

Handbook
for
Local Pastors
&
Associate Members

2023-2024



Center for Clergy Excellence
www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors

Local Pastor's Handbook

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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 or extension ministry setting. In addition, this handbook can assist District Superintendents and District Committees on Ordained Ministry in working with Licensed Local Pastors.

This handbook is divided into sections to facilitate updating and improvement. For the most current version of this handbook, as well as additional policy and resource materials, visit www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors. The Local Pastor's Handbook 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.

A. Definition of Local Pastor (see 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶315, 316, 318)

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. (BOD ¶315) Candidates 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 for licensed and ordained ministry (¶310)
- Successful interview and recommendation by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry
- Successful completion of Licensing School, held annually in May for the Virginia Conference
- Approval by the Board of Ordained Ministry

When first licensed, the local pastor's church membership will be transferred to the annual conference. At such time as the local pastor is no longer under appointment, they shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held, after consultation with the pastor of that church.

The licensed local pastor is reviewed annually and their license may be renewed annually by recommendation of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. Upon a positive recommendation, the license is to be signed annually by the District Superintendent.

The local pastor is licensed by the Bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor and serve only the charge or extension ministry setting to which they are appointed. The license is valid so long as the appointment continues.

Licensed local pastors may be appointed to an extension setting if approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Bishop (¶316.1). Granting of the license for pastoral ministry is made when an appointment to a pastoral charge is made. In the Virginia Conferences, licenses are presented at the session of the annual conference.

B. Responsibilities and Duties of the Local Pastor (see 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶316)

1. *Local pastors approved annually by the district committee on ordained ministry may be licensed by the bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor (¶ 340), including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry.*

For the purposes of these paragraphs the charge or extension ministry will be defined as "people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served." Those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. *Such authorization granted by the license may be renewed annually by the district committee or the Board of Ordained Ministry.*

3. *The license shall remain valid only so long as the appointment continues and shall be recertified by the bishop when assignments change between sessions of the annual conference.*

4. *A local pastor shall be under the supervision of a district superintendent and shall be assigned a clergy mentor [or to a mentor group] while in the Course of Study or in seminary (¶ 348).*

5. *Local pastors shall be amenable to the clergy session of the annual conference in the performance of their pastoral duties and shall attend the sessions of the annual conference.*

6. *The membership of local pastors under full-time and part time appointment is in the annual conference where they shall have the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General, jurisdictional, or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. Local pastors who have completed Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment before the election may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional or central conferences.*

7. *All local pastors shall receive written communication about decisions made regarding their relationship with the annual conference*

8. *Local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may upon retirement annually request from the District Committee of Ordained Ministry and the bishop a license to continue to serve in the local church where they hold membership for the purpose of providing sacramental rites of baptism and Holy Communion, at the request of the appointed pastor.*

C. Categories of Local Pastor (see 2016 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. Has met the requirements for licensing
2. Serves under appointment to a charge on a full-time basis
3. Is paid at least the minimum salary and benefits as established by the Annual Conference
4. Has completed or is in the process of completing the Course of Study by taking four courses per year
5. Following completion of the Course of Study, maintains a continuing education program as directed by the Annual Conference
6. May not be a full-time student in any school, university, or seminary.

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 a sum equal to or larger than the minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time local pastors
4. Is enrolled in a school of higher education or seminary approved by the University Senate and appointed in their home conference (per Judicial Council Decision #895). The Board of Ordained Ministry expects completion of undergraduate work within 6 years (exceptions could be requested to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry). In addition, DCOM's may recommend specific continuing education events related to pastoral ministry for local pastors completing their undergraduate work.
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, unless enrolled in undergraduate education (see #4 above).

C. Students Appointed as Local Pastors:

1. Students enrolled in pre-theological or theological studies in a college, university or school of theology listed by the University Senate who are certified candidates may be appointed as part-time or full-time local pastors in a conference other than the conference in which they are certified candidates.
2. Such students must meet the requirements of ¶315 and be recommended for licensing by a Virginia Conference District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
3. Such students continue to relate to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry in the conference in which they are certified candidates and shall be responsible to them for the continuation of their certified candidacy.

