course, Implicit Bias course, and the Intercultural Development Inventory with Debrief;
5. Completion of a signed Ministry Covenant with the Mutual Ministry Team, outlining the plan for ministry as a certified lay minister;
6. Presentation of the Ministry Project at the culmination of coursework;
7. Recommendation of the district superintendent;
8. Recommendation of the district committee on ordained ministry.

### **Suggested Questions for Initial Certification Recommendation:**

- Tell us about your faith journey and your understanding of the call of God upon your life.
- How would you describe your understanding of God, Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit?
- How have you experienced the presence of God in your ministry?
- Tell us about a leadership experience you have had in the local church within the last year.
- Share with us a conflict situation in which you have been involved and how you dealt with it.
- Tell us how your service in your local church has demonstrated your appreciation of the history, doctrine, polity, worship and liturgy of The United Methodist Church.
- What gifts, skills, and abilities do you bring to certified lay ministry?
- Describe the covenant you have developed with your mutual ministry team.
- Where do you feel your ministry needs to be strengthened?

### **Action Required**

Majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry.

## **Interview for: Recommendation to Renew as Certified Lay Minister**

**Certified lay ministers renew their certification every two years. CLMs due for recertification are interviewed in November, allowing the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries to finalize renewals before the end of the calendar year.**

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry is responsible for conducting the interview, evaluating the candidate's readiness, and determining whether to **recommend** continued certification to the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries. DCOM may also recommend additional coursework or other forms of support to strengthen the candidate's effectiveness in ministry. At the time of the interview, dCOM will be provided with all documentation completed toward re-certification to date.

CLMs will be reviewed by dCOM every other year, even if they are serving as a pastor of a local church. This process aligns with the Book of Discipline (§ 268.4), and the decision would provide consistency across districts. And at a minimum, a DS would meet with the pastor/CLM once a year.

The Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries will receive dCOM's recommendation and ensure all requirements for renewal are complete prior to final approval. These requirements include:

1. Recommendation by the pastor and the church council or charge conference of the local church where the CLM holds membership;
2. Completion of one advanced Lay Servant Ministries course (or approved equivalent) within the past two years;
3. Updated background check, completed within the past two years;
4. Updated signed Ministry Covenant with the Mutual Ministry Team, outlining ongoing plan for ministry as a certified lay minister;
5. Completion of a Ministry Review with the S/PPRC or appropriate body within the ministry context, to assess the ministry and make adjustments as needed;
6. Recommendation of the district superintendent;
7. Recommendation of the district committee on ordained ministry.

### **Suggested Questions for Recertification Recommendation:**

- What are you doing for personal spiritual growth?
- What are you doing to take care of yourself physically?
- Tell us how your service in your local church has demonstrated your appreciation of the history, doctrine, polity, worship and liturgy of The United Methodist Church.
- What gifts, skills, and abilities do you bring to certified lay ministry?
- Describe the covenant you have developed with your mutual ministry team.
- Where do you feel your ministry needs to be strengthened?

### **Action Required**

Majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry.

## **Interview for: Recommendation for Reinstatement of Local Pastor Status:**

### **¶320.4 – Local Pastor (2020/2024 Discipline)**

In order for a discontinued Local Pastor to be reinstated the following groups must approve:

- The district committee on ordained ministry from which their license was discontinued
- The Board of Ordained Ministry
- The Cabinet
- The clergy in full connection as provided in ¶315, 318

The discontinued Local Pastor seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist church since the time of the discontinuance of their local pastor status or for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement.

The district committee on ordained ministry shall require a recommendation from the charge conference where this persons' membership is currently held.

#### **Requirements prior to interview**

--Immediately contact the Office of Clergy Life for detailed instructions

--Contact the Bishop's Office for supervisory file information

--Depending on the circumstances, most of the following will be required:

- A. Kroll Expanded Background Check
- B. File documents related to the reasons for discontinuance or withdrawal
- C. A written request by the candidate on his/her reasons and qualifications for readmission and a statement on the circumstances relating to their discontinuance or withdrawal
- D. A satisfactory report and recommendation by their charge conference and pastor
- E. Other letters of recommendation, if needed
- F. Report of career counseling, if applicable
- G. Completed Medical Report on form 103
- H. Psychological Assessment
- I. Additional information or report on requirements set by the Board or annual conference when discontinued or withdrawn.

