

Steps Into
Licensed and Ordained Ministry



Steps into Licensed and Ordained Ministry (¶ 311, 2008 Book of Discipline)

Candidacy for ordained ministry is the first formal step toward ordination as a deacon or an elder or licensing in The United Methodist Church.

Inquiring about Candidacy

- Persons exploring a call to licensed or ordained ministry should contact the pastor of their local church, another elder or deacon, or the district superintendent of the district in which their United Methodist setting is located to inquire about the candidacy process.
- As people begin considering the candidacy process they are encouraged to use resources such as *The Christian as Minister* and the *Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process* to learn more about the ways they can serve. These resources are available from Cokesbury, 1-800-672-1789 or at www.cokesbury.com.

Beginning Candidacy

- The inquiring candidate who wishes to begin the candidacy process writes to their district superintendent including a statement of call, requests admission to the candidacy program, and the assignment of a candidacy mentor.
- The potential candidate shall have been a member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one year.
- After completing the online enrollment to the candidacy program (including the \$75 fee), with information from the district superintendent's office, the candidate and candidacy mentor will study the resources adopted by the conference board of ordained ministry. *Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy* will be available upon enrollment.
- The candidacy mentor helps the candidate examine the call of God in light of the biblical record, the role and function of United Methodist clergy, personal gifts and grace, and evidence of leadership.

Declaring Candidacy

- The candidate will consult with the pastor and Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee in their local church, or the equivalent in the ministry setting as authorized by the district committee on ordained ministry in order to request a meeting to declare their intent and seek a recommendation. The statement of call and the responses to John Wesley's historic questions found in ¶310 of the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* will be used in the consideration.
- The committee will interview the candidate and make a recommendation to the charge conference or the equivalent in the ministry setting.
- The charge conference will vote whether to recommend the candidate to the district committee on ordained ministry. The recommendation must be confirmed by a two-thirds majority vote.

Certified Candidacy

- In order to be certified, the candidate will request to meet with the district committee for an interview and approval as a certified candidate. The following must be completed and/or prepared prior to the meeting:
 - a written response to questions regarding God's call and the role of the church in the call, formative Christian experiences, beliefs as a Christian, gifts for ministry and present understanding of the call to ministry as deacon, elder, or licensed ministry;
 - required psychological reports, credit checks, criminal background check, and notarized statement regarding convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse;
 - other information as the district committee may require;
 - agree to maintain the highest ideals of Christian life as set forth in the *Book of Discipline*, ¶¶102-104; 160-166.

Local Pastor Studies

(¶¶ 314-315, Book of Discipline)

- A certified candidate may apply for license as a local pastor after completing the steps above for candidacy certification and the studies for license prescribed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry or after completing one-third of the work for a Master of Divinity degree at a school of theology approved by the University Senate. (See www.gbhem.org)
- Licensing studies are a prerequisite to appointment as a full-time or part-time local pastor.
- Following licensing and recommendation, an appointed local pastor must make satisfactory progress in the prescribed Course of Study.
- Those who are appointed as licensed local pastors are no longer certified candidates and are assigned a clergy mentor.

Continuing Candidacy

(¶ 312, Book of Discipline)

- The progress of candidates must be reviewed annually by the district committee which will interview and vote for continuance when the following conditions have been met satisfactorily.
 - The candidate has received the annual recommendation of his or her charge conference or equivalent body.
 - The candidate is making satisfactory progress in his or her studies. One who is enrolled as a student shall present an official transcript to the district committee annually.
 - The candidate continues to evidence gifts, growth, and God's grace for the work of ministry.

Completion of Candidacy for Provisional Membership and Commissioning

(¶ 324, Book of Discipline)

- Candidacy requirement: Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for at least one (1) year and no more than twelve (12) years.

