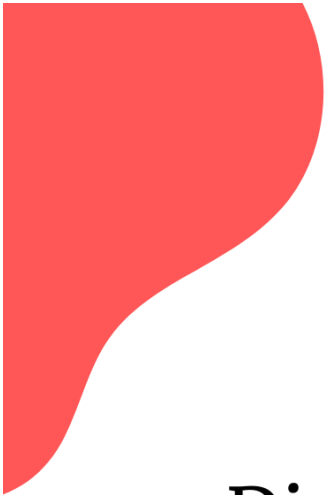


District Committee on Ordained Ministry Handbook



2026 edition

Table of Contents (Click on the title or page number to link to that page)

Section 1: Membership and Organization	3
BOM/d COM Relationship	3
Responsibilities	3
Membership (§666.1)	4
Organization	4
The District Superintendent's Role	5
Nomination & Election of Officers	5
Job Descriptions for Officers	8
Minutes & Report Forms	14
Section 2 - Who to Interview	15
Section 3 - General Interview Guidelines	17
After the interview	18
Section 4 - Interview Guides	20
Criteria for Ministry	21
Lay Supply Interview	23
Certified Lay Minister Interview	24
Recertification as a Certified Lay Minister Interview	25
Admission for Candidacy Interview	27
Certified Candidate Interview	29
Renewal of Certified Candidate Interview	31
Transfer of a Certified Candidate	33
from another District	33
Transfer of a Certified Candidate	34
from another Annual Conference	34
Licensed Local Pastor Interview	36
Licensing School Curriculum Overview	39
Renewal of Local Pastor License Interview	40
Discontinuing a Local Pastor	42
Local Pastor Reminders	43
Retired Local Pastor Preaching and Presiding in Retirement	45
Ministers of Other Christian Denominations or Fellowship Interview (OF)	46
Renewal of Other Fellowship (OF) Interview	50
Recommendation for Associate Membership Interview	51
Recommendation for Provisional Membership Interview	54
Reinstatement or Readmission Interview	58
Section 5 - Withdrawal	60
Section 6 - Additional Information	64
Section 7 - Forms	67
Section 8 - Checklists	69
Section 9 - LLP Renewal Tracks	72

Section 1: Membership and Organization

BOM/d COM Relationship

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) shall be amenable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry (§666.1). All actions are *recommendations* to the Board of Ordained Ministry and shall be reported to the Board through the “Action Report Form” by the dCOM Registrar. The Feedback Form pertaining to each candidate’s interview shall be uploaded in Unity and shared with the candidate. The minutes from the meeting shall be submitted to the Center for Clergy Excellence.

Core Values

Spiritual Discernment: The Holy Spirit is at work in the BOM’s practice of discernment; being prepared, being prayerful, and being healthy all help the Spirit to move among us.

Whole Person: In working with candidates and clergy, the whole person is considered, including theological knowledge, emotional intelligence, practical skill, and cultural competency.

A Changing World: Effective ministry leadership is needed in the pulpit and far beyond it: Christ is present—and our witness is needed—in and for a rapidly changing world.

Responsibilities

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry is responsible for the following actions:

1. Aid the local church in the process of enlisting persons for ordained ministry as deacon or elder or for service as a local pastor.
2. Encourage persons to enter the candidacy program.
3. Interview candidates for admission to the candidacy studies program prior to the assignment of a candidacy mentor.
4. Assign a Candidacy Mentor to newly admitted candidates.
5. Recommend for certification as a candidate for licensed or ordained ministry (Fitness for Ministry).
6. Maintain a list of all admitted and certified candidates under its care, shared annually with the Center for Clergy Excellence (§666.3).
7. Recommend candidates for licensing for pastoral ministry (Fitness for Ministry).
8. Recommend the renewal of license yearly for local pastors (Fitness for & Fruitfulness in Ministry).
9. Recommend candidates for Provisional Membership prior to interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry (Readiness for Ministry).
10. Recommend candidates for Associate Membership prior to interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry (Fruitfulness in Ministry).
11. Recommend for readmission to conference membership prior to interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry.
12. Interview individuals seeking to transfer candidacy into the Conference.
13. Interview individuals seeking to serve in a United Methodist Church as an Other Fellowship (OF) from another denomination or other fellowship.
14. Examine all candidates for renewal as a certified candidate.
15. In partnership with the Annual Conference’s Committee on Lay Servant Ministries, recommend and renew candidates for Certified Lay Minister.

16. Inform all persons interviewed of decisions and recommendations both orally and in writing (§666.12).
17. Assist the Board of Ordained Ministry in providing support for all clergy under appointment within the district (§666.13).

Membership (§666.1)

All members shall be nominated annually by the district superintendent in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. The membership is approved by the annual conference. Interim vacancies shall be filled by the district superintendent in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Filled vacancies shall be communicated immediately to the Center for Clergy Excellence.

Membership shall include:

- At least three professing members of local churches.
- A representative from the Board of Ordained Ministry, selected by the Board (§635.1g).
- At least six other clergy in the district. The clergy shall include elders and deacons, and where possible, women and ethnic minority clergy, a deacon or elder who is age 35 or younger, an associate member, and may include a local pastor who has completed the Course of Study.
- The district superintendent.

Organization

The dCOM shall nominate and elect its officers at the first meeting after the Annual Conference (§666.2). All members to the committee shall be members with vote. The BOM representatives are assigned by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The district superintendent *cannot* serve as chair of the dCOM (§666.1).

Officers include:

- Chairperson
- Team Leaders
- Secretary
- Registrar
- Board of Ordained Ministry Representative
- Mentor Coordinator

There shall be one dCOM per district. Each dCOM may set up multiple interview teams to accommodate a large number of interviews and the geographical size of the districts. The interview teams (i.e., Team A, Team B, Team C, etc.) shall be evenly distributed and representative of the district's diversity. Each team will have a Team Leader who will be responsible for the Feedback Form from their team. The recommendation from the teams will be presented to the dCOM for final approval. The full dCOM shall meet within 24-hours of the final interview either in-person or via Zoom. Those present represent a quorum. The dCOM chairperson will communicate the recommendation both orally and in writing. The written communication should include the Feedback Form.

Prior to the interview, Interview Team members should discern which questions will be asked by which members. This will ensure smooth transitions during the interview. Candidates should be prayed for at the beginning and the end of the interview. The interview space, whether in-person or virtual, should be a hospitable and welcoming environment. A worshipful centerpiece is recommended.

Video conference interviews should be offered for those candidates who are living out of the area. If possible, at least one in-person interview between that candidate and the committee is granted.

The District Superintendent's Role

- After the Annual Conference session, convening the nominating process for dCOM officers (see below). At the first meeting after the Annual Conference session, presides over the election of dCOM officers.
- May receive email or letter from candidate with a statement of call and request for admission to the candidacy program. The letter will also go to the dCOM chair and the Director for Call & Candidacy. This letter begins a dCOM file kept by the district office (hard copy, virtual, or both).
- If a candidate is recommended for admission to the candidacy program, the district superintendent assists dCOM in assigning the candidacy mentor.
- Ensures that any paper documents from candidates or local pastors received in the district office are scanned and uploaded into its proper location.
- Fall: Presides at Charge Conference and monitors candidates seeking approval and renewal.
- Spring: Nominates District Committee on Ordained Ministry members in consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry. The nomination report is sent to the Director for Call & Candidacy and the Assistant to the Bishop.
- Spring: Reviews the Minute Questions to ensure all certified candidates and licensed local pastors associated with the district are properly listed.

Nomination & Election of Officers

dCOM Officer Nominations

The district committee on ordained ministry shall elect its officers at the first meeting following the annual conference session where the members are elected. (BOD, para. 666.2)

The District Superintendent shall convene the nominating process for officers, which shall include:

- Chairperson
- Registrar
- Secretary
- Mentor Coordinator

The nominating process shall ensure that all members of the current dCOM have the opportunity to nominate and have adequate time for discernment, to review and pray about the list of nominees.

Election of Officers

At the first meeting of the dCOM after the Annual Conference, the District Superintendent will preside over the election of officers. This includes:

- Electing a secretary for this portion of the meeting, to take minutes, and to log the elections with the Center for Clergy Excellence
- Time of discerning conversation
- Preside over the election of a slate of officers, or individual officers, as discerned by the DS.

- It will be at the DS discretion whether written ballots are used.

A copy of the minutes will be uploaded to the Google drive folder, and an email will be sent to the Center for Clergy Excellence with the names of the elected officers.

The BOM representatives are assigned by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

Job Descriptions for Officers

Chairperson

- There shall be one chairperson per dCOM.
- Ensures that each meeting of the dCOM is spiritually grounded and seeks the discernment of the Holy Spirit.
- Sets dates, location(s), and agenda for meetings. The meetings should be scheduled in accordance with timelines provided by the BOM (i.e. for associate membership and provisional membership interviews). Dates should be consistent (i.e. every first Thursday of the month) and avoid Board of Ordained Ministry meetings and interviews, as well as Cabinet meetings. A schedule of meetings should be shared with the Center for Clergy Excellence.
- The agenda and candidate's submissions are shared with the dCOM at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Presides at the full dCOM meetings.
- Responds to candidates with relevant information to their request.
- Coordinates with the Registrar that all the required documents are in the candidate's InPath track prior to scheduling an interview.
- Assigns team members to an interview team and the Team Leaders. Chairpersons should identify the necessary number of Team Leaders needed, and have one or two additional dCOM members identified as "backup" Team Leaders in the event a Team Leader is unable to attend a meeting.
- Assigns a candidate to an Interview Team, taking into consideration travel and other accommodations.
- Schedules *Admission Interviews* for candidates requesting admission to the candidacy program and schedules *Certification Interviews* with candidates who have completed the candidacy program and submitted all required documents. These interviews should be scheduled in a timely fashion.
- Communicates orally by phone and in writing to each candidate regarding the results of the interview and recommended action with a copy of the candidate's Feedback Form.
- Uploads, or ensures that, the Chair's letter and Feedback Form in the candidate's Unity track using the Action Report Form step.
- Ensures that all dCOM leaders are following through on their responsibilities.
- Ensures that the dCOM interviews candidates at the appropriate time with the appropriate documents received by the deadlines and reviewed.
- Empowers Team Leaders to guide the interviews.
- Sign scholarship or grant applications for certified candidates.
- Reports annually to the District Conference (§659.3).

Team Leader

- Team Leaders are not elected, but are assigned by the Chairperson.

- Team Leaders should be skilled facilitators and familiar with the interview process. When possible, interview teams should be consistent in their make-up.
- Leads the team in interviewing assigned candidates, providing the corresponding pages of the dCOM Handbook.
- Guides the team in discerning who will ask which questions, and inviting team members to pray for the candidate before and after the interview.
- May assign a note taker to record questions and their responses. See the description below.
- Welcomes candidates to the interview.
- Reports the recommendation to the full dCOM.
- Uses the notes provided by the note-takers to write the Feedback Form for the candidate, offering highlights from the interview as well as recommendations for areas of growth, providing a copy to the dCOM chair and uploading to the Action Report Form step in InPath.

Interview Team Notetaker (optional)

- This person is assigned by the Team Leader.
- Takes notes of candidate's responses to the interview questions. Tracks recommendations for growth and areas of strength.
- Provides a copy of the notes to the Team Leader.

Registrar

- Reviews materials uploaded in InPath track to ensure that all documents are appropriately submitted. If materials are missing, the registrar should contact the Chairperson and the Director of Call & Candidacy.
- Submits Vote Form on the Action Report Form step on the InPath track. This is also where the Feedback Form will be uploaded.
- Maintains tracking of candidates and licensed local pastors. Provides a copy to all dCOM members at the second meeting after the Annual Conference.

Secretary

- Reminds the dCOM that all matters discussed in the meeting are confidential.
- Records meeting minutes for the full dCOM meeting, which should clearly identify which candidates were interviewed, recommendations, and what action was taken. Use the template provided in the dCOM Minutes Google Folder.
- Submits minutes to the Chair, the Registrar, and uploads to the Minutes Google Folder. An alternative is to email them to jasonstanley@vaumc.org.

Board of Ordained Ministry Representative

- BOM Representatives are selected by the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Reminds the dCOM of the Core Values.
- Reports to the dCOM any decisions that have been made by the BOM, such as the continuation of a provisional candidate as a licensed local pastor.
- Reviews the candidate's psychological assessment and medical reports, background and credit checks, and assists the dCOM in reviewing the reports by providing a summary of highlights and concerns raised prior to the interview for certified candidates. If there are any concerns, they should notify the Chairperson and the Director of Call & Candidacy.