#### **Suggested Questions**

Questions would be determined based on the nature of the discontinuance or withdrawal.

## Behavioral Health Guidelines for Boards of Ministry

In the process of selecting candidates for ministry, District Committees on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) and Boards of Ordained Ministry (BOM) must discern each potential candidate's "gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness" (Paras. 301.2 and 666.10). The constant pastoral concern for both the Church and candidates is to maximize effectiveness in ministry (on the positive end of the continuum) and minimize ineffectiveness and harm to all involved, both now and in the future.

These mental and behavioral health guidelines seek to describe the boundaries of healthy functioning, beyond which distortions of health become serious problems for the church and its ministry as well as for the person involved. The central question is how experiences impact a person's inner being or spirit and how a person's inmost spirit transforms behavior patterns (I Cor. 13, Romans 12). Concern about a person's mental and emotional status and behavioral patterns, including mental processing, emotional states, identity, personal boundaries, and responses to stress, are part of our pastoral concern in selecting candidates.

Since our ministries are treasures of God in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7), we seek to discern how human vessels can be refined and strengthened in order to be more durable and useful in the ministry of Christ in the world. Where negatives exist, can they be sufficiently healed and transformed with the available resources to enable a candidate to incarnate love in ministry? Where positives exist, can they be used to strengthen trust, enable safety, and express grace and love in relationships without giving in to temptations and distortions?

To address these concerns, the Division of Ordained Ministry's Advisory Committee on Psychological Assessment offers the following Behavioral Health Guidelines as a resource in candidacy selection. **As the title suggests, these are general guidelines rather than hard-and-fast regulations.** They relate to behavioral health issues, broadly defined, that our Committee believes are critical to effectiveness in ministry and the avoidance of misconduct. Our primary purposes in this effort:

- to guide and advise dCOMs and BOMs
- to assist BOMs in establishing their own standards
- to provide a vehicle for BOMs to raise questions about standards
- to flag areas of concern

Our Committee proposes standards in the categories listed below, along with brief rationales explaining our sense of their importance. Most candidates will meet these standards immediately, but some may evidence critical behaviors or conditions that would require further exploration. Questions are provided to facilitate this exploration. If the results continue to raise concerns, the Board or Committee may need to take some action, such as postponement of the candidacy process (for further exploration or remediation) or, in serious cases, permanent disqualification. Each recommendation or guideline requires interpretation on a case-by-case basis.

## Definitions

**Category:** A general area of concern.

**Standard:** A minimum requirement necessary to address the area of concern.

**Rationale:** An explanation of the standard.

**Critical Behavior:** A specific behavior or condition that indicates the standard has not been met.

**Exploratory Question:** A recommended question which may assist in assessing whether a critical behavior does indeed violate the standard.

**Recommendation:** A decision recommended when exploratory questions indicate that a standard is not met.

## Category: Physical Health

**Standard:** The candidate demonstrates no obvious physical health concerns.

**Rationale:** Neglect of physical health is known to impair function in pervasive ways. Responsible preventive health care maximizes the functional abilities of the individual and minimizes the health care costs to the annual conference.

The physical health concerns listed below may have a strong psychological component, and may reflect psychological disorders.

**Critical behaviors: (considered in cultural context)**

- Morbid obesity (Body weight 100 lbs or more above maximum ideal weight)
- Markedly underweight (body weight at least 15% or more below the candidate's healthy minimum weight)
- An un-treated, chronic, medical condition such as hypertension, diabetes, etc.
- Non-compliance with prescribed medical treatment for any condition

**Exploratory Questions:**

How do you evaluate your overall physical health?

What steps do you take to care for your physical health?

When was your last medical checkup?

Do you have any current or chronic health problems?

If so, what steps are you taking to care for yourself?

How does your physical health impact your ability to be an effective minister?

**Recommendations:** Candidates should be able to articulate their plans for physical health care. Candidates with medical problems should demonstrate medical consultation and cooperation with treatment plans.

**Category: Management of personal finances**

**Standard: The candidate is not in debt so as to embarrass the Church.**

**Rationale:** While this may not, on the surface, seem to be a behavioral health issue, personal financial management has to do with general maturity, including the ability to set priorities, maintain discipline and delay gratification. Difficulties in this area raise concerns about judgment and impulse control. Critical behaviors:

- The candidate has been reported to a credit bureau for nonpayment.
- The candidate has had money judgments filed against him/her.

