

**District Committee
On Ordained Ministry
HANDBOOK**



**Alabama-West Florida
Conference
The United Methodist
Church**

2013-2016

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The District Committee on Ordained Ministry

Alabama-West Florida Conference

Amenability

The district committee on ordained ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry (§666). All actions are *recommendations* to the Board of Ordained Ministry and shall be reported to the Board through the “Action Report Form” by the district committee registrar.

Responsibilities

The DCOM is responsible for the following actions:

1. Recommendation for certification as a candidate for licensed or ordained ministry (Fitness for Ministry)
2. Recommendation for licensing for pastoral ministry (Fitness for Ministry)
3. Recommendation for Associate Membership prior to interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry (Effectiveness in Ministry)
4. Recommendation for Provisional Membership prior to interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry (Readiness for Ministry)
5. Recommendation for Readmission to Conference Membership prior to interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

In addition, the district committee on ordained ministry shall aid the local church in the process of enlisting persons for ordained ministry as deacon or elder or for service as a local pastor, encourage persons to enter the candidacy program, and maintain a list of all candidates under its care.

Membership

- A representative from the Board of Ordained Ministry, named by the board after consultation with the district superintendent, who may be named chairperson.
- The district superintendent
- At least three professing members of local churches
- At least six other clergy in the district. The clergy shall include elders and deacons, and where possible, women and ethnic clergy, a deacon or elder who is age 35 or younger, an associate member, and may include one local pastor who has completed the Course of Study.
- These persons shall be nominated annually by the district superintendent in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the annual conference.
- All persons named to the district committee on ordained ministry shall be members with vote.
- Interim vacancies are filled by the district superintendent.

OVERVIEW: ROLE OF THE DCOM

Enlistment

Interviews

A. Candidacy Certification: Fitness for Ministry

- Spiritual fitness
- Psychological fitness
- Physical fitness
- Potential for effectiveness

Interviews are required at these points:

1. *Certification Interview* following completion of all steps for certification
2. Annual renewal of certified candidacy

B. Licensed Local Pastor: Annual License for Pastoral Ministry

- Fitness issues
- Readiness issues

1. Recommendation for licensing and conference relationship (full-time local pastor, part-time local pastor, and students appointed as local pastors)
2. Annual renewal of the license for pastoral ministry

C. 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?

D. 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?

E. Readmission to Conference Membership

- Be in touch immediately upon such a request with the Office of Ministerial Services prior to any of these interviews.
1. From honorable location
 2. From administrative location
 3. From those who previously withdrew from the ministerial office
 4. From discontinuance as a certified candidate or local pastor

DCOM LEADERSHIP JOB DESCRIPTIONS

District Superintendent

- Receives letter from potential candidate with a statement of call and request for admission to the candidacy program. (Copy also goes to DCOM chair)
- Sends letter inviting the potential candidate to be a part of the next candidacy retreat. Notifies the Director of Ministerial Services with the candidates' name, address, cell phone number, and email address.
- Presides at Charge Conference where candidates are voted on.
- Nominates District Committee on Ordained Ministry members and leaders.
- Obtains from former district the files of candidates and local pastors moving to the district.
- Reviews the Business of the Annual Conference Questions to make sure all certified candidates and licensed local pastors are listed.

Chairperson

- Sets date and place for meetings.
- Receives copies of letters to District Superintendent from potential candidates
- Schedules *Certification Interviews* with candidates who have completed the candidacy retreat and group mentoring successfully and submitted all required documents. These interviews should be scheduled in a timely fashion. All documents are due prior to the interview.
- Writes letter to each candidate regarding the results of the interview and recommended action with a copy in the candidate's file.
- Sets the agenda and presides at the meetings.
- Makes sure that all DCOM leaders are following through on their responsibilities.
- Makes sure that the DCOM interviews candidates at the appropriate time with the appropriate documents in hand.

Secretary

- Sends meeting notices, if not done by the chair.
- Records and sends minutes of the meetings to the DCOM members and to the Office of Ministerial Services.
- Keeps a file of all DCOM minutes (in the district office).

Registrar

- Tracks all candidates.
- Maintains the official file for each candidate. Original files are sent to the Office of Ministerial Services and copies are kept in the district office. A "Candidacy File Checklist" or "Local Pastor's File Checklist" shall be

used to keep a record of documents in each candidate's file. Record keeping procedures shall be governed by the "guidelines for Keeping Ordained Clergy and Diaconal Ministry Personnel Records in the United Methodist Church", prepared by GCFA.

- Uses the DCOM Action Report Form to record and report to the Board of Ordained Ministry all actions of the DCOM. Keeps a copy of this Action Report Form in the candidate's file.
- Makes sure that all paperwork is in the file prior to a candidate's interview.
- Makes sure that the candidate's and local pastor's file is complete (see file contents checklist).
- Works with the district superintendent to review the Business of the Annual Conference Questions.

