

Certification in Specialized Ministries in the United Methodist Church

Certification in specialized ministries in the United Methodist Church is available to qualifying persons to demonstrate a level of competency and standards set by the denomination. These standards include faith formation, academic training, and experience, membership in the United Methodist Church and continuing study in the area of specialization.

The church's need for individuals who can serve to the best of their ability makes certification by the United Methodist Church increasingly important.

Three Tracks for Certification in the United Methodist Church

There are three tracks of certification; **professional, undergraduate, and para-professional** and each track is available in seven areas of specialized ministry:

CAMPING AND RETREAT MINISTRIES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

EVANGELISM

MUSIC MINISTRY

OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

YOUTH MINISTRIES

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Professional certification is the United Methodist Church's recognition that an individual has been called, made a commitment to serve and has fulfilled the required standards for academic training, experience, and continuing study to serve with excellence in an area of specialized ministry. The church certification in specialized ministry offered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry was born of a desire on the part of individuals to serve the church with excellence and to serve more effectively.

Professional certification provides biblical and theological training, knowledge of the United Methodist Church structure and resources, skill development, support, and accountability.

Professional certification is available to lay persons, ordained deacons and elders, and diaconal ministers who meet the standards set by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

ENROLLMENT

A one-time enrollment (“**Enrollment for the Professional Certification Studies in Ministry Careers**” – HE4064, found on web site www.gbhem.org) must be completed with the student's annual conference BOM and with the DOM, GBHEM. This is the only form required to be eligible to proceed with the certification studies and to receive scholarship aid from the DOM, GBHEM.

Registration in a particular educational event is with the institution offering the course. The student must register each time a course is to be taken. The school offering the course will determine the registration fee and will collect the fee. Scholarship application can be made through the school to GBHEM on Certification/Deacon Scholarship Application (Form 116).

Enrollment forms are available from the annual conference BOM; the DOM, GBHEM website www.gbhem.org.

- 1. Contact** the certification registrar of your annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) or Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM), e-mail: certification@gbhem.org, telephone 615-340-7375, to get information about: a) required certification courses, b) scholarship information, c) enrollment form HE4064 (can also be downloaded from www.gbhem.org).
- 2. Decide** which track you want to take for the fulfillment of the requirements for certification in your specific field.
- 3. Enroll** in the program by completing form HE4064, “Enrollment for Professional Certification Studies” and sending it to The Division of Ordained Ministry, Education Team/Certification, P. O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203-0007. Send a copy to the certification registrar in your annual conference, a second copy to the Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM) and keep a copy for your own records.
- 4. Identify** the track you have chosen and contact the academic institution to register. Complete the course work.

APPLICATION FOR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

When all the course work is completed, send one copy of form 323790, “Application for Professional Certification”, to your annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Send a second copy of the application with a copy of your transcripts to the Division of Ordained Ministry, Education Team/Certification, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), P. O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203-0007.

Upon receipt of your application,

1. The Education team of GBHEM will (a) verify that the educational requirements have been met, (b) examine your transcripts, and (c) verify your employment experience.
2. Your annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry will (a) **contact** the three references given in the application, ask their evaluation, using forms prepared by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church for that purpose, (b) **Administer** a psychological assessment and criminal background check, (c) **Schedule** an interview, (d) **Verify** your local church membership, abilities, skills, experience, and leadership position in your chosen field; (e) **Make** a recommendation to the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry concerning your certification.

The annual conference board will notify you and the Division of Ordained Ministry, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, of the action taken by the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry concerning your application. If favorable and the Division of Ordained Ministry concurs, a certificate of certification will be sent to the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry for presentation during the annual conference meeting.

The annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry will keep a record of all certified persons and the areas of their certification and publish their names annually in the conference journal. When a certified person transfers from one annual conference to another, his/her records are forwarded to the new annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

The continuing validity of certification is dependent upon a biennial review and renewal by the certified person. The forms for this purpose are prepared by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist church and are available from the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA OF SPECIALIZED MINISTRY

Qualifications

Supervised experience shall be approved by the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry based upon personal knowledge and investigation, plus the information and evaluation provided by the personal references presented on behalf of the person seeking certification. Supervised experience shall be defined as a contractual agreement with supervision, accountability, evaluation, continuing education and a stipend.

