

# Exploring Your Call to Ministry

“God’s call takes many forms and people hear God’s call differently; therefore, people find many different ways to respond to God’s call.”  
The Christian as Minister, page 23

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## Are you interested in exploring a call to ministry?

If you feel that God is calling you into ministry and you want to explore options of how God may be calling you, there are two initial steps for discernment into vocational ministry:

- Contact a United Methodist clergyperson to discuss ways to answer a call to ministry
- Read *The Christian as Minister* found at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

## There are so many ways to follow a call into ministry!

Some are centered around becoming more educated and focused as laity while some are centered around serving the church as clergy by becoming a licensed local pastor or ordained as an elder or deacon.

“As United Methodists, we believe that when we are baptized we are called into ministry on behalf of Christ.”  
The Christian as Minister, page 12

## Laity

The opportunities to grow and lead as a lay person in your congregation or district are varied.

<b>Lay Servants</b>	Assist the clergy in leading inside your local church
<b>Lay Speakers</b>	Preach in your local church and around your district
<b>Certified Lay Ministers</b>	Assist the District Superintendent in serving wherever district church(es) require assistance. This can be for: Youth Leaders, Evangelism Teams, Pastoral Care Givers, Community Leaders, Worship Leaders, Small Group Leaders and, Lay Supply ( <i>laity leading congregations that do not have an appointed clergyperson</i> ) For More Info: <a href="http://www.vaumc.org/clm">www.vaumc.org/clm</a>

If you believe your call is to work within your specific church or district, you may be called to continue growing as a lay person. **Lay Servants**, **Lay Speakers**, and **Certified Lay Ministers** are all under the care of the Board of Laity. Talk to your district lay leader.

Visit [www.vaumc.org/Districts](http://www.vaumc.org/Districts) for more information on how to reach your district lay leader.

## Clergy

Serving as clergy, you can be a **licensed local pastor (LLP)** or be ordained. The two distinct orders of ordained clergy are **elders**, whose primary focus is to oversee the life of the church, and **deacons**, whose primary focus is to be in touch with the needs of the community and connect the church to those places. All clergy have both common ground and distinctions.

	<b>Licensed Local Pastor</b>	<b>Elder</b>	<b>Deacon</b>
<b>Common Ministry</b>	Word & Service	Word & Service	Word & Service
<b>Distinctive Ministry</b>	Witness/Mission	Sacrament Order	Justice/Compassion
<b>Biblical Role</b>	Exhortation	Apostolic	Diakonia
<b>Role in Connecting the Church</b>	Church & Individual	Church & Denomination	Church & World

## Next Steps

If you believe your call is leading you toward becoming **LLP**, **Deacon** or **Elder**:

- Send an email to your District Superintendent and copy the Chair of your District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM).
- Describe your call and your intent toward vocational ministry, asking to be admitted to the candidacy program.

## Welcome to Credentialing in the VAUMC

The Center for Clergy Excellence has created a webpage which includes all of the necessary steps, forms, and applications for any step in the credentialing process. Visit <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms> to find information on every step from Inquiring Candidacy to Provisional Membership

## Inquiring Candidate: Exploring Call

As you enter the Candidacy journey, there are multiple steps. Please use the Master Checklist found at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms) to assist you in keeping track.

Please be sure to maintain a copy of ALL documents, assessment results, etc. in case you need to supply an additional copy along the way.

### Inquiring Candidate Steps

Write a Call Statement  
Complete the Biographical Form  
State Background Check (\$\$)  
  
Request an Interview with dCOM  
*Your dCOM Chair will contact you to schedule an interview time*  
Interview with dCOM\*

### Candidacy Summit Event Steps

Complete Sense of Call  
Education, Membership & Engagement  
Register for Summit (Events occur in Jan and July of each year) (\$\$)  
Complete River of Life Activity  
Complete Strength Finders Assessment  
Read *Blessed Wrestling*  
Attend Candidacy Summit Event

\*You will meet with the dCOM to be admitted to the candidacy studies program *before* you meet with your local S/PPRC or charge conference for their recommendation of your candidacy.

## Admitted Candidate: Continued Exploration

Once you are an admitted candidate, by recommendation of your dCOM during the Admission Interview, you will be placed on two new tracks:

### Becoming a Certified Candidate Steps

Register with GBHEM  
Complete Candidacy Application  
Pay Administration Fee (\$\$)  
Download Guidebook  
Complete the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI)

Meet with S/PPRC Committee  
Meet with Charge Conference  
Psychological Evaluation (\$\$\$)  
Expanded Background Check (\$\$)  
Complete Medical Report Form  
Complete Disclosure Form  
Attend and/or Confirm Completion of Candidacy Summit

On the Clergy Excellence forms page you will find these forms and the application for Becoming a Certified Candidate. <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms> Complete the forms first, then upload the forms into your application. Your dCOM chair will receive a copy of your application automatically and schedule you for an interview.

## Certified Candidate: Candidates for Ministry

Certification can lead in three directions: Toward ordained deacon, ordained elder or local pastor. Each requires continuing education: seminary for Elder/Deacon and Course of Study for LLP.

