

# **District Committee On Ordained Ministry**

## **DCOM Handbook**



**2023-2024**

**Virginia Conference  
The United Methodist Church**

**[www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources](http://www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources)**

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# Membership and Organization

## BOM/DCOM Relationship

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) shall be amendable to the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry (§666). 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 full minutes pertaining to each candidate interview and/or discussion and the Action Report form shall be submitted to the BOM Registrar.

## Responsibilities

The district committee on ordained ministry is responsible for the following actions:

1. Admission interview of candidates for admission to the candidacy studies program prior to the assignment of a candidacy mentor.
2. Recommendation for certification as a candidate for licensed or ordained ministry (Fitness for Ministry).
3. Recommendation for licensing for pastoral ministry (Fitness for Ministry).
4. Recommendation for Provisional Membership prior to interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry (Readiness for Ministry).
5. Recommendation for Associate Membership prior to interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry (Effectiveness in Ministry).
6. Recommendation for readmission to conference membership prior to interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

In addition, the district committee on ordained ministry shall aid the local church in the process of enlisting persons for ordained ministry as deacon or elder or for service as a local pastor, encourage persons to enter the candidacy program, and maintain a list of all candidates under its care.

## Membership

All members shall be nominated annually by the district superintendent in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the annual conference; to include:

- A representative from the Board of Ordained Ministry, named in consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- 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.
- At least three professing members of local churches.
- The district superintendent.
- All persons named to the committee shall be members with vote.
- Interim vacancies are filled by the district superintendent and communicated to the Board of Ordained Ministry immediately.
- Officers are nominated by the district superintendent and elected at the first meeting following annual conference.

## Life Cycle of a Candidate



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 full minutes pertaining to each candidate interview and/or discussion and the Action Report form shall be submitted to the BOM Registrar.

*\* When a licensed local pastor is recommended and eligible for an appointment, yet they are not currently appointed to a ministry setting - referred to as “Minute Question 16” - they revert back to being a certified candidate (lay person) until such time as they are under appointment.*

### Action Report Form/Candidate’s Narrative/General Meeting Minutes

In an attempt to streamline submission of Action Reports, Candidate’s Narratives, and General Meeting Minutes- these three forms have been collapsed into one with the formula controls set to ask the right set of questions depending on the nature of the dCOM Meeting.

### Process:

Select the link to the form which corresponds to your district.

Select which kind of meeting minutes you are submitting: Action Report and Candidate’s Narrative or General Meeting Minutes. Then process to follow the prompts.

### When recording Candidates Narrative or General Meeting Minutes:

The full minutes pertaining to each candidate interview and/or discussion shall be taken by the dCOM Secretary or another designated member in their absence.

The Secretary sends Candidacy’s Narrative’s to the Registrar for upload into the Action Report.

The Secretary can record General Meeting Minutes directly into the Jotform for their district.

### When recording an Action Report:

Prior to submitting an Action Report, the Registrar will need to receive the Candidate’s Narrative from the Secretary in order to upload them into the Jotform.

All votes (recommendations for action) taken by the district committee are to be reported to the Board of Ordained Ministry Registrar on the Action Report form located at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-forms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-forms) . The report should be submitted soon after the meeting so that the action can be recorded and subsequent steps can be taken at the conference level.

The controls on this form are set to send a copy to the dCOM Chair, the dCOM Registrar and the Associate Director for Call and Candidacy.

Action Report/Candidates Narrative /General Meeting Minutes Management  
dCOM Chairs or Registrars may upload the report or minutes into the corresponding folder in Basecamp.

## Online Document Sharing

*The Board of Ordained Ministry and the Center for Clergy Excellence has determined to use its own process for sharing files as well as communicating the credentialing process for active candidates, local pastors, and certified lay ministers as they relate to the DCOM. Required documents, written materials, and forms for each conference relationship are detailed on the Clergy Excellence website: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>*

In keeping with the on-line process established in recent years, the documents, written materials, and forms are uploaded into a candidate’s account for access and review by all members of the dCOM prior to action being taken. **No paper candidate files are maintained by the dCOM. All documentation should be uploaded into the VAUMC Basecamp account.**

The Center for Clergy Excellence is responsible maintain accurate information about candidates through Unity as well as updating the Minute Questions based on actions taken by the dCOM.

### Documentation Flow for Candidates

#### **Step One**

Candidate is directed to the Forms Page:  
<https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms>

#### **Step Two**

Candidates downloads and complete the corresponding forms appropriate to their stage of credentialing.

#### **Step Three**

Candidate downloads Application and uploads completed forms *into* the application

#### **Step Four**

dCOM Chair, dCOM Registrar receive a copy of the completed application and upload into Basecamp into the appropriate folder

\*Associate Director receives notification as well

\* There is flexibility as to which dCOM member uploads documentation.

## Documentation Flow for dCOMs

### Step One-Review Documents

dCOM members visit Basecamp to review necessary documents for each candidate

\*meeting schedules and assignments can be shared confidentially in Basecamp as well.

### Step Two- Recording

- **Secretary:** Record Candidates Narrative and send to Registrar for final Submission via Word doc
- **Secretary:** Record General Meeting Minutes Directly into Jotform

<https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>

### Step Three- Final Submissions

- **Registrar:** Record, Submit and Upload Report

The Action Report is filled out by the registrar (who includes the Candidate's Narrative from the Secretary) using the form their district which can be found at: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>

#### Action Report/Candidate's Narrative

This form is automatically sent to the dCOM Chair, the dCOM Registrar- who uploads a copy into the appropriate folder in Basecamp

#### General Meeting Minutes

The Registrar also uploads the General Meeting Minutes once submitted by the Secretary via jotform.

The Association Dir. For Call and Candidacy receives a copy of these forms as well.



# One Year in the Life of a District Committee on Ordained Ministry

## July – Getting Organized

- DCOM Committee Membership: Is everyone registered in PASSAGE? (While Candidates are not uploading new documentation, PASSAGE is still the way candidates register with GBHEM.) Does everyone have a folder in Basecamp? Is the membership roster correct?
- Set a schedule for the coming year and make note of important dates within this outline and the liturgical calendar
- List and review candidates by their progress and status
- Confirm all admitted candidates are in a mentor group (or assigned to a mentor)
- List and review local pastors and local pastor mentoring groups in light of appointment changes
- Discuss recruiting/enlistment strategies for receiving those who are sensing God's call.

## Late Summer/Early Fall – Provisional and Associate Interviews

- Schedule an interview with candidates applying for associate and provisional membership *Candidates who apply for the application packet will be placed on the appropriate membership track in The Jotform links found at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-forms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-forms)|UMC. They will need to apply before they interview with you, however they cannot continue in the application process without your recommendation.*
- Interview candidates for associate and provisional membership. *Committees are encouraged to complete associate and provisional interviews, with notification of your action to the candidate, no later than September 1 for Associate Membership, and no later than September 30 for Provisional Membership.*  
For action taken on associate and provisional membership, the narrative recommendation from the district chair is extremely important to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Respond in detail to each question on the Recommendation report form, found in and submitted through The Jotform links found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>
- 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.

## Fall/Winter

*The Center for Clergy Excellence should receive the narrative recommendation for provisional and associate membership candidates November 1. Submit through The Jotform links found at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-forms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-forms)|UMC*

- Admission interviews
- Certified candidacy interviews  
Place those interested in pursuing licensing direct them to the corresponding form at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>
- Interview candidates who are home on break from school in December or January
- Readmission interviews (for provisional or full membership readmission) should be completed by February 1 so that the BOM may also interview and take action.

## Winter/Spring

- Local Pastor Renewal interviews
- Recommendation for Licensing interviews – review sermon video and required paper
- Certified candidacy and renewal interviews
- Licensing School registration deadline is May 1
- All Certified candidacy and Candidacy renewal interviews should be complete by the end of May

- All Local Pastors who are requesting retirement should be interviewed by the end of May

### Summer

- Interview candidates who are home from school

## **Critical Benchmarks for Attending Licensing School**

In order to receive the registration link and be confirmed to attend licensing school, a student must be a Certified Candidate and have received the positive recommendation of their DCOM **prior to** the end of April. Recommendations for licensing received in May will be reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry and considered for an exception to this policy.

In order to be a **Certified Candidate by the end of April**, following are the critical benchmarks the admitted candidate must meet:

### January Summit

The candidate is to have attended a Candidacy Summit prior to becoming a certified candidate. The January Summit is the last opportunity to complete this step and receive a recommendation to attend licensing school. Details on registration can be found at [www.vaumc.org/candidacysummit](http://www.vaumc.org/candidacysummit) or on their Candidacy Summit track in The Jotform links found <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms>.

### No later than February 15

The candidate must complete the “Request to Psychological Assessment” step no later than February 15. The new Psychological Assessment track will be manually added to their account within 2-3 days.

### No later than February 25

The candidate and their mentor must have completed the Psychological Assessment track no later than February 25. A failure to complete the assessment materials in full will delay the delivery of materials to the MAS and put completion at risk to meet the following benchmarks.

### No later than March 30

The candidate will have completed their interview with the MAS no later than March 30. The candidate may call the Center for Clergy Excellence if they have not heard from VIPCare (or other MAS office) to schedule this interview in advance of the March 30 deadline.

All steps on the “Becoming a Certified Candidate” track, including the recommendation from charge conference, background, medical and psychological reports, must show as complete prior to the DCOM conducting an interview with the candidate for certification. All materials must be reviewed by the DCOM prior to meeting with the candidate for an interview.

