

Local Pastor's Handbook

LOCAL PASTOR'S HANDBOOK

This handbook is a guide for the Local Pastor who is licensed for pastoral ministry, to assist in the call to serve God and to carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ through the local church. In addition, this handbook can assist District Superintendents and District Committees on Ordained Ministry in working with Local Pastors. This handbook 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 it is to serve as a practical and understandable resource in the ministry of the Local Pastor.

1. **DEFINITION OF LICENSED LOCAL PASTOR**

(see 2004 Book of Discipline, ¶ 316,317)

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. Local pastors who have completed the following may be recommended to the executive session of the annual conference to receive the license for pastoral ministry:

- The conditions for candidacy certification (¶ 311.1-3)
- Been examined and recommended by the district committee on ordained ministry
- Attended Licensing School
- Been approved by the board of ordained ministry
- Provided the board with a satisfactory certificate of good health

2. **RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE LICENSED LOCAL PASTOR** (see 2004 Book of Discipline, ¶ 316,317,340)

- A. *The Local Pastor* is licensed by the Annual Conference to serve only to the charge to which they are assigned and does not extend beyond it.
- B. The charge is defined by the church, as people in or related to the community being served.
- C. The license must be renewed annually by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry and the conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
- D. *The Local Pastor* may perform marriages after receiving a Local Pastor's License from the presiding Bishop and District Superintendent after assignment to the local church appointment.
- E. *The License for Pastoral Ministry* is valid only to the charge to which the pastor is assigned. The Local Pastor (including student local pastor) relates to the district committee on ordained ministry on the district where he/she is appointed.
- F. *The Local Pastor* is supervised by the District Superintendent and a Clergy Mentor, who will support the Local Pastor's work in Course of Study and in the performance of duties as a local pastor.
- G. *The Local Pastor* shall attend each session of the Annual Conference and is responsive to the directives of the Annual Conference.
- H. Membership of the Full-time and Part-time Local Pastor is in the Annual Conference. They may vote on all matters presented to the Annual Conference, except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General or jurisdictional conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
- I. *The Local Pastor*, except student local pastors, may serve on any board, commission, or committee with voice and vote, except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status, and ordination, except on the district Committee on Ordained Ministry. They shall not be eligible to vote on or serve as delegates to the General, jurisdictional, or central conference.

- J. *Student Local Pastors* may retain their membership in their home church and conference, but are subject to the directives and administrations of the District Superintendent in the district where they serve. They shall have the right to voice but not vote in the annual conference.
- K. All local pastors shall receive written communication about decisions made regarding their relationship with the annual conference.
- L. Local Pastors are encouraged to participate in the Fellowship of Local Pastors (see *2004 Book of Discipline* ¶323)

3. **CATERGORIES OF LOCAL PASTOR** (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 318)

In recommending to the 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:

A. Full-time Local Pastor

- 1. Serves under appointment to a charge on a full-time basis (forty hours or more, with no other outside employee relationship)
- 2. Is paid at least the minimum salary and benefits as established by the Annual Conference
- 3. Has completed or is in the process of completing the Course of Study by taking four courses per year
- 4. Following completion of the Course of Study, maintains a continuing education program as directed by the Annual Conference.
- 5. **May not be a full-time student in any school, university or seminary, full-time is 9 hours or more**

B. Part-time Local Pastor

- 1. Has met the requirements for licensing
- 2. Does not devote their entire time to ministry in the local church
- 3. Does not receive in cash support per year from all Church sources as sum equal to or larger than the minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time local pastors
- 4. If enrolled in an appropriate school of higher education or seminary approved by the University Senate, must be appointed in their home conference (per Judicial Council ruling in 2001)
- 5. Shall complete two courses per year in a Course of Study school or the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the general Board of Higher Education and Ministry, until they complete the Course of Study.
- 6. Persons attending school full-time and pasturing would be considered this category

C. Student Local Pastor

- 1. If enrolled in an appropriate school of higher education or seminary approved by the University Senate, is appointed in a conference other than their home conference.
- 2. Has met the requirements for licensing
- 3. Makes appropriate progress in their educational program as determined by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

4. **REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSE AS A LOCAL PASTOR** (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 315)

All persons who are not ordained as elders but are appointed to preach, conduct divine worship, and perform the duties of a pastor in a local church shall have a license for pastoral ministry. The

Board of Ordained Ministry may recommend to the executive session of the annual conference the licensing of those persons who meet the following requirements.