**Exploratory Questions:**

- Describe the history (sequence) of your difficulties.
- Are there extenuating circumstances? (Possible mitigating circumstances: major medical expenses, divorce. NOTE: Business failures and unemployment are not necessarily mitigating conditions, but require further exploration.)

**Recommendation:**

If the candidate has a history of having been reported to the credit bureau, then three years of a good credit history is recommended. If the candidate has a history of a personal bankruptcy, then five years of good credit is recommended. If the candidate has a history of money judgments, then it is recommended that the judgments be satisfied prior to continuance.

<b>Category: Mental Illness</b>
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**Standard: The candidate has no current or recurring disqualifying psychological impairment.**

**Critical behaviors:**

- The candidate has received a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or any other psychotic disorder.
- The candidate has received a diagnosis of a personality disorder.
- The candidate has been hospitalized for psychiatric treatment.
- The candidate has been prescribed psychiatric medications (including antidepressants and anxiolytics)
- The candidate has attempted suicide.

**Exploratory Questions:**

- Describe the history (sequence) of your treatment for your difficulties.
- What specific potential vulnerabilities do these difficulties create for your ministry, and how do you see yourself protecting both yourself and the people you would serve?
- Would you be willing to authorize communication between those who have treated you and this committee?

**Recommendation:**

The more severe the psychiatric impairment, the more important the need for direct consultation with the treating mental health practitioners. The Board may wish to bring in its own mental health consultants in order to evaluate the candidate's situation.

The candidate has a history of remission from any moderately-to-severely impairing conditions for not less than five years without necessity for psychiatric hospitalization, though treatment may continue.

The candidate has a history of responsible management of any mildly-to-moderately impairing conditions for not less than five years, and has an effective treatment program in place

**Category: Alcohol abuse/dependence**

**Standard:** The candidate demonstrates no present abuse or dependence upon alcohol.

**Rationale:** Alcohol abuse (short-term intoxication) and/or alcohol dependence (chronic over-involvement) are mental disorders known to impair functioning in pervasive ways. Candidates who suffer from these disorders will have greatly limited effectiveness and are at much greater risk for professional misconduct.

**Critical behaviors:**

- a history of drinking to the point of intoxication
- a history of arrest for driving while intoxicated
- a history of an arrest for public intoxication
- complaints by family or others regarding the candidates use of alcohol

**Exploratory Questions:**

The “CAGE” questions below may be helpful: two or more “yes” answers predicts alcoholism with about 75% accuracy.

1. Have you ever felt you should **C**ut down on your drinking?
2. Have people **A**nnoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
3. Have you ever felt bad or **G**uilty about your drinking?
4. Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover? (**E**ye-opener)

Where there is a history of alcohol use, the following questions may be helpful:

- Are you currently abstinent, and if so for how long?
- If you are abstinent, how and why were you able to become abstinent?
- What are you currently doing to maintain abstinence? (Possible answers: Alcoholics Anonymous, outpatient chemical dependency counseling, other counseling)

**Recommendation:**

Consider requiring a minimum of one year’s sobriety prior to certification for candidacy.

If any of the critical behaviors are recent (within five years), then consider requiring a formal “substance abuse evaluation” by a certified chemical dependency treatment specialist.

If there is clear evidence of alcohol dependence at any time, then consider requiring participation in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or equivalent program and continued involvement in such a program for not less than five years prior to certification for candidacy.

**Category: Chemical abuse/dependency**

**Standard:** The candidate demonstrates no present abuse or dependence upon either non-prescribed pharmacologic agents or prescribed medications.

**Rationale:** Chemical abuse and/or dependence are mental disorders known to impair functioning in pervasive ways. Candidates who suffer from these disorders will have greatly limited effectiveness and are at much greater risk for professional misconduct.

**Critical behaviors:**

- any use of illegal or non-prescribed substances, including but not limited to marijuana, cocaine, hashish, hallucinogens, sedatives, amphetamines or other stimulants.
- misuse of prescribed pharmacological agents of any type

**Exploratory Questions:**

- What is your history of chemical abuse or dependency?
- Are you currently abstinent, and if so for how long?
- If you are abstinent, how and why were you able to become abstinent?
- What are you currently doing to maintain abstinence? (Possible answers: Narcotics Anonymous, outpatient chemical dependency counseling, other counseling)

**Recommendation:**

If the history reveals occasional and/or experimental use limited to an adolescent period, then consider requiring not less than five years of sobriety prior to certification for candidacy.