### No later than April 30

An interview and recommendation to attend licensing school and receive a part/full time appointment as a local pastor. The Action Report must be complete and submitted in The Jotform links found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms> by the end of the day on April 30.

### May 1

Registration closes at midnight on May 1. No additional registrations are received after this date.

The inability to meet these benchmarks will mean that the candidate is not in order to be certified and recommended for licensing this conference year. Exceptions to this policy may be considered by the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

## Job Descriptions for Officers

### District Superintendent

- May receive email or letter from candidate with a statement of call and request for admission to the candidacy program (The letter may also go to the DCOM chair).
- The district superintendent acknowledges receipt and refers candidate to DCOM chair, forwarding or scanning/emailing the statement of call.
- If candidate is recommended for admission to the candidacy program, 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 The Jotform links found at
- Fall: Presides at Charge Conference and monitors candidates seeking approval and renewal.
- Spring: Nominates District Committee on Ordained Ministry members and leaders—members reported to Cabinet Dean and leaders reported to Center for Clergy Excellence.
- Spring: Reviews the Minute Questions to ensure all certified candidates and licensed local pastors associated with the district are properly listed.

### Chairperson

- Sets date and location for meetings.
- Sets the agenda and presides at the meetings.  
Following receipt of an email or letter from a potential candidate (directly or through the DS), responds to the candidate with information about filling out their application according to where they are in the process. Copies of forms for candidates can be found here:  
<https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms>
- Applications are sent to dCOM chairs automatically once submitted by the candidate. Also refers the candidate to the Center for Clergy Excellence Candidate and Seminary Students website:  
[www.vaumc.org/Candidacy](http://www.vaumc.org/Candidacy).
- 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.
- Emails each candidate regarding the results of the interview and recommended action with a copy in the candidate's The Jotform links found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>
- Assists the dCOM mentor coordinator and district superintendent in assigning candidacy mentors at the time of the admission interview.
- Completes the Narrative Recommendation Form for Provisional and Associate Membership via The Jotform links found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>. A copy of this form is included in the appendix of this handbook.
- 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 and reviewed.
- Training and resource materials can be found at [www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources](http://www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources)

### Secretary

- Records and distributes minutes of the meetings to the DCOM members and to the Associate Director for Call and Candidacy: CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org
  - The Jotform for Action Reports/Candidate's Narratives and General Meeting minutes can be found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>
- Keeps a file of all dCOM minutes (in the district office)—the BOM Registrar ensures that a copy of minutes related to an individual person goes into that person's file on Basecamp.

### Registrar

- Reviews the documents uploaded by the dCOM chair in Basecamp or the district office to ensure that all documents are appropriately in the candidate's or local pastor's Basecamp folder prior to an interview.
- Uses the Action Report/Candidates Narrative and General Meeting Minutes Form found on <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms> to record all actions within 48-hours of the DCOM interview.
- Training and resource materials can be found at [www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources](http://www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources)

### Board of Ordained Ministry Representative

- Reviews the psychological assessment report on candidates when uploaded Basecamp by the dCOM chair (once they are Center for Clergy Excellence) (see guidelines) and assists the dCOM in reviewing the report prior to the interview for certified candidacy
- Reviews the Expanded Background Report, Psychological Assessments, and results of the Emotional And Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) on candidates when uploaded into Basecamp by the District Administrator and assists the dCOM in reviewing the report prior to the interview for certified candidacy.
- Exchanges questions and information between the dCOM and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Assists in training members of the dCOM.
- Leads the dCOM in connecting with Call Culture efforts and reaching out to those who are discerning a call into ministry.

### Mentor Coordinator for Candidacy and Local Pastor Mentors

- Coordinates with the dCOM chair and district superintendent regarding the assignment of candidates to candidacy mentor groups. The assignment of a newly admitted candidate is done at the time of the interview.
  - A mechanism to assign Mentors is being reviewed.
- Offer ongoing support to registered candidacy mentors through gatherings, resources, phone calls, etc. Notify the BOM Associate Registrar for Call and Candidacy when a mentor is no longer available to be assigned.
- With the district superintendent, recommend 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 mentors.
- Assign, train and resource Local Pastor Mentors.
- Training and resource materials for the coordinator and for candidacy or local pastor mentors can be found at [www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources](http://www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources)

## General Interview Guidelines

### Preparing for an interview

- The dCOM Chair will ensure, prior to scheduling an interview, that the required documents for the candidate being interviewed have been uploaded into the appropriate folder in Basecamp.
- All dCOM members should review the required documents in Basecamp for each candidate/local pastor to be interviewed prior to the DCOM meeting.
- Decide on the size of the interview group. The committee can subdivide for most interviews and then report back a recommendation to total committee for a final decision.
- Video conference interviews should be offered for those candidates who are living out of the area—*after* at least one in-person interview between that candidate and the committee.
- Allow fifteen minutes before each interview to discuss concerns and issues that need to be addressed in the interview.
- Decide on the most important questions. Decide who will ask each question. Decide which question to ask first - do not begin with the psychological assessment. Involve all members of the committee in asking questions while the chair focuses on process and time.
- Be mindful of the distinctions between candidates on the elder track and the deacon track and ask appropriate questions.
- The dCOM Chair will ask someone on the dCOM to begin the interview with prayer and someone to close the interview with prayer.

### During an interview

- If the mentor is a member of the DCOM, the mentor shall not be present for the interview.
- The DCOM Chair welcomes the candidate to the interview and asks members of the DCOM to introduce themselves, by name and church/ministry setting.
- State the purpose of the interview (Admission Interview, Certification Interview, Renewal Interview, Recommendation for provisional or associate membership, etc.) and if more than one recommendation for action will be voted upon afterwards.
- The candidate does most 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 chair serves as the timekeeper.
- The secretary will take detailed minutes of the questions, answers, and discussion that follows.

### Discussion after an interview

- The recommendation for action should be determined by the whole committee after the interview. The recommendation of the dCOM is recorded and submitted to the Board of Ordained Ministry on the Action Report form found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>
- The *Book of Discipline* requires that the decision of the dCOM be communicated 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.

- File the letter to the candidate with the Action Report form and meeting minutes.
- Evaluate the interview. What was effective in the interview? What would we do differently next time? Were any questions asked that were inappropriate?

## Quick Reference for Interviews

**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.** Full details of requirements, criteria, and suggested questions for each interview follow in this handbook.

A. Lay Supply:

dCOMS do not certify or recommend Lay Supply. However, given that Lay Supply is meant as a temporary status, dCOMS are asked to meet with those assigned to their districts to establish relationship.

Interviews should explore:

- Journey of Call
- Initial experience in ministry
- Hopes for continued ministry as Certified Lay Minister or Certified Candidate

B. Certified Candidate; The standard is: Fitness for Ministry

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

Interviews and recommendation of action are required at these points:

1. *Admission Interview* following completion of all steps to become an Admitted Candidate
2. *Certification Interview* following completion of all steps to become a Certified Candidate (requires a 3/4 vote and specification toward licensing, ordination as an elder or as a deacon)
3. Annual *renewal* of certified candidacy

C. License for Pastoral Ministry; The standard is: Fitness for Ministry (same points as CC above)

- Initial *recommendation* for licensing and availability for appointment  
Specify part-time (PL) or full-time (FL) eligibility if approved
- Annual *renewal* of the license for pastor ministry
- Annual *recommendation* for continued appointment as a retired local pastor (RL)

D. Associate Membership; The standard is: Effectiveness in Ministry (required a 3/4 vote)

- Assess areas of developing competency
- Review academic background
- Consider current practice of ministry
- How has the candidate's theological understanding evolved since licensing?
- Review bullet responses to questions for interview papers and the writing sample.

E. Provisional Membership; The standard is: Readiness for Ministry (requires a 3/4 vote)

- Assess areas of developing competency
- Review academic background
- Consider field education experiences, internships, other practice of ministry experiences
- How has the candidate's theological understanding evolved since certification?
- Review bullet responses to questions for interview papers and the writing sample.

F. Certified Lay Minister

- Assists the pastor in congregational care and program development in the local church
- Works as part of a ministry team with supervision by a clergyperson

- Annual recertification required

G. Readmission to Conference Membership

Upon such a request, Chair communicates with the Center for Clergy Excellence prior to any interviews.

1. From honorable location
2. From administrative location
3. From those who previously withdrew from the ministerial office
4. From discontinuance/withdrawal as a certified candidate, local pastor, or provisional member.



## **Lay Supply Interview**

*Exploratory Interview*

In the United Methodist Church, dCOMs do not certify or recommend Lay Supply. However, in the Virginia Conference, the cabinet and the Center for Clergy Excellence request that dCOMs hold introductory interviews with persons serving as Lay Supply for the first time in their districts to establish relationships that will hopefully last for years to come.

First time Lay Supply are required to attend the following:

- Just In Time Training – Typically the First Saturday in June of the Conference year
  - Topics include: Worship 101, Administration 101, Church Finances, and Orientation to the VAUMC.
- Four Sessions – Four Mondays throughout July, August, and September
  - Topics include: Worship 201, Administration 201, Pastoral Care, Journey of Call, and Time Management
- Clergy Ethics Training
  - The Center for Clergy Excellence requires all persons serving pulpits in the VAUMC to have clergy ethics training.

The attendance for these events is recorded and shared with the District Superintendent.

First time-and returning Lay Supply are invited to attend the following:

- Gathering of Lay Supply and Certified Lay Ministers- Annual Conference
- Lay Supply Cohort- Meets once a month

The questions below are intended to assist the dCOM in getting to know the Lay Supply assigned in their district.

