

# Provisional Process Handbook 2023-2024



**Board of Ordained Ministry  
Virginia Conference, The United Methodist Church**

**Center for Clergy Excellence**  
[www.vaumc.org/ProvisionalMembers](http://www.vaumc.org/ProvisionalMembers)





# Your Provisional Journey

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# **The Provisional Journey**



## Provisional Member – *A Partner in Ministry*

### Welcome

Welcome to the Provisional Journey! The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry invites you to join us on this journey of discernment and growth for the next three or more years. We hope that you will experience this provisional journey as a time of continued learning, a time of new relationships with new partners in ministry, and a time to develop and strengthen lifelong patterns that will enable you to be an effective clergy leader for a lifetime of set-apart ministry. The Provisional Journey is the Board's way of supporting you as you move from readiness to effectiveness in ministry.

### New Relationships

You will be developing new relationships during this time:

- With persons in your new appointment.
- With a Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) or personnel committee or Ministry Board.
- With your District Superintendent.
- With a Clergy Mentor, assigned by the Board of Ordained Ministry, and a small covenant group of your peers.
- With the Board of Ordained Ministry, especially the Provisional Membership Team, and the Center for Clergy Excellence.

Hopefully you will find in all of these relationships new partners in ministry that will support you in your journey into the clergy covenant.

### Time Commitment and Accountability

Provisional members are expected and required to attend all events as outlined in this Handbook, and deadlines are firm for various assessments/applications along the way.

**In the rare occasions when a family or congregational emergency prevents attendance at an event or completion of a required item, an excused absence/extension may be granted.** Provisional members are expected to notify the Center for Clergy Excellence as soon as a conflict arises. For events in the life of the provisional member that can be scheduled at other times, the absence will be considered unexcused and/or late materials may not be accepted. Regular scheduled events like Vacation Bible School or communal church gatherings are not congregational emergencies—please find coverage for your absence.

Please note that clergy who are on parental leave will be granted an excused absence from events, but do need to plan arrangements with the Center for Clergy Excellence. Clergy who are on personal leave of absence or family leave of absence are excused from both the mentor-covenant group and the residency events.

Part of ministry is setting appropriate boundaries around the aspects of ministry that you can control, and about choosing among many good options at any given moment. **Please make the events of the Provisional Journey a priority in your ministry as you are able to do so.**

Each year, your participation in Provisional Residency events will be noted as a factor in evaluating your ministry for recommendation to continue as a provisional member. Unexcused absences or incomplete participation may extend a provisional member's time in the provisional relationship with the Conference.

## **Your Feedback**

You receive a good deal of feedback from the Board of Ordained Ministry, and the Board wants your feedback, too. This Provisional Journey is continually assessed by the Board of Ordained Ministry and redesigned to more effectively meet the needs of the provisional members, the Board, and the Cabinet in the service of making disciples for the transformation of the world in effective ways. Your feedback will be important to the Provisional Membership Team.

Particular times for evaluation will be included in the process, but your comments are welcome at any time--please contact Rev. Jessie Colwell in the Center for Clergy Excellence.

## **Elements of the VAUMC Provisional Journey**

There are three key aspects of the Provisional Journey in Virginia. More information on these aspects can be found in their respective chapters of this handbook:

### **❑ Mentor-Covenant Groups**

The Mentoring-Covenant Group offers you the opportunity to build a relationship with a clergy mentor and a group of your peers that will assist you 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 one-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 2 consecutive days in May and September annually. Your whole class group will meet for connection and support during these events, as well as continuing theological education.

Residency Events are held at Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond, Va. All program, lodging and meal costs are covered through the MEF apportionment. Rooms are double-occupancy at Roslyn, and you are encouraged to pick your own roommates. (Singles may be available at an additional charge and subject to availability.) **You must RSVP in a timely manner for the Residency Events using the weblink sent to you from the Center for Clergy Excellence.**

Childcare for children under two is available on a very limited basis for Residency Events during the active session times only. Alternatively, along with your young child, you are welcome to bring along a caregiver as your roommate, whose lodging and meals will be covered by the BOM. Requests for childcare/caregiver arrangements must be made by the RSVP deadline (generally 30 days prior to the Residency Event).



□ **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.

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 and
- e) to receive feedback for use in making decisions of self-awareness.

In addition, two other components of the Supervision Ministry are important to assist in identifying areas of growth and learning:

- Completion of an ESCI-U assessment, in the fall of your second year.
- A feedback session with your Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee/supervisory board in the spring of your second year.

# Year 1

## Calendar of Events, Benchmarks and Milestones

### Year 1 – Commissioned in June 2023\*

1. Attend September Residency Event & Mentor Covenant Retreat—September 5-7, 2023.  
Bring with you the feedback sheets from BOM interviews that you received by email following your interviews last winter. Bring your calendar. You will complete and turn in a Mentor-Covenant Group Commitment Statement at the end of this Retreat.
2. Meet regularly with your Mentor-Covenant Group—your group should meet monthly from September through April.
3. Provisionals will schedule a site visit (in person or online) by your District Superintendent to observe:
  - Worship leadership for provisional elders (see Addendum A)
  - Leadership in proclamation of the word for provisional deacons (see Addendum B).
4. Schedule a one-on-one meeting with your District Superintendent following the site visit (in person or online) to discuss:
  - For all provisional members, discussion of observations from site visit.
  - For provisional elders in a local church, you should also have discussion around pastoral care and visitation ministries (see Addendum C).
  - For provisional deacons and for provisional elders in an extension ministry, you should also discuss vocational identity in ministry (see Addendum D).
5. Remind your District Superintendent that a supervisor’s evaluation report is due to the Center for Clergy Excellence by April 1. **You should schedule your site visit and one-on-one with your DS in plenty of time for him or her to write their report.**
6. Submit your Annual Report/Action Plan, noting your progress based on BOM feedback, and your annual Mentor-Covenant Group Report by April 1 via jotform. A submission link will be sent to you by March 1.
7. Attend May Residency Event (May 7-8, 2024).

\*Each year review the updated provisional handbook as it pertains to your class’s year as updates are made each year.

## I. Meetings with the District Superintendent

The role and mission of the supervision aspect of provisional membership by the Board of Ordained Ministry is to: a) to develop vocational identity; b) to build effective ministry; c) to enhance faith and theological understanding; d) to experience support and accountability; and e) to receive feedback for identifying and addressing growing edges.

**For all aspects of the Supervision Ministry, the provisional member must take the initiative to schedule the on-site visit and supervision meeting with the District Superintendent.**

- If you are serving on-loan in another Conference, your local DS as well as your Virginia DS should submit a report; only your local DS would make a site visit.
- If you are serving in an extension ministry/beyond the local church, your work supervisor should also submit an annual (general) evaluation of your work. This evaluation does not need to follow the Addendum pattern/topic.

\*If a site visit in your first year is impractical or impossible (for instance, for a military or prison chaplain, perhaps), please contact the Center for Clergy Excellence to request an exception to this policy.