Full-time and Part-time Local Pastors may serve on any board, commission, or committee with voice and vote, except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status, and ordination. However, local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may serve on the district committee on ordained ministry with voice and vote. (§318.5)

D. Management of License (see 2016 Book of Discipline, §319)

A local pastor, full or part-time, is licensed for ministry one year at a time within a specific appointment to a church, charge or extension ministry (BOD§316.1). The license must be renewed annually by the dCOM and is valid only if the local pastor is appointed and the license is noted and signed by the District Superintendent on the back (BOD§316.2,3 §419.8).

It is the licensed local pastor's responsibility to seek the District Superintendent's signature every year. This can be done at the yearly Charge Conference, District Conference, Annual Conference, dCOM renewal meeting, or a personal visit to the District Office.

The local pastor's license gives them ministerial authority in their congregation. Therefore, it is the local pastor's responsibility to maintain their license and have access to it at all times.

It is the responsibility of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to annually interview and recommend for continuance all persons who are licensed local pastors.

E. Continuance of the Local Pastor (see 2016 Book of Discipline, §319)

The following guidelines (§319) will be used by the dCOM for continuance:

1. Annual Requirements when a Meeting is Required:

Paperwork and Interviews

Be interviewed and recommended annually for continuance by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, completing and submitting the following requirements prior to the interview:

- a) Report of annual evaluation by P/SPRC
- b) Transcripts from undergraduate school, Course of Study or Seminary
- c) Written Mentor Report (if applicable)
- d) Written responses to the questions provided by the track steps in PASSAGE and are available from the Office of Clergy Excellence. Questions are provided for each year of ministry. Following are the themes for each year:

Year 1 - Leadership

Year 2 - Theology

Year 3 - Practice of Ministry

Year 4 and beyond – Application of education, spiritual practice, and means of grace

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.

****The first year of ministry is considered to be a season of growth. Therefore, Licensed Local Pastors in their first appointment year are *not* required to be evaluated by the SPRC or to report on educational progress.**

2. Annual Requirements when a Meeting is Not Required

Eligibility for License Local Pastors Renewal Interview-No Meeting Required (*The UMC Book of Discipline, 2016, §316.2*)

Full and part time licensed local pastors **who have met the following criteria will be eligible to not meet** with the dCom each year for renewal:

- 1) Served for at least 5 consecutive years under appointment (part-time and full-time).
- 2) Completed course of study or MDiv.

Paperwork due to dCom's Annually by December 30, 2023, submitted via jotform

- 1) Annual Charge Conference forms (pastor's narrative and continuing education).
- 2) Annual SPRC evaluation.
- 3) D.S. recommendation or D.S. appointed elder recommendation (submitted via jotform)- scheduled by pastor. The link to the recommendation form is embedded in the application for license renewal
- 3) Mentor report if applicable.

Process

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry will review the above written materials and send the pastor a letter (via email) sharing whether they have been recommended to renew their license or if additional conversations or an interview needs to take place to address any concerns.*

* Every licensed local pastor, dCom, and D.S. has the right to request an interview at any time.

2. Educational requirements for all Licensed Local Pastors

Persons licensed as local pastors who are not provisional members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the Course of Study.

The Discipline requires "appropriate progress" in meeting the educational requirements, and the VA Board of Ordained Ministry expects completion of undergraduate work within 6 years (exceptions could be requested). In addition, DCOM's may recommend specific continuing education events related to pastoral ministry for local pastors completing their undergraduate work.

For local pastors who do not have an M.Div. degree from an approved seminary, the following educational requirements apply: A full-time local pastor shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years and a part-time local pastor within twelve, unless a family situation or other circumstance precludes the local pastor's opportunity to meet said requirements. The local pastor may be granted an annual extension beyond the prescribed limit upon 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.

A local pastor may choose to remain in a local relationship with the annual conference upon having completed the five-year Course of Study.

More detailed information on Course of Study – including schools- can be found below.

3. Continuing Education Requirements

Full-time local pastors are required to receive a minimum of one CEU per year and at least eight CEU's per quadrennium. Part-time local pastors are required to receive a minimum of one-half CEU per year and at least two CEU's per quadrennium. (See Appendix A for policies and financial assistance available.)

4. Required Licensed Local Pastor Mentoring Groups

All local pastors who have not completed the educational requirements and/or are in the first three years of ministry, shall be assigned to a mentor group by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry along with the District Superintendent. This group will gather until the local pastor has completed the five-year Course of Study or a Master of Divinity. The group includes a clergy mentor and other local pastors.

Clergy mentors may be local pastors who have completed the five-year Course of Study, associate members or elders. A curriculum has been created for the mentoring groups.