The Narrative form to record this meeting can be found at: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>

### Suggested Questions

- Tell us about how God has brought you here today. What is it that has drawn you toward ministry?
- What have been some of your experiences in the life of the church or in a ministry setting? Which were most formative to your calling? Which did you find challenging?
- What have been some key learnings or take away's from the trainings offered to Lay Supply this year?
- What are some of the ways that you care for yourself physically, relationally, spiritually and emotionally?
  - What do you do to keep physically active? How do you deal with stress?
  - Do you have access to (and do you participate in) annual medical checkups?
  - Which spiritual disciplines do you practice on a regular basis?
  - How have these disciplines informed your calling?
  - Tell us how your family and friends have encountered your sense of call.

- As you think of a future living into a call from God, what does that look like to you? While it might be early in your journey of call, do you have a sense of being called ministry as a Certified Lay Minister or as a Certified Candidate headed toward licensing and perhaps ordination?

*This is a good time to explain the process and how the DCOM is here to guide and support.*

## Certified Lay Minister Interview

### The 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶268

*1. A certified lay minister is a certified lay servant, certified lay missionary, or equivalent as defined by his or her central conference, 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 as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person. A certified lay minister is assigned by a district superintendent in accordance with ¶419.2.*

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below. A Jotform application has been created for Certified Lay Ministers and is automatically sent to each DCOM Chair (according to the district of the applicant) for uploading into Basecamp. Link to the application is: <https://form.jotform.com/223196266905159>*

1. Been certified as a lay servant or lay missionary
2. Obtained written recommendation from pastor
3. Obtained written recommendation from church council or charge conference where church membership is held
4. Completed Modules 1-4 for Certified Lay Ministry  
(Be A Disciple - <https://www.beadisciple.com/certified-lay-ministry/>)
5. Made application in writing to both Board of Laity and DCOM
6. Submit to both Board of Laity and DCOM certificates for Modules 1-4
7. Biographical Form (GBHEM Form 102)
8. State Criminal and Sex Offenders Background Check
9. Expanded Background Report
10. Written recommendation of the district superintendent
11. Written verification that all requirements for certification reviewed by Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries received by DCOM for examination and recommendation

### Action required after an interview

Majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend candidate as a Certified Lay Minister.

Recommended actions include:

- Recommended as a Certified Lay Minister according to ¶268
- Not recommended or withdrawn as a Certified Lay Minister

### Suggested Questions (required questions in ¶266.2)

- Tell us about your journey of faith.
- Tell us about your leadership experiences in the local church.
- Tell us how your service in your local church has demonstrated your appreciation of the history, polity, doctrine, worship and liturgy of The United Methodist Church. (This is a required question from the *Book of Discipline*.)

- Share about your devotional life. How are you growing spiritually?
- Tell us about your personal strengths...your areas of growth.
- What have you read that has been helpful in your spiritual life?
- What 2-3 characters in the Bible resonate with your own spiritual life/journey?
- Talk about positive and negative relationships in your life.
- What are the most stressful aspects of ministry for you?
- What do you do to take care of yourself physically?
- Share a conflict situation in which you have been involved and how you dealt with it.
- Share a leadership experience you have had this year.

## Renewal as a Certified Lay Minister – Annual Interview

**The district committee chair shall notify the candidate of the renewal requirements and that they are due prior to their scheduled interview.** This information should be reflected in the steps on the Certified Lay Minister Renewal track- steps and application can be found at:

[www.vaumc/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms](http://www.vaumc/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms)

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

1. Written recommendation with a ministry review by the church council or charge conference from the congregation of which he/she is a member, and if different, the congregation where assigned.
2. Verification of satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event (at least 1 CEU or equivalent).
3. Written recommendation of the district superintendent.
4. Written report submitted in The Jotform links found at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms)
  - a. Share your greatest joys since your last interview.
  - b. Share your greatest challenges since your last interview.
  - c. How do you take care of your health?
  - d. How do you care for your spirit?
  - e. How are you living out your calling in leadership in your local church? In the community?
  - f. What lessons have you learned since your last interview?

### Action Required

Majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend renewal as a Certified Lay Minister.

Recommended actions include:

- Continued as a Certified Lay Minister
- Will not be assigned by the District Superintendent
- Not recommended or withdrawn as a Certified Lay Minister

### Suggested Questions

- Share several highlights of your ministry this year.
- Share a leadership experience you have had this year.
- What are the most stressful aspects of ministry for you?
- What was the greatest joy you experienced in the past year? Why do you feel this was so?
- How do you integrate your personal and professional responsibilities? Do you experience tensions between family/self and church expectations of your work, your time or your identity?
- What/where are your support systems? How are you making time for family and/or self-care?

- How are you caring for your health? How do you get exercise, manage stress, cultivate relationships and interests beyond your ministry setting?
- What were your goals or objectives for personal or professional growth last year? What did you do toward accomplishing these goals and how well did it work?
- What are your plans for the future? Continuing education plans? Are you considering licensed or ordained ministry? If not, celebrate the ministry of the laity and the ways God continues to call and use them in the life of the church.

What have you read beyond the Bible this year that has been helpful in your spiritual life?

## Admission Interview

### *Introductory Interview for Admission to Candidacy Studies*

#### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in uploaded into Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

1. A professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one year.
2. Graduation from an accredited high school or certificate of equivalency.
3. Review of The Christian as Minister with candidacy mentor or clergy person.
4. Call statement and request for admission to candidacy studies program.
5. Biographical Form (GBHEM Form 102)
6. Expanded Background Check including; State Criminal and Sex Offenders Background Check, Credit Report

#### Action required after an interview

Consensus or majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend that the candidate be admitted to the candidacy studies program.

Recommended actions include:

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

The admitted candidate is assigned to a group candidacy mentor at the time of the interview.

#### Suggested Questions

- Tell us about how God has brought you here today. What is it that has drawn you toward ministry?
- What have been some of your experiences in the life of the church or in a ministry setting? Which were most formative to your calling? Which did you find challenging?
- What character(s) or stories from the Bible do you identify with? Tell us more about this.
- What are some of the ways that you care for yourself physically, relationally, spiritually and emotionally?
  - What do you do to keep physically active? How do you deal with stress?
  - Do you have access to (and do you participate in) annual medical checkups?
  - Which spiritual disciplines do you practice on a regular basis?
  - How have these disciplines informed your calling?
  - Tell us how your family and friends have encountered your sense of call.

- What does it mean to you to be “called”? As you think of a future living into a call from God, what does that look like to you? What are the steps you are taking to live into that vision? (This is a good time to explain the process and how the DCOM is here to guide and support).



## **Certification Interview**

### *Certified Candidate Interview for Licensed or Ordained Ministry*

#### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

1. Declaration of Candidacy (GBHEM Form 104), indicating recommendation by 2/3 vote of the candidate's home church charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the district committee on ordained ministry.
2. Answers to the questions in the Book of Discipline, paragraph 310.2d
3. Candidate's Disclosure Form (GBHEM Form 114, notarized)
4. Expanded Background Report (national and county criminal search, DMV record search, consumer credit report, and social security trace)
5. Medical Report (On the form provided from GBHEM and the BOM)
6. Psychological Assessment
7. Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI)
8. Written report from the mentor indicating completion of the candidacy studies and verification of attendance at a minimum of three meetings with mentor/mentor group.
9. Verification of attendance at Candidacy Summit
10. If there is a concern about reading and writing skills, the DCOM could require the TAB test

#### Criteria for certification:

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

#### Action required after an interview

Individual written ballot, three-fourths majority of the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend that the candidate be certified.

#### Recommended actions include:

- Continued as an admitted candidate
- Discontinued as an admitted candidate
- Granted Certified Candidate status according to ¶666.6 (3/4 vote)
- Not granted certified candidate status and discontinued as an admitted candidate

Once a candidate is certified, the formal mentor relationship ends and no further mentor report is required.

The Action Report Form and the Narrative for Candidate Interviews can be found here:

<https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>

#### Suggested Questions

- **Required to ask the questions in ¶310.2d.**
- **For elder track candidates, cabinet and BOM have requested that questions about itinerancy be asked at this stage.**

- Tell us about your call to ministry. *(Listen for language describing both an internal call and confirmation of that call by the community of faith; use of biblical images; knowledge of the differences in orders of ministry, and a growing sense of where the candidate is called within the orders.)*
- Describe a recent leadership experience that you had in a church/campus ministry/mission environment. What results came from your leadership? What was most challenging? What was most fulfilling? What did you learn about yourself?
- Tell us about a time when you found yourself in a conflict situation, and how you handled it.
- Tell us a time when you did not succeed at something you tried. How did you respond to that failure?
- How are you taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, and relationally? *(If the candidate has any medical issues identified on the medical form, refer to Behavioral Health Guidelines for guidance. It is appropriate to ask a candidate how he/she is managing weight, hypertension, diabetes, or any other condition that could affect their health if put into a stressful ministry environment or that could hamper their effectiveness in lifelong ministry.)*
- Describe your devotional/worship life. Tell us about a time when your spiritual practices were particularly life-giving for you. *(Look for evidence of habitual practice of meaningful spiritual disciplines. If not evident, note in feedback, and follow up at next interview to check for evidence of growing commitment and fruitfulness in this area.)*
- What was your experience of completing the psychological assessment and interview? Ask questions suggested on the psychological report, if deemed appropriate.
- If the candidate has had theological training (seminary or other coursework), ask basic theological questions concerning grace, the kingdom of God, the sacraments. *(Listen for use of biblical images, including OT when appropriate.)*
- If the candidate has completed field education and/or CPE, ask questions integrating their experience with their theological understanding and self-awareness, such as:
  - What is one thing that you learned about yourself in (CPE/Field Education) that surprised you?
  - What aspect of your theology was challenged/changed/confirmed in your CPE/Field Education experience?
  - What leadership and/or relational skill have you identified as needing continued growth through your experience of CPE/Field Education? What plans do you have to address this?