Follow the instructions for your year (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>) and conference relationship (PD, PE) and ministry setting (local church or extension/beyond the local church) to ascertain which Addendum should guide your conversation with your DS. **It is your responsibility to remind your DS which topic/Addendum should be covered.** The VAUMC Superintendents all have the Addendum packet; you should share the Addendum guidelines with your local DS if you are serving on-loan.

## II. Annual Reports/Action Plans

Annually, using the feedback sheets from your provisional membership interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry and subsequent evaluations, submit a brief written Annual Report/Action Plan identifying areas of growth and how you are addressing them. The action plan should be a maximum of 3 pages, be double-spaced, and include your name and the date.

Use the following questions as a guide in your writing:

- What were the areas of growth identified by the Board at your provisional interviews (or in subsequent feedback) and how have you addressed these? What has been the fruit of your efforts?
- What are other areas of growth have you identified for yourself this year?
- Using the VA Conference Characteristics of Effective Clergy, describe specific ways you have grown as a clergy leader. What have been the most significant influences leading to this growth?
- What have you learned in the past year that has most affected your practice of ministry? Where or from whom did you learn it?

**This report is due by April 1 each year.**

**Addendum A**  
**Worship Leadership Guidelines**  
*For provisional elders*

During **Year 1** of the Provisional Journey, the District Superintendent will make an on-site (in person or online) visit to observe and evaluate the provisional elder in the area of worship leadership, using the following criteria. The narrative should highlight strengths and areas of growth using the questions below.

I. Use of Word and Table

- a. Does the candidate understand the rationale for the basic pattern of worship? (Book of Worship and UMH 2 & 3)
- b. Does the candidate incorporate appropriate prayers, responses, hymns, Psalter elements, service music, liturgy, acts and gestures suitable to the liturgical season, sacramental act, scriptural focus and designated Sunday in the Christian Year? (see also “This Holy Mystery” and “By Water and the Spirit”)
- c. Is liturgy as “work of the people” evidenced in worship?

II. Use of Text

- a. Is there evidence that the candidate exegetes the text soundly using an appropriate hermeneutic?
- b. Did the candidate use an illustration(s) to support the theme?
- c. Is there “Good News?”

III. Delivery

- a. Use of voice – appropriate modulation.
- b. Eye contact with congregation
- c. Evaluate the candidate as liturgist (reading of scripture).
- d. Does the candidate use appropriate gestures?

IV. Clergy – Congregation Interaction

- a. Does the candidate preside effectively with the people gathered for worship?
- b. How are pastoral concerns received?
- c. Does the candidate understand his/her role in the liturgy?

**Addendum B**  
**Proclamation of the Word Guidelines**  
*For provisional deacons*

During **Year 1** of the Provisional Journey, the District Superintendent will make an on-site visit to observe and evaluate the provisional deacon in the area of proclaiming the word. The narrative should highlight strengths and areas of growth using the questions below.

*Deacons fulfill servant ministry in the world and lead the Church in relating the gathered life of Christians to their ministries in the world, interrelating worship in the gathered community with service to God in the world. Deacons give leadership in the Church's life: in the teaching and proclamation of the Word; in worship, and in assisting the elders in the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in the congregation's mission to the world; and in leading the congregation in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. It is the deacons, in both person and function, whose distinctive ministry is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry.*

1. How is the provisional deacon proclaiming the Word in his/her current appointment?
2. What are examples of how the provisional deacon connects worship in the gathered community with service to God in the world?
3. What are the ways that the provisional deacon is leading the congregation in equipping and supporting all baptized Christians to proclaim the Word?
4. As the provisional deacon assists in worship leadership and in the administration of the sacraments, what are:
  - a) areas of strength?
  - b) areas of growth?

**Addendum C**  
**Pastoral Care and Visitation Ministries Guidelines**  
*For provisional elders in a local church appointment*

During **Year 1** of Provisional Membership, the District Superintendent will meet with the provisional elder appointed to a local church and evaluate the provisional elder in the areas of pastoral care and visitation ministries. The historic question asked at ordination “*Will you visit from house to house?*” provides the framework for this evaluation. The narrative should highlight strengths and areas of growth using the questions below.

1. Visitation of Church Members and Constituents  
Has an attempt been made to visit in the homes of members and constituents of the congregation?  
Does the candidate see and understand a need for this?  
What are the expectations of the congregation in visitation?  
Have these expectations been conveyed and discussed with the candidate and the S/PPRC Committee?
2. Visitation of Homebound Members and those in Nursing Homes  
Have those in nursing homes or who are homebound received a regular visit from the provisional member?  
What is the candidate’s understanding of the need for this?  
What are the expectations that the congregation has of the candidate in this setting?  
Have they been conveyed and discussed with the S/PPRC Committee?
3. Visitation of First-time Worshipers  
What plan has been followed for the candidate’s contact and follow up with first-time worshipers?  
What is the candidate’s understanding of the need for this?
4. Hospital Visitation  
What has been the candidate’s experience with hospital visitation?  
What evidence is there in understanding this as a priority?
5. Visitation in other settings  
Has the candidate had experiences in visiting jails, prisons, shelters, etc?  
What learnings about ministry in these settings can be shared?
6. Learnings from Pastoral Care and Visitation Ministries  
What is the candidate’s understanding of the role of prayer in visitation and pastoral care ministries?  
How has this understanding been demonstrated?  
What experiences in pastoral care/counseling have helped the candidate to realize their gifts/strengths/weaknesses in pastoral care and visitation?  
Can they name their gifts/strengths/weaknesses in this area?  
Have they developed a sense of the appropriateness of referral?  
Do they have contacts to whom they may refer?  
What learnings have taken place in pastoral care and visitation ministries?

## **Addendum D**

### **Vocational Identity in Ministry Guidelines**

*For provisional elders in an extension ministry and for provisional deacons*

During **Year 1** of Provisional Membership, the District Superintendent will meet with and evaluate the provisional elder in an extension appointment and the provisional deacon in the areas of vocational identity and effectiveness in ministry. The narrative should highlight strengths and areas of growth using the questions below.

1. For the provisional deacon, how has he or she helped persons in his/her local church connect with “the needy, neglected, and marginalized among the children of God”?
2. For the provisional elder in extension ministries, how has he or she continued to live out their call to order the life of the church?
3. In what ways has the candidate taught and proclaimed the Gospel effectively in his/her current appointment?
4. Describe the candidate’s leadership style.
5. What are this candidate’s growing edge issues in the following areas:
  - a. Administering or assisting with the sacraments?
  - b. Preparing for liturgical gatherings, including weddings and funerals?
  - c. Helping the congregation engage people and issues in the world?
6. How does this candidate live out his/her identity as a member of The United Methodist Church?
7. What evidence do you see that this candidate is able to work collegially with other clergy?