Resources and materials for the clergy mentor and mentoring groups may be found at www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources.

E. Discontinuance of the Local Pastor (see 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶1320.1)

Whenever a local pastor:

- a) retires,
 - b) is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference as required in ¶ 318,
 - c) severs relationship with The United Methodist Church,
 - d) the appointment of a local pastor is discontinued by the bishop,
 - e) the district committee on ordained ministry does not recommend continuation of license,
- the license and credentials shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference [deliver to c/o Center for Clergy Excellence].

After consultation with the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held.

Refer to the *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶320.4 for information regarding reinstatement of local pastor status. 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 at 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 the Board of Ordained Ministry.

Candidates seeking reinstatement should write a letter explaining how the circumstances of their discontinuation or withdrawal have been resolved or changed and what has prompted their request to begin the reinstatement process. This letter should be addressed to the district superintendent of the district from which their license was discontinued, with a copy to the Director of Clergy Excellence.

F. Retirement of the Local Pastor (see *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶320.5)

A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study as a full-time or part-time local pastor, may be recognized as a retired local pastor. Retirement provisions for local pastors shall be the same as those for clergy members in ¶358.1, .2, .4, with pensions payable in accordance with ¶1506.5a. 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 upon recommendation by the district committee on ordained ministry without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit.

- A letter of request to retire should be sent by the local pastor to the district superintendent and chair of the DCOM, with a copy to Clergy Excellence.
- In Virginia, an initial recommendation regarding “satisfactory progress in the COS” for retirement is required by the DCOM. An interview (and an action report) is required.
- The recommendation is for “Retired Local Pastor, entering retirement”
- A recommendation by the Retirement Committee of BOM is also required.
- For licensing and appointment as a retired local pastor, an annual interview and recommendation by the DCOM is required. The Action Report should list, “Recommended for renewal as a Retired Local Pastor, serving an appointment “.

Retired local pastors without an appointment are no longer members of the annual conference, are no longer clergy, and shall move their membership to a local church as a lay member.

Note the following additional reference to retired local pastors:

¶316.8 Retired local pastors serving in the local church where they hold membership

Local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may upon retirement annually request from the District Committee of Ordained Ministry and the Bishop a license to continue to serve in the local church where they hold membership for the purpose of providing sacramental rites of baptism and Holy Communion, at the request of the appointed pastor.

- Requires the annual request by the pastor in charge to the Bishop and District Committee on Ordained Ministry
- Requires annual approval by the DCOM and Bishop

- An interview is not necessarily required but action (and an action report) is required by the DCOM.

G. Course of Study Schools (see 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶318, 319)

Persons licensed as local pastors who are not provisional members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the five-year Course of Study. (¶319) 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 the Virginia Conference 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 General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. 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 Virginia Conference 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 throughout the year at certain locations. These extension centers usually offer courses 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. Only with special permission of the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry may a full-time local pastor take a weekend Course of Study course.

Often when registering for Course of Study, students must provide a PID#, a personal identification number which is issued to you by the denomination. You may email cos@gbhem.org to request this number.

Care should be taken when making the decision as to which school to attend. There are many factors to consider, including geographic location, facilities, class periods, and individual needs. District Superintendents, mentors, and the Center for Clergy Excellence can offer advice as to particular circumstances. One option is to contact a present or past student to learn of the particulars that are most important to you.

The curriculum at each school discussed is reasonably close to identical. It is important for the student to arrange for substitute preachers while in school. Weekend time is needed for study and rest during the summer COS. Travelling home to preach adds to the stress of school (not to mention the added time needed for sermon preparation). Your District Superintendent may be able to assist you with suggestions for substitute preachers. Also work with the laity in your church(es) for pulpit help.

The Course of Study includes a five-year curriculum with four courses per year (see chart in [Appendix B](#)).

In case of emergency or unusual circumstances, with the approval of the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry through the registrar, courses may also be taken through a correspondence curriculum provided by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

¶1421.3d on the Course of Study states “*Upon approval of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, a candidate may complete up to one-half of the work through online courses developed by the Division of Ordained Ministry.*”

Since the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry allows only 1/3 of seminary work to be completed on line or hybrid, the same standard of 1/3 for Course of Study by correspondence/on line/hybrid is the policy of the Virginia Conference. Financial aid is not available for the on-line courses.

A candidate who has attended an accredited theological seminary but not listed by the UMC University Senate 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. The request for evaluation must come from the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry through the Center for Clergy Excellence and an official transcript must be supplied.