- a) Completed the conditions for candidacy certification;
- b) Been examined and recommended annually by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry;
- c) Completed the studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.
- d) Been approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the executive session of the Annual Conference.

5. STEPS TO OBTAINING A LICENSE AS A LOCAL PASTOR

A summary:

1. Become a certified candidate (§311.1-3);
2. Receive the recommendation of the district Committee on Ordained Ministry.
3. Complete the studies for the license for pastoral ministry (Licensing School).
4. Been approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the executive session of the Annual Conference.

6. LICENSING SCHOOL

Studies for License as a Local Pastor area joint enterprise between the district Committee on Ordained Ministry, the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Section of Elders and Local Pastors. The first basic philosophy which informs this program is within the covenant of United Methodist ordained ministers. Full members have a basic and continuing responsibility to work in the preparation of new candidates. They can fulfill that responsibility by sharing practical knowledge and skills for the practice of ministry. The second basic tenet is that persons licensed must exhibit certain basic minimum competencies. Basic to these concepts is the fact that these studies are not another hoop through which to jump or a roadblock to be bypassed. They are what the church considers the knowledge/skill components essential to the practice of ministry.

7. CONTINUANCE AS A LOCAL PASTOR (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 319)

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:

1. Persons licensed as local pastors who are not probationary members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the Course of Study.
2. Upon recommendation by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry, and by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy members in full connection may approve the continuance as a licensed local pastor.
3. Full-time local pastors shall complete the five-year 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 three-fourths vote of the district committee on ordained ministry, recommendation by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and the vote of the clergy members in full connection.
4. A local pastor may choose to remain in a local relationship with the annual conference upon having completed the five-year Course of Study. Full-time local pastors are required to

receive a minimum of one CEU per year and eight CEU's per quadrennium. Part-time local pastors are encouraged to do continuing education.

5. All local pastors shall be assigned a Clergy Mentor by their district superintendent. The Clergy Mentors shall work with the local pastor in meeting the above requirements for continuance. It is the responsibility of the local pastor to ensure that a Clergy Mentor has been assigned, and to contact that mentor for the help needed.

8. DISCONTUANCE OF THE LOCAL PASTOR (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 320)

Please refer to the *2004 Book of Discipline* for information regarding discontinuance and surrendering of license and credentials. When a local pastor retires 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. After consultation with the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held. Reinstatement takes place only upon recommendation by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry from which their license was discontinued, the 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 a 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 Board of Ordained Ministry.

9. RETIREMENT OF THE LOCAL PASTOR (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 320.4)

A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study, as recommended by the district committee on ordained ministry, 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 without any additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit.

10. COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOLS (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 318, 319)

Persons licensed as local pastors who are not probationary members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the five-year Course of Study. The Course of Study in The United Methodist Church is provided and administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for persons:

- Who are certified candidates for ordained ministry,
- Who have successfully completed Licensing School,
- Who have been licensed by the Bishop after approval by the district Committee and Board of Ordained Ministry
- Who are unable to attend an approved school of theology.

The Course of Study is a basic theological education program of the Division of Ordained Ministry, Section of Elders and Local pastors. 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 and the licensing school.

The Course of Study is offered at regional Course of Study schools held each summer on the campuses of United Methodist theological seminaries. Extension courses for part-time local pastors are held at Millsaps College in Jackson, MS. These courses are offered in a two or three weekend format which allows bi-vocational local pastors to participate without taking a lot of time away from their work.

The Course of Study includes a five-year curriculum with four courses per year as follows (revised 2004-20084 curriculum):

First Year

- The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible
- Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit
- Pastoral Care for Spiritual Formation
- Pastoral Leadership and Administration

Second Year

- Hebrew Bible I
- Theological Heritage: Early and medieval
- Formation for Discipleship
- Practice of Preaching

Third Year

- New Testament I
- Theological Heritage: Reformation
- Our Mission: Evangelism
- Pastoral Care and Counseling

Four Year

- Hebrew Bible II
- Wesleyan Movement
- Worship and Sacraments
- Personal and Social Ethics

Fifth Year

- New Testament II
- Contemporary Theology
- Our Mission: Transforming Agent
- Theology and the Practice of Ministry

A candidate who attended an accredited theological seminary may request that work completed in the school of theology be evaluated by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for transfer to the Course of Study.