- Coordinate with Team Leaders to ensure that the recommended questions from the Psychological Assessment and any relevant questions based on the Medical Report and Background Checks are asked. If the BOM rep is not available to ask the necessary questions, they should ensure that another committee member is prepared.
- Serves as a bridge between the dCOM and the Board of Ordained Ministry by exchanging questions and information. If information needs to be shared at a meeting, the BOM Representative should notify the Chairperson prior to the meeting to be added to the agenda.
- Assists in training members of the dCOM.
- Leads the dCOM in connecting with Culture of Call efforts and reaching out to those who are discerning a call into ministry.
- Responsible for shredding any confidential copies of psychological reports, credit reports, background checks and other confidential copies used in the meeting.

Mentor Coordinator for Candidacy and Local Pastor Mentors

- Coordinates with the district superintendent regarding the assignment of candidates to a candidacy mentor or mentor group. The assignment of a newly admitted candidate is done at the conclusion of the discernment to admit a candidate.
- Assign Local Pastor Mentors.
- Communicates with all mentors and candidates/local pastors.
- Responsible for communicating to all mentors about training opportunities provided by the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Maintains a list of all mentors and their mentees, to be shared annually with the Center for Clergy Excellence. Notify the Director for Call and Candidacy of any changes mid-year.
- Recommends, with the district superintendent, full connection clergy, associate members, and full time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study to be trained by the Board of Ordained Ministry as registered candidacy or clergy mentors.

Minutes & Report Forms

The secretary will share the minutes with the dCOM Chair and the Registrar and upload the minutes from the dCOM meeting, to the dCOM Minutes Google folder. Upon election as secretary, access will be granted to the shared Google folder by the Center for Clergy Excellence. A template for Minutes will be provided in the Minutes Google folder (see sample on next page).

The Registrar completes the Vote Form on the Action Report Form step per candidate or local pastor, indicating the recommendation of the dCOM, the vote outcome, and the date of the vote to be reported in Unity. The Action Report should be submitted within 48 hours of the dCOM meeting so that the action can be recorded and subsequent steps can be taken by the Center for Clergy Excellence. The Vote Form should be completed during the meeting, at the time of the vote.

The Team Leader completes the Feedback Form, using the notes from the Interview Team Notetaker. The Team Leader is responsible for the Feedback Form, and may ask Interview Team members to contribute to the writing process. The Team Leader uploads the Feedback Form to the Action Report Form step on the InPath step, and provides a copy to the Chair and the Registrar.

The Feedback Form should highlight gifts for ministry from the interview as well as recommendations for areas of growth. This Feedback Form is sent to the candidate with the chairperson's letter explaining the dCOM's recommendation. The chair confirms that the Feedback Form has been uploaded into Unity, with the Action Report. The Feedback Form should be uploaded within a week of the interview.

Section 6 provides details and samples for the forms.

[District Name]

Committee Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: _____

Location (if applicable): _____

1. Attendance

Name	Title/Role	Present (Y/N)

2. Candidates Reviewed

Candidate 1

- Full Name: _____
- Reason for Interview:
- Summary of Committee Discussion:
- Action Taken by Committee:

Candidate 2

- Full Name: _____
- Reason for Interview:

- **Summary of Committee Discussion:**

- **Action Taken by Committee:**

(Add more candidate sections as needed by copying and pasting the above)

3. Additional Requirements / Follow-Up Actions

Include any conditions, next steps, or documentation required from candidates or the committee.

- _____
 - _____
-

4. Adjournment

Time Meeting Adjourned: _____

Next Scheduled Meeting (if any): _____

Signatures

Committee Chair: _____ **Date:** _____

Secretary: _____ **Date:** _____

DCOM BY THE MONTH

August Elect officers Interview candidates for Associate Members & Readmission to Provisional by Sept. 1. Admission, Certified Candidates	September Interview candidates for Provisional Membership by Oct. 1. Admission, Certified Candidates CLM Interviews	October Admission, Certified Candidates. Readmission Interviews by Feb. 1. Local Pastor Interviews.
November Admission, Certified Candidates. Readmission Interviews by Feb. 1. Local Pastor Interviews.	December Admission, Certified Candidates. Readmission Interviews by Feb. 1. Local Pastor Interviews.	January Local Pastor Interviews. Recommendation for Licensing. Candidacy/Candidacy Renewal. CLM Renewals
February Feb. 1 deadline for Readmission. LLP Interviews. Recommendation for Licensing. CLM Interviews	March LLP Interviews. Recommendation for Licensing. Candidacy/Candidacy Renewal CLM Interviews	April April 15 deadline for Licensing School. LLP Interviews. Certified Candidacy/Candidacy Renewal.
May May 30 deadline for Certified Candidacy & Renewal. LLPs retiring by May 30.	June Admission, Certified Candidates. Associate Member applications open.	July Notifications of who applied for Associate Membership. Provisional & Full Membership applications open.

A Year in the Life of a dCOM

July – Getting Organized

- Receive nominations for officers - Elect officers at the first meeting after Annual Conference (§666.2).
- Ensure that the dCOM membership roster is correct.
- Communicate changes and officers to the Center for Clergy Excellence.
- Set a schedule for the coming year and make note of important dates within this outline and the liturgical calendar.
- Review the list of admitted and certified candidates by their progress and status, including those who requested to be admitted over the summer. Share any updates with the Director for Call and Candidacy.
- Confirm all admitted candidates are assigned to a Candidacy Mentor or a mentor group.
- Assign newly licensed local pastors to a Local Pastor Mentor or mentor group. If local pastors who have been appointed in the district need a mentor, ensure that one has been assigned.
- By the end of the month, receive names of those who have applied for Associate Membership. Associate Members need to be recommended by September 1.
- Receive names from the Center of Clergy Excellence of any candidates who are applying for readmission as a provisional or associate member, to be interviewed by September 1.
- Discuss recruiting/enlistment strategies for receiving those who are sensing God's call.

August

- Schedule interviews with those candidates who have applied for Associate Membership or who are applying to be readmitted as a provisional or associate member.
- Interview admitted or certified candidates, including those who requested to become admitted over the summer.
- Receive names from the Center of Clergy Excellence of any candidates who are applying for Provisional Membership. These candidates need to be recommended by October 1.

September

- Schedule an interview with candidates applying for provisional membership.
- Other interviews (Admission, Certified Candidacy) as the schedule allows. Note especially those potential Certified Candidates who will be applying for seminary in the winter; it can be an advantage to them for scholarships to be certified when they apply.
- Make note of candidates interested in becoming a licensed local pastor and encourage them to complete the certified candidate track by February and of the April 15 deadline to be recommended for licensing.
- May receive referrals to interview Certified Lay Minister candidates.

October-April

- Admission, certified candidate interviews.
- Readmission of candidacy interviews need to be completed by February 1.
- May begin interviewing candidates for licensing. Candidates need to be approved by April 15 to ensure they have all the information needed regarding Licensing School.
- Renewal of Certified Candidates/License Local Pastor interviews.
- May receive referrals to interview Certified Lay Minister candidates.
- Local pastor retirement interviews by May 15.

March-April

- DS consults with the Board of Ordained Ministry through the Director of Call & Candidacy for nominations of dCOM membership.

May-June

- All certified candidacy and candidacy renewal interviews should be completed by May 30.
- Note especially those potential certified candidates who will be applying for seminary in the fall; it can be an advantage to them for scholarships to be certified when they apply.
- All Local Pastors who are requesting retirement should be interviewed by May 15.
- Interview candidates who are home from school.

dCOM Meeting Template

Here is a recommended flow for the dCOM meeting. Meetings should be planned according to the time needed for the necessary interviews (see Section 4).

- Centering Prayer (10 minutes)
- Review Candidates (20-25 minutes)
 - What candidates are interviewing and why, any additional information from members that is helpful, pray for the candidates.
- Break into Interview Teams to Interview candidates
- Full dCOM meeting - Team Leaders report and make recommendations. Full dCOM discusses and discerns
- dCOM votes - votes are recorded by the registrar
- Any business related to the work of the dCOM or preparation for the next meeting

Section 2 - Who to Interview

Full details of requirements, criteria, and questions for each interview can be found in Section 4 - Interview Guides. There will be no conditional recommendations for action. With the exception of Lay Supply, an interview should be conducted only after ***all required documents*** have been received and reviewed by the dCOM.

Lay Supply are laity who have been assigned to a local church by the District Superintendent. They are also referred to as “Pulpit Supply.” Some lay supply are certified lay ministers, others are not. dCOMs do not certify nor recommend lay supply. It is a tradition in Virginia for dCOMs to meet with those assigned to a church to establish a relationship and support discernment.

The interview should explore:

1. Journey of Call
2. Initial experience in ministry
3. Hopes for continued ministry as Certified Lay Minister or Certified Candidate for ministry.

A **Certified Lay Minister** is a lay person who has responded to the call to serve in a specific ministry (§268). They can be assigned by the District Superintendent to a ministry setting, including a local church. While the Annual Conference’s Lay Servant Ministries is responsible for the certification and recertification, *The Book of Discipline* requires the Lay Servant Ministries to refer a candidate to the dCOM and for the dCOM to make a recommendation to the Lay Servant Ministries. Recertification required every two years by the dCOM (§268.4e).

An **Admitted Candidate** (§310.1) is someone who is at the beginning of the discernment process and is expressing a call to ministry. The candidate completes a biographical form, a call statement, candidate’s disclosure form, and has read and discussed a resource with a clergy person, who recommends them for candidacy. The dCOM is listening for a call to the set-apart ministry of the licensed or the ordained. If the candidate is recommended, they are assigned a Candidacy Mentor.

When an admitted candidate completes the steps to become a **Certified Candidate** (§310.2), they interview with the dCOM. The standard is Fitness for Ministry: spiritual fitness, psychological fitness, physical fitness, and potential for fruitfulness and effectiveness. This candidate has expressed a call to the ministry of the licensed, or full membership as an elder or a deacon. The candidacy has to be renewed annually by the charge conference ***and*** the dCOM by May 30. A certified candidate can be continued as a candidate for no more than 12 years (§313.5).

Those candidates who discern a call to become a licensed local pastor are interviewed for **License for Pastoral Ministry** (§315). The standard is Fitness for Ministry: spiritual fitness, psychological fitness, physical fitness, theological fitness, and potential for fruitfulness and effectiveness. The initial recommendation for licensing and availability for appointment should indicate part-time (PL) or full-time (FL), and should be done in consultation with the District Superintendent. Recommendations will be made by ***April 15*** to ensure that candidates can complete all the requirements for Licensing School.

All Local Pastors must renew their license annually. Local pastors who have completed the course of study requirements and have served five years are eligible to renew using the Modified Process. All other local pastors must use the Standard Renewal Process. Those local pastors on ***Minute Question 16*** (MQ16) are to complete the renewal process as well. The standard for renewal is Fitness for Ministry: spiritual fitness, psychological fitness, physical fitness, theological fitness, and potential for fruitfulness and effectiveness.

A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the course of study requirements may be interviewed to be recognized as a **Retired Local Pastor**. Satisfactory progress takes into consideration how long a person has been licensed for ministry and how many courses they have completed in that time. The expectation is full-time local pastors complete four (4) a year and part-time local pastors complete two (2) a year. Retired local pastors are eligible to be appointed to a church in retirement. If serving in retirement, the dCOM needs to interview the local pastor and the license needs to be renewed.

A retired local pastor may request from the Bishop permission to preach and preside at the church they are attending in retirement. In addition to a written request to the Bishop, a dCOM recommendation is required.

Local pastors who have completed the Course of Study requirements can apply to become an **Associate Member** (§321). Before these candidates can interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry, they must first be recommended for Associate Membership by the dCOM. The standard is Fruitfulness in Ministry.

Candidates who are on the ordination track will need to be recommended by the dCOM for **Provisional Membership** (§324) before they are interviewed by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The standard is Readiness for Ministry.

A person may seek **readmission or reinstatement** (§314.2, 320.4, 364, 365, 366) from honorable location, administrative location, from previously withdrawing from the ministerial office, or from discontinuance/withdrawal as a certified candidate, local pastor, or provisional member. If such a request is received, the chair will communicate with the Center for Clergy Excellence prior to scheduling an interview.

Reinstatement of Certified Candidates (§314.2): Certified candidates may be reinstated by the dCOM in which they were discontinued or by another dCOM upon transfer of the certified candidate's file, including all possible documentation of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance.

Reinstatement of Local Pastors (§320.4): The dCOM from which their license was discontinued, may recommend to the Board of Ordained Ministry and the cabinet reinstatement. The individual shall provide evidence that they have been a member of a local United Methodist church since the time of the discontinuance or for at least one year prior to their request. A recommendation from the charge conference is required.

Readmission to Provisional Membership (§365): A discontinued provisional member may be readmitted to the provisional membership upon the recommendation of their dCOM, the Board of Ordained Ministry, and the Cabinet. Persons who were discontinued from another annual conference may apply to be readmitted in the Virginia Annual Conference once the Board of Ordained Ministry has obtained verification of their qualifications, and information about the circumstances relating to the discontinuance. This requires a vote by the clergy session.