# Year 2

## Calendar of Events, Benchmarks and Milestones

### **Year 2 – Commissioned in June 2022**

1. Attend fall Residency Event (September 5-6, 2023).
2. Meet regularly with your Mentor-Covenant Group.
3. In the fall, complete the ESCI-U assessment **due by January 12, 2024**. Include reflection on this meeting in your Annual Report/Action Plan.
4. In the late winter/early spring, complete the annual evaluation session with your S/PPRC or personnel committee. Include reflection on this meeting in your Annual Report/Action Plan. **Schedule this well in advance with your S/PPRC Chair so that he or she may plan meetings appropriately.** If you serve in extension ministry/beyond the local church, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence for support in developing a comparable group to provide feedback on your ministry. This evaluation may also serve as your summer evaluation to be turned in to your District Office.
5. Schedule a one-on-one meeting with your District Superintendent (in person or online) to review the results of your S/PPRC or personnel evaluation and to discuss Leadership (see Addendum E).
6. Remind your District Superintendent that a supervisor's evaluation report is due to the Provisional Membership Team by April 1. For all provisional members, focus on Leadership in the Life of the Church. **You should schedule your one-on-one with your DS in plenty of time for him or her to write this report! A lack of advance planning is not an emergency and will be noted by the Board.**
7. Submit to the Center for Clergy Excellence the following documents, by April 1:
  - a. Annual Report/Action Plan, including reflection on the ESCI-U assessment and your S/PPRC Evaluation.
  - b. A copy of the completed S/PPRC Evaluation Report Form
  - c. Your Mentor-Covenant Group Report
8. Attend May Residency Event (May 7-8, 2024).

## I. Meetings with the District Superintendent

The role and mission of the supervision phase of provisional membership by the Board of Ordained Ministry is to: a) to develop vocational identity; b) to build effective ministry; c) to enhance faith and theological understanding; d) to experience support and accountability; and e) to receive feedback for identifying and addressing growing edges.

**For all aspects of the Supervision Ministry, the provisional member must take the initiative to schedule the supervision meeting with the District Superintendent.**

- If you are serving on-loan in another Conference, your local DS as well as your Virginia DS should submit a report.
- If you are serving in an extension ministry/beyond the local church, your work supervisor should also submit an annual (general) evaluation of your work. This evaluation does not need to follow the Addendum pattern/topic.

In the second year, all provisional members discuss the topics in Addendum E. **It is your responsibility to remind your DS which topic/Addendum should be covered.** The VAUMC Superintendents all have access to the electronic Addendums; you should share the Addendum guidelines with your local DS if you are serving on-loan.

## II. Annual Reports/Action Plans

Annually, using the feedback sheets from your provisional membership interviews and subsequent evaluations, submit a brief written Annual Report/Action Plan identifying areas of growth and how you are addressing them. The action plan should have a maximum of 3-pages, be double-spaced, and include your name and the date.

Use the following questions as a guide in your writing:

- **In the second year Annual Report/Action Plan**, be sure to include the things you learned from the ESCI-U assessment and from your S/PPRC Evaluation, and how you are already using (or plan to use) those aspects of feedback to develop your ministry.
- What were the areas of growth identified by the Board at your provisional interviews (or in subsequent feedback) and how have you addressed these? What has been the fruit of your efforts?
- What are other areas of growth have you identified for yourself this year?
- Using the VA Conference Characteristics of Effective Clergy, describe specific ways you have grown as a clergy leader. What have been the most significant influences leading to this growth?
- What have you learned in the past year that has most affected your practice of ministry? Where or from whom did you learn it?

**This report is due by April 1 each year.**

### III. ESCI-U Assessment

When you applied for Provisional Membership you took the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory-University Edition (ESCI-U). This assessment takes a holistic view of your leadership and taking it at this point will allow both you and the Board to see the ways you have grown in your ministry since your application to provisional membership.

You and all your raters must complete the inventory by **January 12, 2024**. This deadline cannot be extended. You must invite 9 raters.

By October 1, 2023, you will receive an email from “CFCE Admin (Korn Ferry Hay Group Surveys) [diagnostics@kornferry.com](mailto:diagnostics@kornferry.com)” within the next day or so. Please notify me if you do not receive this automated email with your user name and password; be sure to check your junk mail folder. When you receive the email, you will need to log on and enter your raters and their email addresses. You will need to ask your raters to complete this assessment by watching for a similar invitation email from “CFCE Admin [HaySurveys@HayGroup.com]”. **Select nine persons with whom you have been in ministry.** Family members are not appropriate. Raters’ responses will be anonymous.

Here are two issues that have caused trouble for raters in the past:

- The rater fails to hit the “submit” button when they complete. This button may not be clearly apparent.
- The rater answers too many questions as “not observed”. If that happens, they have a non-valid evaluation, and it will not count. They are not able to go back in and answer more.

Please remind your raters of these two issues so they can offer as many observations as possible and fully submit their responses.

#### **In addition to your raters, you will also complete the self-assessment.**

You will need to check back on the website periodically to make sure that your raters have completed their work. We expect that all **nine** of your raters will complete their assessments, by January 12, 2024, you must have **at least six valid raters plus your self-assessment completed.** Please remind your raters by at least December 15, 2023 if they have not yet completed their responses.

After January 22, 2024 you will receive an email with your composite report.

Please contact Lyn Harding ([lynharding@vaumc.org](mailto:lynharding@vaumc.org)) with any questions you may have.

Your Annual Report/Action Plan should include a reflection on what you learned about yourself and your ministry from this feedback, and how you have begun to address areas of growth and build on areas of strength.

The results and responses to the assessment will be reviewed by the Provisional Membership Team in May of the second year and recommendations may be made to the provisional member in the annual continuance letter.

#### **IV. S/PPRC Evaluation**

Each year, clergy appointed to local congregations complete an S/PPRC evaluation. In the second year of provisional membership, this evaluation must be completed and turned in to both your District Office (as usual) and the Center for Clergy Excellence (for the sake of your Provisional Journey). You can find the format for the evaluation at: [www.vaumc.org/SPPRCResources](http://www.vaumc.org/SPPRCResources), under Annual Evaluation. This evaluation is due with your action report on **April 1**.

Your Annual Report/Action Plan should include a reflection on what you learned about yourself and your ministry from this feedback, and how you have begun to address areas of growth and build on areas of strength.

## **Addendum E**

### **Leadership in the Life of the Church Guidelines**

During **Year 2** of Provisional Membership, the District Superintendent will meet with and evaluate the provisional member in the area of leadership. The narrative should highlight strengths and areas of growth using the questions below.

1. What are your specific responsibilities for ordering or leadership in the life of the church (or your context for ministry)?
2. Explain how you promote partnerships between the Conference, District, Clergy, and Laity in all aspects of ministry. Further explain your role in equipping the laity in your present appointment
3. Give examples of your leadership in facilitating group meetings and promoting group decisions.
4. How do you lead your church/context in planning for mission and ministry? How do you lead in connecting your setting to your community? How have you helped persons in your setting discover and enter into ministries of love, justice, and service?
5. Identify your initial reaction to conflict (perhaps: hide, attack or accuse) and how you get beyond it to promote resolution. Give examples of conflict situations in your present appointment and how you exercised leadership in them.
6. How do you manage your time in your appointment? Briefly outline what a typical workweek looks like. Be sure to address issues of self-care and family care.
7. In what ways do you foster connectional relationships at the District and Conference levels? In what ways are you involved in the United Methodist Church beyond the local church?
8. For provisional elders, discuss your understanding of the spiritual aspects of ordering the life of the Church, and list ways you work to promote them.
9. Name an ordained clergyperson whom you consider to be a model of servant leadership and list the qualities that lead to your choice.
10. Describe your leadership style and explain how you see it functioning in The United Methodist Church.
11. If applicable, describe your understanding of staff relationships and how you relate to other members of a church staff.
12. Describe your role in the financial stewardship leadership in your ministry context.

