

# Local Pastors and Associate Members Handbook



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

2021-2022

Interim

## **Local Pastors and Associate Members Handbook Alabama-West Florida Conference**

This handbook is a guide for the local pastor who is licensed for pastoral ministry and for associate members. It is to assist in the call of serving God and carrying out the ministry of Jesus Christ through the local church and ministry setting.

In addition, this handbook can assist District Superintendents, District Committees on Ordained Ministry and Mentors in working with local pastors and associate members. It is divided into sections to allow and facilitate updating and improvement. It is not intended to be the final authority on a situation or condition, but to serve as a practical and understandable resource in the ministry of the local pastor.

All references relate to the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, Paragraphs 310---323.

This handbook is online at [www.awfumc.org/ministerialservices](http://www.awfumc.org/ministerialservices).

### **License for Pastoral Ministry (par. 315)**

All persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry may recommend to the executive session of the Alabama- West Florida Annual Conference the licensing of local pastors who have completed the following:

- An annual review by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (par. 312). The primary purpose of the interview is to determine the candidate's fitness and readiness for pastoral ministry using documentation from candidacy certification (par. 311), the local pastor licensing school and any other source required by the AWF Annual Conference.
- The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the Division of Ordained Ministry or 1/3 of their work for a Master of Divinity Degree at a school of theology listed by the University Senate. The local pastor licensing school is held annually and sponsored by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Seminary graduates do not have to attend licensing school.

### **Responsibilities and Duties of the Local Pastor (par. 316)**

- The local pastor is approved annually by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and may be appointed by the Bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor, including the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of marriage, burial, confirmation, and membership reception while serving a charge or extension ministry.
- The local pastor is recommended by the DCOM and licensed by the resident bishop to serve only the charge to which he/she is assigned. A license shall not be issued until an appointment to a pastoral charge has been made. A candidate may attend licensing school only if an appointment is projected.

- Those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the Bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- The license for pastoral ministry remains valid only so long as the appointment continues and shall be recertified by the bishop when assignments change between sessions of the annual conference.
- A local pastor may be granted an interim license for pastoral ministry between sessions of the AWF Annual Conference upon the recommendation of the Cabinet, the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, and the Executive Committee of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and may be appointed by the Bishop. (par. 317)
- The District Superintendent supervises the local pastor. The licensed pastor shall be assigned a clergy mentor while in the Course of Study or in seminary (par. 348).
- The local pastor shall attend each session of the AWF Annual Conference and be amenable to the clergy session.
- Membership of full-time and part-time local pastors is held in the AWF Annual Conference. They shall have the right to vote on all matters presented to the Annual Conference, except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General, jurisdictional or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
- Local pastors who have completed Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment before the election may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional or central conferences. (par. 316.6)
- Local pastors may serve on any board, commission or committee with voice and vote, except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status and ordination. (par. 318.5)
- Part---time and full---time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may serve on the District Committee on Ministry with voice and vote.

- Full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may serve on the Board of Ordained Ministry with voice and vote. (par. 318.5) They shall not be eligible to serve as delegates to the General, jurisdictional, or central conferences. When possible, at least two associate members or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study shall be included as members of the Board of Ordained Ministry with voice and vote. (par. 635)

Part-time and full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may serve as candidacy mentors. Clergy mentors must be clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study.

- All local pastors shall receive written communication about decisions regarding their relationship with the annual conference.

### **Categories of Local Pastor**

In recommending to the AWF Annual Conference those who have met the requirements to serve as local pastors for the ensuing year, the Board of Ordained Ministry shall classify them in three categories under which one may serve:

#### **Full-time Local Pastor (par. 318.1)**

- Serves under appointment to a charge on a full-time basis.
- Is paid at least the minimum salary and benefits as established by the AWF Annual Conference.
- Has completed or is in the process of completing the Course of Study by taking four courses per year.
- Following completion of the Course of Study, maintains a continuing education program as directed by the Annual Conference.
- May not be a full-time student in any school.
- Full-time local pastors must attend a Course of Study regional school connected with a UMC seminary.

### **Part-Time Local Pastor (par. 318.2)**

- Does not devote his/her entire time to ministry in the local church.
- Has met the requirements for licensing.
- Is paid less than the minimum salary as established by the AWF Annual Conference and no benefits.
- Shall complete two courses per year in a Course of Study School or the online curriculum prescribed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, until the completion of the Course of Study.
- May be appointed to small membership churches that are grouped together in a charge.
- Part-time local pastors attend a Course of Study extension school. Our extension school is the Alabama Course of Study School.