Board of Ordained Ministry Representative

- Receives the psychological assessment report on candidates from the Office of Ministerial Services and assists the DCOM in reviewing the psychological assessments (see guidelines) prior to the interview for candidacy certification.
- Receives the expanded background check report on candidates and assists the DCOM in reviewing prior to the interview for candidacy certification.
- Exchanges questions and information between the District Committee and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Leads the DCOM in enlistment strategies.

DCOM INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Guidelines for preparing for an interview

- Allow thirty minutes ahead of each interview to review the file, the written documents, and the psychological assessment. Discuss concerns and issues that need to be addressed in the interview.
- Decide on the most important questions and who will ask each question (do not have the chair or one person ask all the questions).
- Decide on the size of the interview group. DCOM can subdivide for most interviews and then report back a recommendation to total committee for final decision.
- Make sure all items are in the file prior to the interview.
- Decide how long the interview will be.

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.
- Welcome the candidate to the interview and introduce by name and church to the DCOM. State the purpose of the interview (Certification Interview, for recommendation for probationary 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 timekeeper.
- 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

- Decide how to begin the interview. Do not begin with the psychological assessment.
- Remember that the mentor, if present, may not speak in the interview.
- 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: having the candidate wait in the hall vs. a phone call. A letter must be sent following the DCOM meeting stating the decision of the DCOM.
- 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 distinctions between candidates on the elder track and the deacon track. Ask appropriate questions.

Interview for: Candidacy Certification for Ordained or Licensed Ministry

Requirements prior to interview

1. Form 102 in file (Biographical Information Form)
2. TRAK-1 Background and Credit Check in file and reviewed by BOM Representative
3. Form 103 Medical Report completed (both sides) in file
4. Form 114, Candidate's Disclosure Form (notarized)
5. Form 104 in file, indicating recommendation by the candidate's home church charge conference equivalent body as specified by the district committee on ordained ministry, receiving a 2/3 vote.
6. Written report from the mentor indicating completion of the candidacy studies
7. Written response to statements in ¶310.1(d)
8. Psychological Assessment report completed.
9. If a concern about reading and writing skills, could require the TABE test.

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

#1 from above: Form 102 (Biographical Information Form)

#6 from above: Mentor Report

#7 from above: Written response to statements in ¶310.1(d)

Suggested Questions

- Tell us about your journey, your call to ministry.
- Share several highlights of your ministry this year.
- Tell us about your leadership experiences as a student.
- What were some of your frustrations in ministry this 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.
- What are you doing to avoid burnout?
- What are your goals for the year ahead?
- Questions about theology and sacraments prior to certification.
- What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- What 2-3 characters in the Bible emulate your own spiritual life/journey?
- What did you learn about yourself in the psychological assessment process?
- Talk about your family.
- Talk about positive and negative relationships in your 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.
- Share a leadership experience you have had this year.
- Tell us about your seminary classes (for students).

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)

Requirements prior to interview (documents must be submitted one month prior to interview)

1. Certification as a candidate for ministry (see requirements for Candidacy Certification).
2. Submit two copies of one sermon on DVD along with two copies of the sermon manuscript for that sermon.
 - a. When establishing a setting for preaching your sermon, it is not necessary for it to be in a Sunday morning worship service. For example, you can gather friends in a chapel, speak at a mid-week service or a nursing home. But you must preach/speak before an audience.
 - b. Length of the sermon shall be 10 to 15 minutes only.
 - c. Candidate may choose any Scripture.
 - d. On a separate sheet of paper respond to the following:
 1. What is the sermon title?
 2. What is the sermon text?
 3. When and where was the sermon preached?
 4. Write a one-sentence purpose statement for this message.
 5. What do you want the hearers to do as a result of this message?
 6. After viewing the video, what is your personal evaluation of the sermon?
3. Submit written responses to the following questions (minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 pages total for all questions, typed and double spaced):
 1. What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments?
 2. Talk about the nature of the Kingdom of God and then use a Biblical parable to illustrate one aspect of the Kingdom.
 3. What is your understanding of the Wesleyan concept of divine grace?
 4. How will you discern and implement God's vision for your ministry setting?

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

#2 from above – two members of the DCOM should view the sermon and report to the DCOM

#2 d from above – copy for all members of the DCOM

#3 from above – copy for all members of the DCOM

Suggested Questions

- Tell us about your journey, your call to ministry.
- Share several highlights of your ministry this year.
- Tell us about your leadership experiences as a student.
- What were some of your frustrations in ministry this 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.
- What are you doing to avoid burnout?
- What are your goals for the year ahead?
- Questions about theology and sacraments prior to certification.
- What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- What 2-3 characters in the Bible emulate your own spiritual life/journey?
- Talk about your family.
- Talk about positive and negative relationships in your 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.
- Share a leadership experience you have had this year.
- Tell us about your seminary classes (for students).

Action Required

Majority vote with recommendation required to specify full time local pastor, part time local pastor, or student local pastor (note that "student local pastor" is for only those students from other annual conference not in the candidacy studies in AWF Conference). Once voted, the candidate will have to register for and complete Licensing School.