Professional Leadership

Appointed, assigned or employed relationship in the certified field in The United Methodist Church is interpreted to mean that a person is responsible to provide leadership for programming

in The United Methodist Church, or in an ecumenical ministry setting, as long as he/she is under supervision. There shall be a written job description and contractual arrangements, in writing, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. *Full-time* is measured more in terms of full leadership responsibility than as a number of hours or days worked per week or per year? The applicant must be serving in the certified area of ministry in The United Methodist Church at the time of certification.

Standards for Certification

- 1. Recognized Christian character**, personal competence, integrity, and commitment to the church's total ministry and mission.
- 2. Ability to relate to people**, to work with volunteers and staff, to function in the role with emotional maturity and sound judgment.
- 3. Demonstrated leadership**, ability to integrate theory and practice, an understanding of and commitment to the church's ministry.
- 4. A member of The United Methodist Church** for at least one (1) year before enrolling in the certification process— affiliate or full member.
- 5. Knowledge of The United Methodist Church's** structure, polity, resources, program, and mission.
- 6. Psychological assessment** and criminal background check is required prior to certification

The annual conference BOM will be informed of the administrative process and maintenance of reports and personal files.

Academic requirements:

Graduate Degree Track – A graduate degree, (a master's degree, doctor of ministry, doctorate in theological studies, master's of divinity, master's of theological studies) including a concentration (minimum of 15 semester hours or equivalent quarter hours), in the area of specialization and a course in United Methodist studies. This degree should be from a University Senate-approved seminary or a graduate degree from a United Methodist college or university where the Division of Ordained Ministry has approved the graduate program for the fulfillment of the requirements for certification.

Bachelor's Degree with Graduate Courses Track – A bachelor's degree plus five (5) graduate certification courses in the area of spiritual formation including United Methodist studies.

Effective supervised experience for at least four (4) years of leadership with full responsibility in the area in which certification is sought.

An expressed commitment to continuing education that includes a planned program to enrich both personal and professional growth. Such a program shall include: 1) reading; 2) study – individual and group learning events; 3) participation in professional, community, denominational, and ecumenical groups; 4) renewal of spiritual life; and 5) evaluation by the immediate supervisor.

Be a member of a group or association related to the area of specialization.

Certification Status (ALL TRACKS)

A certificate of certification is issued by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) of The United Methodist Church to persons who fulfill all the standards of certification in their chosen field of specialty.

Biennial Renewal (ALL TRACKS)

1. To remain valid, certification must be renewed biennially (every other year) on even years regardless of the year of entrance. Before annual conference, the conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) will send to all annual conference certified persons a copy of form HE4004, "Request for Review and Renewal of Professional/Para-Professional Certification." The completed form is returned at the time specified to the annual conference in order for the BOM to make renewal status recommendations to the annual conference.
2. Following renewal, an Annual Report Profile form is completed by the annual conference BOM and sent to the Division of Ordained Ministry, The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church.
3. The supervisor providing the evaluation for certification renewal is defined as one with whom the person works closely, who is in a position to evaluate his/her work accurately and to whom the person is accountable for accomplishing this ministry.
4. Provided all requirements are met, renewal of certification is permissible for certified persons who currently are not serving in a United Methodist setting, or who may be unemployed, but wish to keep their certification valid. If the person is unemployed or on leave a district supervisor or conference staff member may complete the report. To maintain certification, the person is expected to actively participate in his/her area of ministry.
5. Certification is valid for as long as the individual wishes, provided all requirements are fulfilled and the biennial review is updated.
6. The annual conference BOM may withhold certification renewal for a valid cause, subject to the right of the individual to appeal to the annual conference. If the appeal is not sustained by the annual conference, the person will no longer have the certified status in The United Methodist Church.
7. Certified persons may give us their status upon written notification to the annual conference BOM. If through oversight or neglect, the conference fails to act in this manner, the certified person should not be jeopardized thereby, and the conference should act quickly to correct the deficiency.
8. If certification is allowed to lapse by failure of the certified person, the person must then meet the current standards in force. Certification cannot be renewed on the same basis as the original certification after a lapse or more than one (1) year.