## Renewal of Certified Candidacy – Annual Interview

**The district committee chair shall notify the candidate of the renewal requirements and that they are due prior to their scheduled interview.** This information should be reflected in the steps on the Certification Renewal track found at: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms>

. This interview may be conducted via video conference if the candidate is in school or ministry far away.

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

1. If enrolled, an official transcript from the school, college, or seminary showing progress in education in the past 12 months.
2. A written report from the candidate on service and leadership in the church with reference to ¶310.2a (i.e. growth in these areas since certification)
3. Annual recommendation of renewal by the candidate's home church charge conference or equivalent body as determined by the district committee on ordained ministry.

### Action required after an interview

Individual written ballot, three-fourths majority of the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend that the candidate's certification be renewed.

Recommended actions include:

- Recommended for renewal as a certified candidate (¶313)
- Discontinued or withdrawn as a certified candidate

### Suggested Questions

- Tell us how God has been working in your life this past year.
- What have been some of your experiences in the life of the church or in a ministry setting? Which were most formative to your calling? Which did you find challenging?
- How has your sense of call grown, shifted or changed in the past year?
- How are you balancing your life with work/school, home and self?
  - Work: Assuming that some income is needed, how is the candidate meeting this need while going to school? If in a ministry setting, ask how the work is forming God's call for him/her. Identify any stressors related to income. If not working professionally in a church setting, ask about their worship community.
  - (If applicable) School: What classes have you taken this past year that have been particularly meaningful to you? How have you incorporated any of your courses in your ministry setting (paid position or as a lay member)? Have any lessons challenged you theologically? Have any surprised you?
  - Home: If married, ask about how the marital relationship is going and what attention is being given to growing the marriage. If children are involved, ask how parenting is going and how the children adapting to the change in family dynamic as the candidate moves toward the work of ministry. If single, ask questions around friends and family support.

- Self: In what ways are you tending to your spiritual life (beyond homework or sermon prep). Do you participate in annual medical checkups? How are you attending to the needs found in these medical reports? What kind of exercise program do you participate in? What relationships/ interests do you have beyond church/seminary communities? How do you hold yourself accountable to spiritual, physical and relational health?
- Psychological Report: Identify the suggested follow up questions from the psychological report and ask questions specific to findings. The purpose here is to find how the candidate has responded to the findings and how s/he has attended to areas of growth.
- What are your goals for the year ahead? How are you incorporating those goals into your plan for the coming year?
- If the candidate has had the opportunity to take classes in theology, basic theology questions are appropriate as determined by the DCOM.

## **Transfer of a Certified Candidate or Local Pastor from another District or Annual Conference**

The 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶313.4

*A person who is a certified candidate or who is in the candidacy process may have her or his status or studies accepted by another district committee in the same or another annual conference.*

1. Upon receipt of a request from the candidate, contact the Associate Director for Call and Candidacy [CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org](mailto:CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org) immediately.
2. If the candidate has requested to transfer from another district in the Virginia Conference, the Center for Clergy Excellence will move the candidate's account to the new district for the DCOM to review prior to an interview for transfer. An annual renewal interview can be conducted at the same time if appropriate.
3. If the candidate has requested to transfer from another annual conference, the candidate requests of his/her district committee that his/her file be emailed to [CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org](mailto:CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org) or a paper file may be sent to the Center for Clergy Excellence, attn: Rev. Crystal Sygeel P. O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. The candidate should copy their Conference Registrar on their request so that the center is aware of the request and from whom they might expect to receive the file.
4. The candidate's file must include all of the items required by the Virginia Conference for certification as a candidate, listed as follows:
  - a. Call statement
  - b. Biographical Form (GBHEM Form 102)
  - c. Criminal and Sex Offenders Background Check
  - d. Expanded Background Report (national and county criminal search, DMV record search, consumer credit report, and social security trace)
  - e. Medical Report (GBHEM Form 103)
  - f. Candidate's Disclosure Form (GBHEM Form 114, notarized)
  - g. Record of the Charge Conference approval
  - h. Psychological Assessment
  - i. Written response to ministry questions
  - j. Mentor Report
  - k. Action report for certification as a candidate
  - l. Annual renewal of candidacy, if applicable.

For a **licensed local pastor**, all of the preceding items plus:

- m. Documentation of licensing (copy of the license)
- n. Annual renewal of the license for pastoral ministry
- o. Transcripts (seminary or Course of Study) if applicable
- p. Transcripts of undergraduate education if applicable
- q. Recommendation from the current district superintendent.

5. Once the candidate's file has been received by the Center for Clergy Excellence, it will be uploaded into Basecamp. Notification will be sent to the district committee chair and district superintendent that the file is now available.
6. The District Committee on Ordained Ministry reviews the candidate's documents. An interview is required prior to accepting the transfer of candidacy.
7. If the candidate is certified and is requesting local pastor status, the district committee makes a recommendation regarding licensing by the Virginia Conference. Licensing is dependent upon the person receiving an appointment in the Virginia Conference.

The action is reported by the DCOM Registrar on the Action Report Form available at:

<https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms>

8.

## **Licensing Interview**

*Recommendation to be Licensed for Pastoral Ministry (Local Pastor)*

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

**1. Certification as a candidate for ministry (see requirements page for Certification Interview).**

*An action to recommend for certification must precede a recommendation for licensing.*

**2. Sermon manuscript and preaching video**

- a. 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— candidate simply must preach before a gathered group.
- b. Length of the sermon shall be 10 to 15 minutes only.
- c. Candidate may choose any scripture.

**3. Sermon description - in a separate document, candidate responds to the following questions:**

1. What is the sermon title?
2. What is the biblical text for the sermon?
3. When and where was the sermon preached?
4. Write a one sentence purpose statement/focus for this message.
5. What do you want the hearers to do or be as a result of this message?
6. After viewing the video, what is your personal evaluation of your sermon and preaching?

**4. Written responses to the following questions (minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 pages total for all questions, typed and double spaced):**

1. What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments?
2. Talk about the nature of the Kingdom of God and then use a Biblical parable to illustrate one aspect of the Kingdom.
3. What is your understanding of the Wesleyan concept of divine grace?
4. How will you discern and implement God's vision for your ministry setting?

**Criteria:**

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

### Action required after an interview

Majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry to specify and recommend full time local pastor, part time local pastor, or student\* local pastor.

Recommended actions include:

- Recommended for licensing as a Full-time Local Pastor (first time)
- Recommended for licensing as a Part-time Local Pastor (first time)
- Eligible to attend Licensing School
- Not recommended for licensing as a local pastor
- Recommended for licensing as a Student Local Pastor

If recommended, the candidate will have to register for and complete Licensing School prior to receiving their license for pastoral ministry.

\* “Student local pastor” applies only to a local pastor from another annual conference who is also a seminary student serving an appointment in Virginia.

An Action report form can be found at: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms> to record the minutes.

### Suggested Questions

- Tell us about how you went about preparing the sermon that you submitted. How did you select the scripture for your sermon?
- What resources are helpful to you in preparing for worship and preaching?
- Explore further the responses the candidate gave in the paper related to sacraments, Kingdom of God and God’s vision for ministry.
- How will you prepare a family for the baptism of an infant?
- Tell us about a time when you served as a leader of a team. What do you know about your leadership style and strengths?
- Tell us about a time when you disagreed with someone in church. How did resolution occur? How do you typically deal with frustration?
- Tell us about a time when you implemented a change in your church. What came from your efforts? What did you learn about yourself or your context?



## Renewal of Local Pastor License – Annual Interview

**The district committee chair shall notify the local pastor of the renewal requirements and that they are due prior to their scheduled interview.** This information should be reflected in the steps on the License Renewal applications found at <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms/licensing-renewal/>. Each local pastor will be interviewed individually, not collectively in the presence of a group of local pastors.

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 for Renewal and the Modified Process for License Renewal for LLP's who have served 5 consecutive years, have completed Course of Study, and are an active member of a Clergy Covenant Group and/or the Licensed Local Pastor Fellowship which provides opportunities for fellowship, educational seminars, and retreats.

The form controls for renewal have been set to ask the appropriate questions for the corresponding track. The link to the forms can be found here: <https://vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms/licensing-renewal/>

### The Standard Process and Requirements for License Renewal prior to conducting an interview

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

1. Written responses to the questions below (are submitted via Jotform with the entire application) as appropriate to their year in ministry:

#### Year 1 - Leadership

- What are the local church committees required by the *Book of Discipline* and what is the function of each?
- How is your church structured for mission and ministry?
- How are you using the distinctive Wesleyan emphases and characteristics of The United Methodist Church to lead your church in making disciples of Jesus Christ?
- Describe leadership qualities which you demonstrate in your ministry and the strengths and weaknesses of those qualities.

#### Year 2 - Theology

- How do you apply United Methodist theology in your teaching?
- Describe ways your congregation lives out the theology of grace.
- In what ways has your theology of grace shaped your understanding of the Sacraments?

#### Year 3 - Practice of Ministry

- How has your preaching improved since you were licensed?
- In what ways have your spiritual disciplines affected your practice of leadership in ministry?
- Describe ways you lead your congregation in offering pastoral care?
- Bring a recent worship bulletin and be prepared to talk about your order of worship.
- Describe ways that, in partnership with laity, you make disciples of Jesus Christ, and train and empower these disciples to produce tangible fruits of love of God and love of neighbor.