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

It is the policy of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to limit students 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 in Virginia do not usually attend the Course of Study the first summer they are appointed.

When 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.

Where to go and how to register:

The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry offers scholarship assistance. For policy details including the application, visit www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors. The scholarship funds are sent directly to the student to use as payment for COS expenses. Local Pastors who cancel, withdraw, or fail from a registered class will be asked to refund the applicable portion of any scholarship received.

Two Course of Study schools best serve the needs of Local Pastors in the Virginia Conference:

- Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.
- Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina

Wesley Seminary

Wesley offers full-time local pastors four courses each summer during July. Two courses are offered each two week period. Full-time local pastors complete one full year by taking both two week terms. Part-time local pastors have the option of completing one-half year of the course of study by completing two courses (or one term).

Wesley Seminary also offers weekend course of study classes for part-time local pastors. A course consists of two weekends (Friday and Saturday) on two consecutive months. A registration fee and a tuition fee are charged in addition to expenses for books, lodging and meals.

Registration forms are obtained from their website at www.wesleyseminary.edu. Instructions for Virginia students can be found at www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors. Registration requires approval by both the District Superintendent and the Conference Local Pastor Registrar (the Associate Director of Clergy Excellence). Tuition for the weekend Course of Study is paid by the student, in addition to lodging, meals, and travel.

The address for Wesley is:

Wesley Theological Seminary
4500 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016
202-885-8688
COSRegistration@wesleyseminary.edu
www.wesleyseminary.edu

Duke Divinity School

Duke offers full-time local pastors four courses each summer during July. Two courses are offered each two week period. Full-time local pastors complete one full year by taking both two week terms. Part-time local pastors have the option of completing one-half year of the course of study by completing two courses (or one term). Registration is on line at the Duke Summer COS web site (<http://divinity.duke.edu/events/summer-course-study>).

Duke Divinity School also offers weekend course of study classes for part-time local pastors. One course is offered over three consecutive weekends per period, from September to March. Registration is on line at the Duke Summer COS web site (<http://divinity.duke.edu/events/weekend-course-study>).

Duke also offers courses in the “Advanced Course of Study.”

Instructions for Virginia students can be found at www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors. Registration requires approval by both the District Superintendent and the Conference Local Pastor Registrar (the Associate Director of Clergy Excellence). Tuition for the weekend Course of Study is paid by the student, in addition to lodging, meals, and travel.

The address for Duke is:

Leadership Education at Duke Divinity
312 Blackwell St. Suite 101
Durham, NC 27701
Phone: (919) 613-5323
Fax: (919) 613-5333
Email: leadership@div.duke.edu

Hispanic Course of Study Schools

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry sponsors at least four Hispanic Course of Study Schools. The Hispanic Course of Study schools are held at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., 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 interested 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 of Higher Education and Ministry underwrites both the tuition and the transportation costs of students attending these schools. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence. If you have other specific language needs, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence for assistance and options.

H. Associate Membership (see *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶1321, ¶1322)

Associate members of an annual conference are in the itinerant ministry and are available on a continuing basis for appointment by the Bishop. They shall be granted the same security of appointment as provisional members and members in full connection.

Requirements for election as Associate Members:

1. Annual renewal of license for pastoral ministry with service as a full-time local pastor for four years.
2. Reached the age of 40.
3. Completed the five year Course of Study
4. Completed a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree in an accredited college or university.
5. Declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment.
6. Been recommended by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
7. Completed the application process, been examined, interviewed, and recommended by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Rights of Associate Members:

1. Vote in the annual conference on all matters except constitutional amendments and all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
2. Serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference. They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the general or jurisdictional or central conferences.
3. Shall be subject to the provisions governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension.

Associate members may be received as provisional members in the annual conference upon completing all the requirements in ¶324.6, upon receiving a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy members of the annual conference in full connection, present and voting.

Application materials and details regarding deadlines are available from the conference website <http://vaumc.org/BOMApplications>. The application packet itself is available beginning July 1. Interim deadlines to keep on track toward an interview are included in the packet.