If the history reveals any adult use of illegal substances, or any misuse of prescribed pharmacological agent, then consider requiring a formal chemical dependency assessment from a credentialed chemical dependency treatment specialist. A period of not less than five years of sobriety prior to certification for candidacy would also be appropriate.

<b>Category: Legal (General)</b>
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**Standard: The candidate shall be respectful of the law and evidence legal responsibility in personal habits.**

**Rationale:** This may not, on the surface, appear to be a behavioral health issue, but similar issues around maturity, discipline, and judgment come into play. In addition, one's approach toward the law often is a barometer of one's respect for authority generally, and unresolved authority issues may significantly hamper clergy effectiveness.

**Critical behaviors:**

- More than three moving violations (traffic) within the preceding three years
- An arrest or conviction for any misdemeanor
- An arrest or conviction for any felony

Note: "Conviction" includes a "no contest" plea without admission of guilt, deferred adjudication and/or probation.

**Recommendation:**

Candidates may have no more than three moving violations (traffic) within the preceding three years.

A history of arrest for any misdemeanor or felony requires investigation of the circumstances of the arrest including review of the offense (police) report. Results of the investigation may require an appropriate period without history of difficulty or further arrest prior to certification for candidacy or continuance.

A history of conviction for any felony is, under most circumstances, permanently disqualifying.

<b>Category: Family Violence</b>
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**Standard: The candidate has a history of resolving family conflict in a nonviolent manner.**

**Critical behaviors:**

- Any report or complaint (against the candidate) of family violence.
- Any history that a law enforcement unit has been called to the candidate's residence because of his/her behavior.
- Any report or complaint (against the candidate) to protective services for inappropriate treatment of children or adults.
- Any history of protective orders against the candidate.

**Recommendation:**

The candidate shall ordinarily have not less than three years without reports as described.

The presence of any critical behaviors requires an investigation into the facts and circumstances and an appropriate period may be required prior to certification for candidacy or continuance. The candidate shall acknowledge his/her behaviors and may have entered into family counseling or other appropriate treatment.

**Category: Divorce or Infidelity**

**Standard:** If the candidate has been divorced, or if there is evidence of infidelity, the candidate must have done sufficient exploratory and reparative work to demonstrate and/or articulate the impact of the health of married life on quality of ministry.

**Critical behaviors:**

- A divorce in the past three years
- A history of having been married more than twice
- A history of infidelity

**Exploratory Questions:**

If a recent divorce:

- What steps have you taken to understand the nature of your own contribution to the dissolution of the marriage?
- What steps have you taken to move yourself through a healthy grief process?

If multiple marriages:

- What steps have you taken to identify and deal with any dysfunctional patterns in intimate relationships?

In either case:

- Have you maintained fidelity in marriage? If not, what steps have you taken to understand your actions and decisions so as to safeguard current or future marriage covenants?

**Recommendation:**

If there is a recent divorce (within 2-3 years), then the candidate should be able to articulate any dysfunctional patterns in intimate relationships and have taken steps to safeguard current or future marriage covenants.

If there is insufficient evidence that sufficient exploratory or reparative work has been done, the Board may wish to recommend or require a course of psychotherapy and/or other conditions, such as a delay of one year.

**Standard:** The candidate has no history, or complaints, of sexual misconduct or charges of sexual harassment having been brought against him/her. See addendum for definitions.

**Rationale:** Candidates must model in their personal life and behavior a healthy and sacred view of sexuality so as not to misuse the clerical office.

**Critical Behaviors**

- A history of complaints or charges (either formal or informal) of sexual harassment
- A history of improper sexual conduct

**Exploratory Questions**

- Have you ever had a complaint or charge (either formal or informal) of sexual harassment or misconduct brought against you? (If so, describe the circumstances.)
- What steps have you taken to ensure that the behavior does not occur in the future?

**Recommendations**

Consider further assessment.

The Board of Ministry should explore in an interview with the committee the steps the candidate has taken to identify and understand and deal with the psychological vulnerabilities that contributed to the behavior, and what safeguards the candidate has put into place to guard against the possibility of similar behavior in the future.

The candidate should have no evidence of sexual misconduct for a minimum of three years.