Readmission after Honorable or Administrative Location (§366): Associate members or clergy members in full connection requesting readmission after honorable location must be recommended by the dCOM, the BOM, and the cabinet after review of their qualifications, the circumstances relating to going on location, and conduct during the period of time while on location.

Readmission after leaving the Ministerial Office (§367): Associate members and clergy members in full connection who have left the ministerial office under the provisions of §361 may be readmitted by the Annual Conference in which they held previously such membership and to which they surrendered the ministerial office upon their request and recommendation by the dCOM, the Conference Relations

Virginia Conference, DCOM Handbook -Revised July 2026

Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and the cabinet after review of their qualifications and the circumstances relating to the surrender of their ministerial office.

Section 3 - General Interview Guidelines

Preparing for an interview

- Prior to a scheduled interview, the dCOM chair and the registrar will ensure that the required documents for the candidate have been received in Unity. If something is missing, notify the Director of Call & Candidacy *first*. Then, if necessary, contact the candidate or local pastor.
- Assign candidates/local pastors to an Interview Team and notify the dCOM at least two weeks prior to the interviews.
- All dCOM members should review the required documents for each candidate/local pastor to be interviewed by their Interview Team prior to the dCOM meeting.
- Team Leaders invite a member to prepare a worship centerpiece for the table.
- Allow at least fifteen minutes before each interview to discuss concerns and issues that need to be addressed and by whom in the interview.
- Team Leaders will guide their interview team in deciding who will ask which question. Involve all members of the committee in asking questions while the Team Leader focuses on process and time.
- In some cases, the medical report, background check, or psychological assessment may require more time for conversation and reflection. In these cases, discern which of the other questions are not as necessary for that candidate's interview. If you suspect that additional time will be needed, the Team Leader should discuss with the Chairperson. If additional time is added to the interview, the Chairperson should notify the candidate or local pastor of the time change.
- The Team Leader reminds the Interview Team not to contribute information outside of the candidate's file into the interview or discernment.
- Be mindful of the distinctions between candidates on the elder track, deacon track and associate member track and ask appropriate questions.
- The Team Leader will ask a member to begin the interview with prayer and someone to close the interview with prayer.

During an interview

- If the candidate's pastor, or head of staff is a member of the dCOM, this person shall not be present for the interview.
- A mentor may be present during the interview, with no voice or vote.
- The Team Leader welcomes the candidate to the interview and asks members of the dCOM to introduce themselves, by name, status (i.e. clergy, laity, deacon, elder), and church/ministry setting.
- The Team Leader states the purpose of the interview (Admission Interview, Certification Interview, Renewal Interview, Recommendation for provisional or associate membership, etc.), what recommendation(s) the dCOM will make, tells the candidate that what is shared will be held in confidence, that the Team Leader will be monitoring time and may need to move the interview along to be good stewards of time, and that the interview will begin and end with prayer.
- The dCOM members use the questions from the Interview Guide to ensure consistency across all dCOMs.

- The candidate should do 80% of the talking.
- Do not allow other committee members to answer questions or to engage in an argument or discussion with the candidate or each other during the interview. Feedback should not be communicated by individual committee members offering advice during the interview.
- Keep the conversation focused on the matter at hand. The Team Leader serves as the timekeeper.
- A note taker may take detailed notes of the questions and responses.

Discussion after an interview

- The Team should highlight strengths from the interview and identify areas of growth. The Team Leader completes the Feedback Form based on the discussion.
- The Team Leader should facilitate this discussion and lead the team to a faithful recommendation.
- The Board reps can provide helpful guidance and best practices based on the Board of Ordained Ministry's discernment process.
- After every interview, evaluate the interview. What was effective in the interview? What would we do differently next time? Were any questions asked that were inappropriate?

After the interview

- The dCOM Chairperson facilitates the receiving of reports from the Interview Teams.
- The recommendation from the Interview Team is presented to the entire dCOM by the Team Leader. It is a good practice to use the Feedback Form when making the recommendation, providing strengths and areas of growth before stating the recommendation. The dCOM votes to accept or not the recommendation by the Interview Team. The vote and recommendation of the dCOM is recorded and submitted on the Action Report Form step in Unity by the registrar.
- The dCOM can amend or add to the recommendations for growth from the Interview Team. These should be recorded and shared with the candidate on the Feedback Form and in the letter from the chair. These should also be noted in the minutes.
- The secretary takes detailed minutes of the recommendation and discussion.

After the meeting

- The *Book of Discipline* requires that the decision of the dCOM be communicated verbally and in writing to the candidate/local pastor following the interview. **Do not have the candidate wait in the building after the interview for this decision.** Let them know when they can expect to hear from the dCOM chair.
- The Chair writes a letter to the candidate explaining the recommendation. The Feedback Form from the Interview Team is sent with the letter to the candidate (see the template in Section 6). The written communication should be sent within a week of the interview.
- The Chair calls the candidate within 24 hours of the interview to let them know what the recommendation was and shares brief highlights and recommendations for growth. The Chair explains that the candidate will receive the recommendation and the feedback in writing.
- The letter from the chair and the Feedback Form are uploaded into Unity (use the Action Report form" button). These documents are filed in the candidate/local pastor's folder at the District office and the Center for Clergy Excellence.
- The Minutes are uploaded to the Minutes folder in the dCOM Google Folder.

Checklist for the Beginning of an Interview

- ☐ Introduce yourself and ask the Interview Team members to introduce themselves
- ☐ State clearly the purpose of the interview and the time frame for the interview.
- ☐ Remind the candidate that this is a confidential space.
- ☐ Pray for the candidate.

Section 4 - Interview Guides

Criteria for Ministry

Fitness — *Who the candidate is* (character, health, spirituality, leadership potential, and suitability for ministry). The candidate has the right foundation.

Fruitfulness — *What the candidate is doing* (evidence that ministry is bearing fruit and impacting lives). The candidate is producing ministry impact.

Readiness — *What the candidate can do* (knowledge, skills, experience, and competencies needed for the next step in ministry). The candidate has the necessary tools and competencies for ministry.

Fitness for Ministry (Certified Candidates)

When evaluating candidates who are interviewing to become a certified candidate, the dCOM is looking for “Fitness for Ministry”: *spiritual fitness, psychological fitness, physical fitness, and potential for fruitfulness and effectiveness.*

Spiritual Fitness:

The candidate demonstrates:

- A vibrant and growing relationship with God.
- Consistent participation in spiritual disciplines (prayer, Scripture, worship, sacramental life, accountability).
- Evidence of personal holiness and discipleship.
- A clear sense of call that has been tested and affirmed by the church.
- Spiritually informed leadership with emotional and spiritual resilience during seasons of challenge.

Psychological Fitness:

The candidate demonstrates:

- Emotional maturity and self-awareness.
- Healthy interpersonal relationships and boundaries.
- Appropriate coping skills during stress, conflict, and disappointment.

Physical Fitness:

The candidate demonstrates:

- Sufficient health to fulfill the essential responsibilities of ministry.
- Awareness of personal limitations and strengths.

- Healthy practices related to self-care and well-being.
- Appropriate plans and support systems for managing ongoing health concerns, if applicable.

Potential for Fruitfulness and Effectiveness:

The candidate demonstrates:

- Leadership gifts recognized by others.
- Ability to inspire, equip, and develop disciples.
- Capacity to build healthy relationships and communities.
- Initiative, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Fitness for Ministry (Local Pastors)

When evaluating candidates who are interviewing to become a licensed local pastor, the dCOM looks for evidence of Fitness for Ministry as outlined above, ***and*** theological fitness.

Theological Fitness:

The candidate demonstrates:

- Understanding of Scripture, Christian doctrine, and Wesleyan theology.
- Commitment to the doctrinal standards and polity of The United Methodist Church.
- Capacity for theological reflection in ministry situations.

Fruitfulness for Ministry (Associate Members)

When evaluating candidates who are interviewing to be recommended as an Associate Member, the dCOM/BOM looks for evidence of “Fruitfulness for Ministry.”

The candidate demonstrates:

- Evidence of making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Positive impact in congregational and community settings.
- Ability to lead people toward spiritual growth and deeper discipleship.
- Faithful and effective proclamation of the Gospel.
- Development and empowerment of lay leadership.
- Healthy relationships with colleagues, congregations, and community partners.
- Signs of growth, transformation, reconciliation, healing, or service resulting from their ministry.

Readiness for Ministry (Provisional Members)

When evaluating candidates who are interviewing to be recommended as a Provisional Member, the dCOM/BOM looks for evidence of “Readiness for Ministry.”

The candidate demonstrates:

- Competence in preaching, teaching, worship leadership, and pastoral care.

- Understanding and application of United Methodist polity and doctrine.
- Ability to lead and administer ministry effectively.
- Capacity to navigate conflict, change, and complex ministry situations.

Professional ethics and healthy boundaries.

Lay Supply Interview

When an ordained or licensed minister is not able to serve a church, a qualified and trained layperson, lay minister, or lay missionary may be assigned to do the work of ministry in that charge (§205.4). This person is accountable to the district superintendent. The dCOM may interview those serving as lay supply in their districts to establish relationships and to provide guidance for discernment.

Recommended Time Frame: 30 - 45 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Tell us what excites you about your ministry.
2. Tell us how your family and friends responded to your sense of call.
3. Describe a formative church experience that has shaped your call.
4. What have been some key learnings or takeaways from your ministry setting?
5. Tell us what you love about The United Methodist Church.
6. As you think about living into a call from God, do you have a sense of what you are being called to - Certified Lay Minister or as a Certified Candidate headed toward licensing and perhaps ordination?

As time permits:

7. How do you take care of yourself physically, relationally, spiritually and emotionally?
8. What spiritual disciplines do you practice on a regular basis?
9. How have these disciplines informed your call?
10. Tell us how you are/were in leadership in your local United Methodist Church?

If appropriate, encourage the lay supply to use the Become a Certified Candidate checklist and to begin by reading *The Christian as Minister* or *Blessed Wrestling* and discuss with their pastor.

Action Required: None.

Certified Lay Minister Interview

A Certified Lay Minister (§268) is a certified lay servant or lay missionary who is called and equipped to conduct public worship, care for the congregation, assist in program leadership, develop new and existing faith communities, preach the Word, lead small groups, or establish community outreach ministries, who can be assigned by a district superintendent in accordance with §419.2. A candidate for CLM is evaluated by the Annual Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries and referred to the dCOM for examination and recommendation for certification (§666.11).

Requirements for an interview

When a candidate has completed the initial steps to become a CLM, Lay Servant Ministries will make a referral to the Director for Call and Candidacy, who will notify the dCOM chair and provide the necessary documentation. The following documents should be available on an InPath track: *a written recommendation from the pastor or church, evidence of completion of studies, a letter of recommendation from the District Superintendent, referral form from Lay Servant Ministries.* Additional documents may be provided by the Committee on Lay Servant Ministries.

Recommended Time Frame: 45 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about ministry?
2. Tell us about your call to be a Certified Lay Minister.
3. What figures from the Bible resonate most with your call?
4. What are your gifts for ministry?
5. How have you used your gifts for ministry in your local United Methodist Church (or through your Ministry Project)?
6. How have these experiences shaped your call?
7. How do you take care of yourself physically, relationally, spiritually and emotionally?
8. What spiritual disciplines do you practice on a regular basis?
9. How have these disciplines informed your call? How have you grown spiritually?

As time permits:

10. What has been the most helpful learning experience from the CLM modules?
11. Share about a conflict in which you were involved and how you dealt with the situation.

Action Required: A majority vote to recommend or not recommend a candidate as a Certified Lay Minister. Complete the Vote Form on the Action Report Form step in Unity, and upload the Feedback Form. A letter from the Chair and the Feedback Form should be sent to the candidate.

Recertification as a Certified Lay Minister Interview

A Certified Lay Minister must fulfill the requirements for recertification as outlined in ¶268.4. The Annual Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries reviews the requirements and refers the CLM to the dCOM for a recommendation for recertification.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The Annual Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries reviews the requirements for recertification every two years and will make a referral to the Director for Call and Candidacy, who will notify the dCOM chair that the necessary documentation is available in Unity, including: *Annual Report to Charge Conference, a Church ministry review, evidence of an advanced lay servant ministries course, recommendation from the district superintendent.*

Recommended Time Frame: 30-45 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What brought you the most joy in your ministry these past two (2) years?
2. How have you used your gifts for ministry?
3. What/where are your support systems? How are you making time for family and/or self-care?
4. How are you caring for yourself spiritually?
5. How are you living out your call in the church and/or community?
6. *Ask about something shared in the Charge Conference report or the church's ministry review.*
7. What was your greatest challenge in the past two (2) years? How did you handle it?
8. What have you learned about yourself since we last saw you?
9. In what areas do you see a need to grow or learn more?
10. Where do you sense God calling you?

If the candidate expresses interest in licensing or ordained ministry, provide them with the checklist to become a certified candidate¹. If not, celebrate the ministry of the laity and the ways God continues to call and use them in the life of the church.

