



Steps into
Ordained
Ministry

Deacon and Elder

Steps Into Ordained Ministry — Deacon and Elder

Ordained ministers are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership in specialized ministries among the people of God. Ordained ministers are called to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world, and the promise of God for creation. Within these specialized ministries, deacons are called to ministries of Word and Service, and elders are called to ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order.

—¶137, 2004 Book of Discipline

Candidacy for ordained ministry is the first formal step toward annual conference membership and ordination as a deacon or an elder in full connection in The United Methodist Church.

The Inquiring Candidate

- To begin, a candidate contacts the pastor in a local church, another deacon or elder, or the DS to inquire about the process of candidacy. Persons are encouraged to use the resources *The Christian as Minister* and the *Ministry Inquiry Process*. These resources are available from Cokesbury, 1-800-672-1789.

Phase One

- After completing the above, the inquiring candidate who wishes to continue, applies to the district superintendent in writing for admission to the candidacy program. The person shall have been a member in good standing of The United Methodist Church for at least two (2) years immediately preceding application for candidacy, including a year of service in congregational leadership before applying.
- The candidate is assigned a candidacy mentor by the dCOM in consultation with the district superintendent and completes Form 101 – Application for Candidacy Guidebook.
- The candidate enrolls in the candidacy program by sending the enrollment form and the score sheet from the *Inventory of Religious Activities and Interests (IRAI)* to the Division of Ordained Ministry, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203, with a check or money order for \$50. The fee includes the cost of the *Candidacy Guidebook* and other administrative expenses.
- The candidacy mentor helps the candidate examine the call of God in light of the biblical record, the role and function of United Methodist clergy, personal gifts and grace, and evidence of leadership. After completing the first two sections of the *Candidacy Guidebook*, the candidate makes a commitment to ministry as a deacon, elder, or local pastor. (¶311.1)

Phase Two

- In order to become a certified candidate, a person shall have graduated from an accredited high school or received a certificate of equivalency. The candidate will then consult with the pastor and Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee sharing a written statement reflecting on the call and requesting recommendation for certification.
- The committee shall interview the candidate and make a recommendation to the charge conference.
- The charge conference votes whether to recommend the candidate to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. The recommendation must be confirmed by a two-thirds majority vote. (¶311.2)

The Certified Candidate

- The candidate appears before the dCOM for examination and approval after completing psychological assessment as required by the annual conference.
- The candidate submits a written response to questions regarding God's call to ordained ministry; personal beliefs, gifts, and future usefulness; and understanding of the ministry of the deacon and elder in The United Methodist Church.
- The candidate agrees to maintain the highest ideals of Christian life as set forth in *The Book of Discipline*. (¶¶102-104; 160-166)
- *The candidate releases required psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks and reports of child abuse.* (¶311.3)

Local Pastor Studies (optional)

- A certified candidate may apply for license as a local pastor after completing studies prescribed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry administered by the BOM or after completing one-third of the work for a master of divinity degree.
- Licensing studies are a prerequisite to appointment as a full-time, part-time, or student local pastor.
- A local pastor must make satisfactory progress in the Course of Study.

Candidacy Renewal

- The candidate's progress must be reviewed through an annual interview and candidacy renewed annually by the dCOM on recommendation of the charge conference.
- A candidate who is enrolled as a student shall present an official transcript to the dCOM annually. The school must be recognized by the University Senate of The United Methodist Church.