A candidate must articulate a plan to insure that such behavior is unlikely to recur. This plan may include intensive psychotherapy and/or ongoing supervision, or other conditions required by the Board.

<b>Category: Legal - Sex related crimes</b>
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**Standard:** The candidate shall have no history that poses risk of sexual harassment, sexual assault to adults or children, nor history of any sex-related offense.

**Critical behaviors:**

- Treatment for any sex-related crime.
- Arrest, conviction, or written accusation for any sex-related crime.
- Written allegations of any sex-related crime

**Recommendation:**

If the candidate has committed a sex-related crime, he or she should be permanently disqualified.

Certainly the candidate is entitled to be considered innocent until proven guilty, so a written accusation or arrest alone is not sufficient for disqualification, but either one would raise significant questions which the Board would need to explore in depth.

The recommendation for permanent disqualification reflects the massive legal exposure an Annual Conference would take on were it to place in ministry a known sex offender. Behind that reality, however, is the awareness that currently available treatments for such offenses are of limited utility, with high rates of recidivism.

<b>ADDENDUM</b>
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**Definitions of Improper Sexual Conduct****1. Sexual harassment**

Includes solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct consisting of a single intense or severe act, or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts, by a candidate toward another individual, that are sexual in nature and occur whether in connection with the candidate's clerical activities or personal life, and that are unwelcome, offensive, or create a hostile environment for the affected individual.

**2. Sexual impropriety**

Sexual impropriety is deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical acts of a sexual nature that include but are not limited to:

- a) behavior, gestures or expressions which may reasonably be interpreted as inappropriately seductive or sexually demeaning,
- b) making inappropriate comments about an individual's body,
- c) making sexually demeaning comments to an individual,
- d) making comments about an individual's potential sexual performance,
- e) in a counseling relationship, requesting details of a person's sexual history when not clinically indicated for the type of consultation,
- f) requesting a date,
- g) initiating conversation regarding the sexual problems, preferences, or fantasies of either party,
- h) kissing of a sexual nature,
- i) sharing or displaying pornographic material with another person.

**3. Deviant sexual behaviors**

Deviant sexual behaviors include, but are not limited to, behaviors such as pedophilia, exhibitionism, or other paraphilias, and preoccupation with pornographic materials for sexual stimulation and gratification.

## A-Z Glossary of Terms

**Annual Conference:** A geographical area and organizational term. Defines a region that includes all UM churches and ministries in that area. Most clergy serving churches in that area are provisional, licensed or ordained members of that conference. Members of the annual conference meet yearly (in NC, this gathering takes place in June) to approve business, set the budget, and promote ministry programs and other items of interest to the members. Each church also has a number of laypersons (equal to the number of their clergy) who vote on governance and policy for that conference. The annual conference votes to commission provisional clergy members, to ordain deacons and elders and to license local pastors for pastoral ministry. The bishop (in NC, Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton) appointed to that conference presides over the annual meeting and all matters affecting the ministry of that annual conference (§12, ¶1601 - ¶1657).

**Associate Members:** Licensed local pastors who have reached age 40, completed at least four years of full-time service as a local pastor, and the five-year Course of Study and have been approved by the board of ordained ministry. They are not ordained, but are available for full-time service and are guaranteed an appointment as clergy to a local congregation within the annual conference. Associate members have voice and vote in every matter except those pertaining to ordination, ordained clergy and voting for delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conference (§321 – §323).

**Bishop:** During a jurisdictional conference session, bishops are elected from among the elders, by lay and clergy delegates. Bishops oversee and supervise one or more annual conferences and meet with other bishops to lead The United Methodist Church. Bishops commission and ordain deacons and elders and appoint licensed local pastors, deacons and elders from the annual conference in which they lead. They are authorized to "guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine and discipline of the church" and to "lead all persons entrusted to their oversight in worship, in the celebration of the sacraments, and in their mission of witness and service in the world." Bishops elected in the U.S. serve in that capacity until retirement and remain on the Council of Bishops after retirement (§401 - §403). The Bishop of the NC Annual Conference is Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton.

**Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM):** Each annual conference has a Board of Ordained Ministry consisting of deacons, elders, licensed local pastors or associate members, and laypersons who are appointed to that board by the bishop. The board recruits, nurtures and supports those in an annual conference who are seeking and preparing for ordained ministry or continuation as a licensed local pastor and evaluates whether or not they have the gifts and grace for ministry and are ready to serve. The board is the "credentialing" body for clergy in an annual conference and is also responsible for continuing formation programs for clergy and for matters relating to changing conference relationships and clergy conduct (¶634).