¹ <https://vaumc.org/candidates-for-ministry/>

Virginia Conference, DCOM Handbook -Revised July 2026

Action Required: A majority vote to recommend or not recommend renewal as a Certified Lay Minister. Complete the Vote Form on Action Report Form step, and Feedback Form through Unity. The Committee on Lay Servant Ministries recertifies the candidate. The Feedback Form should be shared with the candidate, along with a letter from the Chairperson.

Admission for Candidacy Interview

An individual who has experienced a call to the set apart ministry of the licensed or ordained, first needs to be admitted into candidacy studies (§310.1). The purpose of the admission interview is for the dCOM to provide support and to listen for God's call in the individual.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The individual has requested to become admitted by completing the biographical form, a call statement, a clergy recommendation form, and the candidate's disclosure form. After these items are reviewed by the Center for Clergy Excellence, the dCOM chair will be notified that the candidate is ready to be interviewed. The dCOM chair and the registrar will ensure that the required steps have been completed in Unity. If something is missing, contact the Director of Call & Candidacy.

Recommended Time Frame: 45-60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about God's call?
2. Describe an experience that was formative to your call.
3. What stories from the Bible connect to your call?
4. *Ask follow-up questions to the written call statement.*
5. What does it mean to you to be "called"?
6. As you think about living into your call, what does that look like to you?
7. What spiritual disciplines do you practice on a regular basis?
8. How have these spiritual disciplines informed your call to ministry?
9. Tell us how your family and friends have responded to your sense of call.
10. Describe how you are called to serve in The United Methodist Church.

Before concluding the interview, take a few moments to remind the candidate to continue to use the Become a Certified Candidate checklist.

Action Required: A two-thirds majority vote by **written ballot** and recorded on the Action Report Form in Unity as one of the following:

- Granted admission to the candidacy studies program (§310.1b).
- Not granted admission to the candidacy studies program and will return for a second interview this year.
- Not granted admission to the candidacy studies program and is discontinued or withdrawn as an inquiring candidate.

If admitted, the candidate is assigned to a Candidacy Mentor or mentor group. This information should be included in the Feedback Form that is sent to the candidate.

After the Action Report form has been submitted, an invitation will be sent by the Center for Clergy Excellence to the admitted candidate to join Unity, where they will be added to the Certified Candidate track.

Certified Candidate Interview

A Certified Candidate has discerned their call to licensed or ordained ministry. They show evidence of fitness for ministry (§310.2).

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

Candidates must be admitted into the candidacy studies program and complete the Certified Candidate track in Unity. The dCOM chair and registrar should ensure that all requirements have been met before interviewing the candidate (see the checklist in Section 8). If a step is missing, contact the Director for Call & Candidacy first. If there are concerns about reading and writing skills, the dCOM may require the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment.

Criteria for certification: Fitness for Ministry

- Spiritual fitness
- Psychological fitness
- Physical fitness
- Potential for effectiveness

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about being called to ministry?
2. Share your call story. *(Listen for language describing both an internal call and confirmation of that call by the community of faith; use of biblical images).*
3. What is your understanding of your call to ministry as an elder, deacon, or licensed local pastor?
4. Describe your support system as you discern your call.
5. What is your understanding of itinerancy?
6. How are you taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, and relationally?
7. *If the candidate has any concerns identified on the medical form or expanded background check, refer to the Behavioral Health Guidelines. It is appropriate for the BOM rep to ask the candidate how he/she is managing the identified health or behavioral concerns and how they could affect their health if put into a stressful ministry environment or that could hamper their effectiveness in lifelong ministry.*
8. Describe your spiritual disciplines and practices.
9. Tell us about a time when your spiritual practices were particularly life-giving. *(Look for evidence of habitual practice of meaningful spiritual disciplines. If not evident, note in the Feedback Form,*

and follow up at the next interview to check for evidence of growing commitment and fruitfulness in this area.)

10. What was your experience of completing the psychological assessment and interview?
11. *The BOM rep, or other appropriate committee member, asks the suggested questions from the psychological report, if deemed appropriate.*
12. Describe a recent leadership experience that you had in a church/campus ministry/mission environment. What did you learn about yourself?
13. In preparation for the Candidacy Summit, you took the Gallup StrengthsFinder and received coaching about your strengths. Tell us about your strengths and how they help you understand your leadership.
14. Share about a time when you did not succeed at something you tried. How did you respond to that failure?
15. Tell us about a time when you found yourself in a conflict situation and how you handled it.

Question Bank (ask if time permits):

16. How would you describe grace to a middle school student?
17. Describe your personal experience of God.
18. What is your understanding of the kingdom of God?
19. Explain the significance of the sacraments in the life of the church.
20. Describe what an inclusive church means to you.

Remind the candidate to continue to meet with their Candidacy Mentor as they continue the journey of answering God's call to be licensed or ordained.

Action Required: A three-fourths majority vote by **written ballot** and recorded on the Action Report Form in Unity as:

- Continued as an admitted candidate
- Approval as Certified Candidate
- Not granted certified candidate status and discontinued as an admitted candidate.

If approved, the candidate is to continue meeting with their Candidacy Mentor or mentor group. The Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and sent to the candidate.

Renewal of Certified Candidate Interview

A Certified Candidate is to be renewed annually (§313). The candidate continues to show evidence of gifts, fruits, and God's grace for the work of ministry. A certified candidate may be continued as a candidate for no more than twelve years following certification.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The candidate has completed the Certified Candidate Renewal track in Unity, which includes: an official transcript from the school, college, or seminary showing progress in their education in the past 12 months, a written response on service and leadership in the church showing evidence of growth and the annual recommendation of renewal by the candidate's charge conference.

If the psychological assessment is over five years old, a new assessment must be completed. The candidate should contact the Center for Clergy Excellence for instructions. The dCOM chair and registrar should ensure that all requirements are met before the candidate is interviewed.

Recommended Time Frame: 30-45 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Tell us about the past year as a certified candidate. *If they are in school, college, or seminary, ask about their classes. If there is evidence of no progress in education, ask the candidate to share about that and what may be holding them back.*
2. How has God been working in your life this year?
3. Share about a formative experience in a church or ministry setting from the past year that has impacted your call.
4. How are you balancing your life with work/school and home? How are you handling stress?
5. Share about your spiritual practices. How are these practices informing your call?
6. *If the psychological assessment is older than five years, the candidate will be asked to retake the assessment. In this case, the BOM rep should ask the recommended questions from the report.*
7. What kind of exercise program do you participate in?
8. What relationships/interests do you have beyond church and seminary communities?
9. How are you holding yourself accountable to your spiritual, physical, and relational health?
10. What are your goals for the coming year? How are you planning to accomplish these goals?

Question Bank (ask if time permits):

Virginia Conference, DCOM Handbook -Revised July 2026

11. How would you describe grace to a middle school student?
12. Describe your personal experience of God.
13. What is your understanding of the kingdom of God?
14. Explain the significance of the sacraments in the life of the church.
15. Describe what an inclusive church means to you.

Action Required:

A three-fourths majority by **written ballot** and recorded on the Action Report Form as:

- Recommended for renewal as a certified candidate (§313)
- Discontinued or withdrawn as a certified candidate (§314.2)
- Discontinued as a certified candidate and admitted candidate

If approved, the candidate is to continue meeting with their Candidacy Mentor or mentor group. The Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and sent to the candidate.

Transfer of a Certified Candidate from another District

A certified candidate may be accepted by another district committee in the same annual conference (§313.4).

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

If a certified candidate wishes to transfer to another district within the Virginia Annual Conference, the candidate should request to transfer in writing to the Director for Call and Candidacy, Rev. Dr. Jason Stanley, at jasonstanley@vaumc.org. The letter should indicate the candidate's new charge conference (church membership).

The candidate's certified candidate track will be made available to the dCOM. Because the candidate is already certified in Virginia, a vote is not required by the dCOM. This interview should be a welcoming interview, giving the candidate and the dCOM members a chance to get to know each other.

Recommended Time Frame: 30-45 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about God's call?
2. Describe an experience that was formative to your call.
3. *Ask follow-up questions from the written call statement.*
4. What is your understanding of your call to ministry as an elder, deacon, or licensed local pastor?
5. Describe your support system as you discern your call.
6. Describe your spiritual disciplines and practices.
7. How have these practices shaped your call?
8. Describe a recent leadership experience.

Question Bank (ask if time permits):

9. How would you describe grace to a middle school student?
10. Describe your personal experience of God.
11. What is your understanding of the kingdom of God?
12. Explain the significance of the sacraments in the life of the church.
13. Describe what an inclusive church means to you.

Action Required: None.

Transfer of a Certified Candidate from another Annual Conference

A certified candidate from another annual conference may be accepted by a district committee (§313.4). Licensed Local Pastors cannot transfer from another Annual Conference. An LLP seeking transfer, must do so as a certified candidate.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

If a certified candidate wishes to transfer to the Virginia Annual Conference from another annual conference, they must first be in contact with the Center for Clergy Excellence. Upon request to transfer, the candidate will be assigned to a Certified Candidate Transfer track in Unity and complete the items on the transfer checklist. If the psychological assessment is over five years old, a new assessment must be completed. The dCOM chair and registrar should review the completed steps in Unity. If a step is missing, contact the Director of Call & Candidacy first.

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Share your call story. *(Listen for language describing both an internal call and confirmation of that call by the community of faith; use of biblical images).*
2. What is your understanding of your call to ministry as an elder, deacon, or licensed local pastor?
3. Describe your support system as you discern your call.
4. What is your understanding of itinerancy?
5. Share your reasons for requesting a transfer to the district/Virginia Annual Conference?
6. *The BOM rep asks the suggested questions from the psychological report, if deemed appropriate.*
7. Describe a recent leadership experience that you had in a church/campus ministry/mission environment. What did you learn about yourself?
8. Share about a time when you did not succeed at something you tried. How did you respond to that failure?
9. Tell us about a time when you found yourself in a conflict situation and how you handled it.
10. How are you taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, and relationally?
11. *If the candidate has concerns identified on the medical form or expanded background check, refer to the Behavioral Health Guidelines. It is appropriate for the BOM rep to ask the candidate how he/she is managing the identified health or behavioral concerns and how they could affect their*

health if put into a stressful ministry environment or that could hamper their effectiveness in lifelong ministry.

12. Describe your spiritual disciplines and practices.

13. Tell us about a time when your spiritual practices were particularly life-giving. *(Look for evidence of habitual practice of meaningful spiritual disciplines. If not evident, note in feedback, and follow up at the next interview to check for evidence of growing commitment and fruitfulness in this area.)*

Question Bank (ask if time permits):

14. How would you describe grace to a middle school student?

15. Describe your personal experience of God.

16. What is your understanding of the kingdom of God?

17. Explain the significance of the sacraments in the life of the church.

18. Describe what an inclusive church means to you.

Action Required: A three-fourths majority vote by **written ballot** and recorded on the Action Report Form in Unity as:

- Approval of transfer as Certified Candidate (§666.7)
- Not granted transfer as certified candidate status.

If approved, the candidate should be assigned to a Candidacy Mentor or mentor group. The Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and sent to the candidate.

Licensed Local Pastor Interview

A licensed local pastor is appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor in their appointment (§315). In order for newly licensed local pastors to be licensed and attend Licensing School, they must be **recommended by April 15.**

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

To be licensed for pastoral ministry, the individual must be a certified candidate. While it is permissible for a dCOM to conduct the certified candidate and licensing interview at the same time, the chair and registrar should discern if that is the best action for the individual candidate. The candidate for licensing must complete the items on the Licensed Local Pastor track in Unity (see the checklist²). The instructions on the track are listed below. The chair and the registrar should ensure that all items are completed in Unity before scheduling the interview. If a step is not completed, notify the Director of Call & Candidacy first.