Completion of Candidacy toward Probationary Membership and Commissioning

- Candidacy requirement: Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for at least one (1) year and no more than twelve (12) years. (§324.1)
- Service requirement: Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the dCOM. (§324.2)
- Undergraduate requirement: A candidate shall have completed a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate. Exceptions may be made, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry:
 - a) for persons who have a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours of credit
 - b) for Master of Divinity graduates who have attended a college that is not recognized by the University Senate. (§324.3)
- Graduate requirement:
 - a) Candidates for deacon or elder shall have completed a minimum of 24 semester hours of graduate theological studies (BGTS) in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, theology, church history, mission, worship/liturgy, evangelism, and United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree.
 - b) A candidate for elder shall have received one-half of the studies toward a Master of Divinity or its equivalent including one-half of the BGTS from a seminary listed by the University Senate.
 - c) A candidate for deacon shall have received one-half of the studies of a master's degree from a University Senate-approved school or received a master's degree in the area of ministry in which one will serve and completed one-half of the BGTS. (§324.4)
- Alternate routes to ordination:
 - a) See *Discipline* §324.5 for alternate route for deacons.
 - b) See *Discipline* §324.6 for route for licensed local pastors.
- Other requirements: Each candidate shall a) present a satisfactory certificate of health; b) respond to a written and oral doctrinal examination; c) provide a written concise autobiographical statement; d) be interviewed and recommended by a three-fourths majority vote of the dCOM; e) submit a form provided by the BOM with a notarized statement detailing any written accusations or convictions for felony, misdemeanor, or incident of sexual misconduct or child abuse; and f) have a personal interview with the BOM. (§324.8-14)

Full Membership and Ordination as a Deacon or an Elder

- A candidate who has been a probationary member for at least three (3) full annual conference years following completion of educational requirements may be admitted into membership in full connection in annual conference and ordained as a deacon or an elder. (§330 and 335)
- A candidate for the order of deacon who has a) served under Episcopal appointment in a ministry of service the entire probationary period; b) been supervised throughout the probationary period by a district superintendent and by the BOM; and c) responded to an examination administered by the BOM on the covenantal relationship to God, the church, and the order of deacon, the understanding of *diaconia*, servant leadership, and the interrelatedness of the church and the world may be recommended by the BOM to the clergy session for ordination as deacon in full connection. (§330)
- A candidate for elder who has a) served full time under Episcopal appointment the entire probationary period; b) been supervised throughout the probationary period by a district superintendent and the BOM; c) satisfied the BOM regarding physical, mental, and emotional health; d) prepared a sermon on a passage specified by the BOM and presented a plan for teaching a book of the Bible; and e) responded to an examination administered by the BOM in the areas of theology and vocation may be recommended to the clergy session for ordination as elder. (§335)
- Elders may be appointed to serve in ministry settings beyond the local United Methodist Church in the witness and service of Christ's love and justice (extension ministries). (§343)



For further information write:
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
Division of Ordained Ministry
P.O. Box 340007
Nashville, Tennessee 37203-0007
615/340-7389
e-mail: dom@gbhem.org
Web site: www.gbhem.org/ministry.html

Candidacy Process for the Deacon, Elder, and Local Pastor

Inquiring Candidate: 2004 Book of Discipline ¶311.1

1. Contact the pastor in the local church, another deacon or elder, or the DS
2. Read *The Christian as Minister*

Phase One: ¶311.1

1. Member of The United Methodist Church for two (2) years immediately preceding application for candidacy, including a year of service in some form of congregational leadership
2. Apply to DS, in writing, for admission to candidacy program and be assigned a candidacy mentor by DS/dCOM
3. Apply to GBHEM for *Candidacy Guidebook* using Form 101 (send \$50 to GBHEM)
4. Complete exploration of candidacy with the mentor (the first two sections of the *Candidacy Guidebook*)

Phase Two: ¶311.2

1. Consult with pastor and request for recommendation from S/P-PRC
2. High school degree or equivalent
3. Written statement of call and interview by Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee
4. Recommendation by charge conference
5. Continue candidacy program with candidacy mentor and academic requirements

Certified Candidate: ¶311.3

Completion of the following:

1. Written response to ministry questions (¶311.3b & c)
2. Psychological assessment and report
3. Provide other information upon request
4. Agree to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life
5. Examination and approval by dCOM

Local Pastor - Completed candidacy certification, licensed, and assigned a clergy mentor ¶315.

Continuation of Candidacy: ¶312

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

Completion of Candidacy ¶324

1. Certified candidate for minimum of one (1) year, maximum twelve (12) years
2. One (1) year in service ministry
3. Completion of academic requirements
4. Health certificate completed by medical doctor
5. Written and oral doctrinal exam and written autobiographical statement
6. Interview and recommendation by three-fourths vote of dCOM
7. Notarized statement certifying that the candidate has neither been accused in writing nor convicted of a felony, misdemeanor, or any incident of sexual misconduct or child abuse
8. Interview and recommendation by the BOM
9. Election to probationary membership by clergy session

Commissioning to specialized ministry as probationary member