I. Local Pastors Preparing For Provisional Membership and Elder's Orders (see *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶324.6, ¶335)

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

- Completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent;
- Completed the five-year Course of Study for ordained ministry, of 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 persons who have a minimum of sixty semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit (see ¶324.3 for details);
- 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 the 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. Note that the Virginia Conference has additional course requirements for ordination as an elder, including a course in preaching and at least ½ unit of C.P.E. Four to six semester hours of credit may be earned each summer in the Advanced Course of Study (see below). Credit may also be obtained through courses at an approved seminary.
- Once commissioned and elected to provisional membership, all requirements for full membership and ordination as an elder must be met, including serving three years as a provisional member. See ¶333 & ¶335, *2012 Discipline* and Virginia Conference policies.
- Application materials and details regarding deadlines are available from the conference website <http://vaumc.org/BOMApplications>. The application packet itself is available beginning July 1. Interim deadlines to keep on track toward an interview are included in the packet.

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 provisional membership.

- The courses chosen will not duplicate those included in the basic five-year curriculum.
- 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, working through the Center for Clergy Excellence.
- 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.
- **Important to note:** Virginia Conference students must meet the educational requirements set by the Board of Ordained Ministry for provisional membership (see Appendix C). These are identical to the "basic graduate theological studies" in the *Discipline* with the addition of a course in preaching and ½ unit of CPE.

Advanced Course of Study Courses are offered during the summer sessions with the regular Course of Study Schools. See the section in this handbook on Course of Study Schools for registration information.

Scholarships for the Advanced Course of Study are available as a “Service Loan” from Ministerial Education Funds of the Board of Ordained Ministry. A Service Loan application form can be downloaded from the conference website (<http://vaumc.org/SeminaryStudents>). Application deadlines are July 1 and October 1. Service loans are paid back in years of service to the annual conference. Service loans are based on financial need and are paid back in years of service after ordination and election to full membership.

J. Fellowship of Associate Members And Local Pastors (¶323, 2012 Discipline)

The *Discipline* says that each annual conference may organize a Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors. All licensed local pastors and associate members may be members of and participate in the fellowship. The fellowship will provide mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. The Discipline outlines the functions of the fellowship to include providing for regular gatherings of local pastors and associate members, encouraging local pastors to continue study beyond the Course of Study, developing a bond of unity and common commitment among the members, and enabling the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust.

The Virginia Conference Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors has developed the following purpose:

The purpose of the Fellowship of Local Pastors is to provide support, love and encouragement to each other through the encouragement of self-care and spiritual growth, and to create a sense of unity and fellowship. The Fellowship will serve all local pastors and the Board of Ordained Ministry as an advisory/resource group on issues and needs of local pastors and associate members. It will serve as a voice for local pastors in the Virginia Conference, will sponsor retreat time, and encourage small group participation with elders and associate members on the district level.

The Board of Ordained Ministry provides financial support for the fellowship. A Steering Committee with elected officers provides leadership for the fellowship. Various events are held annually, including a meal together at annual conference.

K. Licensed Local Pastors and Weddings

The License for Pastoral Ministry is valid only to the charge or extension ministry to which the licensed local pastor is appointed. The charge/extension ministry is defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served.” (¶316.1)

For the performance of marriage, a license shall be obtained through the District Court of the county of residence, after receiving the license for pastoral ministry from the Bishop. Note the limitations stated above. Since the *Book of Discipline* makes the definition of ministerial authority based on persons involved, not geography, the local pastor is allowed to officiate at a wedding for a church member when the ceremony is in another state or location (but not another local church). But the local pastor may not officiate at weddings for friends and relatives who are not part of the church/ministry setting to which the local pastor is appointed.

December 2011

L. Licensed Local Pastors and The Walk To Emmaus

Effective 4/25/2008 as in the Upper Room Guidelines

Clergy persons are critical elements in The Walk to Emmaus and in Chrysalis. The two programs depend on the partnership between laity and clergy. This partnership is a model that can be used in churches to enhance the ministry of the church. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the role of the clergy in Emmaus and Chrysalis. In addition, it is important to have clarity about what is expected of the clergy who serve Emmaus and Chrysalis. It is also important to have a good understanding of how men and women are recognized as clergy and those things that qualify them to be called clergy. Below you will find the qualifications for the various clergy positions in Emmaus and Chrysalis.