## Second Year Preparatory Work toward Full Membership

In preparation for the application and interview process for full membership and ordination, provisional members may begin working on two items that will be submitted with other application requirements:

- A. **Provisional members will prepare for the leadership project which is required as a part of the application for full membership and ordination** (Vocation and Leadership Committee) which is described as follows:

*Relate an experience of leadership in your ministry that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

- *How was God's vision discerned?*
- *How did the community come to embrace the vision?*
- *How did you discern and equip people to implement the vision?*
- *How did you provide leadership to ensure the health and vitality of the vision?*
- *How did you evaluate effectiveness?*
- *What is the next step in leadership development for you?*

This should be a substantial, meaningful, disciple-making leadership experience during your provisional membership years, and you should make plans to complete (and describe) your leadership project as you approach your application for full membership.

- B. **Provisional members may complete the required Bible Study Teaching Plan a year prior to applying.** The book of the Bible and the format of submission must comply with the instructions for the year of application. The book of the Bible associated with applications for the next year will be distributed by October 1, as well as posted on the [www.vaumc.org/ProvisionalMembers](http://www.vaumc.org/ProvisionalMembers) page. Second year (or other) provisional members are invited to consider completing the Teaching Plan one year in advance in order to spread out the work of applying for full membership.

# Year 3



## Calendar of Events, Benchmarks and Milestones

### Year 3-Commissioned in June 2021

1. Attend fall Residency Event (September 5-6, 2023). There will be an orientation for those applying for full membership during this event.
2. Meet regularly with your Mentor-Covenant Group and submit the group report by April 1. Whether you apply for full membership or not (and whether or not you are recommended for it), the Mentor-Covenant Group continues to meet until April.

**If you are not applying** for full membership and ordination (or recognition of orders) this year:

- a. Schedule a one-on-one meeting with your District Superintendent to discuss Teaching Ministry (see Addendum F).
- b. Remind your District Superintendent that a supervisor's evaluation report is due to the Provisional Membership Team/Center for Clergy Excellence by April 1.
- c. Submit to the Center for Clergy Excellence your Annual Report/Action Plan and your annual Mentor-Covenant Group Report by April 1.
- d. Attend the May Residency Event (May 7-8, 2024).

**If you are applying** for full membership and ordination (or recognition of orders) this year:

Review the next chapter of this handbook for an overview of the application process.

Complete the initial application request by **July 31, 2023**. The request will be available from the conference website beginning **July 1** at [www.vaumc.org/BOMApplications](http://www.vaumc.org/BOMApplications) and should be completed and submitted via the jotform link.

- a. Remind your District Superintendent that a supervisor's evaluation report is due to the Provisional Membership Team by the **December 1** deadline listed in your full member application packet (see Addendum G – Final Evaluation). You need to schedule a meeting with your DS well in advance of that deadline to allow him or her time to write a report.
- b. Submit all materials for full membership and ordination by noon on **December 1, 2023**.
- c. If interviewed and continued as a Provisional Member by the Board, you will not need to submit an Annual Report/Action Plan to the Center for Clergy Excellence this spring. You will attend the May Residency Event.
- d. If recommended for full membership and ordination, you will not need to submit an Annual Report/Action Plan in the spring. You will attend the Ordinands' Retreat with the Bishop on **April 2-3, 2024**.

## I. Meetings with the District Superintendent

The role and mission of the supervision phase of provisional membership by the Board of Ordained Ministry is to: a) to develop vocational identity; b) to build effective ministry; c) to enhance faith and theological understanding; d) to experience support and accountability; and e) to receive feedback for identifying and addressing growing edges.

**For all aspects of the Supervision Ministry, the provisional member must take the initiative to schedule the supervision meeting with the District Superintendent.**

- If you are serving on-loan in another Conference, your local DS as well as your Virginia DS should submit a report.
- If you are serving in an extension ministry/beyond the local church, your work supervisor should also submit an annual (general) evaluation of your work. This evaluation does not need to follow the Addendum pattern/topic.

**It is your responsibility to remind your DS which topic/Addendum should be covered.** The VAUMC Superintendents all have the electronic Addendums; you should share the Addendum guidelines with your local DS if you are serving on-loan.

## II. Annual Reports/Action Plans

Annually, using the feedback sheets from your provisional membership interviews and subsequent evaluations, submit a brief written Annual Report/Action Plan identifying areas of growth and how you are addressing them. The action plan should have a maximum of 3-pages, be double-spaced, and include your name and the date.

Use the following questions as a guide in your writing:

- What were the areas of growth identified by the Board at your provisional interviews (or in subsequent feedback) and how have you addressed these? What has been the fruit of your efforts?
- What are other areas of growth have you identified for yourself this year?
- Using the VA Conference Characteristics of Effective Clergy, describe specific ways you have grown as a clergy leader. What have been the most significant influences leading to this growth?
- What have you learned in the past year that has most affected your practice of ministry? Where or from whom did you learn it?

**This report is due by April 1 each year.** If you submitted your Full Membership application along with your written papers for the Board of Ordained Ministry during the winter, no spring report is required.

## Addendum F

### Teaching Ministries Guidelines

If the provisional member is **not applying** for full membership and ordination, during **Year 3** of Provisional Membership, the District Superintendent will meet with and evaluate the provisional member in the area of teaching ministries. The narrative should highlight strengths and areas of growth from the questions below.

1. Ask the candidate to share about his/her teaching ministry (Disciple Bible Study, Sunday School Class, Advent/Lenten Study, Confirmation Class, New Member Class, etc.). In what ways does the candidate demonstrate a teaching ministry?

Select one experience of teaching for the following questions.

2. Did the candidate have a clear lesson plan and objective(s) for the session?
3. Was the candidate able to articulate to you his/her expectations/objectives for the class prior to teaching? After the session, was the candidate able to determine the degree to which these expectations/objectives were reached?
4. What communication skills were used in the teaching setting?
5. Describe this person as a teacher. What needs for developing/improving teaching skills as a teacher do you identify?
6. Did teaching methods address several different learning styles?

The following criteria will be used by the Board of Ordained Ministry in evaluating the teaching plan that is required in the application for full membership and ordination:

*Candidate shows evidence of effectiveness in teaching and regularly teaches in his/her ministry setting.*

- *Candidate understands the major themes of the text.*
- *Candidate communicates understanding of the use of basic resources for teaching.*
- *Candidate was able to prepare an adequate outline and a detailed lesson plan.*
- *Candidate communicates skills used in interpreting the text for applications to life.*

## **Addendum G**

### **Final Evaluation Guidelines**

**When completing this evaluation for those provisional members applying for full membership and ordination, the District Superintendent should provide a detailed response to each question below.**

These questions, as well as Action Reports from the Board of Ordained Ministry, can also guide the conversation between the provisional member and District Superintendent during meetings in **Year 3** and **Beyond Year 3**.