The Licensed Local Pastor Track Steps and Instructions:

- Ministry Sermon Manuscript, Video, & Description: *The setting for preaching may not necessarily be a Sunday morning worship service. For example, the candidate can gather friends in a chapel, speak at a mid-week service or a nursing home. The candidate must simply preach before a gathered group. The length of the sermon shall be 10 to 15 minutes only. The candidate may choose any scripture.*
 - a. *The first page of the document should include a Sermon Description answering these five questions:*
 - i. *What is the sermon title?*
 - ii. *What is the biblical text for the sermon?*
 - iii. *When and where was the sermon preached?*
 - iv. *Write a one sentence purpose statement/focus for this message?*
 - v. *What do you want the hearers to do or be as a result of this message?*
 - b. *The first page should also include the link to the video/recording.*
- Written Responses: *In a separate document, provide written responses to the following questions, being sure to use Old Testament and New Testament references. Write out the question and then provide a response. In total, the paper should be a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 pages, typed and double spaced.*
 - *What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments as we understand them in the United Methodist Church?*
 - *What does the Kingdom of God look like? Where have you seen the church live out this Kingdom? When have you seen it fail to do so?*
 - *What is your understanding of the Wesleyan concept of divine grace?*
 - *How do you believe the church discerns God's vision for them? How will you lead your church in this discernment? How will you lead your church in implementing that vision?*

² <https://vaumc.org/candidates-for-ministry/>

Virginia Conference, DCOM Handbook -Revised July 2026

Criteria for recommendation: Fitness for Ministry

- Spiritual fitness
- Psychological fitness
- Physical fitness
- Theological fitness
- Potential for effectiveness

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Tell us what excites you about ministry.
2. Tell us how you have been in leadership and ministry in your local United Methodist Church. How have these experiences informed your call to be licensed?
3. We read and watched your sermon. Tell us how you prepared for your sermon, including the resources you used.
4. How did you select the scripture you used?
5. *Ask any "I'm curious..." questions related to the sermon video. Come prepared with these questions.*
6. What are you doing to take care of yourself?
7. How do you understand the statement "Jesus Christ is Lord?"
8. What is your understanding of the kingdom of God? *You may rephrase this question based on the candidate's written responses.*
9. Imagine that a family has come to you to baptize their infant. How will you prepare the family for the baptism?
10. *Ask any follow-up questions based on the written responses, specifically any that were not answered correctly or well.*
11. Tell us about a time you disagreed with someone at church. How did you handle the frustration? What, if any, resolution was there to this situation?
12. How would you describe your leadership style?
13. How have you used your strengths as a leader of a ministry team?
14. Share a time when you implemented a change in your church or ministry. What came from your efforts? What did you learn about yourself or your context?

Action Required: A three-fourths majority vote (§315.2d) by **written ballot** and recorded on the Action Report Form as:

- Recommended for licensing as a Full-time Local Pastor (first time)
- Recommended for licensing as a Part-time Local Pastor (first time)
- Not recommended for licensing as a local pastor, renewed as a certified candidate
- Recommended for licensing as a Student Local Pastor (applies only to a local pastor from another annual conference who is also a seminary student serving in Virginia).

The Vote Form and Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and sent to the candidate. If recommended, the Center for Clergy Excellence will notify the candidate with information to register for Licensing School. To be licensed, the candidate will need to attend and complete all the requirements for Licensing School.

Categories of Local Pastors:

In accordance with §318, the dCOM recommends a local pastor to be *eligible* to be appointed in one of the three categories (full-time, part-time, or Student Local Pastor). The license is only awarded when an appointment to a pastoral charge is made in accordance with §337.

Licensing School Curriculum Overview

Licensing School has two components, an online curriculum and an 8-day in-person school. The online modules must be completed prior to attending the in-person school. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry requires 80 contact hours in nine categories.

1. United Methodist Tradition
 - a. The Wesley Brothers (online)
 - b. Movements of Grace (online)
 - c. The Aldersgate experience and the means of grace (online)
 - d. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral (online)
 - e. Theology (in-person, 3.5 hours)
 - f. Connectional Polity (in-person, 1.5 hours)
2. Public Worship and Liturgy
 - a. Public Worship (in-person, 4.5 hours)
 - b. Worship Design groups (in-person)
 - c. Sacraments & Practice (in-person, 3.5 hours)
 - d. Weddings & Funerals (in-person, 3.5 hours)
3. Preaching
 - a. Preparing to Preach (online)
 - b. Observe a Sermon and reflection (online)
 - c. Preaching Practice Groups (in-person, 1.5 hours)
 - d. The Art of Preaching (in-person, 3.5 hours)
4. Spiritual Formation
 - a. Introduction to Spiritual Formation (online)
 - b. Approaches to Prayer (online)
 - c. Rule of Life (online)
 - d. Intentional Congregational Prayer (in-person, 1.5 hours)
5. Educational Ministries
 - a. What is discipleship?(online)
 - b. Take and reflect on the Real Discipleship Survey (online)
 - c. Intergenerational Faith Formation (online)
 - d. Educational Opportunities in the Local Church (online)
 - e. Learning Styles and Writing a Simple Lesson Plan (online)
 - f. Introduction to the Bible (in-person, 2 hours)
6. Mission & Evangelism
 - a. United Methodist Mission (online)
 - b. Missional Movement (online)
 - c. Assessing Missional Needs and Resources (online)
 - d. What is evangelism? (online)
 - e. Pastor's role in evangelism and reflection (online)
 - f. Digital Ministry (in-person, 2 hours)
 - g. How to Connect with Neighbors (in-person, 2 hours)
7. Pastoral Care
 - a. Understanding conflict (online)
 - b. Pastoral Care (in-person, 2 hours)
8. Leadership/Administration
 - a. Charge Conference (online)
 - b. So, you're a pastor, now what? (in-person, 1.5 hours)
 - c. Stewardship (in-person, 1.5 hours)
 - d. Church Leadership (in-person, 1.5 hours)
 - e. Church Administration (in-person, 1.5 hours)
9. Conference emphases
 - a. Clergy Ethics training (online)
 - b. Mandatory Reporting training (online)
 - c. Clergy Ethics (in-person, 3 hours)
 - d. Provisional Journey & Journey Ahead (in-person, 1 hour)
 - e. Pensions & Health Benefits (in-person, 1.5 hours)
 - f. Clergy Finances (in-person, 1.5 hours)

Renewal of Local Pastor License Interview

All local pastors serving under appointment, including retired local pastors, extension ministers, and student pastors, as well as those on **Minute Question 16** are to have their license renewed annually. Each local pastor will have a renewal track added to their Unity based on years of service. They will upload all materials to Unity. The deadline to complete the renewal track will be **December 31**, unless otherwise requested by the dCOM. It is the responsibility of the dCOM to communicate the deadline.

Educational Requirements

It is the responsibility of the dCOM to hold local pastors accountable for their educational journey. Local pastors are to begin their Course of Study after being licensed. Full-time LLPs have eight (8) years to complete the requirements, while part-time LLPs have twelve (12) years. The standard practice is for full-time LLPs to take four (4) courses a year and part-time LLPs take two (2) courses a year. Extensions to the standard timeframe may be granted for circumstances that prevent timely completion. The local pastor should request an extension in writing to the District Superintendent, the dCOM, and the Director for Call & Candidacy. Approval of the extension requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the dCOM, recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry, and a vote of the clergy session at Annual Conference.

Local pastors can take course of study classes at any of the 13 approved United Methodist seminaries, approved schools, or through GBHEM. They do not have to take classes from one school. There are no limitations on how many courses are taken on-line. GBHEM sends the Center for Clergy Excellence updated transcripts once a year, typically in February, and the Center for Clergy Excellence updates the Course of Study in Unity. The course of study curriculum can be found here:

<https://www.gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study-curriculum/>.

Local pastors who are enrolled in college or seminary must notify the Center for Clergy Excellence and provide evidence of process to the dCOM. A current transcript from Course of Study, college, or seminary is required for license renewal

Renewal Options

During the interview, it is important to focus on the local pastor's areas of strength and growth rather than spending a lot of time on the church the local pastor serves. Be careful not to spend the time evaluating the church/charge, but keep the focus on the local pastor and their role, skills, self-growth, and pastoral identity.

As of 2023, the Board of Ordained Ministry in the VAUMC has provided two paths for Local Pastors to renew their license: The Standard Process and the Modified Process. The Modified Process is for LLPs who have served five consecutive years, completed Course of Study, and are active members of a Clergy Covenant Group and/or the Fellowship of Licensed Local Pastors. Local pastors who have completed Course of Study, will be on the LLP Modified Renewal Track in Unity, *unless the District Superintendent requests otherwise to the Director for Call & Candidacy*. All other local pastors will be on the LLP Standard Renewal Track.

Note: *Years a local pastor is on Minute Question 16 do not count toward years of service.*

Requirements for the Standard Process of Renewal prior to conducting an interview:

To be renewed through the Standard Process, the LLP needs to complete the Unity track for their year of service, which includes written responses in four areas (call, practice of ministry, leadership, and theology). The chair and the registrar should review the written responses that have been received prior to the interview, process of Course of Study/education, annual evaluation by S/PPRC, and the mentor report.

Requirements for the Modified Process of Renewal:

Those who have served five or more consecutive years and completed course of study, completed their annual charge conference pastor's narrative and continuing education forms, the annual evaluation by S/PPRC, confirmed participation in a Clergy Covenant Group and/or the Fellowship of Licensed Local Pastors, and a recommendation from the district superintendent or a DS appointed elder that provides evidence that the LLP is a pastor in good standing, then the dCOM is **not** required to interview the LLP, however, the DS, the dCOM, or the LLP can request or require an interview at any time. If a local pastor is being renewed via the Modified Process, the dCOM chair or registrar makes the recommendation and the committee approves. If there are more than one local pastor using the Modified Process, the dCOM may vote "consent calendar" style on a list of pastors. The Vote Form on the Action Report Form step must be completed for each local pastor.

Categories of Local Pastors:

In accordance with ¶318, the dCOM recommends a local pastor to be eligible to be appointed in one of the three categories (full-time, part-time, or Student Local Pastor). The license is only granted when an appointment to a pastoral charge is made in accordance with ¶337.

Criteria for recommendation: Growth in Fitness for Ministry; Fruitfulness in Ministry

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about your ministry?
2. What has brought you the greatest joy this year in ministry?
3. What has surprised you the most about your ministry?
4. How are you caring for yourself? How do you get exercise, manage stress, cultivate relationships and interests beyond your ministry setting?
5. Being in ministry is challenging. Describe where you find support systems outside of the church/charge you serve.
6. In what ways have you grown spiritually this year, both personally and as a pastor? What contributed to this growth?
7. *Thank the pastor for completing the written responses and ask them any follow up questions.*

8. What Course of Study classes have you taken? How have you incorporated what you have learned into your ministry?
9. How are you equipping the laity in your church?
10. What was the most difficult challenge you faced this past year as a pastor?
11. How did you handle this challenge, and what did you learn from this experience?
12. You have been assigned to a mentor or a mentor group. Describe the relationship and what you have been working on with your mentor or mentor group.
13. What are your plans moving forward? Course of Study, continuing education, ordination?
14. What is the single most important thing you need to learn this coming year to grow as a pastor?
15. What questions do you have for us?

The local pastor should be encouraged to continue meeting with their mentor or mentor group.

Action Required: Majority vote to specify and recommend renewal of full time, part time or student local pastor, recorded on the Action Report Form in Unity.

Recommended actions include:

- Recommended for renewal as a Full-time Local Pastor
- Recommended for renewal as a Part-time Local Pastor
- Recommended for renewal as a local pastor not currently appointed (MQ16)
- Recommended for renewal as a Retired Local Pastor, serving an appointment
- Discontinued as a local pastor yet renewed as a certified candidate
- Discontinued as a local pastor and as a certified candidate
- Recommended for renewal as a Student Local Pastor (a local pastor from another annual conference who is also a seminary student serving an appointment in Virginia).

A Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and shared with the local pastor. The Feedback Form should remind the local pastor that their license will need to be signed by the district superintendent annually.

Discontinuing a Local Pastor

There are a few reasons a local pastor may be discontinued:

1. ***There is no longer an appointment available.*** In this case, the District Superintendent would notify the dCOM regarding the lack of an appointment. The dCOM will conduct a renewal interview and discern if they will renew the license under Minute Question 16 or discontinue as a

local pastor. In this latter case, the dCOM would further discern if the local pastor can be renewed as a certified candidate or not.

2. ***The local pastor is no longer fit for ministry.*** If the dCOM has reservations about a local pastor's fitness for ministry, these concerns should be discussed thoroughly with the full dCOM. Use the Fitness for Ministry standard. When discerning discontinuance in this case, careful consideration should be given to whether the dCOM will renew the local pastor as a certified candidate. Additional intentionality should be given to the feedback regarding the lack of fitness for ministry. This communication empowers the Center for Clergy Excellence in confirming the discontinuance. Similarly, when a local pastor interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry, the BOM can also recommend discontinuance as a local pastor. In both cases, the Clergy Session of the Annual Conference will vote on discontinuances.
3. ***Voluntary discontinuance is also an option.*** If a local pastor discerns that they can no longer serve under appointment, they will put in writing their request to their District Superintendent, who will notify the Center for Clergy Excellence who will send a confirmation letter. This is different from those who withdraw to join another denomination (see Section 5).

Local Pastor Reminders

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 (§316.1). The license must be renewed annually by the dCOM and is valid only if the local pastor is appointed (§316.3) and the license is noted and signed by the District Superintendent on the back.

RECERTIFICATION			
Dates From To	Assignment	Signature of District Superintendent	Date Signed

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 (§316.2). Therefore, it is the local pastor's responsibility to maintain their license and have access to it at all times.

Local pastors are appointed to a local congregation, as such, they are authorized to officiate weddings for "people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served." (§317.1) Click here for the Cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry policy:

https://doc.vaumc.org/Cabinet/LLP_PD_PE_WeddingPolicy2025Mar10.pdf.