Remember that licensing is dependent upon the person receiving an appointment in the Alabama-West Florida Conference.

Criteria:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Spiritual fitness | • Readiness for ministry |
| • Psychological fitness | • Potential for effectiveness |
| • Physical fitness | |

Interview for: **Renewal of Certified Candidacy (annual interview required)**

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.

1. Annual recommendation of the candidate's home church charge conference in file
2. A written report from the candidacy mentor in file
3. An official transcript from the school, college, or seminary
4. A written report from the candidate on service and leadership in the church with reference to ¶313 (i.e. growth in these areas since certification)
5. 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
6. If the candidate is not in college, seminary, or a ministry setting, a letter from the local church pastor as to the candidate's involvement in the local church.

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

#2 from above, Mentor Report

#4 from above, written report from candidate

#5 or #6 if applicable, written report from supervisor or from local church pastor

Suggested Questions

- Tell us about your journey, your call to ministry.
- Share several highlights of your ministry this year.
- Tell us about your leadership experiences as a student.
- What were some of your frustrations in ministry this 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.
- What are you doing to avoid burnout?
- What are your goals for the year ahead?
- Questions about theology and sacraments prior to certification.
- What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- What 2-3 characters in the Bible emulate your own spiritual life/journey?
- What did you learn about yourself in the psychological assessment process?
- Talk about your family.
- Talk about positive and negative relationships in your 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.
- Share a leadership experience you have had this year.
- Tell us about your seminary classes (for students).

Action Required

Individual written ballot, three-fourths majority required to renew.

Interview for: Local Pastor Continuance (annual interview required)

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.

1. Pastor's Report to the Charge Conference
2. Report of annual evaluation by P/SPRC
3. Written evaluation by district superintendent or supervisor
4. Official transcripts from undergraduate school, Course of Study or Seminary
5. Written Mentor Report
6. Written responses to the questions below (minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 pages, typed and double spaced, for all questions per year):

Year 1 - Leadership

- What are the local church committees required by the *Book of Discipline* and what is the function of each? How is your church structured for mission and ministry?
- How are you using the distinctive Wesleyan emphases and characteristics of The United Methodist Church to lead your church in making disciples of Jesus Christ?
- Describe leadership qualities that you demonstrate in your ministry and the strengths and weaknesses of those qualities?

Year 2 - Theology

- How do you apply United Methodist theology in your teaching?
- Describe ways your congregation lives out the theology of grace.
- In what ways has your theology of grace shaped your understanding of the Sacraments?

Year 3 - Practice of Ministry

- How has your preaching improved since you were licensed?
- In what ways have your spiritual disciplines affected your practice of leadership in ministry?
- Describe ways you lead your congregation in offering pastoral care?
- Bring a recent worship bulletin and be prepared to talk about your order of worship.
- Describe ways that, in partnership with laity, you make disciples of Jesus Christ, and train and empower these disciples to produce tangible fruits of love of God and love of neighbor.

Year 4 and beyond

- In years 4 and 5, talk with the local pastor about how they apply their education to their ministry setting.
- For those who have completed COS or M.Div., track continuing education requirements and review progress.

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

#1, #2, #3, #5, and #6 from above

Suggested Questions

- Review the responses to the questions above.
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- Talk about your pastoral appointment? Has it been what you expected when you felt called to become a local pastor? In what ways have you been surprised? In what ways have you been affirmed that you are properly responding to God's call in your life.
- What is the single most important thing you need at this point in time to become a better pastor?
- What was 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 of the committee, specifying annually full time, part time or student local pastor.

Guidelines for Accepting a Certified Candidate
From Another Annual Conference

¶313.4

¶313.4, *The 2012 Book of 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. Contact the Office of Ministerial Services immediately upon receipt of a request.
2. The candidate requests that his/her file be sent to the Office of Ministerial Services, 100 Interstate Park Drive, Suite 100, Montgomery, AL 36109.
3. The file must include all of the items required by the AWF Conference for certification as a candidate, listed as follows:
 - ✓ Statement of call (Form 101)
 - ✓ Biographical information form (Form 102)
 - ✓ TRAK-1 background and credit check
 - ✓ Medical report (Form 103)
 - ✓ Declaration of candidacy charge conference recommendation (Form 104)
 - ✓ Application for clergy relationship (Form 105)
 - ✓ Theological school recommendation for ordination (Form 109)
 - ✓ DCOM approval report for certified candidate (Form 113)
 - ✓ Candidate’s disclosure form (Form 114)
 - ✓ The psychological assessment
 - ✓ The written response to ministry
 - ✓ Mentor report
 - ✓ Verification of certification as a candidate
 - ✓ 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
 - ✓ Official transcripts (seminary or Course of Study) if applicable
 - ✓ Official transcripts of undergraduate education if applicable
 - ✓ Recommendation from the current district superintendent.
4. The District Committee on Ordained Ministry reviews the candidate’s file and has a required interview 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 AWF Conference. **Licensing is dependent upon the person receiving an appointment in the AWF Conference.**
 6. The action is reported to the registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry (Office of Ministerial Services) for approval by the Board.