#### Year 4 and beyond

- In years 4 and 5, questions have been provided in [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms) as discussion starters.
- If not a question the local pastor chose to answer, talk with them about how they apply their education to their ministry setting.

- For those who have completed COS or M.Div., track continuing education requirements and review progress.
2. Education progress through transcripts of undergraduate school, Course of Study or Seminary course work; or, continuing education certificates and report if their education is complete.  
Please note: *Licensed Local Pastors who were licensed at the most recent annual conference, do not need to submit their educational progress until their SECOND renewal.*
  3. Copy of the annual evaluation by P/SPRC.  
*All local pastors must have one evaluation per 12-month period.*  
Please note: *Licensed Local Pastors who were licensed at the most recent annual conference, do not need to submit their evaluation until their SECOND renewal.*
  4. Mentor Report (if applicable)

The Modified Process and Requirements for License Renewal for LLP's (who have served five consecutive years and completed course of study) prior to conducting an interview:

*dCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

1. Upload Annual Charge Conference forms (pastor's narrative and continuing education)
  - *This report is the same report which is entered into Unity each year.*
2. Upload Annual Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPCR) evaluation.
3. Upload District Superintendent or District Superintendent Appointed Elder recommendation
  - *Must relay the pastor is in good standing is approved to forego an interview with the dCOM.*
4. Confirm Clergy Covenant Group Participation
  - *To be eligible to forego an interview with the dCOM LLP's must be part of a Clergy Covenant Group. Pastors must list group members via Jotform in order to confirm participation.*

Action required after an interview

Majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry to specify and recommend renewal of full time, part time or student\* local pastor.

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 (MQ20)
- Recommended for renewal as a Retired Local Pastor, serving an appointment  
*Applies to previously retired pastor projected for or continuing in an appointment*
- Recommended as a Retired Local Pastor, either entering or returning to retirement  
*Applies to first time retirement or renewal without a projected 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

\* "Student local pastor" applies only to a local pastor from another annual conference who is also a seminary student serving an appointment in Virginia.

**Annual Signing of License for Ministry**

dCOMs are to remind local pastors of the following...

- A local pastor, full or part-time, is licensed for ministry one year at a time within a specific appointment to a church, charge or extension ministry (BOD¶316.1).
- The license must be renewed annually by the dCOM and is valid only if the local pastor is appointed and the license's is noted and signed by the District Superintendent on the back (BOD¶316.2,3 ¶419.8).
- It is the licensed local pastor's responsibility to seek the District Superintendent's signature every year. This can be done at the yearly Charge Conference, District Conference, Annual Conference, dCOM renewal meeting, or a personal visit to the District Office.
- The local pastor's license gives them ministerial authority in their congregation. Therefore, it is the local pastor's responsibility to maintain their license and have access to it at all times.

### Suggested Questions

- Review the responses in the written ministry report.
- Focus on the candidate's areas of strength and areas for growth rather than spending a lot of time on what is going on or not going on in their church. Be careful to not spend the time evaluating the church/charge but keep the focus on the local pastor and his/her role, skills, self-growth and pastoral identity.
- What/where are your support systems? How are you making time for family and/or self-care?
- How are you caring for your health? How do you get exercise, manage stress, cultivate relationships and interests beyond your ministry setting?
- How do you integrate your personal and professional responsibilities? Do you experience tensions between family/self and church expectations of your work, your time or your identity?
- What were your goals or objectives for personal or professional growth last year? What did you do toward accomplishing these goals and how well did it work?
- What was your Course of Study focus last year? Did you find it helpful/useful? What changes or improvements to your practice of ministry can you identify as a result of the Course of Study?
- What are your plans for the future? Continuing education plans? Plans for ordination or associate membership?
- In what ways have you grown spiritually in the past year, both personally and as a pastor? What do you feel were the causes of this growth?
- How do you equip laity in your church? Share some specific examples.
- What was the most difficult challenge you faced as pastor this past year and how did you meet it? What did you learn from it? How do you feel you have grown as a result of it?
- Talk about your pastoral appointment? Has it been what you expected when you felt called to become a local pastor? In what ways have you been surprised? In what ways have you been affirmed that you are properly responding to God's call in your life.
- What is the single most important thing you need at this point in time to become a better pastor?
- What was the greatest joy you experienced in the past year? Why do you feel this was so?

## Retired Local Pastors (2016 Book of Discipline)

### ¶320.5 Retirement of local pastors and status

*5. Retirement of Local Pastor—A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study as specified in ¶ 318.1 or .2 may be recognized as a retired local pastor. Retirement provisions for local pastors shall be the same as those for clergy members in ¶ 358.1, .2, .4, with pensions payable in accordance with ¶ 1506.5a. Retired local pastors may attend annual conference sessions with voice but not vote. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the bishop to a charge and licensed upon recommendation by the district committee on ordained ministry without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit.*

- In Virginia, an initial recommendation regarding “satisfactory progress in the COS” for retirement is required by the DCOM.
- A letter of request to retire should be submitted by the local pastor to the District Superintendent, with a copy to the registrar [JessieColwell@vaumc.org](mailto:JessieColwell@vaumc.org).
- An interview and subsequent minutes with an Action Report is required of the district committee on ordained ministry.
- The DCOM minutes are received and reviewed by the Retirement Committee of BOM prior to their recommendation for retirement.
- For licensing and appointment as a retired local pastor, an annual interview and recommendation by the DCOM is required (and reported on an Action Report form).

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

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

- A letter of request should be submitted annually by the pastor in charge to the Bishop and chair of the district committee on ordained ministry.
- An interview is not necessarily required; however, recommendation by the DCOM is required annually and reported in writing to the Bishop for approval.

## **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.

If you have questions about when you last received the training contact the Office of Clergy Excellence. You can find more information about Clergy Ethics Training [here](#).

**Course of Study**  
**Basic Five-Year Curriculum**  
 (Provisional Approval August 8, 2013)

<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>Year One- Foundation</b>	<b>Year Two</b>	<b>Year Three</b>	<b>Year Four</b>	<b>Year Five- Integrative</b>
<b>Bible</b>	<b>121</b> Bible I: Introduction	<b>221</b> Bible II: Torah & Israel's History	<b>321</b> Bible III: Gospels	<b>421</b> Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms & Wisdom Lit	<b>521</b> Bible V: Acts, Epistles & Revelation
<b>Theology</b>	<b>122</b> Theological Heritage I: Introduction	<b>222</b> Theological Heritage II: Early Church	<b>322</b> Theological Heritage III: Medieval-Reformation	<b>422</b> Theological Heritage IV: Wesleyan Movement	<b>522</b> Theology in the Contemporary Church
<b>Congregational Life</b>	<b>123</b> Formation & Discipleship	<b>223</b> Worship & Sacraments	<b>323</b> Congregational Care	<b>423</b> Mission	<b>523</b> Evangelism
<b>Pastoral Identity</b>	<b>124</b> Transformative Leadership	<b>224</b> Administration & Polity	<b>324</b> Preaching	<b>424</b> Ethics	<b>524</b> Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry

## Recommendation for Associate Membership

The local pastor will submit to the Center for Clergy Excellence their application request between July 1 and July 31. Upon receipt of that request, the local pastor will be placed on the “Applying for Associate Membership” track and should contact the chair of their district committee to schedule by September 1.

***Refer to the phase 1 document for Provisionals and Associates to see the instructions the candidates are given. These instructions tell the candidates which questions to answer depending upon if they are a first-time applicant, or if they have been continued by the board. If they have been continued, they are required to submit an action report.***

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

1. Reached the age of 40
2. Annual renewal of license for pastoral ministry with service as a full-time local pastor for four years (or granted equivalency)
3. Completed the five-year Course of Study
4. Completed, or will complete by June 1 of the coming year, a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree in a college or university approved by the University Senate.
5. Declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment.

*DCOM Members will review documentation in Basecamp as appropriate to each step listed below.*

6. Paragraph responses to each of the questions in the four categories as follows:
  - a. Questions for the Theology
  - b. Questions for the Practice of Ministry
  - c. Questions for the Vocation and Leadership
  - d. Questions for the Call

If the candidate was previously continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry, they may respond only to the areas they were continued in, as indicated in their feedback letter.

7. A writing sample consisting 12-15 pages (for first time applicants) answering the 8 questions as outlined on the Provisional/Associate Member Application Phase 1 document.
8. If the district committee will also vote to renew the local pastor as part of this interview, see the requirements on the Renewal of Local Pastor License guidelines page.

#### Criteria:

- 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, vocation and leadership, call, and practice of ministry.

## Action required after an interview

A three-fourths majority vote by the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend for associate membership.

Recommended actions include:

- Recommended for annual renewal of license for ministry *[if included as part of the interview]*
- Recommended for Associate Membership according to ¶322.1
- Not recommended for Associate Membership

DCOM Chair completes the narrative recommendation and submits this report to the Board of Ordained Ministry via the Jotform [found at www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms)

## Suggested Questions for the Interview

- The writing sample is an excellent source of questions and discussion with the candidate. - Ask questions that will help applicants go beyond the scope of their paper.  
- If the candidate was unable to fully address or adequately answer a question in their paper, ask them to expand upon their answer in the verbal interview.
- All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to associate membership. Why are you seeking the conference relationship of associate membership?
- How has your theology changed since you have been in the Course of Study?
- Share an example of a formative moment of ministry in your life this past year. How has it affected your practice of ministry?
- Where/what are your support systems?
  - Questions that integrate candidate's theology/Course of Study educational experiences with their practice of ministry.