An update to the Clergy Criteria for Emmaus and Chrysalis was provided in July 2024. You can review the updated policy here:

https://doc.vaumc.org/Cabinet/ClergyCriteria_for_Emmaus_and_Chrysalis_updated2024Jul26.pdf.

Local Pastor Retirement Interview

A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study as specified in ¶ 318.1-2 may be recognized as a retired local pastor. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the bishop to a charge and licensed upon recommendation by the dCOM without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit (¶320.5).

In considering “satisfactory progress in the COS,” the dCOM should consider the timeframe requirements as explained on page 40.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The local pastor seeking retirement will send a letter of request to the Bishop, district superintendent and the Director for Clergy Excellence. The district superintendent will notify the dCOM chair so an interview can be scheduled. The deadline to request retirement is February 15, annually.

The chair and the registrar should review Course of Study and discern if “satisfactory progress in the COS” has been made. *If a local pastor is projected to serve in retirement*, the interview should be 30-45 minutes and include questions from the Renewal of Local Pastor License Interview.

Recommended Time Frame: 30 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Tell us about your greatest joy in ministry.
2. Where do you sense God calling to you while in retirement?
3. In what ways have you grown spiritually as a local pastor, both personally and as a pastor? What contributed to this growth?
4. What has surprised you the most throughout your ministry?
5. What has brought you the greatest joy?
6. What excites you about retirement?

Action Required: A renewal track will have been added to the local pastor’s Unity. The Action Report Form step is required recommending retirement as a Local Pastor. It will be reviewed by the Retirement Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry prior to their recommendation for retirement (approved by the Clergy Session of Annual Conference). If the pastor is projected to serve in retirement, the Action Report Form should reflect both recommendation for retirement and renewal as a Retired Local Pastor, serving an appointment.

Retired Local Pastor Preaching and Presiding in Retirement

A retired local pastor, not under appointment, may be a pulpit supply for a congregation, however, they are not able to preside at the sacraments. A retired local pastor **who has completed the Course of Study** may ***annually*** request from the dCOM 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 (§320.5d).

Requirements:

- A letter of request should be submitted annually by the pastor in charge to the Bishop and chair of the dCOM.
- An interview is not necessarily required; however, a recommendation by the dCOM is required annually and reported in writing to the Bishop for approval. The dCOM chair should write a letter to the Bishop with the recommendation and email it to the Bishop's office and the Director for Call & Candidacy.

Retired Clergy Who are Serving are Required to Take Clergy Ethics Training Quadrennially

On Monday September 12, 2022 the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry approved the action item that all retired clergy who are actively serving in the Virginia Conference UMC are required to take Clergy Ethics training quadrennially.

The rationale is that all clergy serving in the VAUMC need to be trained in clergy ethics so that they can continue to be held accountable to the highest Christian standards and learn about the most recent training on this topic as they are entrusted to care for their congregations including children and vulnerable adults.

The Center for Clergy Excellence will communicate how to participate in ethics training. Retired local pastors may contact the Center for Clergy Excellence with any questions or for more information.

Ministers of Other Christian Denominations or Fellowship Interview (OF)

Someone who is ordained in another Christian denomination or other fellowship, who desires to serve in the Virginia Annual Conference, shall follow this process:

1. Complete the Clergy Interest Form, which includes a resume & work history, proof of ordination, letter of good standing from their credentialing body, work authorization form, and candidate's disclosure form.
2. The Assistant to the Bishop assigns the clergy person to a District Superintendent (DS). The DS will interview the clergy person to discern if their gifts can be used for a current appointment.
3. If the Cabinet intends to project an appointment, the DS contacts the Center for Clergy Excellence and the clergy person, requesting the clergy person to be added to the OF Track in InPath, which includes requirements from ¶346.2.
4. The OF Track in InPath will include the following:
 - a. Background and Credit Check
 - b. Biographical Form 102
 - c. Medical Report
 - d. Psychological Evaluation
 - e. Written responses
 - f. Sermon Manuscript, Video, & Description
5. When the OF Track is completed, the clergy person will be interviewed by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) using the OF Interview Guide. The dCOM may vote to recommend to serve as an OF or not recommend to serve.
6. Upon recommendation, a letter will be sent to the candidate by the Center of Clergy Excellence to record this decision and share next steps and requirements (i.e. clergy ethics and mandatory reporting). The following will be copied on the letter: *The Chair of the Transfer Committee, Chair of the dCOM, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, Director of Pensions and Benefits, and District Superintendent.*
7. The dCOM may assign a mentor, require courses or recommend books to read so that the minister gains a stronger foundational understanding of UM theology, polity and history.
8. Candidates recommended will be required to attend Licensing School.
9. OFs will meet with dCOM annually until they transfer into the Virginia Conference.
10. Two years under appointment as a "Minister of another Denomination" or "Minister of Other Fellowship" is required prior to a transfer to the Virginia Conference. A dCOM recommendation is required.
11. As appropriate, the Bishop of the Virginia Conference consults with other bishops or judicatory leaders.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The OF candidate must complete all the steps outlined in point 4 above before they are interviewed by the dCOM.

Instructions for Sermon and Written Responses:

- Ministry Sermon Manuscript, Video, & Description: *The setting for preaching may not necessarily be a Sunday morning worship service. For example, the candidate can gather friends in a chapel, speak at a mid-week service or a nursing home. The candidate must simply preach before a gathered group. The length of the sermon shall be 10 to 15 minutes only. The candidate may choose any scripture.*
 - a. *The first page of the document should include a Sermon Description answering these five questions:*

- i. *What is the sermon title?*
 - ii. *What is the biblical text for the sermon?*
 - iii. *When and where was the sermon preached?*
 - iv. *Write a one sentence purpose statement/focus for this message?*
 - v. *What do you want the hearers to do or be as a result of this message?*
- b. *The first page should also include the link to the video/recording.*
- *Written Responses: In a separate document, provide written responses to the following questions, being sure to use Old Testament and New Testament references. Write out the question and then provide a response. In total, the paper should be a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 pages, typed and double spaced.*
 - *What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments as we understand them in the United Methodist Church?*
 - *What does the Kingdom of God look like? Where have you seen the church live out this Kingdom? When have you seen it fail to do so?*
 - *What is your understanding of the Wesleyan concept of divine grace?*
 - *How do you believe the church discerns God's vision for them? How will you lead your church in this discernment? How will you lead your church in implementing that vision?*

Criteria for recommendation: Fitness for Ministry

- Spiritual fitness
- Psychological fitness
- Physical fitness
- Theological fitness
- Potential for effectiveness

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Tell us what excites you about ministry.
2. Share about the faith community or tradition in which you were ordained, and if you have any, your current connections to a United Methodist community.
3. Tell us about your call to serve in The United Methodist Church (and in Virginia).
4. We read and watched your sermon. Tell us how you prepared for your sermon, including the resources you used.
5. How did you select the scripture you used?
6. *Ask any "I'm curious..." questions related to the sermon video. Come prepared with these questions.*
7. United Methodist ministers are expected to dedicate themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to that end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits

conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God. What does making this commitment mean to you?

8. What are you doing to take care of yourself?
9. *If the candidate has concerns identified on the medical form or expanded background check, refer to the Behavioral Health Guidelines. It is appropriate for the BOM rep to ask the candidate how he/she is managing the identified health or behavioral concerns and how they could affect their health if put into a stressful ministry environment or that could hamper their effectiveness in lifelong ministry.*
10. How do you understand the statement “Jesus Christ is Lord?”
11. What is your understanding of the kingdom of God? *You may rephrase this question based on the candidate’s written responses.*
12. Imagine that a family has come to you to baptize their infant. How will you prepare the family for the baptism?
 - a. Follow-up: Share your understanding of the United Methodist sacraments of baptism and communion.
13. *Ask any follow-up questions based on the written responses.*
14. The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church? How do you view the authority of the Bible?
15. What is your understanding of United Methodist polity? Will you, in your ministry, embrace and articulate this polity?
16. Describe a time when you offered effective leadership during a situation or circumstance in which there was conflict.
17. *The BOM rep, or other appropriate committee member, asks the recommended questions from the psychological report.*
15. How would you describe your leadership style?
16. How have you used your strengths as a leader of a ministry team?
17. Share a time when you implemented a change in your church or ministry. What came from your efforts? What did you learn about yourself or your context?

Action Required: A three-fourths majority vote by **written ballot** and recorded on the Action Report Form as:

- Recommended as Other Fellowship
- Not recommended as Other Fellowship

In addition to the letter from the Center of Clergy Excellence, the Action Report Form step in InPath should be completed, including the Feedback Form and sent to the candidate. If recommended, the Center for Clergy Excellence will notify the candidate with information to register for Licensing School. To serve as an OF, the candidate will need to attend and complete all the requirements for Licensing School.

Renewal of Other Fellowship (OF) Interview

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The OF pastor will be required to complete the Other Fellowship (OF) renewal track in Unity, which includes an SPRC evaluation form and written responses.

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about your ministry?
2. What has brought you the greatest joy this year in ministry?
3. What has surprised you the most about your ministry?
4. How are you caring for yourself? How do you get exercise, manage stress, cultivate relationships and interests beyond your ministry setting?
5. Being in ministry is challenging. Describe where you find support systems outside of the church/charge you serve.
6. In what ways have you grown spiritually this year, both personally and as a pastor? What contributed to this growth?
7. *Thank the pastor for completing the written responses and ask them any follow up questions.*
8. How are you equipping the laity in your church?
9. What was the most difficult challenge you faced this past year as a pastor?
10. How did you handle this challenge, and what did you learn from this experience?
11. What is the single most important thing you need to learn this coming year to grow as a pastor?
12. What questions do you have for us?

Action Required: A majority vote to renew as an Other Fellowship (OF) or discontinue as an OF. The Vote Form and Feedback Form should be completed in the Action Report Form step. The Feedback Form should be shared with the OF pastor.

Recommendation for Associate Membership Interview

The local pastor will submit to the Center for Clergy Excellence their application request in June, when announced by the Center for Clergy Excellence. Upon receipt of that request, the local pastor will be placed on the “Associate Membership” track in Unity. The deadline to submit materials to their InPath track is noon on July 31. Candidates must be recommended by September 1.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The local pastor must have completed all the necessary requirements to apply for Associate Membership (§322). The Center for Clergy Excellence will communicate to dCOM chairs who from their district has applied for Associate Membership.

1. The candidate writes a 12-15 page paper answering the provided questions in the areas of theology, practice of ministry, personal growth and development, and call. (See the questions below). The paper is submitted through the InPath track.
2. Those who were continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry are required to submit an action report addressing the recommendations from the Board.

Criteria for recommendation: Fruitfulness in Ministry

- Areas of competencies
- Academic background
- Consider current practice of ministry
- Review how theological understanding has evolved since licensing
- Fruitfulness in ministry will be evaluated in four areas: theology, personal growth and development, call, and practice of ministry.

Writing Instructions & Guidelines Given to Candidates

1. Use inclusive language for God throughout your paper.
2. Thoroughly answer each question. Do not write more in one area and less in another.
3. Have a title page (not counted in your page count) with the following information “Associate Membership [Year]” and your name.
4. All papers must be typed using the following attributes:
 - a. Font: Times New Roman, 12-point
 - b. Page margins: 1” on all four sides
 - c. Line Spacing: Double (with the exception of the “stated question” as noted below or long block quotes which should be single spaced)
 - d. State and number each question, as it is written, prior to answering the question. Only the question is to be single spaced.
 - e. Page numbers are required, beginning with Page 1 on the first page after the title page
 - f. Your name on each page, in either the header or footer area.
 - g. Please use endnotes in your paper, NOT footnotes at the bottom of the page or within the paper, to cite sources used. This includes all Scripture references. Endnotes should come before your bibliography.

5. A bibliography is required for your paper and should include all printed materials, web pages, audio-visual materials, seminary lecture notes, the Bible, Book of Discipline, all other United Methodist resources, etc. The bibliography does not count toward the required number of pages for the paper.
6. Citation Style: Use Chicago style format throughout your papers and your bibliographies. You can find an example of endnotes and bibliography here:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html

dCom Criteria

The dCom is looking for your ability to communicate your understanding of Wesleyan theology and practice of ministry. The committee is looking for a sense of the direction you will be taking to answer each question.

Questions for Paper

Theology (BOD ¶324.7 a & d)

1. Describe your personal experience of God and the understanding of God you derive from biblical, theological, and historical sources.
2. How do you interpret the statement Jesus Christ is Lord?

Practice of Ministry (BOD ¶324.7 b & c)

3. What is your understanding of evil as it exists in the world?
4. What is your understanding of humanity, and the human need for divine grace?

For those continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry:

*Sermon, if you were continued in the sermon portion, turn in the manuscript of a sermon you have preached from April 1 – August 1 of the year applying.

*Teaching Plan, if you were continued in the teaching plan, answer 324.7g: How do you intend to affirm, teach, and apply Part II of the Discipline (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task) in your work in the ministry to which you have been called?