Conference Transfer (ALL TRACKS)

When a certified person moves to another annual conference, the certified records are transferred to the new annual conference. The transferring person shall write to the new conference BOM requesting a transfer of his/her certification status from the former conference and shall send a copy of the request to the former conference. The new conference BOM shall review the request and upon approval, shall notify the former conference board that will send the certified persons accumulated file to the new conference.

Undergraduate certification

Undergraduate certification is available by taking an undergraduate degree at one of the United Methodist Colleges whose programs have been approved by GBHEM and then completing two years of employment in the area of specialized ministry. After two years of employment and at least two years of membership in the United Methodist Church, application should be made to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry on “Application for Professional Certification” (Form 323790) that can be downloaded from www.gbhem.org. A copy should be sent to the certification registrar of the applicant’s annual conference BOM. In both instances copies of transcripts should be sent with the application.

To request additional information on United Methodist Colleges with approved undergraduate programs, send an email to certification@gbhem.org.

Para-professional certification

Para-professional certification is available to those working in areas of specialized ministry through programs approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. These programs are available through some jurisdictions, annual conferences, colleges and seminaries. Para professional certification does not have academic credit and is designed for persons seeking training in a specialized ministry as a worker or volunteer. Those seeking para-professional certification should take the following steps.

STEP 1: Persons seeking para-professional certification in the United Methodist Church should make their interest known to the certification registrar of their annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry. For the name and address of the registrar contact your annual conference office, or the Education office of the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

STEP 2: Study the requirements for para-professional certification which include personal standards, church membership, course work and experience in the area of specialized ministry. Register with the program chosen to fulfill the course requirements. Program information can be obtained from the annual conference or from www.gbhem.org.

STEP 3: Personal Requirements

- Recognized Christian character, personal competence, integrity, and commitment to the church's total ministry and mission.
- Ability to function with emotional maturity and sound judgment; ability to relate to people and to work with others.
- Demonstrated leadership; ability to integrate theory and practice; understanding of the relationship to the mission of the church.

STEP 4: Church Requirements

- A member of the United Methodist Church for at least two years at the time of application for para-professional certification. (This should be done when course work is completed.)
- Knowledge of the United Methodist Church's structure and mission, curriculum resources and programs.

STEP 5: Course Requirements

Applicants must have completed a course of work approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Division of Ordained Ministry, Education Team of the United Methodist Church. (Information on approved programs can be obtained from the conference office or on www.gbhem.org.)

STEP 6: Experience in area of Specialized Ministry

Persons seeking para-professional certification must have two years experience in their area of specialized ministry at the time of applying for certification. This can be through employment, full or part-time, or volunteering in a United Methodist Church setting.

STEP 7: Following the meeting of requirements individuals may apply for para-professional certification by completing an application form available from the annual conference registrar or GBHEM.

STEP 8: Each applicant must submit a minimum of three references from persons acquainted with her/his personal standards, church relationship, and course work. Among the three persons must be a United Methodist minister (ordained deacon, ordained elder, or local pastor), a course work teacher under whom the person has studied, and a general officer in a local church with whom the person seeking para-professional certification has worked.

STEP 9: The completed application form must be sent to the registrar of the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry and a copy to the Division of Ordained Ministry, Education Team/Certification, GBHEM, P. O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203-0007.

STEP 10: The annual conference board of ordained Ministry will conduct a background check of the applicant, a psychological background test is also recommended.

STEP 11: The Division of Ordained Ministry, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Education Team will review the application to determine that all requirements have been met and notify the annual conference board of ordained ministry. The annual conference board of ordained ministry will then interview the applicant and if all standards and requirements have been met make a decision to grant para-professional certification.

STEP 12: Upon vote of the conference Board of ordained ministry indicating the applicant has been approved for para-professional certification, the Division of Ordained ministry, Education Team will be notified and will prepare the certificate sending it to the board of ordained ministry who will present it to the applicant, usually at the annual conference session.

STEP 13: The para-professional certification is subject to biennial review and approval by the conference board of ordained ministry. The individual must continue to meet the standards maintained by the Division of Ordained Ministry, Education Team. Every other year the conference board will send all the certified persons the renewal form which must be completed and returned by the date specified. Certification is renewable for as long as the certified person desires it contingent upon meeting the requirements set for continuing education and approval of the conference BOM.

APPROVED PARA-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

eChristianEd, Columbia College, 1301 Columbia College Drive, Columbia, SC 29203
www.eChristianEd.com