## Recommendation for Provisional Membership

The candidate will submit to the Center for Clergy Excellence their application request between July 1 and July 31. Upon receipt of that request, the local pastor will be placed on the “Applying for Provisional Membership” track and should contact the chair of their district committee to schedule an interview by October 1.

***Refer to the phase 1 document for Provisionals and Associates to see the instructions the candidates are given. These instructions tell the candidates which questions to answer depending upon if they are a first-time applicant, or if they have been continued by the board. If they have been continued, they are required to submit an action report.***

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview

1. Certified candidate or licensed local pastor for at least one year prior to desired election to provisional membership. Annual renewal of certified candidacy or license for pastoral ministry if certified for longer than one year.
2. Completed a bachelor’s degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate.
3. Met the educational requirements of the VA Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (which include the educational requirements in ¶324) by one of three options - see Appendix.

*DCOM Members will review documentation in THE JOTFORM LINKS FOUND AT [WWW.VAUMC.ORG/CLERGYEXCELLENCE-FORMS](http://WWW.VAUMC.ORG/CLERGYEXCELLENCE-FORMS) UMC as appropriate to each step listed below.*

4. Paragraph responses to each of the questions in the four categories as follows:
  - a. Questions for the Call Paper
  - b. Questions for the Theology Paper
  - c. Questions for the Practice of Ministry Paper
  - d. Questions for the Personal Growth and Development Paper

If the candidate was previously continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry, they may respond only to the areas they were continued in, as indicated in their feedback letter.

5. A writing sample consisting 12-15 pages (for first time applicants) answering the 8 questions as outlined on the Provisional/Associate Member Application Phase 1 document.
6. Service requirement – demonstrated gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the DCOM.
7. If the district committee will also vote to renew the certified candidate or local pastor as part of this interview, see the requirements on the corresponding guidelines page.



Criteria:

- Areas of competencies
- Educational requirements
- Consider the fruitfulness of 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.

### Action required after an interview

A three-fourths majority vote by the district committee on ordained ministry to recommend for provisional membership.

Recommended actions include:

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

DCOM Chair completes the narrative recommendation and submits this report to the Board of Ordained Ministry (via jotform at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-dcomforms) ).

### Suggested Questions

- The writing sample is an excellent source of questions and discussion with the candidate. - Ask questions that will help applicants go beyond the scope of their paper.  
- If the candidate was unable to fully address or adequately answer a question in their paper, ask them to expand upon their answer in the verbal interview.
- Be mindful of the distinctions in call as a deacon or elder.
- All of us are called by God. Share about your specific call to ordained ministry?
- Questions that would integrate their theology with their practice of ministry.
- Questions that make the connection between their seminary/Course of Study education and their practice of ministry.
- How has your theology changed since you have been in seminary/Course of Study?
- Where/what are your support systems?
  - What did you learn about yourself and about ministry through the CPE experience (if completed, not required until applying for ordination)?

## Provisional/Associate Member Application Phase 1 2024

**dCOMs Please note:** *The following materials include the content for the Provisional/Associate Membership Packet in Phase I. This material is provided as a resource for dCOMs so they can see the requirements for the applicant.*

\*\*\*\*

After you submit your application to apply for provisional or associate membership complete the steps below:

\_\_\_ Contact the chair of your District Committee on Ordained Ministry to schedule an interview with your dCom to be completed by **October 1, 2023** to receive a recommendation for provisional or associate membership. You can find their contact information here:

[https://doc.vaumc.org/MinServices/DCOM\\_OfficersList2022\\_23\\_2023Mar13.pdf](https://doc.vaumc.org/MinServices/DCOM_OfficersList2022_23_2023Mar13.pdf)

\_\_\_ If you are applying for the first time or you have not been previously recommended by the dCom write a 12-15-page paper answering the questions below from “The Book of Discipline” (2016) paragraph 324.9 a-9 (pp. 247-248) numbers 1-8. Submit these materials through the jotform for your district (see at end of document).

\_\_\_ If you have been continued by the Board of Ordained Ministry submit your detailed action report for the committee(s) in which you were continued, answer one question below from the committee in which you were continued, and follow the instructions below for those who have been continued (\*). Submit these materials through the jotform for your district (see at end of document).

### **Questions to Answer for the dCom Recommendation Interview**

#### Theology (BOD ¶324.9 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 Jesus Christ is Lord?

#### Practice of Ministry (BOD ¶324.9 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:**

\*Sermon, if you were continued in the sermon portion, turn in the manuscript of a sermon you have preached from April 1, 2023 – October 1, 2023.

\*Teaching Plan, if you were continued in the teaching plan, answer 324.9g: 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 (Provisionals) or Vocation and Leadership (Associates) (BOD ¶324.9 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 selfcontrol by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth and grace and the knowledge and love of God. What is your understanding of this agreement?

### Call (BOD ¶324.9 k, l)

7. a. For provisional member applicants: 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?
  - b. For associate member applicants: 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. a. For provisional member applicants: Describe your understanding of *diakonia*, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the provisional member.
  - b. For associate member applicants: Describe your understanding of *diakonia*, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the associate member.

### Criteria for the written materials

- 1) Copy the question (single spaced)
- 2) Double space your responses
- 3) 12-point font
- 4) 1-inch margins
- 5) Written answers will be brief (at least one paragraph per answer), but be prepared to go more in depth in your interview with the dCom.
- 6) Number pages

### dCom Criteria

- 1) 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.

\_\_\_\_ Submit your materials to your dCom through the jotform link below for your District.

**Coastal Virginia:** <https://form.jotform.com/231766120818153>

**Living Waters:** <https://form.jotform.com/231765670513154>

**Mission Rivers:** <https://form.jotform.com/231765523694161>

**Mountain View:** <https://form.jotform.com/231765657911161>

**Northern Virginia:** <https://form.jotform.com/222304943476053>

**Shenandoah River:** <https://form.jotform.com/231765990785170>

**Three Notch'd:** <https://form.jotform.com/231765977542166>

**Valley Ridge:** <https://form.jotform.com/231766111733149>

**Additional Steps:**

\_\_\_ If you are recommended by the dCom email Rev. Jessie Colwell at [JessieColwell@vaumc.org](mailto:JessieColwell@vaumc.org) to let her know that you have been recommended.

\_\_\_ If you are not recommended by the dCom work on the feedback given to you and reapply next year.

\_\_\_ Upon sending your recommendation email to Jessie Colwell you will be sent the extended application packet and can begin working on the requirements for provisional or associate membership.

Board of Ordained Ministry

## Instructions for Writing and Submitting Materials to the dCom Application Cycle 2024 for Provisional and Associate Membership

**dCOM's Please Note:** *The content below includes the instructions for Writing and Submitting Materials for Provisional/Associate Membership. These instructions are sent to applicants and are provided here for the dCOM's knowledge and understanding.*

\*\*\*

In order for all papers to be read and critiqued with equal standards to the papers received by the Board of Ordained Ministry, follow these writing and submission instructions carefully as you prepare to submit your written materials to the dCom.

1. All papers must be typed using the following attributes:
  - Font: Times New Roman, 12-point
  - Page margins: 1" on all four sides
  - Double (with the exception of the "stated question" as noted below or long block quotes which should be single spaced)
  - Line Spacing: Double (with the exception of the "stated question" as noted below or long block quotes which should be single spaced)
  - State and number each question, as it is written, prior to answering the question. ***Only the question is to be single spaced.***
  - Page numbers are required, beginning with *Page 1* on the first page after the title page
  - Your name on each page, in either the header or footer area followed by the status in which you are applying for (i.e. Provisional or Associate Membership)
  
2. Bibliography and Formatting Information

A bibliography is required for your paper (for all) and the sermon manuscript (for those continued in the sermon portion of Practice of Ministry), including 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 that paper.
  
3. Citation Style:

**Use Chicago style format throughout your papers and your bibliographies.**  
You can find an example of endnotes and bibliography here:  
[https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html).
  
4. 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.
  
5. Check for Plagiarism. Review the Plagiarism information at the end of this document. The plagiarism checker below is provided to help you avoid plagiarism. Please also have someone read over your papers to check this.

Plagiarism checker: <https://www.grammarly.com/plagiarism-checker>

6. Review the Writing Guidelines (Inclusive Language and Quality of Writing) at the end of this document.

## **Plagiarism and Using Sources**

**Please read carefully and note the examples given for the different levels of plagiarism. The BOM takes this seriously. Evidence of plagiarism can result in continuance.**

The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry uses the following definition of plagiarism: “According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.”<sup>i</sup>

### **The Board has identified five levels of plagiarism, from least to greatest offense, as follows:**

1. Attributed quote (in quotation marks) with no endnote.
2. Verbatim with an endnote with no quotation marks or improper paraphrasing that is attributed.
3. Improper paraphrasing that is unattributed.
4. Unattributed verbatim of material in the paper.
5. Copying so many words or ideas from *a single source* that it makes up the majority of your work, whether it is accredited or not.

<sup>i</sup> [http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_article\\_what\\_is\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_plagiarism.html).

The following article from the Claremont School of Theology website, which is reprinted here with permission, is offered to assist you in citing sources:

## USING SOURCES

“Unintentional plagiarism is a serious matter in graduate school. Unintentional plagiarism most often occurs when a student loses his or her own voice. That is, instead of the student remaining in control of what he or she is saying with his or her own voice. The scenario goes something like this: the student finds a source with whom he or she agrees and, making a few changes in wording, basically follows the structure of the source material. Even if citations are used, this is a recipe for plagiarism. The following are some commonsense suggestions to help you avoid unintentional plagiarism.