Interview for: Recommendation for Associate Membership

Requirements prior to interview

1. Annual renewal of license for pastoral ministry with service as a full-time local pastor for four years.
2. Reached the age of 40.
3. Completed the five year Course of Study (with no more than one year by correspondence or online/distance learning courses).
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. If this is also the interview for local pastor continuance, see the requirements on that page.

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

None, unless this is also the interview for local pastor continuance, then see that page.

Suggested Questions

- Candidate will write papers and be interviewed in four areas: Call, Theology, Personal Growth and Development, and Practice of Ministry (including worship/proclamation and teaching).
- All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to associate membership?
- Why are you seeking associate membership?
- 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?
- What did you learn about yourself and about ministry through the CPE experience (if completed)?

Action Required

Majority vote, recorded on the Action Report 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 Ministerial Services.

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 for Provisional Membership

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 AWF Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (which include the educational requirements in ¶324) which include an undergraduate degree
5. Or for those applying under ¶324.6, reached 40 years of age, completed the 5 year Course of Study, and 32 semester hours of graduate theological study and met the educational requirements of the AWF 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.

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

None, unless this is also the interview for candidacy renewal or local pastor continuance, then see those pages.

Suggested Questions

- Candidate will write papers and be interviewed in four areas: Call, Theology, Personal Growth and Development, and Practice of Ministry (including worship/proclamation and teaching).
- All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to ordained ministry?
- Questions that would integrate their theology with their practice of ministry.
- 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.
- Questions that make the connection between their seminary/Course of Study education and their 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?

Action Required

Written ballot with three-fourths majority vote, recorded on the Action Report 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 Ministerial Services.

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 Ministerial Services with any questions
- Readiness will be evaluated in four areas: call, theology, personal growth and development, and practice of ministry.

Interview for: Recommendation for Reinstatement (Local Pastor or certified candidate) or Readmission:

- To Provisional Membership or Associate Membership
- After leaving the ministerial office to full membership as elder or deacon
- After honorable location or administrative location
- After termination by action of the annual conference

Requirements prior to interview

1. Immediately contact the Office of Ministerial Services for detailed instructions
2. Depending on the circumstances, most of the following will be required:
 - a. Biographical Information Form (Form 102)
 - b. TRAK-1 Background and Credit Check
 - c. Disclosure Form
 - d. Work Authorization Form
 - e. File documents related to the reasons for discontinuance or withdrawal
 - f. 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
 - g. A satisfactory report and recommendation by their charge conference and pastor
 - h. Other letters of recommendation, if needed
 - i. Report of career counseling, if applicable
 - j. Completed Medical Report (Form 103)
 - k. Psychological Assessment
 - l. Pastor Profile
 - m. Additional information or report on requirements set by the Board or annual conference when discontinued or withdrawal.

Documents to be copied and distributed to committee members

#2a from above, Biographical Information Form (Form 102)

#2f from above, reasons for discontinuance or withdrawal

#2g from above, written statement by the candidate

#2i from above, career counseling, if applicable

Suggested Questions

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

Action Required

- For reinstatement as a certified candidate, majority vote which is a recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- For readmission to local pastor status, associate, provisional, or full membership, majority vote which is a recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry (which will require an interview with the Conference Relations Committee) and Cabinet.

Board of Ordained Ministry
Alabama-West Florida Conference, The United Methodist Church

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

The *Discipline* lists the following specific course requirements that must be included in graduate theological education for ordination in the United Methodist Church (see ¶324.4). In order to apply for provisional membership and commissioning, a candidate shall have completed ½ of the basic graduate theological studies from a seminary listed by the University Senate. Note that the Alabama-West Florida Conference requires completion of all educational requirements prior to beginning the two-year residency required for ordination and full membership.

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Theology
- Church history
- Mission of the church in the world
- Evangelism
- Worship/liturgy
- United Methodist Studies: Doctrine, Polity and History
- For candidates on the elder track, these are the additional Alabama-West Florida Conference requirements: two courses in homiletics, one course in church administration or leadership, and one quarter (unit) of clinical pastoral education (CPE).
- For candidates on the deacon track, these are the additional Alabama-West Florida Conference requirements: one seminary-level course in missions or servant leadership and one quarter (unit) of clinical pastoral education (CPE).

Although each seminary has the responsibility to designate which basic course meets the core requirements and advise students of these courses, the conference Board of Ordained Ministry will have the final authority to approve academic studies.

The Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Ordained Ministry requires that all educational requirements (both disciplinary and conference requirements, including one unit of CPE) be completed successfully prior to ordination and full membership.

The Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Ordained Ministry follows the direction from the University Senate rulings on distance learning. The University Senate set these policies:

1. All 13 UMC seminaries and Asbury Theological Seminary are allowed to offer 2/3 of the Master of Divinity degree online. 1/3 of the degree must be done on campus.
2. The only online courses allowed to count toward a degree for a person seeking UMC ordination must come from one of the 13 UMC seminaries and Asbury Theological Seminary.
3. At their June 2010 meeting, the University Senate made the decision to require that all official transcripts of University Senate approved schools must identify the courses that are taken online. The University Senate reconfirmed this decision in January 2011. The term “online courses” includes those that offer some instruction on campus.
4. As of January 2011, few if any additional seminaries will be invited to join the list of non-UMC schools approved for the education of those seeking ordination in the UMC.
5. All non-UMC schools currently approved to educate UMC candidates for ordination must continue to meet University Senate criteria. It is necessary that a non-UMC school either (a) have at least one full-time UMC faculty member with a Ph.D. or Th.D. on a long-term contract teaching the courses in UM history, doctrine and polity (b) or partner with a UMC seminary to offer the required courses in history, doctrine, and polity. This policy takes effect in August 2012.

Four Tracks to Conference Membership

(Book of Discipline, Par. 324)

Course of Study Track for Elder ¶324.6

- High School Education
- Bachelor's Degree
- Basic COS (5 year)
- Must be 40 years of age
- Advanced COS (32 hours)
- Provisional Membership (2 years full time)
- Full Membership and Ordination as Elder

Professional Certification Track for Deacon ¶324.5

- High School Education
- Must be 35 years of age at time of Certified candidacy
- Bachelor's Degree
- Professional Certification (10 semester hours)
- Basic graduate theological studies (24 semester hours)
- Provisional Membership (2 years full time)
- Full Membership and Ordination as Deacon

Seminary Track ¶324.4

- High School Education
- Bachelor's Degree
- M.Div. Degree for elder or deacon Track OR for deacon track, other graduate Theological degree/or graduate degree and Basic graduate theological studies (24 semester hours)
 - Provisional Membership (2 years full time)

• Full Membership and Ordination as Elder or Deacon Master's Degree in Area of Specialization for Deacon ¶324.5

- High School Graduation
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree in area of Specialization
- Basic graduate theological studies (24 semester hours)

Focus	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
<i>Bible</i>	111 The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible	211 Hebrew Bible I	311 New Testament I	411 Hebrew Bible II	511 New Testament II
<i>Theology</i>	112 Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit	212 Theological Heritage: Early & Medieval	312 Theological Heritage: Reformation	412 Wesleyan Movement	512 Contemporary Theology
<i>Congregation</i>	113 Pastoral Care for Spiritual Formation	213 Formation for Discipleship	313 Our Mission: Evangelism	413 Worship and Sacraments	513 Our Mission: Transforming Agent
<i>Pastor</i>	114 Pastoral Leadership & Administration	214 Practice of Preaching	314 Pastoral Care & Counseling	414 Personal and Social Ethics	514 Theology and the Practice of Ministry

- Provisional Membership
(2 years full time)
- Full Membership and
Ordination as Deacon

Advanced Course of Study Description – per the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry

The Advanced Course of Study is a curriculum that enables a local pastor to meet the educational requirements for provisional membership, full conference membership, and ordination as an elder in The United Methodist Church.

It consists of 32 semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. These shall include the areas of evangelism, and United Methodist history, doctrine and polity.

Local pastors who complete the requirements of the Course of Study may continue their preparation for conference membership and ordination as an elder through an Advanced Course of Study program. The 2012 Discipline requires that local pastors who seek ordination through advanced studies:

1. be at least forty years of age;
2. complete a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate, or in some instances, for missional purposes, a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit (see ¶324.3 for complete information);
3. complete the five-year Course of Study, of which no more than ½ of the courses may be taken by correspondence or Internet; up to ½ of COS may be online courses;
4. complete thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study offered by a seminary recognized by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. These shall include the areas of evangelism and United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity (¶324.6).

A candidate may request that work completed at a recognized school of theology be evaluated by the Division of Ordained Ministry for transfer to the Course of Study curriculum. The request for this evaluation should come from the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and grade reports or transcripts must be supplied. Contact the Director of Ministerial Services for more information.

No credit is recognized in the Course of Study for work completed on the undergraduate level. However, some graduate studies in counseling, business, and education may be applied to the Course of Study. Graduate transcripts must be sent to the Division of Ordained Ministry for evaluation before such credit may be granted. Contact the Director of Ministerial Services for more information.

Seminary courses in United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history must be included in the thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study required for conference membership and ordination as an elder. These courses may be taken at an approved school of theology or through the independent study program of the Division of Ordained Ministry.

Is God calling me to licensed/ordained ministry?

The process to become a Certified Candidate will help you and the Church discern how God is calling you. Whether you are pursuing licensed or ordained ministry, the first step is to become a Certified Candidate.