**Book of Discipline (BOD):** The book of law for The United Methodist Church that determines how the church governs itself. It includes historical information, doctrinal standards, laws, and policies that can only be changed by the General Conference. After each General Conference session it is updated and reprinted based on decisions made by delegates of the General Conference session.

**Book of Worship (BOW):** The basic handbook for worship services that reflects the theology of The United Methodist Church. It contains the order of services, the liturgy for Holy Communion (referred to as Word and Table), Baptism, marriage, funerals, healing, and many other types of worship services. It also contains blessings, prayers, and resources for weekly worship services and special celebrations.

**Cabinet:** The bishop and district superintendents when meeting as a body. Each annual and missionary conference has a Cabinet.

**Call, Call Story, or Calling:** A specific experience or set of decisions, circumstances or other type of encouragement that lead an individual to believe that God has asked her or him to enter ministry. Many clergy will refer to being "called" to preach or serve. During the candidacy process, candidates for licensed or ordained ministry will be asked to write and/or talk about how they have discerned God's calling in their lives and how and where they believe God is calling them to serve.

**Campus Minister or University Chaplain:** Campus ministers and university chaplains serve on college campuses across the United States and around the world. Some work in United Methodist campus ministry units (sometimes called Wesley Foundations). Some work in cooperation with other denominations in ecumenical campus ministries. Others are chaplains at United Methodist-related colleges and universities. Ministry with students is an important part of the work, but these ministers are also concerned with faculty, staff, and administration—in other words, they work with the whole campus. Some campus ministers and chaplains are ordained deacons and elders. Others are laypeople who have received training for ministry on campus.

**Candidacy/Candidacy Process:** A discerning and preparatory period of time and the process by which those wishing to serve as licensed local pastors, deacons or elders apply, prepare and are evaluated by their annual conference to serve on behalf of The United Methodist Church (§310 - §314).

**Candidacy Mentors:** Ordained deacons, elders, associate members or full-time local pastors (who have completed the Course of Study), who have been trained to provide guidance to candidates. They are assigned to lead mentoring groups, typically made up of 5-8 candidates. These mentors assist the candidate in understanding the process and further discerning their call as they become certified and licensed or provisional members (§310.1b, §311).

**Candidate:** A person who is seeking recommendation or is enrolled in the candidacy process and wishes to serve as a licensed local pastor, deacon, or elder.

**Certified Candidate:** Someone who is enrolled in the candidacy process; has been approved by their local ministry setting; has submitted requested information to the district committee on ministry; and has been interviewed, and approved to continue the process of moving toward licensing or ordination (§311).

**Chaplain:** Chaplains and pastoral counselors are elders or deacons who engage in ministries of pastoral care in specialized settings. Endorsed chaplains and pastoral counselors are appointed to prisons, hospitals, the armed forces, and counseling centers where they serve people in difficult places outside the local church (§1406.10).

**Charge Conference:** This refers to a meeting of the local church that includes every member of the church's governing body (such as a church council) as well as clergy appointed to serve that church. It meets at least once a year, usually in the fall, to review church goals and objectives, elect new church leaders, set clergy salaries, and recommend and continue persons for candidacy (§246 - §251).

**Clergy:** Commissioned and ordained deacons and elders; associate members and licensed local pastors serving under the full or part-time appointment of a bishop (§142).

**Clergy Mentor:** An ordained deacon, elder, associate member, or full-time local pastor who has completed the Course of Study, who has been trained to provide guidance to provisional deacons or elders during the provisional period. They assist provisional members in the process as these persons further discern their call and prepare for ordination.

**Course of Study (COS):** Refers to prescribed classes taken by licensed local pastors for ministry preparation. Part-time and full-time local pastors attend the Course of Study while serving local churches (typically for a month during the summer). The full course takes at least five years to complete. Upon completion of the initial course of study, the pastor may become an associate member if they have completed four years of service and are at least forty years of age (¶1318 - ¶1320).