1. How well does the provisional member relate to his/her colleagues, to the laity and to the community?
2. What, if any, specific concerns do you have for the provisional member's overall effectiveness?
3. What strengths and/or weaknesses (not 'growing edges') do you see in the provisional member?
4. What verbal concerns has S/PPRC (or personnel committee) shared that do not appear in their annual written evaluations of the provisional member? Is there a record of complaints from S/PPRC (or personnel committee) or from parishioners about the provisional member's ministry? Do you see any patterns?
5. How has the provisional member received and responded to your supervision?
6. What personal habits or behavior patterns could hinder and/or help the provisional member's ministry in the years ahead?
7. Is this provisional member fruitful in leading the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? Share some of the evidence.
8. Please share your intuitive sense of the provisional member.

# **Applying for Full Membership**

## Requirements for Application and Interviews

The process for application and interviews changes somewhat each year, as the Board of Ordained Ministry refines the process in light of feedback, best practices, Disciplinary changes, and BOM policy changes.

**When you have decided to apply for full membership, you need to let two key groups know about this decision by July 31, 2023:**

- 1) The Center for Clergy Excellence—by turning in your application via the jotform link by July 31, 2023.
- 2) Your provisional mentor-covenant group, so that they can be in prayer with and for you.

Once the Center for Clergy Excellence has received your application request, you will receive the expanded application packet.

Using the instructions detailed in that packet, you will begin working through a series of assessments and forms required by the United Methodist Church and the Virginia Annual Conference, including:

- a) Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor’s Evaluation and Self-evaluation – if not previously submitted. Your CPE is to be completed by **September** for ordination as a deacon or elder and full membership in the conference the following June.
- b) Psychological Assessment: this is required for all candidates for ordination and full membership and is different from the psychological assessment you have previously completed.
- c) Medical Report Form: this is required to make sure that you are physically cleared by a doctor to meet the demands of ministry.
- d) Background and Credit Check: this is required for all candidates for ordination and full membership.
- e) Edge Performance Assessment: self-rating and rating from others whom you will invite to participate online.
- f) District Superintendent Evaluation: an interview is required early in the fall in order for your DS to complete their written narrative evaluation.
- g) Interview Committee Papers and Materials: full written answers to questions from each of the three areas of Theology, Practice of Ministry, and Vocation and Leadership. Additionally, you will submit via web link (not DVD) a recording of your leadership in worship or, if applying for ordination as a deacon, a proclamation in your current ministry setting. Since 2016, the Deacon proclamation materials include a full sermon.

If at any time you choose to withdraw from the process, you may do so by sending an email to Rev. Jessie Colwell ([jessiecolwell@vaumc.org](mailto:jessiecolwell@vaumc.org) or 804-521-1140). You may be asked to reimburse the Virginia Conference for the cost of assessment materials if you withdraw after October 1.

**The application materials are due by noon on the specified date in December. The due date is prominently listed in the packet each year, and it is firm.** Late materials will not be accepted—but you will be 364 days early for the following year’s deadline.

# **Beyond Year 3**

## Calendar of Events, Benchmarks and Milestones

### **Beyond the Third Year- Commissioned in June 2020 or before**

1. Attend the fall Residency Event (September 5-6, 2023). There will be an orientation for those applying for full membership during this event.
2. Meet regularly with your Mentor-Covenant Group and submit the group report by April 1. Whether you apply for full membership or not (and whether or not you are recommended for it), the Mentor-Covenant Group continued to meet until April.

**If you are not applying** for full membership and ordination (or recognition of orders) this year:

- a. Remind your District Superintendent that a supervisor's evaluation report is due to the Provisional Membership Team by April 1. This evaluation may be guided by Addendum G, or address other areas of ministry that you and the DS identify.
- b. Submit to the Center for Clergy Excellence your Annual Report/Action Plan (via jotform) and your annual Mentor-Covenant Group Report by April 1 (your mentor will submit this report).
- c. Attend the May Residency Event (May 7-8, 2024).

**If you are re/applying** for full membership and ordination (or recognition of orders) this year:

Review the previous chapter of this handbook for an overview of the application process.

Complete the initial application request by July 31, 2023. The request will be available from the conference website beginning July 1 at [www.vaumc.org/BOMApplications](http://www.vaumc.org/BOMApplications) and should be completed and submitted via the jotform link.

- a. Remind your District Superintendent that a supervisor's evaluation report is due to the Provisional Membership Team by the December deadline listed in your full member application packet (see Addendum G). If you are reapplying for full membership and your DS submitted an Addendum G evaluation last year, he or she should update that evaluation in light of this year's ministry.
- b. Submit all materials for full membership and ordination by the December deadline listed in your application packet
- c. If interviewed and continued as a Provisional Member by the Board, you will not need to submit an Annual Report/Action Plan to the Center for Clergy Excellence this spring. You will attend the May Residency Event.
- d. If recommended for full membership and ordination, you will not need to submit an Annual Report/Action Plan in the spring. You will attend the Ordinands' Retreat with the Bishop on April 2-3, 2024.



## I. Meetings with the District Superintendent

The role and mission of the supervision phase of provisional membership by the Board of Ordained Ministry is to: a) to develop vocational identity; b) to build effective ministry; c) to enhance faith and theological understanding; d) to experience support and accountability; and e) to receive feedback for identifying and addressing growing edges.

**For all aspects of the Supervision Ministry, the provisional member must take the initiative to schedule the supervision meeting with the District Superintendent.**

- If you are serving on-loan in another Conference, your local DS as well as your Virginia DS should submit a report.
- If you are serving in an extension ministry/beyond the local church, your work supervisor should also submit an annual (general) evaluation of your work. This evaluation does not need to follow the Addendum pattern/topic.

**It is your responsibility to remind your DS which topic/Addendum should be covered.** The VAUMC Superintendents all have the Addendum packet; you should share the Addendum guidelines with your local DS if you are serving on-loan.

## II. Annual Reports/Action Plans

Annually, using the feedback sheets from your provisional membership interviews and subsequent evaluations, submit a brief written Annual Report/Action Plan identifying areas of growth and how you are addressing them. The action plan should have a maximum of 3-pages, be double-spaced, and include your name and the date.

Use the following questions as a guide in your writing:

- What were the areas of growth identified by the Board at your provisional interviews (or in subsequent feedback) and how have you addressed these? What has been the fruit of your efforts?
- What are other areas of growth have you identified for yourself this year?
- Using the VA Conference Characteristics of Effective Clergy, describe specific ways you have grown as a clergy leader. What have been the most significant influences leading to this growth?
- What have you learned in the past year that has most affected your practice of ministry? Where or from whom did you learn it?

**This report is due by April 1 each year.** If you submitted your Full Membership application along with your written papers for the Board of Ordained Ministry during the winter, no spring report is required.

### III. Time Limits on Provisional Membership

Please note that there are many good reasons to continue your provisional membership beyond the third year. Family, ministry, moving, and other considerations may all factor into that timeline—and occasionally the Board itself will suggest or require a provisional member to wait into the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> year or beyond to apply or re-apply. **Please note that there is an eight-year maximum on provisional membership in the Discipline. If you pass that eight-year maximum, you may be recommended (or not) as a licensed local pastor and you may re-apply (or not) for provisional membership or associate membership.**

If you transfer between Provisional Deacon and Provisional Elder, please note that you must serve at least two years in the new relationship before being elected to full membership.