Prior to Candidacy Retreat (these items must all be completed by January 1, 2013)

- △ Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* and *Ministry Inquiry Process* with your minister. You can order these books at www.cokesbury.com.
- △ Must have been a member of UMC church (or another recognized United Methodist ministry setting, such as a campus ministry) for *one* year immediately preceding candidacy application, including a year of service in some form of leadership.
- △ Send a letter to your District Superintendent, including a statement about your call, stating that you would like to begin the candidacy process. Often, your DS will arrange to meet with you in person as well.
- △ Download from www.awfumc.org the authorization form for Background and Credit Check. (On Ministerial Services webpage.) Return the authorization form with check to Office of Ministerial Services, 100 Interstate Park Drive, Suite 100, Montgomery, AL 36109. The cost is \$50.00.
- △ You will be assigned to a mentor, as part of a candidacy mentoring group. You will receive your mentor's name and contact information, though your Group will not start meeting until after the Candidacy Retreat. You may Contact your mentor with questions at any time.
- △ You will receive an email inviting you to log into the Online Candidacy System at www.canapply.gbhem.org. Many steps of your process will be Completed on this website.
- △ Fill out the Candidacy Retreat Registration form found in the candidate packet. Mail it, **along with a \$100 check for a single room/\$75 for a double room**, by **December 1, 2012**. Send the registration form and check to Office of Ministerial Services, 100 Interstate Park Drive, Suite 100, Montgomery , AL 36109. Make the check out to the AWF Conference, memo line: BOM.
- △ Using the Online Candidacy System, complete the following steps. Your mentor and District Superintendent will be prompted by the Online Candidacy System to sign off on your forms. **Do not pay attention to the "projected dates" on the website. Complete all of these items by December 15.**

- + Candidacy Application Form
 - + Guidebook request (\$75 payable online)
 - + Personal Data Inventory
 - + Personal/Professional Reference Forms
 - + Release of Information (just mark task complete; we will fill this out together at the retreat)
- Δ Send a \$150 check payable to the AWF Conference for your psychological assessments. Mail the check, marked “psychological assessment” to the Office of Ministerial Services, 100 Interstate Park Drive, Suite 100, Montgomery, AL 36109. If finances are a concern and you will not be able to pay this amount by December 1, please contact Rev. June Jernigan at june@awfumc.org to work out a payment plan.

At the Candidacy Retreat (January 11-12, 2013 at Blue Lake Assembly)

- Δ Complete psychological assessments and Release of Information

Following the Candidacy Retreat (January – April, 2013)

- Δ Meet with your candidacy mentoring group for six sessions (you may make up a missed session individually with your mentor, and you may not miss more than two sessions)
- Δ High school degree or equivalent is required at this point
- Δ When contacted by the Ministerial Assessment Specialist, make your appointment to discuss your psychological assessment results. Let your mentor know when this appointment has been completed.
- Δ Request interview from your church’s Staff Parish Relations Committee (or equivalent); provide written statement of call and responses to questions in ¶ 310 (*Book of Discipline 2012*) ahead of time, along with any other information the Committee requests.
- Δ Request approval by your church’s Charge Conference (or equivalent).
- Δ Mentor writes mentor report and sends it to DCOM Registrar
- Δ Continue to mark off tasks on www.canapply.gbhem.org as they are completed.
- Δ Complete and prepare the following for your Certification interview with the District Committee on Ministry.
 - + Psychological report (you will have already completed your appointment and paid \$150 fee)
 - + Financial report (download from Ministerial Services webpage)

- + Medical report (download from Ministerial Services webpage)
- + Charge Conference approval form (download from Ministerial Services webpage if not already completed at Charge Conference)
- + Mentor's report (you do not need a copy, just make sure your mentor sent it in)
- + Responses to ¶ 311.2 and any other information requested by your DCOM

District Committee on Ministry interview (April-May, 2013)

- Δ A $\frac{3}{4}$ vote is needed to become a Certified Candidate.
- The Committee may vote "Continue," which means that you will not be Certified at this time, and instead continue in your present status as a candidate
 - The Committee may vote "Certify," which means that you will become a Certified Candidate
 - The Committee may vote "Discontinue," which would discontinue you from the process
 - The Committee may assign you contingencies

Candidacy Process for Licensed or Ordained Ministry Alabama-West Florida Conference

Name: _____ Mentor: _____

ALL Forms needed for candidacy are located at www.afumc.org, under the Ministerial Services tab.

Please keep copies of all of your candidacy paperwork.

Inquiring Candidate	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Read and discuss <i>The Christian as Minister</i> and/or <i>Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process</i> with your pastor or respected clergyperson. These books are available from www.cokesbury.com . (§310)			

Beginning Candidacy	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Be a member in good standing of a UMC or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for at least one year immediately preceding application. (§310.1a)			
2. Candidate shall have graduated from an accredited high school or received a certificate of equivalency. Official HS transcript, GED certificate or college transcript required.			
3. Apply to the DS in writing requesting admission to the candidacy process. Include a statement of call. (§310.1b)			
4. Download from www.awfumc.org , the authorization form for Background & Credit Check. Return to Office of Ministerial Services (with check) for processing. The report will be reviewed by the Director of Ministerial Services and a summary report is sent to the DS and DCOM chair (§310.2b).			
5. Candidate is assigned to a mentor as part of a candidacy mentoring group. Your group will not start meeting until after the Candidacy Retreat.			
6. DS will go online to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) candidacy website and "invite" candidate to begin the process.			