**Deacon:** Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two. Deacons devote themselves to the ministry of the Word, which includes sharing, teaching, and modeling the word of God. Additionally, deacons are called to a lifetime of servant leadership, serving both the congregation and the world. A deacon is called to serve all people, particularly the poor, the sick, and the marginalized, and to equip and lead the laity in ministries of compassion, justice, and service. The deacon's leadership role exemplifies Christian discipleship, equips and supports all baptized Christians in their ministry, and connects the church's worship with its service in the world (¶1328 - ¶1331).

**Deaconess and Home Missioner:** Deaconesses (laywomen) and home missioners (laymen) are professionally trained persons who have been led by the Holy Spirit to devote their lives to Christ-like service under the authority of the Church. They are approved by the General Board of Global Ministries and commissioned by a bishop. They have a continuing relationship to The United Methodist Church through the General Board of Global Ministries. Deaconesses and home missioners are available for service with any agency or program of The United Methodist Church. Deaconesses and home missioners may also serve in other than United Methodist Church agencies or programs, provided that approval is given by the board in consultation with the bishop of the receiving area (¶1913 - ¶1918).

**Discern:** Synonymous with "decide." However, it carries an underlying assumption that the decision (generally to serve in ministry) is made with considerable thought, prayer, study and attention to God's call in one's life.

**District:** One of several smaller geographic areas within a conference. Each church in an annual conference is also part of a district. Each district is supervised by a district superintendent. The number of districts in an annual conference varies depending on the size of the annual conference. The North Carolina Conference has 8 districts.

**District Committee on Ministry (dCOM):** Evaluates, certifies and recommends to the board of ordained ministry all those who apply to become licensed or ordained. The committee conducts annual interviews to certify candidates, recommend candidates for provisional membership and license all local pastors serving within the district (¶666).

**District Superintendent (DS):** An elder appointed to serve as supervisor of the churches within a geographical area of an annual conference, called a district. They serve as extensions of the bishop's authority and supervise clergy serving within that district (¶419 - ¶421).

**Elder:** Elders are persons called by God, authorized by the church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. Like all baptized Christians, elders are committed to a lifetime of service, although this service manifests itself in different ways than deacons or the laity. The elder embodies, or brings to life, Christ's teachings in servant ministries and servant leadership and gives pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for service. Elders devote themselves to the ministry of the Word, which includes primary responsibility for preaching and teaching the Word of God (¶332 - ¶335).

**Endorsement:** Endorsement is the process to ensure that pastoral counselors and prison, hospital or military chaplains are qualified and prepared to appropriately represent the denomination in their ministry setting (¶1406.10; ¶1406.11; ¶344.1b).

**Episcopal:** Refers to something relating to a bishop. For instance, an "episcopal area" is the area under the supervision of a particular bishop.

**Extension Ministry:** Refers to elders who serve in ministry outside of a local church setting. It includes such settings as conference administration, chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, teaching, etc. The bishop must appoint the elder to that position, although this typically happens at the elder's request and through consultation with the bishop (§1343 - §1344).

**Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members:** The Fellowship provides mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. All licensed local pastors and associate members shall be members of and participate in the Fellowship (§1323). The chairperson of the Fellowship for LP 2025-2026 is the Reverend Vickie Woolard.

**Full Connection:** An ordained deacon or elder serves in "full connection" to an annual conference, as a member of that annual conference. This means that their life and work is amenable to the annual conference and that they are supported by and accountable to that annual conference. Ordained members in full connection have voice and vote in all matters related to the annual conference, to the clergy of that conference, to the general conference, and constitutional amendments of the UMC.

**General Conference:** The international gathering and business meeting of the United Methodist denomination. It convenes once every four years, in a different location. There are 998 delegates (half are ordained, half are laypersons) representing each annual and central conference. This body decides on petitions to change the Book of Discipline. It is the only body authorized to make decisions and speak on behalf of The United Methodist Church (§19, §1501-§1512).

**Itinerate:** Indicates that an ordained elder, associate member, or full-time local pastor will agree to serve where the bishop appoints them. This system of appointments is referred to as itinerancy.

**Jurisdiction:** A group of annual conferences within a geographical region in the United States. There are five jurisdictions in the U.S. (North Central, Northeast, South Central, Southeast, and Western). The Jurisdictional Conference meets every four years after General Conference and consists of representatives from each annual conference in that region. The conference's primary responsibility is to elect bishops for their jurisdiction (§1513-§1538). North Carolina is part of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

**Layperson:** A member of a local church. In The United Methodist Church laypersons are responsible for leadership in all levels of the denomination – from the local church, to the district, to the annual conference, Jurisdictional Conference and General Conference. Laypersons are also involved at all levels of decision-making about candidates for licensed and ordained ministry.

