



Certification

in Specialized Ministries in The United Methodist Church

Spiritual Formation



Educational Requirements

Individuals seeking professional certification in spiritual formation in The United Methodist Church must meet the standards set by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry. These include successful completion of five (5) certification courses relating to spiritual formation. Persons are certified by their conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) in cooperation with GBHEM.

Courses are designed to provide graduate academic experience for persons to qualify them for certification. Other requirements for certification include personal and church qualifications and experience in the area of spiritual formation as determined by GBHEM.

The five (5) courses include theories and methods of teaching the Bible, exploration of the pedagogical and theological bases for ministries, and equipping persons as disciples for the transformation of the world. Courses also include an understanding of The United Methodist Church, its structure, curriculum, and resources.

Each course must be offered for no less than two (2) semester (or equivalent quarter) hours of graduate academic credit. All certification courses must be taken at a United Methodist seminary or approved graduate schools. Exceptions may be made for other seminaries on the University Senate-approved list in consultation with an annual conference BOM and GBHEM.

Three of the five courses may be taken online.

Candidates may participate in more than one course each year. A maximum of ten (10) years is allowed for the certification studies in ministry careers. Two years' experience working in specialized area is required for certification. Experience is defined as a contractual agreement with supervision, accountability, evaluation, and continuing education in a specialized ministry area. Sufficient experience is approved by the annual conference BOM and may also require pre-approval.

Core Competencies expected for certification in Spiritual Formation:

1. Regular practice of spiritual disciplines within the candidate's life.
2. Ability to teach others diverse spiritual disciplines (including, but not limited to, lectio divina, various forms/types of prayer, confession and examination of consciousness, processes of discernment, leadership of worship, fasting and self-emptying, ways of hospitality).
3. Understanding of and engagement in the essential link between spiritual formation and congregational life (e.g. in worship leadership and preaching, Christian education, pastoral care, community outreach, mission and evangelism, church administration, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue).



4. Knowledge of and the ability to teach history and practices of Wesleyan spirituality.
5. Ability to lead retreats with persons of varying ages.
6. Ability to offer spiritual direction, both in one-to-one and/or in-group modes.

Required Core Courses for Spiritual Formation

1. **TEACHING FOR BIBLICAL FAITH:** The nature of the Bible and its role in congregational contexts and processes which nurture Christian spiritual formation and discipleship; approaches to teaching the Bible as the church's book of faith and life.
2. **UNITED METHODIST STUDIES:** Understanding of and grounding in United Methodist doctrine and polity, and the practice of ministry. The course may include a study of doctrine, general rules, social principles, and polity of the UMC as found in the Book of Discipline; historical issues in UMC polity (organization and structure of contemporary United Methodism.)
3. **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR PERSONAL AND PARISH RENEWAL:** Orientation to Christian practices of contemplative and intercessory prayer for personal and parish renewal. Explores healing process and historic styles of spiritual direction.

OR

- PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY:** An orientation to the history and practice of Christian prayer forms and spiritual disciplines as they may be applied for personal and parish renewal. Exploration of the relationship of prayer to other spiritual disciplines, such as corporate worship, prophetic witness, hospitable social service, processes of discernment and of spiritual healing.
4. **SPIRITUAL DIRECTION/COMPANIONSHIP:** Focusing on attentiveness to God, listening skills, psychological awareness, personal spiritual disciplines, historical background (including formative Wesleyan spirituality), and ethical issues for fostering this supportive relationship of spiritual guidance. Includes readings in Christian classics, experiencing the practice of spiritual companionship, and training in ways of offering spiritual guidance in congregations.
 5. **PRACTICUM IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION/COMPANIONSHIP:** Supervised field education in spiritual guidance of individuals and groups, extending at least over an academic year; requiring regular engagement in one's own spiritual direction, offering individual and/or group spiritual direction to others, participation in a monthly peer supervision group, personal written reflection, and occasional retreats. The practicum will take place through

a training center or parish as approved by the seminary monitoring this course. (Prerequisite: Introductory course on "Spiritual Direction/Companionship.")

Certification Courses

- Satisfactory completion of the two-year "Academy for Spiritual Formation" of The Upper Room may meet the requirements for two (2) courses, *Teaching for Biblical Faith* and *Spiritual Disciplines for Personal and Parish Renewal* or *Prayer in Christian Ministry*.
- Completion of The Upper Room three-year Covenant Community may meet the requirement for the course: *Spiritual Disciplines for Personal and Parish Renewal*.

A certificate of completion will be required from The Upper Room to verify completion of these programs.

GBHEM may accept the course in Bible required for other areas of certification as meeting the requirements for spiritual formation certification when the course has been taken within the past 10 years and a special assignment related to spiritual formation is completed in consultation with GBHEM.

Should I seek Professional or Paraprofessional Certification?

Professional certification is available to persons with an undergraduate degree and graduate credit courses at a United Methodist seminary OR students graduating from a United Methodist-related college, where they have completed the required courses in an area of specialization and served two years in a specialized ministry area.

Paraprofessional certification is available to persons who may not have an undergraduate degree and are working in areas of specialized ministry. Paraprofessional certification does not carry academic credit and is designed for persons seeking training in a specialized ministry as a worker or volunteer.



General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

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