7. Fill out the Candidacy Retreat Registration forms.			
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Candidacy Process	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Candidate receives an email of invitation to the process which will provide a link for the candidate to input biographical information. Website address: https://public.gbhem.org/candidacy . Make copies of all forms submitted online.			
2. Candidate should correctly choose “Alabama-West Florida Conference,” the district with which candidate is affiliated, and the mentor to whom the candidate has been assigned.			
3. The DS will receive an email to electronically “sign off” on the candidate.			
4. The mentor will receive an email to electronically “sign off” on the candidate.			
5. The candidate will be asked to pay the \$75 registration fee. Candidate can pay the fee online with a credit card or mail a check to GBHEM.			
6. Once the fee is paid, the candidate will receive the <i>Fulfilling God’s Call: Guidelines for Candidacy</i> manual and tests will be sent to the mentor.			
Complete all other requirements in preparation for the Candidacy Retreat.			
7. At the Candidacy Retreat, the psychological testing is done. Completed instruments are mailed to GBHEM in the envelope provided. GBHEM scores the instruments and mails the results to our Ministerial Assessment Specialists (MAS). Candidate will have named four references who will receive forms that are also returned to the MAS. Candidate meets with the MAS to discuss the psychological assessment results. (See the Candidate Handbook for more information.)			
8. Meet with your mentoring group for six sessions. 9. Request a meeting with the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee of your local church. If candidate is coming through the alternate route (baptized participant in a UM ministry), conversation needs to happen with the mentor, DCOM and DS to determine an alternative group. The S/PPRC will consider the candidate’s statement of call and responses to Wesley’s historic questions (§310). S/PPRC (or alternate body) votes on approval of the candidate. (§310.1d)			
10. Request approval by your church’s Charge			

<p>Conference. Candidate will meet with the charge conference of his/her local church (or equivalent body determined by the DS and DCOM). The charge conference (or equivalent body) must vote for candidate's approval by a written ballot. Candidate must have a 2/3 approval. (§310) Form 104 must be completed and submitted to the district office.</p> <p>11. Mentor writes mentor report and sends it to DCOM registrar.</p> <p>12. Continue to mark off tasks on www.canapply.gbhem.org as they are completed.</p> <p>13. Complete and prepare for your Certification interview with your DCOM.</p>			
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Where possible, the local church is encouraged to assist candidates with the expenses of candidacy.

Provide other information (if requested by DCOM) for determining gifts, evidence of God's grace, fruit, and demonstration of the call to licensed or ordained ministry.

Candidate will agree for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of their influence as clergy, to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in §§102-104; 160-166. (§310.2d)

Certification Interview	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Following successful completion of the candidacy retreat and a favorable recommendation by the mentor, the candidate is ready to meet with the DCOM for certification. Your DCOM file must be complete prior to this meeting.			
2. Candidate notifies DCOM chairperson that he/she requests a meeting with the DCOM for approval for certification.			
3. Prior to the meeting, the mentor will prepare a written report for the DCOM introducing the candidate and sharing information about the time spent together. The candidate should review and approve the mentor's report prior to submission.			
4. The mentor may be present as a support and a listening ear. The mentor does not have a role during the interview and should refrain from participating.			
5. Approval by written ballot with a ¾ majority vote for recommendation.			
6. Complete Form 113. Mentor logs in to GBHEM website to complete form 113 electronically which indicates candidate has completed certification			

process.			
7. Upon vote of certification, candidate shall be encouraged by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to attend a United Methodist seminary. (§310.2f)			

Continuing Candidacy	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Candidate meets with the DCOM annually for continued recommendation.			
2. Candidate continues to make progress in seminary or COS studies and submits copies of transcripts to DCOM annually.			
3. Charge Conference recommendation in file annually.			

Becoming a Local Pastor	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Certified candidate must be approved by DCOM and the DS to attend licensing school.			
2. An appointment must be projected in order to attend licensing school.			
3. Candidate must attend licensing school in April to be eligible for appointment.			
4. Candidate must have a medical report completed by a physician.			
5. Candidate will continue to meet annually with DCOM.			
6. Candidate will be assigned a local pastor mentor.			
7. Candidate will make annual progress in Course of Study.			

Becoming Commissioned	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Certified candidate for one year, maximum of 12 years (without being under appointment).			
2. Complete all educational requirements.			
3. Medical report by physician.			
4. Seek approval of the DCOM.			
5. Make application for provisional membership to Board of Ordained Ministry.			
6. Meet with the Board of Ordained Ministry for			

interviews.			
7. Approval by the Board of Ordained Ministry.			
8. Election to provisional membership by clergy session.			
9. Commissioned to ministry as provisional deacon or elder.			

