

Definition and Duties of the Pastor

¶ 339. Definition of a Pastor

A pastor is an ordained elder, probationary deacon (according to 1992 Book of Discipline), associate member, provisional elder, or local pastor approved by vote of the clergy session and may be appointed by the bishop to

be in charge of a station, circuit, cooperative parish, extension ministry, ecumenical shared ministry, or to a church of another denomination, or on the staff of one such appointment.

¶ 340. Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors

1. The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops.

2. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment.

a) Word and ecclesial acts:

(1) To preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.

(a) To ensure faithful transmission of the Christian faith.

(b) To lead people in discipleship and evangelistic outreach that others might come to know Christ and to follow him.

(2) To counsel persons with personal, ethical, or spiritual struggles.

(3) To perform the ecclesial acts of marriage and burial.

(a) To perform the marriage ceremony after due counsel with the parties involved and in accordance with the laws of the state and the rules of The United Methodist Church. The decision to perform the ceremony shall be the right and responsibility of the pastor.

(b) To conduct funeral and memorial services and provide care and grief counseling.

(4) To visit in the homes of the church and the community, especially among the sick, aged, imprisoned, and others in need.

(5) To maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.

b) Sacrament:

(1) To administer the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord according to Christ's ordinance.

(a) To prepare the parents and sponsors before baptizing infants or children, and instruct them concerning the significance of baptism and their responsibilities for the Christian training of the baptized child.

(b) To encourage reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant and renewal of baptismal vows at different stages of life.

(c) To encourage people baptized in infancy or early childhood to make their

profession of faith, after instruction, so that they might become professing members of the church.

(d) To explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper and to encourage regular participation as a means of grace to grow in faith and holiness.

(e) To select and train deacons and lay members to serve the consecrated communion elements.

(2) To encourage the private and congregational use of the other means of grace.

c) Order:

(1) To be the administrative officer of the local church and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately provided for.

(a) To give pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership, equipping them to fulfill the ministry to which they are called.

(b) To give oversight to the educational program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media.

(c) To be responsible for organizational faithfulness, goal setting, planning and evaluation.

(d) To search out and counsel men and women for the ministry of deacons, elders, local pastors and other church related ministries.

(2) To administer the temporal affairs of the church in their appointment, the annual conference, and the general church.

(a) To administer the provisions of the *Discipline*.

(b) To give an account of their pastoral ministries to the charge and annual conference according to the prescribed forms.

(c) To provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation. To ensure membership care including compliance with charitable giving documentation requirements and to provide appropriate pastoral care, the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, shall have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records.

(d) To model and promote faithful financial stewardship and to encourage giving as a spiritual discipline by teaching the biblical principles of giving.

(e) To lead the congregation in the fulfillment of its mission through full and faithful payment of all apportioned ministerial support, administrative, and benevolent funds.

(f) To care for all church records and local church financial obligations, and certify the accuracy of all financial, membership, and any other reports submitted by the local church to the annual conference for use in apportioning costs back to the church.

(3) To participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities.

(a) To seek out opportunities for cooperative ministries with other United Methodist pastors and churches.

(b) To be willing to assume supervisory responsibilities within the connection.

(4) To lead the congregation in racial and ethnic inclusiveness.

d) Service:

(1) To embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership.

(2) To give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world.

(3) To build the body of Christ as a caring and giving community, extending the ministry of Christ to the world.

(4) To participate in community, ecumenical and interreligious concerns and to encourage the people to become so involved and to pray and labor for the unity of the Christian community.