Personal Growth and Development (BOD ¶324.7 n & o)

5. Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry.
6. You have agreed as a candidate for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of their influence of ministers, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility and faithful sexual intimacy expressed through fidelity, monogamy, commitment, mutual affection and respect, careful and honest communication, mutual consent, and growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of God. What is your understanding of this agreement?

Call (BOD ¶324.7 k, l)

7. Explain your understanding of associate membership. How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitments as an associate member in The United Methodist Church?
8. Describe your understanding of diakonia, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the associate member.

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about ministry?
2. All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to be an Associate Member and relate it to a call story from the Bible.
 - a. *The candidate should be able to articulate a clear call to the ministry of an Associate Member.*
 - b. *Biblical imagery should be easily recalled.*
3. What systems of support and self-care have you set up in your life and ministry?
 - a. *The candidate should be able to share about support systems.*
4. Share an example of a formative moment of ministry in your life this past year. How has this experience affected your practice of ministry?
 - a. *The candidate should be able to share a formative moment in ministry and their growth in the practice of ministry.*
5. Share how you understand God's means of grace in the context of our Wesleyan understanding of the sacraments of baptism and communion.
 - a. *The candidate should be able to articulate God as the primary actor in both sacraments.*
 - b. *The candidate should be able to share about the Wesleyan concepts of infant baptism and the open table.*
 - c. *The candidate recalls Biblical imagery as related to each sacrament.*
6. *Thank the candidate for completing the written work, and ask any questions not addressed in the written materials or questions above.*
7. Share about a time when you were in conflict with another person. How did you handle the conflict and what was the outcome?
8. Do you have any questions for us?

Action Required: A three-fourths majority vote by the dCOM to recommend is recorded on the Action Report Form in Unity as:

- Recommended for Associate Membership
- No recommended for Associate Membership*
- Not recommended for Associate Membership, yet license renewed.

*The dCOM may ask the candidate to return for a license renewal interview. If so, be clear in the Feedback Form why the candidate is returning.

The Action Report Form and Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and sent to the candidate. The Action Report Form and the Feedback Form will be shared with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

Recommendation for Provisional Membership Interview

The candidate will submit their application request to the Center for Clergy Excellence between July 1 and July 31. Upon receipt of that request, the candidate will be placed on the “Applying for Provisional Membership” track which is where they will submit their materials to the dCOM. The deadline to submit materials to their InPath track is noon on August 30. Candidates must be interviewed before October 1.

Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

The candidate must have completed all the necessary requirements to apply for Provisional Membership (§324), including meeting the educational requirements. The Center for Clergy Excellence will communicate to dCOM chairs who from their district have applied for Provisional Membership.

1. A 12-15 page paper answering questions in the areas of call, theology, practice of ministry, and personal growth and development. See the questions below.
2. Service requirement – demonstrated gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the dCOM.
3. Those who were continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry are required to submit an action report addressing the recommendations from the Board.

Criteria for recommendation: Readiness for Ministry

- Areas of competencies
- Educational requirements
- Consider the readiness of the candidate’s field education experiences, internships, other practice of ministry experiences
- Review how theological understanding has evolved since certification
- Readiness for ministry will be evaluated in four areas: call, theology, personal growth and development, and practice of ministry.

Writing Instructions & Guidelines Given to Candidates

1. Use inclusive language for God throughout your paper.
2. Thoroughly answer each question. Do not write more in one area and less in another.
3. Have a title page (not counted in your page count) with the following information “Provisional Membership [Year]” and your name.
4. All papers must be typed using the following attributes:
 - a. Font: Times New Roman, 12-point
 - b. Page margins: 1” on all four sides

- c. Line Spacing: Double (with the exception of the “stated question” as noted below or long block quotes which should be single spaced)
- d. State and number each question, as it is written, prior to answering the question. Only the question is to be single spaced.
- e. Page numbers are required, beginning with Page 1 on the first page after the title page
- f. Your name on each page, in either the header or footer area.
- g. Please use endnotes in your paper, NOT footnotes at the bottom of the page or within the paper, to cite sources used. This includes all Scripture references. Endnotes should come before your bibliography.
 - i. A bibliography is required for your paper and should include all printed materials, web pages, audio-visual materials, seminary lecture notes, the Bible, Book of Discipline, Methodist resources, etc. The bibliography does not count toward the required number of pages for the paper.
 - ii. Citation Style: Use Chicago style format throughout your papers and your bibliographies. You can find an example of endnotes and bibliography here: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html

dCom Criteria

The dCom is looking for your ability to communicate your understanding of Wesleyan theology and practice of ministry. The committee is looking for a sense of the direction you will be taking to answer each question.

Questions to Answer for the dCom Recommendation Interview

Theology (BOD ¶324.7 a & d)

1. Describe your personal experience of God and the understanding of God you derive from biblical, theological, and historical sources.
2. How do you interpret the statement Jesus Christ is Lord?

Practice of Ministry (BOD ¶324.7 b & c)

3. What is your understanding of evil as it exists in the world?
4. What is your understanding of humanity, and the human need for divine grace?

For those continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry:

*Sermon, if you were continued in the sermon portion, turn in the manuscript of a sermon you have preached from April 1– August 1 of the year applying.

*Teaching Plan, if you were continued in the teaching plan, answer 324.7g: How do you intend to affirm, teach, and apply Part II of the Discipline (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task) in your work in the ministry to which you have been called?

Personal Growth and Development (BOD ¶324.7 n & o)

5. Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry.
6. You have agreed as a candidate for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of their influence of ministers, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility and faithful sexual intimacy expressed through fidelity, monogamy, commitment, mutual affection and respect, careful and honest communication, mutual consent, and growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of God (updated language from the 2020/2024 General Conference). What is your understanding of this agreement?

Call (BOD ¶324.7 k, l)

7. Explain your understanding of the distinctive vocations of the Order of Elders and the Order of Deacons. How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitments as a provisional deacon or provisional elder in The United Methodist Church?
8. Describe your understanding of diakonia, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the provisional member.

Recommended Time Frame: 60 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. What excites you about ministry?
2. All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to ordained ministry as a deacon/elder and relate it to a call story from the Bible.
 - a. *The candidate should be able to articulate a clear call to ministry.*
 - b. *The candidate has a clear understanding of their called order.*
 - c. *Biblical imagery should be easily recalled.*
3. What systems of support and self-care have you set up in your life and ministry?
 - a. *The candidate should be able to share about support systems.*
4. A. (For Licensed Local Pastors) Share an example of a formative moment of ministry in your life this past year. How has this experience affected your practice of ministry?
 - a. *The candidate should be able to share a formative moment in ministry and their growth in the practice of ministry.*B. (For those who are certified candidates who have not yet served in ministry) Share an example from this past year when you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit? How did that experience inform how you will practice ministry in the future?
5. Share about how your gifts for ministry will inform your practice of ministry.

- a. *The candidate should be able to share about their gifts for ministry and envision how these gifts will contribute to their ministry.*
6. Share how you understand God's means of grace in the context of our Wesleyan understanding of the sacraments of baptism and communion.
 - a. *The candidate should be able to articulate God as the primary actor in both sacraments.*
 - b. *The candidate should be able to share about the Wesleyan concepts of infant baptism and the open table.*
 - c. *The candidate recalls Biblical imagery as related to each sacrament.*
7. Share about a time when you were in conflict with another person. How did you handle the conflict and what was the outcome?
8. If they have completed CPE: What did you learn about yourself and about ministry through your CPE experience?
 - a. *The candidate should be able to share about their personal growth and growth in the practice of ministry.*
9. *Ask any follow up questions that will help the candidate go beyond the scope of their paper.*
10. Do you have any questions for us?

Action Required: A three-fourths majority vote by the dCOM to recommend is recorded on the Action Report Form, recorded in Unity:

- Recommended for Provisional Elder according to ¶324.10
- Recommended for Provisional Deacon according to ¶324.10
- Not recommended for Provisional Membership, yet Recommended for annual renewal of certified candidacy *[if included as part of the interview]*
- Not recommended for Provisional Membership, yet Recommended for annual renewal of license for ministry *[if included as part of the interview]*

The Action Report Form and Feedback Form should be completed, uploaded in Unity, and sent to the candidate. The Action Report Form and the Feedback Form will be shared with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

Reinstatement or Readmission Interview

Whenever a candidate, local pastor, associate, provisional or full member has been discontinued, placed on honorable location, withdrawn, or terminated, they may request to be reinstated or readmitted to their previous status.

References in the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline:

- As an admitted or certified candidate (§314.2)
- As a licensed local pastor (§320.4)
- As a provisional member (§365) or associate member
- After honorable location or administrative location (§366)
- After leaving the ministerial office to full membership as elder or deacon (§367)
- After termination by action of the annual conference (§368)
- After involuntary retirement (§369)

Requirements prior to interview:

1. The candidate will formally request reinstatement to the Center for Clergy Excellence, who will immediately inform the Bishop's office for supervisory file information. The Center for Clergy Excellence will guide the candidate and the dCOM through the office.
2. The Director of Clergy Excellence in consultation with the district superintendent and/or dCOM will review the circumstances of the request. The candidate's file contents will be reviewed in relation to the requirements of *The Book of Discipline* and, depending on the circumstances, most of the following will be required to be updated and resubmitted to the dCOM:
 - a. A written request by the candidate on his/her reasons and qualifications for readmission and a statement on the circumstances relating to their discontinuance or withdrawal.
 - b. Biographical Form (GBHEM Form 102)
 - c. Expanded Background Report (national and county criminal search, DMV record search, consumer credit report, and social security trace)
 - d. Medical Report (GBHEM Form 103)
 - e. Candidate's Disclosure Form (GBHEM Form 114, notarized)
 - f. A satisfactory report and recommendation by their charge conference and pastor
 - g. Psychological Assessment (level to be determined by circumstances)
 - h. Work Authorization Form
 - i. Pastor Profile
 - j. Other letters of recommendation, if needed
 - k. Report of career counseling, if applicable
 - l. Additional information or report on requirements set by the Board or annual conference when discontinued or withdrawn.

Notification will be sent to the dCOM chair and/or district superintendent that the file is available. In most cases, the candidate will be assigned a track in Unity.

The dCOM reviews the candidate's documents. An interview and subsequent minutes with an Action Report and Feedback Form is required. The recommended time frame is 60 minutes and the questions used should correspond to the reinstatement request.

- For reinstatement as a certified candidate, a majority vote is a recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- For reinstatement of local pastor status, or readmission to associate, provisional, or full membership, a majority vote is a recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
 - This recommendation will require an interview with the Conference Relations Committee and further approval by the BOM and the Cabinet. The Action Report and the Feedback Form will be submitted to the Conference Relations Committee.

Section 5 - Withdrawal

Process for Withdrawal for Clergy from the United Methodist Church in the Virginia Conference

1. Following the procedure as outlined by *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* (§360.1) clergy must submit a written request for withdrawal from membership in The United Methodist Church to the Bishop and copy the Office of the Center for Clergy Excellence, their District Superintendent, and the Office of Pensions and Benefits.
2. ***Licensed local pastors*** will have an exit interview with the ***District Superintendent/District Committee on Ministry***. At the time of the interview they will turn in their license. Licensed local pastors may have their license terminated by the District Superintendent/District Committee on Ministry at any time.
3. Provisional members will have an exit interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry's Conference Relations Committee. At the time of the interview they will turn in their license and certificate for provisional membership.
4. Deacons and Elders in full connection are requested to have an exit interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry's Conference Relations Committee. At the time of the interview they will turn in their license and full membership certificate, as well as their ordination credential. Their ordination credential will be inscribed with the following by the Conference Secretary upon reception: "The Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church recognizes that (name of clergy member) has withdrawn from conference membership and altogether from the ministry of The United Methodist Church on (date of withdrawal)." After their ordination credential is inscribed it will be copied, deposited with the conference secretary, and their original ordination credential will be returned. If an ordination credential no longer exists, a letter should be presented to the clergy member stating the same (signed by the clergy member and conference secretary, and notarized). A copy of the letter will be deposited with the conference secretary.*
5. If any meeting is done virtually, the clergy will be responsible for submitting their license/provisional membership certificate/conference membership certificate to the Center for Clergy Excellence:
Attn: Conference Secretary
Center for Clergy Excellence
10330 Staples Mill Road
Glen Allen, VA 23060
6. Upon completion of the interview, an action report from the Conference Relations Committee/District Superintendent/District Committee on Ministry will be written and sent to the Office of Clergy Excellence to be filed and placed in the clergy's personnel file. This action report will state the clergy's reasons for withdrawing and their plans for the future. Their membership certificate/provisional membership and commissioning certificate/license/copy of ordination credential with inscription (or if never issued, a letter) will be deposited with the conference secretary along with their written request for withdrawal.
7. All files are the property of the Annual Conference; therefore, will not be given to the clergy or transferred to another denomination (§606.9). For the same reason, copies will not be made of the

files.