Community Spiritual Director

The ministry and mission of The Upper Room Walk to Emmaus and The Upper Room Chrysalis depend on the Community Spiritual Director for leadership and oversight of the spiritual life of the community. The Community Spiritual Director serves as the moral, ethical, and spiritual conscience of the Board, the community and the teams. The Community Spiritual Director assists the Board in the development and nurture of clergy leaders and also assists in selecting those to serve on Emmaus/Chrysalis teams. The Community Spiritual Director shall be recognized as a competent spiritual leader within his or her church or denomination and by other church leaders in the area. This person should also represent the best Emmaus/Chrysalis has to offer. Only persons who meet all the following criteria can serve as the Community Spiritual Director. Those who:

- are ordained as UMC elders or the equivalent in other denominations/churches who have completed a four year undergraduate degree and have received a Master of Divinity degree from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS, www.ats.edu);

Or,

- are ordained as UMC elders or the equivalent in other denominations/churches who have completed an undergraduate degree and The United Methodist Church (UMC) Basic Course of Study Program, and the Advanced Course of Study Program, (or the equivalent in other churches or denominations).

In addition the following criteria must be met:

- able to maintain theological balance and be sensitive to the variety of perspectives in this ecumenical setting.
- have showed commitment to the Upper Room Walk to Emmaus and Chrysalis models as stated in the Letters of Agreement.
- have served as Weekend Spiritual Director.
- are actively engaged in full-time professional ministry (or retired while in good standing).
- are able to be a role model of a servant leader in a team environment.
- are able to guide and coordinate the full participation of other clergy.
- are authorized to consecrate the elements of Holy Communion in Emmaus and Chrysalis settings.

Weekend Spiritual Director

The Weekend Spiritual Director (WSD) is the primary clergy leader of the Emmaus or Chrysalis event. The Weekend Spiritual Director is selected by the Board of Directors with the recommendation of the Emmaus or Chrysalis Community Spiritual Director. The WSD is responsible to the board as the spiritual leader of the Walk, Flight or Journey. As with the Lay Director, the weekend Spiritual Director must have sufficient experience, training, and ability for the job.

Only persons who meet the following criteria can serve under this category. Those who:

- are ordained as UMC elders or the equivalent in other denominations/churches who have completed a four year undergraduate degree and have received an Master of Divinity degree from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS, www.ats.edu);

Or,

- are ordained as UMC elders or the equivalent in other denominations/churches who have completed an undergraduate degree and The United Methodist Church (UMC) Basic Course of Study Program and the Advanced Course of Study Program (or the equivalent in other churches or denominations).

Or,

- are United Methodist Licensed Local Pastors; or, their equivalent in other churches or denominations, who are current in their Course of Study or seminary; or, who have completed their Course of Study Program or seminary, are serving a local church under the appointment of the Bishop, or other supervisory body or person, and who are not ordained. These persons need to secure written authorization from the Bishop, District Superintendent, or supervisory body to consecrate the elements of Holy Communion in Emmaus or Chrysalis settings. This letter of authorization must be on file with the local Community Spiritual Director, and the Emmaus/Chrysalis International Office prior to serving as the WSD. This letter must be renewed annually (or for each walk, journey or flight if the authorization is event specific).

Or,

- are Upper Room Certified Clergy (see Upper Room Certification Process attached).

L. 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. The chair of the DCOM is your primary contact.

Clergy Mentor: A person assigned by the Center for Clergy Excellence or the District Committee on Ordained Ministry in cooperation with the District Superintendent. Clergy mentors may be full-time local pastors who have completed the five-year Course of Study or Master of Divinity, associate members, or elders in full connection. This person will facilitate group mentoring for the District.

Registrars for the Board of Ordained Ministry: The chair of the Fellowship for Associate Members and Local Pastors and the Center for Clergy Excellence, provide help to district committees and District Superintendents in working with local pastors, coordinate registrations for the Course of Study, Licensing School, and work with local pastors who are seeking ordination.

Chair, Board of Ordained Ministry: Rev. Tammy L. Estep (TammyEstep@vaumc.org) is the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, 2020-2024.

Fellowship of Association Members and Local Pastors: See www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors for a current roster of the Steering Committee.

Pensions and Health Insurance: John Fuller (JohnFuller@vaumc.org) is the Executive Director of Virginia United Methodist Pensions and Benefits, Inc. Nancy Blair (NancyBlair@vaumc.org) is the contact for pension questions, and Judy Astrella (JudyAstrella@vaumc.org) is the contact for health insurance questions.

Center for Clergy Excellence: The conference staff in the Center for Clergy Excellence is available for technical assistance, mentoring, and resourcing.

