

Ministry of LOCAL PASTORS

Licensed to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service

A local pastor answers God's call by serving a local congregation or extension ministry. When appointed, the local pastor performs the pastor's duties, including preaching and teaching; leading in worship and liturgy; receiving new members; performing the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion; and the services of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, and confirmation. The local pastor's authority is limited to the appointment setting. The local pastor is not ordained and serves by virtue of a license for pastoral ministry after completing certified candidacy, licensing school, and annual conference requirements. Local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference.

Licensed to Order the Life of the Congregation(s)

The local pastor oversees the Church's ministry to fulfill its mission of witness and service in the world where appointed. The local pastor gives pastoral support and guidance and trains lay leadership to fulfill their ministries. The local pastor has administrative oversight of the charge and supervises the programs of the congregation(s) he or she serves.

Local Pastor Relationships

The local pastor is supervised by a district superintendent and bishop and meets regularly with a clergy mentor and the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) for annual approval to serve. Local pastors receive theological education through the Course of Study each year. After completion of the Course of Study, a local pastor may complete the Advanced Course of Study to pursue provisional membership. Along with associate members, they participate in the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members for ongoing peer support while in ministry.

Students Appointed as Local Pastors

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

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First Steps – Local Pastor

- Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* with a clergyperson or candidacy mentor. This book is available for purchase at www.Cokesbury.com.
- Contact a pastor, an elder, a deacon, or the district superintendent to inquire about admission into the candidacy process. The district superintendent invites applicants to enroll in the candidacy process.
- Participate in a candidacy mentoring group or meet with a candidacy mentor (as assigned by the annual conference) to study *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* and refine your call to ministry.

Becoming a Certified Candidate – Local Pastor (¶310)

- Be a member of the UMC or active in a United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one year.
- Register online in the Candidacy Application System and pay the candidacy application fee.
- Meet with the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) to discuss your call to licensed ministry, and complete all required steps to become a certified candidate as listed in ¶¶310-314 and determined by the annual conference.

Educational Requirements and Academic Qualifications – Local Pastor (¶¶315, 319)

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- Licensing school or completion of one-third of a Master of Divinity degree at a school of theology listed by the University Senate.
- Basic Course of Study–A prescribed course of theological education for Local Pastors that is designed to last five years.
- Advanced Course of Study (optional)–Includes 32 semester hours of graduate theological study which begins after the Basic Course of Study is completed.

Continuing Steps – Local Pastor

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

The candidacy process is listed in ¶¶310-314 in *The Book of Discipline*.
The ministry of the Local Pastor is described in ¶¶315-323 and ¶340 in *The Book of Discipline*.

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Visit www.gbhem.org/localpastors for more information.
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