### **Student Local Pastor (par. 318.3)**

- The category of “Student Local Pastor” was reinstated in 2012.
- A student local pastor is defined as a candidate who is a student “in a conference other than the conference in which they are certified candidates.” Student Local Pastors will be responsible to their home annual conference for continuation of their certified candidacy and to the annual conference in which they are appointed for approval and continuation of their license for pastoral ministry.
- (par. 318.3)

## **To Continue Serving as a Local Pastor**

It is the responsibility of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to annually review and recommend for continuance all persons who are licensed local pastors.

The following guidelines will be used:

- Persons licensed as local pastors who are not provisional members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the Course of Study.
  
- Upon completion of each year's educational and other qualifications, a local pastor who is not a provisional member may be recommended for continuance by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
- The clergy members in full connection of the AWF Annual Conference may approve continuance of a local pastor after reference to and recommendation by its Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Full-time local pastors shall complete the five-year Basic Course of Study curriculum within eight years (part-time local pastors shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within twelve years), unless family or other circumstances preclude the local pastor's ability to meet these requirements. An extension beyond the prescribed limit may be granted annually by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority vote of the District Committee on Ministry, recommendation of the AWF Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and the vote of the clergy executive session of the Annual Conference.
- A local pastor may choose to remain in a local relationship with the AWF Annual Conference upon having completed the Course of Study.
- Full-time Local Pastors who have completed the educational requirements are required to receive a minimum average of 2.0 CEU's per year. Part--time local pastors are encouraged to do continuing education.

· Local pastors under appointment are required to take COS classes. Persons who are “approved but not appointed” do not take Course of Study classes. However, there is an allowance for an exception. The Board of Ordained Ministry and District Superintendent may allow a person to continue in Course of Study for up to two years without an appointment. The decision to allow for this exception is entirely up to the Board of Ordained Ministry and District Superintendent. This exception gives flexibility if a licensed local pastor loses an appointment mid-year or is simply waiting for an anticipated change in an appointment.

### **Discontinuance of the Local Pastor (par. 320.1)**

When a local pastor retires or is no longer appointed by the Bishop and/or the District Committee on Ordained Ministry does not recommend continuation of license, license and credentials are surrendered to the District Superintendent for deposit with the Secretary of the Conference via the Office of Ministerial Services. After consultation with the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership is to be held. The Conference Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the resident bishop a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of the local pastor as required in par. 635.3d.

### **Reinstatement of the Local Pastor (par. 320.4)**

Reinstatement takes place only upon recommendation by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry from which the license was discontinued, the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet. Persons seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist Church for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement. A recommendation from the charge conference where membership is held is required in addition to other documents determined by the District Committee and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.



## **Retirement of the Local Pastor (par. 320.5)**

Local pastors who have made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study process (as outlined in par. 318.1 or.2) may be recognized as a retired local pastor.

Retirement provisions for local pastors shall be the same as those for clergy members. Retired local pastors may attend annual conference sessions with voice but not vote. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the bishop to a charge and licensed upon recommendation by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit. (par. 320.5)

Local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may upon retirement annually request from the District Committee on Ministry and the bishop a license to continue to serve in the local church where they hold membership for the purpose of providing sacramental rites of baptism and Holy Communion, at the request of the appointed pastor. (par. 316.8)

## **Associate Membership (par. 321)**

Associate members of the annual conference are in the itinerant ministry of the Church and are available on a continuing basis for appointment by the bishop. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve as their superiors in office shall direct.

They shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry and shall be granted the same security of appointment as provisional members and members in full connection.

Associate members shall:

- \* Have a right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except constitutional amendments and all matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy.
- \* Serve on any board, commission, or committee of an annual conference.
- \* Not be eligible for election as delegates to the General, jurisdictional, or central conferences.
- \* Be subject to the provisions governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension.
- \* May retire under the provisions of the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, par. 357.
- \* Shall retain the license for pastoral ministry in the local church and maintain a relationship as retired clergy members of the annual conference.
- \* May be received as provisional members of the conference under conditions as set forth in the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, par. 324.6 upon receiving a 3/4 majority vote of the executive session members, present and voting.

Local pastors may be elected to associate membership (par. 322) by vote of the clergy members in full connection, upon recommendation of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, when they have met the following conditions:

- \* Been recommended to the clergy session based on a 3/4 majority vote of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

- \* Reached age forty.
- \* Served four years as full-time local pastors.
- \* Completed the five-year Basic Course of Study in addition to the studies for license as a local pastor, up to 1/2 of which may be taken by correspondence or on-line/distance learning courses, or received a Master of Divinity degree that includes the basic graduate theological studies from a school of theology listed by the University Senate.
  - \* 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.
  - \* Been recommended by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
  - \* Been recommended by a ¾ majority vote by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
  - \* Declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment.
  - \* Satisfied the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry in regards to their physical, mental, and emotional health (the annual conference shall require psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse to provide additional information on the candidate's fitness for the ministry).
  - \* Be willing to make a complete dedication to the highest ideals of the Christian life.
  - \* Prepare at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and give satisfactory answers in a written doctrinal examination administered by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The full packet for associate membership is found on the Board of Ordained Ministry web page at [www.awfumc.org/ministerialservices](http://www.awfumc.org/ministerialservices).
  - \* Upon recommendation of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the annual conference may equate part-time service to the requirement of full-time service.