8. The minutes of the Annual Conference Clergy Executive Session will inform the clergy of the Virginia Conference UMC who are withdrawing to unite with another denomination.

*Based on recommendation by the Council of Bishop's Disaffiliation Task Force

Updated and approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry 12/12/22.

Request for Withdrawal or Involuntary Withdrawal

At any time an inquiring, admitted, certified candidate or local pastor may request withdrawal from the candidacy process. This is called a voluntary discontinuance. This request should be received in writing from the candidate and include their reason for withdrawal. This letter of request should then be shared among the chair of the district committee on ordained ministry, the district superintendent, and the Center for Clergy Excellence.

At any time the chair and registrar of the district committee on ordained ministry can deem that an inquiring or admitted candidate has not made satisfactory progress or has not maintained an active relationship with the dCOM and recommend to the dCOM that the candidate be discontinued. This is called an involuntary discontinuance. There is no annual renewal required for inquiring or admitted candidates as the expectation is for them to move into certified candidate status within 18-months of their initial request to begin the process.

1. The letter of request of withdrawal/discontinuance will be received by the Center for Clergy Excellence, who will respond to the candidate and copy the D.S. and dCOM chair.
2. The chair will notify the committee that a request for withdrawal or a recommendation for discontinuation will be on the agenda for the next meeting.
3. The minutes of the meeting will document the reasons for withdrawal or discontinuation and any discussion among the members. This information is crucial should the candidate wish to seek reinstatement at a later time.
4. Any correspondence sent to the candidate by the chair after the committee's decision should also be added as a file to the candidate's Basecamp folder.
5. The dCOM Registrar will complete and submit an Action Report in accordance with the committee's decision.
6. The dCOM Secretary will upload the minutes of the meeting into their Google Drive folder.
7. The Center for Clergy Excellence will record the action in the Minute Questions and as appropriate in the Business of the Annual Conference. It is important to note that those who fall into either the voluntary or involuntary discontinuance category are all listed under the same minute question (discontinuance of certified candidates and discontinuance of licensed local pastors, respectively). However, a record of their discontinuance is placed in their Conference file.

Recommended Time Frame: 30 minutes

Interview Questions for Voluntary Discontinuance/Withdrawal:

1. Share with us what led you to the decision to voluntarily withdraw from the Virginia Conference UMC?
2. Go through the withdrawal process and the process of readmittance to make sure the candidate is fully aware of the requirements and expectations (provide to them the information found on the Reinstatement or Readmission Interview page).
3. Share with us your observations about your ministry in the Virginia Conference and what additional support may have been helpful to you during your ministry and discernment.
4. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?
5. Would you be willing to share your plans for your next chapter?
6. *Thank them for their service!*
7. *Make sure that they turn in their license. Or if they have not brought it with them, there are plans for it to be sent to the District Superintendent.*
8. *Pray.*

Individuals Seeking Readmittance After Withdrawal

Requirements prior to conducting an interview: To begin the process, a written request for readmittance stating reasons and qualifications for readmission as well as the circumstances/reasons relating to withdrawal to be sent to the Center for Clergy Excellence, copied to the Bishop and the District Superintendent of the district served during withdrawal/discontinuance.

A recommendation from the District Superintendent in the conference and the district served during the withdrawal/discontinuance process must be received. There may be additional requirements related to the person's previous conference membership. The individual should be in conversation with the Center for Clergy Excellence.

Recommended Time Frame: 30 - 45 minutes

Interview Questions:

1. Share about your journey from withdrawal to readmittance.
2. Share about how you experienced God during this process.
3. How has the process of withdrawal and readmittance changed your perspective towards The United Methodist Church?
4. Share about your systems of accountability and support.
5. If you are readmitted how will you uphold the doctrines and polity of The United Methodist Church? Please be specific.

6. Tell us about how God is calling you to serve in the Virginia Conference.

Action Required: An Action Report Form should be completed indicating the decision to reinstate. Certified Candidates: Requires a majority vote from the dCom. Licensed Local Pastors, Provisional Members, Honorable and Administrative Location, Associate and Full Members: Requires a majority vote from the dCom, the CRC, and the appointive cabinet.

Section 6 - Additional Information

Virginia Conference, The United Methodist Church

Educational Requirements for Provisional Membership

One course in each area listed below must be included in graduate theological education in preparation for provisional membership in the VAUMC, and the Basic Graduate Theological Studies, noted with an asterisk *, must equal at least 27 semester credits total. Please note: the Virginia Conference requires completion of all educational requirements prior to commissioning and provisional membership. In addition, completion of an undergraduate bachelor's degree is required.

- *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 is required by the Virginia Conference. This is required for both provisional deacon and provisional elder candidates (effective 2020).

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/or 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.

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 Registrar, Rev. Jessie Colwell at JessieColwell@vaumc.org.

Update from General Conference 2024: Paragraph 324.4 was updated and will go into effect January 1, 2025. It will now read: *Candidates for deacon or elder shall have completed the basic graduate*

theological studies in the Christian faith. These courses shall each be three (3) semester hours, or the equivalent and may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies shall include courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; and United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history. The combined credit hours for the United Methodist studies shall be a minimum 6 semester hours, or the equivalent. Basic graduate theological studies shall not be taken pass/fail.

Section 7 - Forms

The Action Report Form can be completed in Unity, as part of the candidate or local pastor's track. A sample from Unity can be found below. The Feedback Form template (see page 52) is available online at <https://vaumc.org/dcomresources/>.

The Vote Form and the Feedback Form are added to the candidate or local pastor's permanent file. The dCOM will have access to both in the Unity tracking system. These two forms are important for when a candidate or local pastor applies for provisional or full membership, when a local pastor changes districts, or when there concerns regarding fitness for ministry.

 Unity Web

Hello dCOM Board Rep [Change your password](#) [Log off](#)

dCOM Vote

John Doe
Certified Candidate

Vote requires a three-fourths majority via written ballot.

Vote Date	08/16/2024
Total In Attendance	0
Attendance List	
Yes Votes	0
No Votes	0
Abstentions	0
Recommendation	Select

© 2024 - Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Icons by [Icons8](#)

Virginia Conference
dCOM Feedback Form
{INSERT DISTRICT NAME}

Name of Candidate:

Interview Team:

Interviewing for:

Feedback on written materials

Identified areas of improvement in the written materials (*Consider aspects such as clarity, structure, tone, grammar, and subject knowledge*):

Identified areas of strength in the written materials (*What stood out positively in the written work?*):

Feedback on the oral interview

Identified areas of strength in the oral interview (*Consider clarity, confidence, engagement, subject knowledge, responsiveness*):

Identified areas of improvement in the oral interview (*Were there moments of uncertainty, unclear responses, or missed opportunities?*):

Additional observations

(*Any general feedback not covered above?*)

Recommendations for growth

(*What should the candidate focus on in the coming year to grow in their call or ministry?*)

Signature, Interview Team Leader

Date

Section 8 - Checklists

1



Path to Become A CERTIFIED CANDIDATE

All forms can be found at: <https://vaumc.org/candidates-for-ministry/>

- ☐ A professing member of a UMC or baptized member of campus ministry for 1 year.
- ☐ Graduation from an accredited high school or certificate of equivalency.
- ☐ Read and review *The Christian as Minister* or *Blessed Wrestling* with local clergy or campus minister.
- ☐ Clergy submits recommendation; certify meeting with candidate.
- ☐ Write a call statement.
- ☐ Complete Biographical form 102.
- ☐ Complete Candidate's Disclosure form 114, notarized.
- ☐ Complete "Request Interview to be Admitted" form (<https://vaumc.org/candidates-for-ministry/>)
- ☐ Meet with dCOM to be admitted as a candidate. If admitted, continue checklist.
- ☐ dCOM assigns a Candidacy Mentor. Meet at least 3 times using *Answering the Call*.
- ☐ Register with General Board of Higher Education and Ministry by contacting Jason Stanley at jasonstanley@vaumc.org.
- ☐ Candidate is invited to Unity. (Checklist tracked in Unity).
- ☐ Prepare written responses to questions in paragraph 310.1d. Share with S/PPRC.
- ☐ Meet with S/PPRC Committee of local church (or equivalent) for recommendation. S/PPRC completes recommendation form.
- ☐ Charge Conference approval. Complete Declaration of Candidacy (included in Charge Conference forms in Unity).

updated 8/13/2025



Path to Become A CERTIFIED CANDIDATE

☐	Prepare written responses to questions in paragraph 310.2a., (questions in Unity track).
☐	Expanded Background Check.
☐	Complete Medical Report form.
☐	Complete Psychological Assessment.
☐	Attend Candidacy Summit.
☐	Submit top 5 Gallup StrengthFinders (provided at Candidacy Summit)
☐	Candidacy Mentor Report, online at https://vaumc.org/candidates-for-ministry/ .
☐	Schedule dCOM meeting.
☐	Interview with dCOM.
☐	If certified, continue meeting with Candidacy Mentor.
☐	Discern next step - licensed local pastor or provisional member?
☐	Review checklist for becoming a licensed local pastor or provisional member.
☐	
☐	
☐	

Questions? Contact the Center for Clergy Excellence

Jessie Colwell, Director of Clergy Excellence, jessiecolwell@vaumc.org
 Jason Stanley, Director of Call & Candidacy, jasonstanley@vaumc.org
 Lyn Harding, Program Admin Coordinator, lynharding@vaumc.org

updated 9/22/2025



Path to Become A LICENSED LOCAL PASTOR

- ☐ Be a certified candidate
- ☐ Continue meeting with Candidacy Mentor
- ☐ Licensed Local Pastor Tracked added in Unity
- ☐ Prepare sermon manuscript & preaching video.
- ☐ Record sermon. Upload link and manuscript to Track.
- ☐ Prepare written sermon description using instructions in the Track.
Upload to Track.
- ☐ Prepare written responses to four questions. Instructions in Track.
- ☐ Schedule dCOM interview.
- ☐ Meet with dCOM prior to April 15.
- ☐ If recommended, prepare to attend Licensing School.
- ☐ Complete online learning modules.
- ☐ Attend in-person Licensing School.
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



updated 9/22/2025

Section 9 - LLP Renewal Tracks

Licensed Local Pastors will be able to submit their written responses for the Standard Renewal based on years of service in Unity. Below are the four renewal tracks. There are four questions for each renewal track: leadership, theology, practice of ministry, and call. This will allow the dCOM to access the LLP in these four areas each year.

LLP Year 1 Renewal Track

S/PPRC Evaluation

Upload the S/PPRC evaluation.

Written Responses

Provide written responses to the questions below. Responses should be 2-3 paragraphs.

1. Describe how your church is structured for mission and ministry.
2. How do you apply United Methodist theology in your teaching?
3. In what ways have your spiritual disciplines affected your practice of leadership in ministry?
4. Describe how your call to ministry has evolved this year.

Transcript

Upload the most current transcript from Course of Study, college, or seminary.

Schedule a meeting with dCOM

Contact your District office or dCOM chair notifying them that all requirements have been submitted.

LLP Year 2 Renewal Track

S/PPRC Evaluation

Upload the S/PPRC evaluation.

Written Responses

Provide written responses to the questions below. Responses should be 2-3 paragraphs.

1. Describe leadership qualities which you demonstrate in your ministry and the strengths and weaknesses of those qualities.
2. Describe ways your congregation lives out the theology of grace.
3. How has your preaching improved since you were licensed?
4. Describe how your call has evolved this year.

Transcript

Upload the most current transcript from Course of Study, college, or seminary.

Schedule a meeting with dCOM

Contact your District office or dCOM chair notifying them that all requirements have been submitted.

LLP Year 3 Renewal Track**S/PPRC Evaluation**

Upload the S/PPRC evaluation.

Written Responses

Provide written responses to the questions below. Responses should be 2-3 paragraphs.

1. In what ways has your theology of grace shaped your understanding of the Sacraments?
2. Describe ways you equip your congregation to offer pastoral or congregational care?
3. Describe your process for developing the order of worship and how it impacts your sermon preparation.
4. Describe how your call has evolved this year.

Transcript

Upload the most current transcript from Course of Study, college, or seminary.

Schedule a meeting with dCOM

Contact your District office or dCOM chair notifying them that all requirements have been submitted.

LLP Year 4+ Renewal Track**S/PPRC Evaluation**

Upload the S/PPRC evaluation.

Written Responses

Provide written responses to the questions below. Responses should be 2-3 paragraphs.

1. How are you making disciples of Jesus Christ?
2. Describe one way you train and empower your laity to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
3. Describe the progress you have made in Course of Study and how this education has impacted your practice of ministry.
4. Describe how your call has evolved this year.

Transcript

Upload the most current transcript from Course of Study, college, or seminary.

Schedule a meeting with dCOM

Contact your District office or dCOM chair notifying them that all requirements have been submitted.