No credit is recognized in the Course of Study for work completed on the undergraduate level.

At the discretion of the General Board, clinical pastoral education units or credit from an accredited graduate degree program may be applied to the Course of Study.

It is the policy of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to limit student to four courses per year in the Course of Study while enrolled in the basic five-year curriculum. The reason for the limitation is that Course of Study students are expected to participate in a program of supervised ministry with a pastoral mentor who will assist in the preparation of assignments and the integration of what has been learned with the practice of pastoral ministry. In addition, licensed local pastors do not usually attend the Course of Study the first summer they are appointed.

While attending the Course of Study, pastors should make arrangements for their pastoral duties and preaching/worship responsibilities to be covered by someone else during that month. All

one's time during the School should be devoted to studies. Travel home should be for personal and family reasons only.

Hispanic Course of Study Schools

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry sponsors three Hispanic Course of Study Schools. They are held at Perkins Course of Study school in Dallas, TX, the North Central Jurisdictional Course of Study School at Garrett- Evangelical in Evanston, Illinois, and the Course of Study School at Claremont in California. Students interest in taking the Course of Study in the Spanish language may apply to the director of the Course of Study school at any of these schools. The General Board Higher Education and Ministry underwrites both the tuition and the transportation costs of students attending these schools. For more information contact the Office of Ministerial Services. If you have other specific language needs, contact the Office of Ministerial Services for assistance and options.

11. LOCAL PASTORS PREPARING FOR PROBATIONARY MEMBERSHIPE AND ELDER'S ORDER (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 324)

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

- Reached forty years of age
- Completed the five-year Course of Study for ordained ministry, or which no more than four courses may be taken by correspondence or Internet;
- **Completed a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate.** Exceptions to the undergraduate degree requirements may be made in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and ministry in some instances, for missional purposes, for person who have a **minimum of sixty semester hours of Bachelor of Arts degree;**
- Completed an Advanced Course of Study consisting of **thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study** or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, including a minimum of twenty-four semester hours of basic graduate theological studies of the Christian faith including the areas of: Old Testament, New Testament, theology, church history, evangelism, mission of the church in the world, worship/liturgy, and at least two semester or three quarter hours in each of the areas of United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history. Four to six semester hours of credit may be earned each summer in the Advanced Course of Study (see below)
- Once commissioned a probationary member, all requirements for full membership and ordination as an elder must be met, including serving three years a probationary member. Advanced Course of Study

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

- The Courses chosen will not duplicate those included in the basic five-year curriculum.
- Courses selected shall include both foundational and functional studies appropriate to each candidate. Foundational courses include studies in the areas of theology, church history, biblical study, or church in society. Functional courses include advanced work in counseling, church administration, evangelism, preaching, teaching or worship.
- Four to six semester hours of credit may be earned each summer in the Advanced Course of Study.
- Advanced Course of Study students may enroll in the Master of Divinity curriculum courses.

- Each student shall have courses approved and recorded by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.
- Graduate studies not taken in a theological school, which parallel courses offered for advanced studies, may be approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to a maximum of nine semester hours. Such studies must have been taken within the last 10 years.
- One basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education may be recognized as the equivalent of six semester hours in the Advanced Course of Study.

Advanced Course of Study Courses are offered during the summer sessions with the regular Course of Study Schools on some campuses.

12. TRANSITIONAL POLICIES FOR LOCAL PASTORS (see *2004 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 324.6)

Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for probationary membership and commissioning provided that these requirements have been met:

- Reached age forty
- Satisfied all requirements of Sections 1-3 and 7-14 of ¶324
- Served four years as a full-time local pastor
- Completed Licensing School and five-year course of study of which no more than four courses may be taken by correspondence or Internet
- Completed the Advanced Course of Study consisting of thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study
- Completed a Bachelor of Arts or an equivalent degree in a college or university listed by the University Senate or competency equivalence through an external degree program at a college or university listed by the university Senate. Exceptions to the undergraduate degree requirements may be made in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in some instances, for missional purposes, for persons who have a minimum of sixty semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit.
- Been interviewed and recommended by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry
- Applied and competed the interview process and been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

13. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS (¶ 322, *2004 Discipline*)

Local Pastors may be elected to associate membership by vote of the clergy members in full connection, upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, when they have met the following conditions:

- Reached forty years of age
- Served four years as full-time local pastors
- Fulfilled the provisions of ¶304, which deals with call and commitment to ministry
- Received the recommendation of the cabinet.
- Completed the five year Course of Study, no more than one year of which may be taken by correspondence or online
- Completed a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts degree
- Recommended by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry
- Declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment
- Satisfied the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health including background checks
- Completed the application and interview process for ordination with the Board of Ordained Ministry. The final step is recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry and election by a two-thirds vote of the clergy session.

14. PAPERWORK AND REPORTS

There is much administrative work to be done by the local pastor. Reports need to be filed, statistics need to be updated on a regular basis, and the membership records need to be accurate. One of the most arduous administrative tasks of the church year is the annual charge conference.

Charge Conference Preparation and Presentation

The preparation for charge conference begins as soon as one is appointed to a charge and continues through the year. These steps will help to ensure a successful charge conference:

1. Watch for an announcement from the district superintendent announcing that a meeting will be held to distribute and review the charge conference materials.
2. Attend the meeting with at least one key layperson from the church or charge finance committee. At that meeting the date and agenda for the charge conference will be given. The apportionments for each church being served will be included in the materials as well. Also the forms to be filed at the charge conference and other pertinent information will be distributed.
3. Place the date on the charge calendar as soon as possible after this meeting and announce it to the charge.
4. Give the apportionments and other financial information sheets to the finance committee chairperson immediately so that committee can begin to plan the budget for the upcoming year.
5. As soon as possible begin meeting with the Nominations Committee to secure the necessary personnel to do the work of ministry in the local church. It is not always necessary to fill every position listed on the district and conference forms. The local pastor and the committee can determine which are essential.
6. Certain of the forms and reports need to be distributed to lay persons (such as the Report of the Trustees form to the trustee chairperson) well ahead of the scheduled charge conference. If possible, make copies of the previous year's reports to assist them in the completion of the reports for the current year.
7. The agenda supplied by the district superintendent will indicate that certain lay persons are to make verbal presentations instead of, or in addition to, a written report. Make sure those persons know well in advance that they will be called on.
8. One of the most important reports is the Report of the Pastor. The district superintendent may have a special form to be used. The local pastor will need to work with the Membership Secretary and other key lay persons to insure that the figures in the report are accurate. In addition, a written supplement to the report should be filed that shows the names and dates for all membership changes listed in the Membership Summary of the report.
9. Keeping good records throughout the year helps to ensure that everything needed for the charge conference reports is accurate and up to date.
10. Remember that the statistics for the charge conference reports cover the calendar period from the date of the previous year's charge conference to the current year's charge conference, and not from January 1st.
11. The clergy mentor should be a primary resource to the local pastor in preparing the charge conference.

End of the Year Report

Many of the same statistics that were reported at the charge conference will need to be filed on a special report at the end of the year. These reports cover the calendar year, from the first of January to the end of December, and become the basis for the figures found in the annual Journal of the annual conference.

1. Watch for mail from the conference treasurer containing the forms
2. Note the dates by which all monies and forms need to be received
3. Schedule a time to work with the treasurer to meet and figure the amounts to be reported. Other persons will need to be contacted as well for help in obtaining financial and other figures.
4. These reports must be typed or neatly printed.

Membership Records

It is absolutely essential that thorough and accurate membership records be maintained. If the church being served is not using the Membership Record System for the Local Church, or something similar, every effort should be made to change to that type of record keeping. The local pastor will want to be diligent in maintaining a chronological roll of the church's members, which will make it possible to know at a glance how many members are currently enrolled in the church. If the church does not have a lay person serving as Membership Secretary one should be recruited to help with maintaining this record as well as the Preparatory Membership Roll records of baptisms, the changes in membership, the records of all births, deaths, marriages, etc.

17. WHO'S WHO

District Superintendent: Your primary relationship is with your District Superintendent. The District Superintendent is your supervisor.

District Committee on Ordained Ministry: Your primary relationship related to your credentials for ministry. All files on Local Pastors are kept by the DCOM.

Clergy Mentor: A person assigned by the district committee on ordained ministry in cooperation with the District Superintendent.