If you take time out of ministry on Personal or Family Leave of Absence, please note that the eight years continue to count down during your time on leave.

If you take time out of ministry on Medical Leave, you may stay in the Provisional relationship for as long as you are on Medical Leave, even beyond the eight years. You may return to ministry as either a provisional member or a licensed local pastor if those eight years have run out and that relationship upon return will be a decision of the Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave.

# **Mentor-Covenant Group Ministry**

# Mentor-Covenant Group Ministry

The Mentor-Covenant Group Ministry begins with a one-day retreat for mentors and members of the first year of provisional membership. Mentor-Covenant Group assignments are made at the September Residency Event. During the provisional journey, sometimes the membership in a particular group changes for a variety of reasons. For any concerns or issues, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence.

## I. Purpose of the Mentor-Covenant Group

The purpose is to build the body of Christ as the provisional member develops vocational identity, reflects theologically on the practice of ministry and reviews the exercise of authority and power in a new clergy role. The years of provisional membership are designed to inculcate habits, attitudes, and practices of theological reflection and covenant life that will influence one's entire ministry. In mentor-covenant groups, provisional members receive encouragement for the practice and work of ministry as servant leaders. Participation in a mentor-covenant group continues the journey of vocational discernment. The Mentor-Covenant Groups will provide an opportunity for accountability related to spiritual disciplines as well as time for discussion of ministry events by using a Ministry Reflection Report.

## II. Model

The model is one of collegiality. The mentor does have understanding, awareness, and experience as a clergy member of the conference, however, the emphasis is placed on the provisional members as clergy colleagues. The relationships among group members will be:

- purposeful and directed
- intentional
- trusting
- disciplined
- accountable to one another and the journey.

## III. Principles for the Mentor-Covenant Group Ministry

Mentoring is a practice of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Mentoring exists to provide a confidential relationship in which the provisional members can grow in effective clergy leadership.
- Mentoring is based on a mutually agreed Commitment Statement between mentor and provisional members.
- The mentor-covenant group ministry is one of the contexts for continued learning and formation in ministry by all those involved.

The mentor relationship is not an evaluative process but a relationship of mutual support, accountability, and learning. Organizational responsibilities and relationships shall be clearly defined for provisional member, mentor, District Superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry.

## **IV. Accountability in the Mentor-Covenant Group Relationship**

The mechanism for accountability between the mentor and the provisional members is the annual *Commitment Statement*. The work the mentor and the provisional members do together is about developing vocational identity, reflecting theologically on the practice of ministry and reviewing the exercise of authority and power in a new clergy role. Together, they examine the practice of ministry and the uniqueness of the Virginia Annual Conference.

Because mentoring is about ordained ministry as vocation, there is collegiality in the relationships because the clergy mentor is also involved in a lifelong process of vocational formation as a member of an Order. At the same time, the mentor is a guide, because the relationship is prescribed for a period of time to support the provisional members in becoming effective clergy leaders.

## **V. Responsibilities of Mentors and Provisional Members**

### **Responsibilities of the Provisional Members:**

Following the retreat, it is the responsibility of the mentor and the provisional members in a covenant group to meet monthly, September through April each year. The mentor and provisional members will share the responsibility to prepare and discuss Ministry Reflection Reports and to plan other discussions or activities for growth, support and accountability in ministry.

### **The responsibility of the Mentor is to:**

- Facilitate a covenant group of provisional members located in a geographical area.
- Facilitate the development of the provisional members' vocational identity.
- Guide the provisional members in theological reflection on the practice of ministry.
- Review with the provisional members the exercise of authority and power in their new clergy role.

### **The expectations of the Mentor and the Covenant Group members are:**

- Attend the Mentor-Covenant Group Retreat at the beginning of the relationship.
- Maintain confidentiality of the meeting.
- Honor time requirements and commitments.
- Share responsibilities for discussion using the Ministry Reflection Report model.

### **The role of the Mentor is:**

- to be a guide, and not an advisor or psychological counselor.
- to be a colleague and resource, not a supervisor or authority.
- to be a listener to clarify options and issues that help the provisional members develop an identity as a clergy person.

## VI. Mentor-Covenant Group Meetings

The provisional members and mentor choose together the times and places to meet. Monthly meetings are required from September through April. The meeting of mentor-covenant groups will include a time for accountability related to spiritual disciplines and also time for discussion of a Ministry Reflection Report based on a ministry event in the life of one of the group members.

## VII. Reflections on Ministry Events

Ministry events used to prepare the Ministry Reflection Report come from the context of the ministry setting and are an opportunity to go deeper in understanding God's actions and our own and others' actions in the work of ministry. To be the most helpful, select a ministry event in which you experienced some uncertainty, conflict or vulnerability. A ministry event might be a conversation, phone call, meeting, worship service or an experience in prayer, mission or pastoral care.

When you present a ministry event, list the pertinent issues and questions to be drawn from three focus areas. The focus areas are (1) vocational identity, (2) theological reflection on the practice of ministry, and (3) the exercise of authority and power.

Consider questions and issues from these three focus areas to shape their discussion of the ministry event:

### *(1) Vocational Identity*

How does this event relate to your call to ordained ministry?

What new insight does this event reveal about your call?

How does this event fit into your vision of ministry?

How might this event shape your spiritual growth?

### *(2) Reflect Theologically on the Practice of Ministry*

How is God present in this event?

Can you identify a biblical person whose experience is similar to yours?

What biblical stories, persons, or themes pertain to this event?

How are the disciplines of faith (prayer, fasting, reading scripture, etc.) shaping your responses in this event?

How do you speak and think theologically about this event?

How do your actions as clergy convey your theology?

### *(3) Exercise of Authority and Power*

How did you exercise authority in this event?

How are you sharing authority in this event?

Does this event suggest a struggle with clergy boundaries in any of the following areas: sexuality, finances, popularity, power as control, etc.?

What is the source of your authority in this event?

Specific details about the Ministry Reflection Report will be shared at the first year Mentor-Covenant Group retreat.

## **VIII. Annual Report to the BOM**

It is the responsibility of the mentor and the provisional members to submit a brief yearly report to the Center for Clergy Excellence. The reporting is not an evaluative essay about the provisional members. It is a descriptive report about the mentor-covenant group relationship and faithfulness to the process. **The group writes one report. The members and mentor will sign the report and your mentor will submit it to the Center of Clergy Excellence via jotform.** This report is due via jotform by April 1 each year.

# Commitment Statement

*For the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry Mentoring Ministry*

To be completed, signed by provisional members and mentor, and a copy returned to the Center for Clergy Excellence **the first year only**.

Following the matching of a mentor with provisional members, the mentor-covenant group meets to begin the official mentoring relationship.