Becoming Ordained	Date	In File	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Serve 2 years full time (or equivalent) in an approved ministry setting, under appointment.			
2. Participate in a Residency in Ordained Ministry group for 2 years.			
3. Participate in all Residency, meetings, events and other experiences.			
4. Provisional member has 8 years to come into full connection (leave time included).			
5. Make application for full connection to Board of Ordained Ministry.			
6. Meet with the Board of Ordained Ministry for interviews.			
7. Approval by the Board of Ordained Ministry.			
8. Election to full connection by clergy session.			
9. Ordained to the order of elder or order of deacon.			

Note: ¶ numbers reference to *2012 Book of Discipline*.

Key Words to Know

1. Associate Member (§321 - §323)

Conference relationship available to persons who have reached forty years of age, have served as full-time local pastors at least four years, completed the five-year Course of Study, studies for license as a local pastor, completed a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or an equivalent degree in a college or university listed by the University Senate. They must also be recommended by the DCOM and the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment and satisfied the conference regarding their physical, mental, and emotional health. Associate members who meet all of the provisions of §322.4 and §324.6 may apply to the Conference Board for Provisional and then Full Membership.

2. Group Candidacy Mentor

A deacon or elder in full connection or local pastor who has completed the Course of Study assigned to an Exploring Candidate to support and guide them through the candidacy process beginning with the Candidacy Retreat.

3. Professional Certification (certified)

The church's recognition that an individual has met the required standards for academic training, experience, and continuing study necessary to achieve and maintain professional excellence in a particular area of ministry such as Christian education, music, youth ministry, evangelism, camp/retreat ministry, spiritual formation, older adult ministry, or church business administrator. Information and details about this process and these careers can be found at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry website: www.gbhem.org/certification/index.html. Information about the church business administrator process can be found at www.umacba.org.

4. Candidacy Certification (certified candidate) (§310- 314)

Candidacy phase when requirements for Inquiring & Exploring Candidate are met.

5. Commissioning (commissioned minister) (§325)

The credentialing of provisional deacons and elders. The act of the church that publicly acknowledges God's call and response, talents, gifts and training of the candidate. The church invokes the Holy Spirit as the candidate is commissioned to be a faithful servant leader among the people, to lead the church in service, to proclaim the Word of God and to equip others for ministry.

6. Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) (§635)

The body responsible for credentialing provisional/commissioned ministers, local pastors, and full connection deacons and elders.

7. Course of Study

The basic theological education program of the Division of Ordained Ministry, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. It is provided for those who are licensed as local pastors who are unable to attend an approved seminary. Participants in the program should have completed candidacy for ordained ministry, the studies for license as a local pastor, and have been approved/recommended for license by the DCOM and Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

8. Deacon (§328 - 331)

Persons called by God, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word and Service to both the community and the congregation.

9. District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM)

The body that oversees, cares for, and evaluates candidates for ministry through the Inquiring, Exploring and Certified Candidate phases. Also responsible for maintaining a relationship with local pastors.

10. Elder (§332 - 336)

Persons who are ordained to a lifetime ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order; authorized to preach and teach the Word of God, to administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the Church for mission and ministry.

11. Exploring Candidate

The second step or phase in the candidacy process for ordained deacon, elder, or local pastor. A group candidacy mentor is assigned. The candidate, group and mentors work together to continue discerning the candidate's call to ministry.

12. Full Connection

The relationship of ordained deacons and elders to the Annual Conference. They have completed the process for ordination, including educational requirements, and been elected to full membership in the annual conference.

13. Inquiring Candidate

The first step in the candidacy process for ordained deacon, elder, or local pastor. The candidate reads and discusses *The Christian as Minister* and *The Ministry Inquiry Process*.

14. License for Pastoral Ministry (§315 - 320)

Credential given to a local pastor when he or she is appointed as pastor of a local church.

15. Licensing School for Pastoral Ministry

The studies are the first exposure for most candidates to the practice of ministry. Public worship, pastoral care for spiritual formation, organization of a parish for nurture and mission, and educational ministries in the church are the major areas of concern covered in the eighty-hour school. The candidate must be approved by the DCOM for licensing as a local pastor before attending Licensing School. There must be a projected appointment for the candidate in order to attend Licensing School. The candidate must attend the school before being approved by the clergy session of the annual conference and being appointed as a local pastor. Licensing School is the beginning of Basic Course of Study.

16. Local Pastor

Persons who are licensed and appointed to preach, conduct divine worship, and perform the duties of a pastor but are not ordained as elders.

17. Ordination (ordained)

The church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit.

18. Provisional Membership (§324 - 327)

Conference relationship of commissioned ministers (deacons and elders) who are on trial in preparation for membership in full connection in the annual conference as deacons and elders. During that two-year period, they are Residents in Ministry under the care of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and participants in the residency program.

19. Residency

The Alabama-West Florida Conference two-year program for provisional/commissioned ministers.