These are the staff members and the key points of contact for each one:

Rev. Jessie Squires Colwell

Director for the Center for Clergy Excellence

JessieColwell@vaumc.org 804-521-1140

Liaison to the Bishop, Conference Registrar, Provisional Membership, Conference Relationship (Retirement, Medical Leave), Extension Ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, Transfers, Clergy Development and Continuing Education

Rev. Crystal R. Sygeel

Associate Director for Call and Candidacy

CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org 801-521-1141

Recruitment, Registrar for Candidacy and Licensing, DCOMs, Calling 21, Candidacy Summit, Lay Supply, Grants and Loans, Licensing School, PASSAGE UMC

Rev. Lyn Whitley Harding

Program Administrative Coordinator

LynHarding@vaumc.org 804-521-1142

Event Coordination, Work Flow Management, Financial Administration, Administrative Support

You may also reach by visiting <https://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence> for staff contact information.

Record Management for License Renewal and Further Credentialing in the VAUMC:

Licensed Local Pastors in the United Methodist Church must complete a series of steps to have their license renewed each year.

The Center for Clergy Excellence is currently utilizing Jotform to capture documentation from candidates for renewals and additional credentialing. This information is uploaded to Basecamp for District Committees on Ordained Ministry to review submitted materials in order to assess candidates.

Steps for Renewal can be found here: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms/>

Licensed Local Pastors can seek further credentialing as either Associate Members or Provisional Members who ultimately go on to become ordained as Deacon or Elder. Details can be found here:

<https://vaumc.org/bomapplications/>

All candidates are advised to maintain their own records in case of need for duplication.

Escalated technical assistance by the Center for Clergy Excellence may be available as necessary.

Email Program Administrative Coordinator Lyn Whitley Harding for forms assistance: LynHarding@vaumc.org

Appendix A

Education and Continuing Formation for Clergy

“Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ.” (§1350.1 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline*)

Who is required to participate in Continuing Education?

The following persons are required to receive a minimum of 1.0 CEU per year and at least 8.0 CEU's per quadrennium.

- Full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study or an M.Div. degree
- Associate Members under appointment
- Full Members (Deacons and Elders) under appointment
- Certified Lay Professionals

The following persons are required to receive a minimum of 0.5 CEU per year and at least 2.0 CEU's per quadrennium.

- Part-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study or an M.Div. degree

Persons in the above relationships involved in ongoing theological education (including enrollment in Course of Study, seminary, CPE, D.Min. and Ph.D. programs) are fulfilling their CEU requirements by their participation in these programs.

Provisional Elders and Deacons are fulfilling their CEU requirements by their participation in the Provisional Membership curriculum.

Clergy on Honorable Location, Administrative Location, Leave of Absence, and Medical Leave do not have a CEU requirement.

Continuing Education Opportunities

Each year the Virginia Conference UMC hosts various continuing education opportunities for clergy. We also publicize additional opportunities.

[Check out the 2022-2023 continuing education opportunities.](#)

Funding for Continuing Education Opportunities: Continuing Education and Clergy Development Fund

Each year all active clergy in the VAUMC (not including retired clergy) are eligible to apply for continuing education and Clergy Development Funding. Read the descriptions below to see where you should apply for funding. Email Jessie Colwell at JessieColwell@vaumc.org for additional questions.

Continuing Education Funds

Continuing Education Funds come from local congregations through the Ministerial Education Fund apportionment. Applicants are received and awarded on a rolling basis. Clergy members can only apply one time a

year for these funds (July 1-July 1). A minimum of 0.5 C.E.U.'s or its equivalent must be available at the event, coaching opportunity, pilgrimage, DMin class etc. in order for clergy to be eligible to receive these funds.

How much is available?

\$200 (if you make more than \$50,000 a year) or \$400 (if you make less than \$50,000 a year) are available annually for clergy to continue their education.

To apply for Continuing Education Funds go [here](#).

Are you looking to receive continuing education credit?

If you are looking to receive Continuing Education Credit (C.E.U.'S) for an event you are having, or a class you have attended apply [here](#).

Sometimes, clergy have a need of funds over Continuing Education funds to pursue additional education and clergy development opportunities. In these situations, clergy are eligible to apply for a Clergy Development Grant. It is possible to apply for both Continuing Education funds and Clergy Development funds, but the two different applications will need to be completed.