- **Service requirement:** Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the district committee on ordained ministry.
- **Undergraduate education requirement:** A candidate shall have completed a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate.
 - In some instances exceptions may be made, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Exceptions will be considered for missional purposes and for persons who have a minimum of 60 semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit. Additionally, the candidate:
 - a) Must have been prevented from pursuit of the normal course of undergraduate education;
 - b) Must be a member of a group whose cultural practices and training enhance insight and skills for effective ministry that are not available through conventional formal education; or
 - c) have graduated with a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a college not recognized by the University Senate.
- **Graduate education requirement:**
 - a) Candidates for deacon or elder shall have completed one-half of the basic graduate theological studies (BGTS) in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, theology, church history, mission, worship/liturgy, evangelism, and United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree.
 - b) A **candidate for elder** shall have also completed one-half of the studies toward a Master of Divinity or its equivalent including one-half of the BGTS from a seminary listed by the University Senate.
 - c) A **candidate for deacon** shall have also completed one-half of the studies of a theological master's degree from a University Senate-approved school, or received a master's degree in the area of ministry in which the candidate will serve, and completed one-half of the BGTS.
- **Alternate routes to ordination:**
 - a) See *Discipline* ¶324.5 for alternate route for deacons.
 - b) See *Discipline* ¶324.6 for route for licensed local pastors.
- **Other requirements:** Each candidate shall a) present a satisfactory certificate of health; b) respond to a written and oral doctrinal examination; c) provide a written, concise autobiographical statement; d) be interviewed and recommended by a three-fourths majority vote of the district committee; e) submit a form provided by the BOM with a notarized statement detailing any written accusations or convictions for felony, misdemeanor, or incident

of sexual misconduct or child abuse; and f) have a personal interview with the board or ordained ministry.

Steps to Ordination as a Deacon or an Elder and Full Membership (¶¶ 330, 335, Book of Discipline)

- A candidate who has been a provisional member for at least two (2) years following completion of educational requirements may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference and ordained as a deacon or an elder.
- A **candidate for deacon** who has a) served under episcopal appointment in a ministry of service for at least two full annual conference years following completion of educational requirements; b) been supervised throughout the provisional period by a district superintendent and by the board of ordained ministry; and c) responded to an examination administered by the board on the covenantal relationship to God, the Church, and the Order of Deacons, the understanding of *diakonia*, servant leadership, and the interrelatedness of the church and the world may be recommended to the clergy session for ordination as deacon in full connection.
- A **candidate for elder** who has a) served full time under episcopal appointment for at least two full annual conference years following the completion of the educational requirements; b) been supervised throughout the provisional period by a district superintendent and the board of ordained ministry; c) satisfied the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health; d) prepared a sermon on a passage specified by the board and presented a plan for teaching a book of the Bible; and e) responded to an examination administered by the board in the areas of theology and vocation may be recommended to the clergy session for ordination as elder.



For further information contact:
 Division of Ordained Ministry
 General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
 The United Methodist Church
 PO Box 340007
 Nashville, Tennessee 37203-0007
 615/340-7389
 E-mail: dom@gbhem.org
 Web site: www.gbhem.org/ministry

Candidacy Process for the Deacon, Elder, and Local Pastor

Inquiring Candidate: 2008 Book of Discipline ¶311

1. Contact your pastor, district superintendent (DS), or another deacon or elder
2. Read *The Christian as Minister* (recommended, not required)
3. Participate in *Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process* (recommended, not required)

Beginning Candidacy: ¶311.1.a-c

1. Member of The United Methodist Church or baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for one (1) year
2. Apply to DS in writing, including statement of call; ask for admission to candidacy program and assignment of a candidacy mentor
3. Complete candidacy online enrollment and \$75 payment
4. Complete beginning stages of candidacy with candidacy mentor

Declaring Candidacy: ¶311.1.d, e

1. High school degree or equivalent is required
2. Request interview by Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee or equivalent in your ministry setting; provide statement of call; and responses to disciplinary questions in ¶310
3. Request recommendation by charge conference or equivalent as specified by district committee
4. Continue candidacy program with candidacy mentor and academic requirements

Certified Candidacy: ¶311.2

Completion of the following:

1. Written response to ministry questions in ¶311.2a as well as ¶310
2. Psychological assessment, criminal background, and credit check
3. Notarized statement certifying have neither been accused in writing nor convicted of a felony, misdemeanor, or any incident of sexual misconduct or child abuse
4. Provide other information upon request
5. Agree to make a complete dedication to the highest ideals of the Christian life
6. Examination and approval by district committee on ordained ministry

Local Pastor - Completed candidacy certification, licensed, and assigned a clergy mentor ¶ 314

Continuing Candidacy: ¶312

1. Annual recommendation by charge conference
2. Annual interview and approval by district committee
3. Annual report of satisfactory progress of studies and copy of transcripts from university or school of theology

Completing Candidacy: ¶324

1. Certified candidate for minimum of one (1) year, maximum twelve (12) years
2. One (1) year in service ministry
3. Completion of one-half the basic graduate theological studies to be eligible for commissioning
4. Health certificate completed by medical doctor
5. Written and oral doctrinal exam and written autobiographical statement
6. Interview and recommendation by three-fourths vote of district committee
7. Interview and recommendation by the board or ordained ministry
8. Election to provisional membership by clergy session

Commissioned to ministry of elder or deacon as provisional member