- Use your own voice. Put what you have to say in your own words. Don't hide behind the "experts."
- Never compose essays with source material open. Take notes from source material on note cards and compose from those cards.
- Clearly mark cards to distinguish summaries from quotations.
- Keep quotations brief and few. Use direct quotes as spices in a meal, not as the main dish.
- Use block quotations only when you plan to give extensive analysis of the quoted material.
- Always introduce quotations (e.g. According to Helmer, "...").
- Summarize or paraphrase material using sentence structure that differs significantly from the source. (Changing a few words, but keeping the same basic sentence structure of the original is still plagiarism.)
- Provide a citation for all quoted, paraphrased or summarized material. When in doubt, provide a citation.

### Examples:

#### Original Source #1

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. [1]

#### Plagiarized Version #1A

Cheap grace means the justification of sin but not the justification of the person who sinned. Some people say that grace alone does everything, so everything can remain the same. [2] Comment:

Even though the writer has cited the source, quotation marks were not used around direct quotations such as "cheap grace means the justification of sin" and "grace alone does everything."

#### Plagiarized Version #1B

Cheap grace is taking care of sin without dealing with the one who sins. God's unmerited favor alone takes care of everything, some say; so the situation can stay as it was before. [3] Comment:

Still plagiarism. Replacing key words with synonyms but keeping the basic sentence structure of the original is still plagiarism, even if you provide a citation.

#### Acceptable Version #1C

According to Bonhoeffer, cheap grace refers to the theological position that a sinner can be justified before God without changing his or her behavior. According to this theological position, one does not need to change to receive justification for it is provided by grace alone. [4] Comment:

This is a legitimate paraphrase of Bonhoeffer's words. Note that it is both introduced and footnoted. Also note that short phrases (usually three words or less) do not necessarily need to be placed in quotation marks, especially if the sentence structure is completely different from the source.

### Original Source #2

As Christianity spread, and the Church became more secularized, this realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded. The world was Christianized, and grace became its common property. It was to be had at low cost. Yet the Church of Rome did not altogether lose its earlier vision. It is highly significant that the Church was astute enough to find room for the monastic movement, and to prevent it from lapsing into schism. [5]

### Plagiarized Version #2A

Christianity spread throughout the Empire but at the same time it became more worldly; thus the realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded away. As the Empire embraced Christianity, grace became its common property and was available cheaply. Nonetheless, the Church of Rome did not completely lose its earlier vision. That the Church was smart enough to make room for the monastic movement and to keep it from dividing from the Church is highly significant.

### Comment:

Plagiarism: not only does the writer copy the outline and sentence structure of the original, she or he fails to place within quotation marks long phrases taken directly from the source such as "the realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded" and "grace became its common property." Moreover, there is no citation.

### Plagiarized Version #2B

According to Bonhoeffer, Christianity spread throughout the Empire but at the same it became more worldly; thus "the realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded." As the Empire embraced Christianity, grace became its common property. Nonetheless, the Church of Rome did not completely lose its earlier vision. It is highly significant that the Church was "astute enough to find room for the monastic movement," and to prevent it from "lapsing into schism."

[6]

### Comment:

Still plagiarism. Although the writer has introduced the material and included a citation and placed some quoted material in quotation marks, other direct quotations are not in quotation marks such as "grace became its common property." Moreover, the sentence beginning with "nonetheless" is a direct quote with only two words replaced by synonyms. Finally, the overall structure of the paragraph and of each sentence mimics the original too closely.

### Full Membership—Effectiveness in Ministry

### Acceptable Version #2C

Bonhoeffer argues that monasticism within the Church is evidence that the concept of costly grace was not completely lost after Christianity became the state religion. Nonetheless, the Church was largely secularized during this period; and for most, grace "was to be had at low cost." [7]

### Comment:

Notice that the paraphrased information is introduced and a citation is provided; both the over- all structure and the sentence structure differ significantly from the source. One small quotation is used to add flavor.”<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>ii</sup> Used by permission. Gillis, Scott. "Using Sources," The Writing Center at Claremont School of Theology. [http://www.cst.edu/academic\\_resources/writing\\_center.php](http://www.cst.edu/academic_resources/writing_center.php).



# VAUMC Application Writing Guidelines

## Guidelines for Inclusive Language

Our language, both written and spoken, reflects our understanding of the Disciplinary mandate to be an inclusive church.

### ***Language about God:***

In using language about God, we must hold to two basic theological principles: first, God is personal; second, God is beyond human characteristics and limits; therefore, God is not a sexual being. Considering the limitations of language, this is difficult to do. If one uses the neuter pronoun “it” to describe God, one depersonalizes God in the process; however, to use the pronoun “he” makes God male in the reader’s/hearer’s mind. Some people solve this dilemma by never using pronouns for God at all. This may be awkward and impersonal. One acceptable approach is to reduce the number of pronouns while increasing the number of images for God.

While we recognize there are times and occasions when it is appropriate to use the traditional terms for God, especially in the language of Scripture, creeds, and liturgy, candidates are expected to use a variety of images for God in all written and oral work for the Board of Ordained Ministry.

### ***Language about people:***

In the past, “man” and male pronouns have been used to reference all humanity, at the exclusion of women. On the Board of Ordained Ministry, we expect the use of inclusive language that includes male and female pronouns as well as references.

Our *Virginia Conference Standards for Clergy Leadership* state that a clergy leader, in all things, models and embraces inclusiveness.

## Guidelines for the Quality of Writing

The papers which you submit to the Board of Ordained Ministry must clearly reflect your deepest understanding of the questions being asked. The Board members conducting your interviews will carefully read each response.

A poorly or inadequately written paper, regardless of the quality of the content, sends a negative message while trying to discern about the competency of the candidate. Moreover, candidates have completed at least 60%-100% of college coursework, Course of Study or Seminary and therefore should be fully capable of expressing their thoughts in grammatically correct prose.

We strongly recommend that you allow sufficient time for you and others to proofread your papers. Be sure that the content of the materials you submit are **your** work. We encourage you to invite laity and clergy to proofread your papers as well as to provide mock interviews. Remember, persons on the Board of Ordained Ministry are not allowed to read your papers. Candidates may consider using resources for improving writing skills that are available at nominal costs through the community colleges in the Commonwealth of Virginia (or elsewhere). Seminaries also offer opportunities for improving one's writing skills.

## 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.

The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry allows up to 1/2 of all course work to be completed through distance education, with no more than 1/3 of the course work to be completed by fully asynchronous methods. The United Methodist Church allows online courses to be taken only at one of the 13 official United Methodist seminaries or Asbury Theological Seminary. Distance education includes all correspondence, online and hybrid courses in which the students and faculty are not in the same physical location. “Fully Asynchronous” courses are those in which students and faculty are neither in the same physical location nor online at the same time.

**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](mailto:JessieColwell@vaumc.org)

## Three Tracks to Full Membership in the Annual Conference & Ordination

*(2016 Book of Discipline, ¶324)*

### Course of Study Track for Elder ¶324.6

- High School Education and Certified Candidate for at least one year
- Bachelor's Degree
- Basic COS (5 year)
- Advanced COS (32 hours, including UM doctrine, polity, history courses)
- Provisional Membership (3 years full time)
- Full Membership and Ordination as Elder

### Professional Certification Track for Deacon ¶324.5

- High School Education and Certified Candidate for at least one year
- Bachelor's Degree
- Must be 35 years of age at time of certified candidacy
- Professional Certification (10 semester hours)
- Basic graduate theological studies (24 semester hours)
- Provisional Membership (3 years full time)
- Full Membership and Ordination as Deacon

### Seminary Track for Elder or Deacon ¶324.4

- High School Education and Certified Candidate for at least one year
- Bachelor's Degree
- M.Div. Degree for elder or deacon track  
OR for deacon track, other graduate theological degree/  
or graduate degree and basic graduate theological studies (24 semester hours)
- Provisional Membership (3 years full time)
- Full Membership and Ordination as Elder or Deacon

\*All education should be completed from a college or university recognized by the University Senate.

## **Reinstatement or Readmission Interview**

### References in The 2016 Book of Discipline

- As an admitted or certified candidate (§314.2)
- As a licensed local pastor (§320.4)
- As a provisional member (§364) or associate member
- After honorable location or administrative location (§365)
- After leaving the ministerial office to full membership as elder or deacon (§366)
- After termination by action of the annual conference (§367)

### Requirements prior to interview

1. Upon receipt of a request from the candidate, contact the registrar: [JessieColwell@vaumc.org](mailto:JessieColwell@vaumc.org) immediately, with a copy to the bishop's office for supervisory file information.
  
2. The Director of Clergy Excellence in consultation with the district superintendent 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. Criminal and Sex Offenders Background Check
  - d. Expanded Background Report (national and county criminal search, DMV record search, consumer credit report, and social security trace)
  - e. Medical Report (GBHEM Form 103)
  - f. Candidate's Disclosure Form (GBHEM Form 114, notarized)
  - g. A satisfactory report and recommendation by their charge conference and pastor
  - h. Psychological Assessment (level to be determined by circumstances)
  - i. Work Authorization Form
  - j. Pastor Profile
  - k. Other letters of recommendation, if needed
  - l. Report of career counseling, if applicable
  - m. Additional information or report on requirements set by the Board or annual conference when discontinued or withdrawn.