1. We agree that the focus of our mentoring process will be:

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2. We agree on the following expectations:

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3. We agree to meet on the following dates and times:

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\* \* \*

We the undersigned enter into a covenantal relationship and commit ourselves to the items above. It is our hope and prayer that it will be a shared journey of learning in which we will remain faithful, open and honest in our relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Provisional Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Provisional Member

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Provisional Member

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Provisional Member

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Provisional Member

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Provisional Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Provisional Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# **Residency Events for Continuing Theological Education**

## Continuing Theological Education through Residency Events

A learning ministry has been characteristic of the Methodist movement from its beginning and continues to be vital for effective ministry. The years of provisional membership are designed to inculcate habits, attitudes, and practices of theological study and covenant life that will influence one's entire ministry.

Residency Events are held 2 consecutive days in September and in May annually. These are overnight events, generally beginning at 10:00am the first day and continuing through mid-afternoon the following day. You are expected to be in residence for the whole event, and you will receive the dates far in advance to reserve on your calendars.

Provisional members are divided into class groups based on year of commissioning and meet with that group and a class coordinator during each Residency Event.

Studies – in the form of presentations, keynote speakers, or workshops – are designed around four major emphases:

- **BEING** – Who the leader is: how the leader articulates call and character, and the disciplines of the spiritual life.
- **DOING** – What the leader does: the practice of fruitful ministry within the context of the nature and mission of the church.
- **KNOWING** – What the leader knows in company with the Church and its basic doctrines: the ability to think theologically and integrate theology into the practice of ministry.
- **CHURCH LEADERSHIP** – An in-depth look at specific contemporary issues in church leadership.

In addition, workshops may be offered from time to time on a variety of ministry areas related to the Characteristics of Effective Clergy. The workshops offer opportunities to address areas of growth identified in BOM feedback as well as ministry enrichment opportunities you may find interesting or relevant to your context.

The Residency Events fulfill your CEU requirements as provisional members. **You do not need to complete other CEU-awarding training while you are a provisional member**, and therefore you are not generally eligible for the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) grants for continuing education. (That apportionment goes to pay for your participation in the Residency Events). Exceptions to this may be granted for specific UMC events, particularly those targeted at new or young clergy, on a case-by-case basis.

## **Calendar of Residency Events**

### **Schedule for 2023-2025**

Make plans to attend these events as they apply to you. You are expected to attend all events, and excused absences are offered only for personal or church emergencies that cannot be scheduled for other times. Mission Trips/Pilgrimages are not generally considered excused absences. Please contact the Center for Clergy Excellence as conflicts arise.

*For Residency Events in July and May: Begin at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday and conclude at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday at the Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond, Va. Please plan to attend the entire event.*

#### Year 1

##### **Residency Event**

**Years 1, 2, 3 and Beyond Provisionals** **September 5-6, 2023**

**Year 1 Provisionals and their Mentors: Mentor-Covenant Group Retreat** **September 7, 2023**

**Action Report Due** **April 1, 2024**

##### **Residency Event**

**Years 1, 2, 3 and Beyond Provisionals** **May 7-8, 2024**

#### Year 2

##### **Residency Event**

**Years 1, 2, 3 and Beyond Provisionals** **September 4-5, 2024**

**Action Report Due** **April 1, 2025**

##### **Residency Event**

**Years 1, 2, 3 and Beyond Provisionals** **May 6-7, 2025**

#### Year 3

##### **Apply for Ordination**

**July 1-July 31, 2025**

**Action Report Due (if you have not applied)** **April 1, 2025**

**Ordinands' Retreat** **TBD April 2025**

*For those recommended for ordination, an overnight retreat is held in April. For those who do not apply or are continued as provisional members, continuing to attend the Residency Events and participating with the Mentor-Covenant Groups is required.*

# **Foundations for the Provisional Journey**

# Self-Care Covenant

## Virginia Conference, The United Methodist Church

For the benefit of my own life and the ministry to which I am called in Christ...

1. I will keep, as a regular practice, the following spiritual disciplines (beyond sermon and teaching preparation). List at least three: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I will regularly set aside time for family meals (at least weekly) and family activities (at least monthly). “Family” denotes immediate family, extended family, and/or network of friends.
3. I will adhere to the minimum standards for vacation and days off as articulated in the “Vacation Policy for Virginia Conference Clergy”\* adopted by the Bishop’s Cabinet.
4. I will adhere to the “Guidelines for Continuing Theological Education”\* as required by the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
5. I will work towards achieving and/or maintaining personal conformity with medically recognized health guidelines for height and weight unless such conformity is deemed unsuitable by my attending physician.
6. I will develop and/or maintain personal relationships with the following persons (friends, family, colleagues) to whom I can go for support in times of stress or difficulty. List at least 3 or 4:  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. I will participate in some form(s) of regular exercise appropriate to the particulars of my physical condition and with the knowledge and approval of my attending physician. Briefly describe exercise program: \_\_\_\_\_
8. I will endeavor to establish/maintain healthy practices with regard to personal nutrition.
9. I will order my personal administrative life through the establishment of legal documents appropriate to the particular circumstances of my relationships: e.g., a personal will, durable power of attorney, living will, and/or guardianship for surviving minor children. I will make known the location of these documents to the following persons (list at least two):  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. I will endeavor to establish/maintain healthy practices with regard to proper sleep.

\*These can be found on the following web page: [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org)

I covenant all of the above with the following peer-support person or group with whom I will share mutual accountability for our self-care as clergy (please list):  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Characteristics of Effective Clergy

### Virginia Conference

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These are the leadership qualities and vocational competencies that define the effectiveness of clergy in the Virginia Conference. Additional measurable characteristics of congregational health are included to provide information for discussion of the clergy person's leadership and resulting effectiveness. *In addition to the criteria in each of the interview areas, your overall effectiveness for full membership and ordination will be evaluated based on these characteristics.*

#### **Leadership Qualities**

- *Maturing Spirituality:* Exhibits a disciplined spiritual life, maintaining healthy boundaries and being accountable for one's work and actions, including participation in a program of personal spiritual enrichment and renewal.
- *Integrity and Authenticity:* Demonstrates consistent behavior that is in alignment with Christian beliefs, practices, and healthy relationship with God.
- *Sound Theology:* Understands, knows, and celebrates the power of Jesus Christ to bring healing and wholeness, forgiveness and reconciliation, justice and peace, to the lives of individuals, congregations, and communities.
- *Servant Leadership:* Exhibits servant leadership that cultivates the gifts of the Spirit and empowers others to claim their call and find their place in ministry.
- *Relational:* Exhibits the ability to listen, develop working teams, equip persons for ministry, and manage conflict in a way that leads to healthy resolution.
- *Self Care:* Maintains a healthy balance between self, family, and work and participates in the Virginia Self-Care Covenant.
- *Connectional:* Serves as a leader who knows and supports United Methodist theology and polity as defined in the *Book of Discipline*, gives clear support for connectionalism and obedience to his/her ordination vows.
- *Adaptability:* Demonstrates the ability to be flexible regarding geographical location, congregational constituency, and worship styles.
- *Performance Standards:* Exhibits a high level of work ethic and consistently produces quality results.

#### **Vocational Competencies**

- *Evangelism and Discipleship:* Demonstrates the ability to lead the congregation in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- *Ministry Development:* Demonstrates a willingness to lead the congregation in establishing ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness.