Clergy Development Funds

Clergy Development Grants come from local congregations through the Ministerial Education Fund apportionment. Applications are received quarterly (October 1, 2022, January 1, 2023, April 1, 2023, and July 1, 2023). Clergy members request grants for continuing education and development beyond the scope of what is available in Continuing Education Funds. Grant requests range from \$400-\$3,000. The selection committee for these grants is the Clergy Effectiveness Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Selections and disbursements occur one month after applications are due. Applicants are notified by the Center for Clergy Excellence. Clergy are eligible to apply for these funds annually (July 1-July 1).

Additional requirements to apply for this grant is:

- 1) A recommendation from your District Superintendent
- 2) A recommendation from your SPRC/PPR Chair or Supervisor (if the applicant is in extension ministry)

Both of these recommendations can be sent to the respective people above using this

link: <https://form.jotform.com/222544495454057>

These funds are not available for those completing doctorates or those completing classes for seminary degree.

To apply for a Clergy Development Grant go [here](#).

Reporting and Accountability

Clergy will make an annual report to the district superintendent on continuing education completed during the year. The district superintendent shall review the clergyperson's continuing education in light of the annual evaluation by the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee or supervisor if in an extension/beyond the local church appointment. In their annual meeting, the district superintendent and clergyperson shall discuss improvements made toward effectiveness in ministry and future needs for continuing education.

If you are awarded funding for a clergy development grant, upon completion of your educational opportunity you are required to fill out [the evaluation of learning form](#) before you are eligible to apply for additional funding.

Appendix B

Course Of Study Curriculum

The Course of Study (COS) is a 20-course program that trains and educates those who are interested in becoming licensed local pastors. If this is the path you're seeking, GBHEM welcomes you and will walk alongside you on this journey of discovery and formation.

Bible

- COS 121 – Bible I: Introduction**
- COS 221 – Bible II: Torah & Israel's History**
- COS 321 – Bible III: Gospels**
- COS 421 – Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms & Wisdom Lit**
- COS 521 – Bible V: Acts, Epistles & Revelation**

Theology

- COS 122 – Theological Heritage I: Introduction**
- COS 222 – Theological Heritage II: Early Church**
- COS 322 – Theological Heritage III: Medieval-Reformation**
- COS 422 – Theological Heritage IV: Wesleyan Movement**
- COS 522 – Theology in the Contemporary Church**

Congregational Life

- COS 123 – Formation & Discipleship**
- COS 223 – Worship & Sacraments**
- COS 323 – Congregational Care**
- COS 423 – Mission**
- COS 523 – Evangelism**

Pastoral Identity

- COS 124 – Transformative Leadership**
- COS 224 – Administration & Polity**
- COS 324 – Preaching**
- COS 424 – Ethics**
- COS 524 – Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry**

Appendix C
Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry
Educational Requirements Worksheet for Provisional Membership & Full Transfer

Name _____ Theological School _____

The *Discipline* lists the following specific course requirements that must be included in graduate theological education prior to provisional membership in the United Methodist Church. List the courses on your transcript that meet each requirement. In addition, completion of an undergraduate (bachelor's) degree is required prior to any graduate theological course work. **In the space provided below, list the name of the course and semester/year; list school if different than above.**

- Old Testament _____
- New Testament _____
- Theology _____
- Church history _____
- Mission of the church in the world _____
- _____
- Worship/liturgy _____
- Evangelism _____
- A minimum of two semester or three-quarter hours in each of the fields of United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity.

- A course in preaching

In addition to the above requirements, the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry requires that all candidates for ordination complete **at least ½ unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)** by the application deadline for ordination as a deacon or elder and full membership in the conference. The Board strongly encourages completion of CPE prior to provisional membership. CPE must be taken at a CPE site that is accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). Online CPE programs are not accepted.

Location: _____ Date: _____

The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry strongly encourages completion of United Methodist doctrine prior to applying for provisional membership. The Board recommends courses in Christian education and systematic theology for all candidates.

Full on-line MDiv now accepted: On Jan. 26, 2023, the University Senate met virtually for its first bi-annual meeting of 2023. During the meeting, the Senate voted to approve a policy change that allows United Methodist students the opportunity to engage in a fully online Master of Divinity degree program. This policy change is effective immediately for all 13 United Methodist seminaries as well as Asbury Theological Seminary.

Although each seminary has the responsibility to designate which basic courses meet the core requirements and advise students of these courses, the conference Board of Ordained Ministry will have the final authority to approve academic studies. Questions should be addressed to the Conference Registrar, JessieColwell@vaumc.org.

Updated 2/2023