**Local Pastors Preparing for Provisional Membership and Elders Orders (par. 324.6)**

Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership and commissioning when they have:

- \* Completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent.
- \* Completed the five-year Course of Study **OR** completed an equivalent program of study embedded in an undergraduate degree at a UM-related college or university.
- \* Completed an Advanced Course of Study consisting of 32 semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent, as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The Advanced Course of Study shall include the basic graduate theological studies (par. 324.4a)
- \* A Bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a college or university recognized by the University Senate.
- \* Satisfy all other requirements as required for provisional membership as set forth in the AWF Conference Board of Ordained Ministry Handbook and the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, par. 324.6.

## **Course of Study Schools**

A local pastor must make satisfactory progress in the Course of Study School each year. The grading and attendance policy for the AWF Conference is as follows:

- If a Course of Study student does not show up for class without notice, he/she will be billed for the course cost paid by MEF funds. If he/she does not pay the money owed, he/she will not receive any additional MEF funds until the bill is paid.
- If a Course of Study student receives an incomplete in a course, no additional MEF funds will be available to him/her until the course is successfully completed.
- If a Course of Study student receives a grade of D or F in a COS course, he/she must retake the course at his/her own expense.
- In a Course of Study class, a grade of C or above is deemed successful completion and is required to receive credit for the courses from the AWF Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Upon receipt, Course of Study grades sent from GBHEM to the Director of Ministerial Services will be forwarded to the District Superintendents, the DCOM Chairs and the DCOM registrars.

Full-time local pastors must take Course of Study classes at a regional school connected with a United Methodist seminary. Course of Study classes are held in various schools of theology. The most convenient for AWF **full-time local pastors** is at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Information can be obtained by contacting Amy Walker amy.elizabeth.walker@emory.edu. The website is <http://www.candler.emory.edu/programs/cos/>.

**Part-time local pastors** attend an extension school for Course of Study. Our extension school for part-time local pastors, The Alabama Course of Study program, offers classes at Huntingdon College and Birmingham---Southern College on weekends year round. Contact Peggy Ryan at [www.alcosumc.org](http://www.alcosumc.org).

All registration forms must be approved by the District Superintendent and submitted through the Office of Ministerial Services. MEF scholarships to assist with expenses are available for every attendee. Contact Rev. Jenni Hendrix, Director of Ministerial Services.

## **Basic Course of Study Online Classes**

A limited number of the Basic Course of Study classes are available in an online format through the Division of Ordained Ministry. By Discipline, no more than one-half of the classes may be taken in this format. For more information go to [www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org) and see online Course of Study.

## **Advanced Course of Study**

The purpose of the Advanced Course of Study for Ordained Ministry is to provide a curriculum that will enable a local pastor to meet the educational requirements for provisional membership.

- † The courses chosen will not duplicate those included in the basic five---year Course of Study.
- † Each student shall have courses approved and recorded by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, working through the Office of Ministerial Services.
- † Advanced Course of Study Courses are offered during the same time period as the regular Course of Study Schools.
- † Advanced Course of Study Courses can be taken at Duke Divinity School.

## **Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members**

A Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members has been organized to provide mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. Rev. Dunford Cole is presently Chair of the Fellowship.

The function of the fellowship is to:

- Provide regular gatherings of members.
- Encourage local pastors to continue study beyond the Course of Study.
- Develop a bond of unity and common commitment among the members.
- Enable the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust.
- Each year at the Annual Conference, a lunch gathering is scheduled.

**Contact Information:**

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry: [www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)

For COS Transcripts: Email GBHEM at: [evaluations@gbhem.org](mailto:evaluations@gbhem.org)

The Alabama Course of Study: [www.alcosumc.org](http://www.alcosumc.org)

Emory Course of Study School: [www.candler.emory.edu/programs/cos](http://www.candler.emory.edu/programs/cos)

Duke Course of Study School: [www.divinity.duke.edu/cos](http://www.divinity.duke.edu/cos)

Chair of Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members:

Rev. Dunford Cole [revdunfordcole@gmail.com](mailto:revdunfordcole@gmail.com)

Director of Ministerial Services, AWF Conference:

Rev. Jenni Hendrix [jenni@awfumc.org](mailto:jenni@awfumc.org) or 334.356.8014 ext. 123

Information can be found online at [www.awfumc.org/ministerialservices](http://www.awfumc.org/ministerialservices).

**NOTES:**