- *Proclamation*: Possesses and articulates a working knowledge of biblical faith; demonstrates the ability to communicate and apply the gospel of Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways to the diverse population groups of our conference.
- *Commitment to Inclusivity*: Models and embraces inclusiveness, demonstrating sensitivity to diversity.
- *Visioning and Implementation Skills*: Demonstrates the ability to partner with laity in identifying and articulating the vision plus the assessment and administrative ability to make the vision become reality.
- *Inspirational and Motivational Skills*: Relates to others in a way that inspires and encourages them in their life of faith.
- *Administration*: Demonstrates administrative, management, and supervisory skills.
- *Pastoral Care*: Devotes time for pastoral care appropriate to the ministry setting, encourages and equips laity for the ministry of pastoral care, establishes and adheres to visitation priorities appropriate to the ministry setting.
- *Conflict Management*: Demonstrates the ability to handle complaints, settle disputes and resolve conflicts.

### **Vital Congregations Characteristics**

- Disciples worship (average worship attendance)
- Disciples make new disciples (number of people who join by profession of faith)
- Disciples engage in growing as a disciple (number of small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies)
- Disciples engage in mission (number of people from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach activities)
- Disciples give to mission (total amount given by local church to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries, including apportionments paid and support for all United Methodist and non-United Methodist organizations active in work such as advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach, and welfare anywhere in the world)

# Effectiveness in Ordained Ministry

## Guiding Questions for the Provisional Journey

*The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry has taken John Wesley's historic questions and shaped them into contemporary form. This restatement of the historic questions becomes the "Guiding Questions" for the Provisional Journey.*

Continuity and change are the poles between which each of us must navigate our lives and work. So it is also with clergy leadership. Men and women who are called as ordained servant leaders to share responsibility for shepherding others ought, in our judgment, practically (and not only theoretically) embody deep engagement with these questions and disciplines, each of which was essential for the vitality of the early Methodist movement and has been used in one form or another by the Wesleys and other spiritual elders in our tradition. The two categories into which the guiding questions have been arranged here help us discern key phases of the divine grace which have long been central in our faith story:

### **A. The Inner and Outer Sides are One: Probing Inward, Invisible Grace and its Outward, Visible Signs**

- 1. Do you have faith in Christ?** Are you willing to bet your life on it? What kind of life-giving story do you have to tell that is attractive to others? Do you have hope? What does this mean in your life? Do you have a deep and lasting concern for the well-being of people who may never give their loyalty to Christ as well as for those who do and will? Do you have an enthusiasm for proclaiming Good News? Is your relationship with God in Christ an actively nurtured one that stretches you daily? By what signs can this be seen?
- 2. Are you moving toward single-mindedness in your love for God and the responsibilities thereby placed on you?** How do you know? What do things like honor, integrity, and character mean in your life--not merely how you *think* of them, but how you *exemplify* them? How do you seek to serve the renewal of God's broken creation in a practical way? What about your commitments to heal the deep rifts in God's local and global family, whether the wounds are economically-, ethnic-, gender-, or culturally-based? What are you *doing*, and not just *saying*, about such things?
- 3. Do you honestly believe that God can renew you so that you may know firsthand a fullness, or perfection, in love during your life?** What does this mean in terms of your behaviors toward God, others, and yourself--specifically in reference to your teaching and guiding roles in the wider community?
- 4. Are you earnestly committing your energies unreservedly toward this renewal?** How would anyone other than you know it? What specific and intentional steps are you taking, and will yet take, to broaden and deepen your spiritual disciplines: What accountabilities given to whom will best serve this task? How are you attending to the positive value of living a balanced life, with physical well-being nurtured alongside emotional and spiritual well-being?
- 5. Are you really serious about giving yourself without holding back to the work that God calls you to do?** What does this mean, *practically*, about your exercise of leadership, commitment to fresh models of partnership with laity and clergy, and willingness to show you value what you see to be true above complicity in what you believe to be wrong or foolish?



**B. The United Methodist Church: An Historic and Still Vibrant Vessel of Inward and Outward Grace to Serve God's Family**

6. **Do you know the General Rules of the Wesleyan tradition?** As part of this stream of faith, you are called to perpetuate their witness. How, practically and specifically, will you do that?
7. **What have you done to grasp the distinctiveness of the doctrinal tradition of the United Methodist Church?** How do you live, and not merely talk about, the deeply ecumenical force of our stream of witness? How do you grasp and explain to others the nature of the connection between our tradition and the Biblical witness itself?
8. **Do you commit to proclaim the basic Biblical truths of sin and reconciliation, and to do so in ways that actually touch the hearts of people who are looking for a better way to live?** How will you show a capacity for flexibility in the forms of expression you use with different people, the ways you respond to real questions they put (with no issues being taboo), and exemplify a practically useful model of servant leadership as you enable them to tell their own stories with grace and power?
9. **Insofar as United Methodist discipline and polity serve the mission of Biblical faithfulness, how will you seek to work within such parameters for the cause of reconciliation and love?** What can you do to help the vision of "connectionalism" be vibrant rather than sterile, to be *relationally collegial* rather than isolated or merely transactional?
10. **Will you instruct children, visit in homes and corporations and shopping centers and hospitals and prisons and amusement parks and government agencies and in both town and country (to name a few settings for ministry)?** If not, why? If so, how will you actually organize your time spent each day to that end?
11. **Will you commit as an ordained United Methodist clergy person--and if so, how--to serve God fully with each day of life you are given, and not take on other engagements that will divert you from your vocation?** Are you, for example, in financial debt so as to embarrass or otherwise impede you in your work? If so, what, specifically, do you propose to do to rectify the situation, and by when?
12. **How will you show persistent diligence in your work as ordained clergy, never being unemployed or triflingly employed?** What *practically* can you do to be wisely discerning and unfailingly punctual in both making and keeping your commitments?

## John Wesley's Historic Questions

From the time of John Wesley to present, candidates for ordination have been asked the following questions. These questions were formulated by John Wesley and have been little changed throughout the years.

### **Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection and Ordination as an Elder**

(¶336, 2016 *Book of Discipline*):

1. Have you faith in Christ?
2. Are you going on to perfection?
3. Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?
4. Are you earnestly striving after it?
5. Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and his work?
6. Do you know the General Rules of our Church?
7. Will you keep them?
8. Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church?
9. After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?
10. Will you preach and maintain them?
11. Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?
12. Do you approve our Church government and polity?
13. Will you support and maintain them?
14. Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
15. Will you visit from house to house?
16. Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
17. Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
18. Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
19. Will you observe the following directions?
  - a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.
  - b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.

# John Wesley's Historic Questions

## **Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection and Ordination as Deacon**

(¶330.5.d, *2016 Book of Discipline*):

1. Have you faith in Christ?
2. Are you going on to perfection?
3. Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?
4. Are you earnestly striving after perfection in love?
5. Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and God's work?
6. Do you know the General Rules of our Church?
7. Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?
8. Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church?
9. After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?
10. Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?
11. Do you approve our Church government and polity?
12. Will you support and maintain them?
13. Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?
14. Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
15. Will you visit from house to house?
16. Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
17. Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
18. Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
19. Will you observe the following directions?
  - a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.
  - b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.