The candidate's file will be uploaded to Basecamp. Notification will be sent to the district committee chair and district superintendent that the file is now available.

3. The District Committee on Ordained Ministry reviews the candidate's documents. An interview and subsequent minutes with an Action Report is required.
  - 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 Cabinet.

## **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 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. 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 for withdrawal should be added as a file to the candidate's basecamp folder MQ 42 by the DCOM Chair or Registrar.
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 Registrar will upload the minutes of the meeting into their basecamp 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.

Suggested Questions:

Please use these guiding questions to frame your conversations:

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 page 41, 44, and 45 of the dCom handbook)
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, that there are plans for it to be sent to the District Superintendent.
8. Pray.

## **Ministers of Other Christian Denominations or Fellowships**

### **Seeking Appointments in the Virginia Conference (§346.2)**

1. All requests are referred to the Board of Ordained Ministry through the Center for Clergy Excellence.
2. The Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, works with a District Superintendent (DS) to determine whether to initiate the process for requesting an appointment as a “Minister of another Denomination” (MOD) or a “Minister of another Fellowship” (OF).
3. If recommended by the District Superintendent to proceed in the process, the personnel file for the MOD or OF is completed as required in §346.2, working through the Center for Clergy Excellence.
4. The MOD/OF is interviewed by the District Committee on Ministry (dCOM) on which the DS serves to determine if the MOD/OF has a foundational understanding of UMC theology, polity, and history found in the dCOM Handbook. If the dCOM does not believe the MOD/OF has a foundational understanding of UMC theology, polity, and history, the dCOM can assign a mentor, require courses, or recommend books to read until the MOD/OF is recommended by the DCOM to serve a UM local church.
5. Upon written recommendation by the DS and the dCOM, the Center for Clergy Excellence will schedule a meeting with the Transfer Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry.
6. Upon written recommendation by the Transfer Committee, the Board of Ordained Ministry presents its recommendations for MODs and OFs (required in §346.2) to the Cabinet during the appointment process.
7. 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.
8. As appropriate, the Bishop of the Virginia Conference consults with other bishops or judicatory leaders.

### **Seeking Transfer to the Virginia Conference (§347.3)**

1. The MOD/OF who has served two years under appointment in the Virginia Conference writes a letter to the Bishop of the Virginia Conference and the bishop or judicatory leader where her/his membership is held with a copy to his/her District Superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry requesting transfer.
2. The District Superintendent of the local church submits a narrative evaluation and recommendation to include an assessment of ministry performance, leadership skills, a Wesleyan understanding of Theology and Polity, and effectiveness in ministry, to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
3. The personnel file is updated through the Center for Clergy Excellence.
4. The MOD/OF is interviewed by the Transfer Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Board presents its recommendation to the Bishop.
5. The Bishop determines if the transfer will be made.

## Interview Questions for Those Seeking Transfer Minister of Another Denomination/Other Fellowship

### Requirements prior to conducting an interview:

1. To begin the process the applicant must fill out the transfer application available:  
<https://form.jotform.com/222225436278052>
2. Required materials submitted through the transfer application include:
  - State and Expanded Background Checks
  - Narrative Recommendation from District Superintendent
  - ESCI-U Assessment
  - Denomination Intent to Transfer
  - A copy of the applicants' ordination credentials
  - Statement of desire to serve in the VAUMC
  - Questions to answer for the committee

### Action Required After an Interview

- Transfer Candidate: Requires a majority vote from the dCom and an action report sent to Clergy Excellence: <https://form.jotform.com/222374821343048>

### Suggested Questions

1. Share about your call to ministry.
2. Tell us why you feel called to serve in the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church and your gifts for ministry.
3. Share how you have been connected to a United Methodist Church in the past (if applicable).
4. What is your understanding of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion? How does your understanding compare with the United Methodist teaching about the Sacraments?
5. 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?
6. How do you understand the following evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance (b) justification (c) regeneration (d) sanctification?
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?



## **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.
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. Deacons and Elders in full connection will be able to keep their ordination certificate.
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 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 is withdrawing to unite with another denomination.

Approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry 5/18/22

## **Clergy Seeking Readmittance After Withdrawal**

### **Requirements prior to conducting an interview:**

3. 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.
4. A recommendation from the District Superintendent in the conference and the district served during the withdrawal/discontinuance process must be received.
5. See additional requirements as related to the person's previous conference membership here (will link to readmittance document).

### **Action Required After an Interview**

- Certified Candidates: Requires a majority vote from the dCom and an action report sent to Clergy Excellence.
- 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.

### **Suggested 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 UMC.

## Appendix of Resources and Forms

### Becoming a Certified Candidate

All instructions and forms required toward Certified Candidacy, can be found at [www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms](http://www.vaumc.org/clergyexcellence-candidacyforms) . Please contact the the Associate Director for the Center for Clergy Excellence [CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org](mailto:CrystalSygeel@vaumc.org) for questions and opportunities for discernment for candidates.

- Biographical Form (GBHEM Form 102)
- State Criminal and Sex Offenders Background Check
- Charge Conference Recommendation (Completed through EVC)
- Expanded Background Check
- Medical Report Form (GBHEM Form 103)
- Candidates Disclosure Form (GBHEM Form 114)
- Psychological Assessment

### Recommendation of the dCOM for Provisional Membership

In addition to the Action Report Form, the Chair completes this narrative recommendation form. This information is extremely important to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Respond in detail to each question on the Recommendation report form. The deadline for the Director for the Center for Clergy Excellence: [JessieCollwell@vaumc.org](mailto:JessieCollwell@vaumc.org) to receive this narrative report is November 1.

### Recommendation of the dCOM for Associate Membership

In addition to the Action Report Form, the Chair completes this narrative recommendation form. This information is extremely important to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Respond in detail to each question on the Recommendation report form. The deadline for the Director for the Center for Clergy Excellence: [JessieColwell@vaumc.org](mailto:JessieColwell@vaumc.org) to receive this narrative report is November 1.

### Web Links to additional Resources for the DCOM and for Candidates

Landing page: [www.vaumc.org/dCOMmentorresources](http://www.vaumc.org/dCOMmentorresources)

Includes links to these three additional pages

[www.vaumc.org/CandidacyMentorResources](http://www.vaumc.org/CandidacyMentorResources)

- Group Candidacy Mentor Resources
- Psychological Assessment Instructions

[www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors](http://www.vaumc.org/LocalPastors)

- Local Pastor Resources - including the Local Pastor Handbook
- Clergy Mentor Resources
- Course of Study Information and Resources
- Provisional and Associate Membership Resources
- Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members

[www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources](http://www.vaumc.org/DCOMResources)

- General Resources for the DCOM
- Candidacy Mentor Resources
- Clergy Mentor Resources

[www.vaumc.org/ClergyContinuingEducation](http://www.vaumc.org/ClergyContinuingEducation)

- Reporting and Accountability
- Education Requirements
- Continuing Education Funding
- Guidelines for Education and Continuing Formation

## Provisional Membership – Readiness for Ministry

### Recommendation of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

- Provisional Membership, deacon track
- Provisional Membership, elder track

One requirement is an interview and recommendation with a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. This interview and vote shall be completed after July 1 of the year of application. In addition, the Board is requesting a narrative evaluation report on this candidate.

Please complete the information requested below and upload this form with your narrative evaluation to the candidate's THE JOTFORM LINKS FOUND AT [WWW.VAUMC.ORG/CLERGYEXCELLENCE-FORMS](http://WWW.VAUMC.ORG/CLERGYEXCELLENCE-FORMS) UMC account by **November 1**.

#### **Narrative Evaluation**

Attach to this form a **narrative evaluation** using the questions below, identifying strengths for ministry and areas of growth. If you have concerns about the candidate's ability to understand, believe in, and support the doctrines, polity, and programs of the United Methodist Church, consider carefully whether to recommend this candidate.

1. Give a summary of the district committee on ordained ministry's history with candidate or file background.
2. Describe the candidate's strengths and areas for growth in the following areas:
  - Call
  - Theology
  - Practice of Ministry
  - Personal Growth and Development
3. Write a summary statement about this candidate with specific observations.

#### **Vote**

Number of DCOM members \_\_\_\_\_

Number present and voting \_\_\_\_\_

Number voting for recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

Number voting against recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

Chair, DCOM \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Associate Membership – Effectiveness in Ministry

### Recommendation of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Membership

One requirement is an interview with and recommendation of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. This interview and vote shall be completed after July 1 of the year of application. In addition, the Board is requesting a narrative evaluation report on this candidate.

Please complete the information requested below and upload this form with your narrative evaluation to the candidate's THE JOTFORM LINKS FOUND AT [WWW.VAUMC.ORG/CLERGYEXCELLENCE-FORMS](http://WWW.VAUMC.ORG/CLERGYEXCELLENCE-FORMS) UMC account by **November 1.**

#### **Narrative Evaluation**

Attach to this form a **narrative evaluation** using the questions below, identifying strengths for ministry and areas of growth. If you have concerns about the candidate's ability to understand, believe in, and support the doctrines, polity, and programs of the United Methodist Church, consider carefully whether to recommend this candidate.

1. Give a summary of the district committee on ordained ministry's history with candidate or file background.
2. Describe the candidate's strengths and areas for growth in the following areas:
  - Theology
  - Practice of Ministry
  - Vocation and Leadership
3. Write a summary statement about this candidate with specific observations.

#### **Vote**

Number of DCOM members \_\_\_\_\_

Number present and voting \_\_\_\_\_

Number voting for recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

Number voting against recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

Chair, DCOM \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_