### Licensed Local Pastor

"United Methodism has depended on local preachers from the beginning... local preachers played a critical role in the vitality of the movement, especially in rural towns and settlements."

*Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church, pg.184*

### Order of Elder

"The servant leadership of the elder is expressed by leading the people of God in worship and prayer, leading people to faith in Jesus Christ, exercising pastoral supervision, and ordering the Church in mission in the world."

*Answering the Call, pg 76-77*

### Order of Deacon

"Deacons are expected to bridge the church and community. They have a special responsibility of calling and equipping the church for its mission of the transformation of the world."

*The United Methodist Deacon, pg. 14*

## Things to remember for Certified Candidates:

### Annual Renewal of Status

Certified Candidates and LLP's must renew their status with the dCOM annually to review growth

### Seminary and Course of Study Scholarships

Scholarships are available for certified candidates and LLP's attending United Methodist seminaries or University Senate approved seminaries ([www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)).

### Consider a Long Term Career as an Ordained Clergy Person in the UMC

During the last year of seminary, candidates can apply for Provisional Membership.

## Licensed Local Pastor

In order to become a Licensed Local Pastor (LLP):

- You will need to complete additional steps to become a Licensed Local Pastor:  
<https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms>
- Then interview with the dCOM once these steps are complete.

Contact your dCOM Chair and see if completing the forms and application are right for your process. You may work these steps simultaneously with the steps to Becoming a Certified Candidate; however, you must receive a positive recommendation as a certified candidate before you may be recommended for licensing. Certification and Recommendation for Licensing can take place at the same dCOM interview but not always.

### Licensing as a Local Pastor Steps

Create a sermon outline and manuscript  
Record yourself preaching the sermon  
Complete the Written Responses  
Interview with dCOM  
Attend Licensing School in May

After completion of the first year under appointment, work must begin toward educational requirements. More information about seminary requirements and Course of Study can be found at [www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors](http://www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors)

If you are curious to learn more about following your call, contact your clergyperson, your District Superintendent, or your dCOM Chair. Information about dCOM can be found at: [www.vaumc.org/Candidacy](http://www.vaumc.org/Candidacy).

You may also contact Associate Director for Call and Candidacy Rev. Crystal Sygeel: [CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org](mailto:CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org)

## Associate Membership: A permanent conference relationship for Licensed Local Pastors

Licensed Local Pastors have the option to apply for Associate Membership once they have completed a series of requirements which include: reaching the age of forty, maintaining their conference relationship for four years, and completing their Course of Study. Associate Membership is a permanent status which allows LLP's to forego annual examination, and enables them to retain their license in retirement.

## **Pursuing Ordination: Provisional Journey**

There are four main elements to the Provisional Process in the VAUMC. For questions, you can contact Jessie Colwell, the director for the Center for Clergy Excellence or visit: [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence)

### **Expectations and Examinations**

Candidates who are licensed in the Virginia conference, and have a Master of Divinity from an accredited United Methodist seminary, may request an application packet which includes a calendar of deadlines for papers which must be submitted to the Board of Ordained Ministry.

Topics include: 1) Theology, 2) Practice of Ministry, 3) Vocation and Leadership, 4) Call

Candidates are then interviewed by the corresponding committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Candidates can be approved to progress to the next level in the process or can be continued and required to return for repeat examination in any given subject.

After their application is submitted, candidates receive detailed instructions on the required content for these papers. Clergy Excellence provides a list of informal advisors from the VAUMC who are able to read papers and offer feedback, as well as help with preparation.

The provisional process can take anywhere from 3 to 8 years.

### **Mentor-Covenant Groups**

Provide provisional candidates the opportunity to build a relationship with a clergy mentor and a group of your peers that will assist in developing vocational identity, reflecting theologically on the practice of ministry, and reviewing the exercise of authority and power in a new clergy role using Ministry Reflection Reports. Covenant groups convene for the first time during a two-day retreat at the beginning of your first year, and your Mentor-Covenant Group will meet monthly from then forward, except for the summer months (May through August).

### **Provisional Residency Events**

Residency Events are designed to support habits, attitudes, and practices of theological study and covenant life that will influence your entire ministry. Each Residency Event will focus on a different theme related to the life of the church. The Residency Events are held on a Tuesday through Wednesday in July and in September, annually. Your whole class group will meet for connection and support during these events, as well as continuing theological education.

### **Supervision Ministry**

Provisional Deacons and Elders have a relationship with their District Superintendent as well as their S/PPRC or supervisory board/managers. These persons' feedback and support is important to vocational development, and the Provisional Membership Team of the Board is interested in their input. Virginia Conference, Provisional Handbook (Revised June 2021) pg. 8.

Five specific purposes have been identified for the supervisory role in your Provisional Journey:

- a) to develop vocational identity
- b) to build effective ministry
- c) to enhance faith and theological understanding
- d) to experience support and accountability
- e) to receive feedback for use in making decisions of self-awareness

**The Center for Clergy Excellence is here to assist you with any questions you may have:**  
**Candidacy and Licensing Questions:** Rev. Crystal R. Sygeel, Associate Director for Call and Candidacy  
**Provisional Membership:** Rev. Jessie Squires Colwell, Director for Clergy Excellence