**Licensed Local Pastor (LLP):** Someone who is not ordained as an elder or deacon but is appointed to preach, conduct worship and perform the duties of a pastor in a particular setting. In order to meet the requirements, a person must complete licensing school and receive an appointment to serve. Licensed local pastors must attend the Course of Study each year and meet with the dCOM annually for approval and eligibility for continued licensing. Licensed local pastors are not required to earn a Master's of Divinity or to itinerate, are not guaranteed an appointment and usually serve smaller congregations (§1315).

**Ministerial Education Funds (MEF):** Grant money made available annually to Undergraduate Juniors/Seniors and to seminary students who are University Senate approved schools. Recipients agree to serve in the NC Conference at least for as many years as they receive the grant money.

**Ordained Ministry:** The specific ministry of deacons and elders who have been ordained by a bishop to serve in The United Methodist Church (§1301-§1304).

**Order of Deacon/Order of Elder:** 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. These orders, separately or together, seek to respond to the spiritual hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers during this

stressful time of change in the Church, and for a deepening relationship with God. All ordained persons upon election to full membership in the annual conference shall be members of and participate in an order appropriate to their election (§306 - §309). The chairperson for the Order of Elders for 2025-2026 is the Reverend Regina Henderson Moore. The chairperson of the Order of Deacons for 2025-2026 is the Reverend Jaye White.

**Ordination:** Performed by the historic laying-on of hands by the bishop. This signifies that the church affirms and continues its apostolic ministry through these persons - empowered by the Holy Spirit. Those ordained commit to living and proclaiming the whole gospel. Persons may be ordained as deacons or elders. Deacons are ordained to the ministries of Word and Service. Elders are ordained to the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service (§301-§304).

**Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee (PPRC or SPRC):** The committee in each local congregation that assists clergy and staff members in setting priorities for leadership and service to the church. Responsible for evaluating all candidates for licensed or ordained ministry from that congregation. To begin the candidacy process one of the first steps is for a candidate to be approved by this committee and by the charge conference of his or her local congregation. Candidates then apply to their district superintendent and dCOM to continue the candidacy process (§258.2).

**Polity:** Refers to the rules and traditions of the UMC. It includes the *Book of Discipline*, history, practices, and beliefs of the denomination.

**Professional Certification:** The church's recognition that an individual has met the required academic standards, experience, and continuing study necessary to achieve and maintain professional excellence. Persons may receive professional certification in one of the following areas: business administration, camping and retreat ministries, children's ministry, Christian education, communications, evangelism, music ministry, older adult ministry, spiritual formation, or youth ministry. Laypersons and clergy can receive professional certification and studies are available for undergraduate or graduate students. Para-professional certification is available for those who do not hold a Bachelor's degree.

**Provisional Membership:** The step in the ordination process between certified candidacy and ordination. Once someone has been commissioned they serve as a provisional member of the annual conference. Those applying for ordination as deacons or elders must first serve as a provisional member for a minimum of two years, depending on the requirements of a specific annual conference. After completing the requirements for provisional membership a person can apply for ordination and full membership in the annual conference. Provisional membership is completed when a person is ordained a deacon or an elder, or a decision is made not to proceed toward ordination and provisional membership is ended (§324 - §327).

**Seminary or Theological School:** Term for post-graduate school of theology. These schools educate and prepare people for ministry. They offer a wide variety of classes, from ancient languages, to urban ministry, to church history and Biblical studies. The United Methodist Church supports 13 theological schools and seminaries, and students preparing for ordination must graduate from an institution that is approved by the University Senate of the UMC.

**University Senate:** The senate is an elected body of professionals in higher education created by the General Conference to determine which schools, colleges, universities, and theological schools meet the criteria for listing as institutions affiliated with The United Methodist Church. Students preparing for ordination must complete their educational requirements at an institution approved by the University Senate (§1409 - §1413).

**Vocation:** 1. a particular occupation, business, or profession; calling. 2. a strong impulse or inclination to follow a particular activity or career. 3. a divine call to God's service or to the Christian life. 4. a function or station in life to which one is called by God: the religious vocation; the vocation of marriage.