

Chapter 2

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry

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The district committee on ordained ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the board of ordained ministry. (§665.1)

The district committee has responsibility for supervising “all matters dealing with candidacy for the ordained ministry and with the license for local pastor.” (§665.5)

Membership

The following shall be represented in the membership of the district committee: (§665.1)

- the district superintendent
- a representative from the BOM, named by the BOM after consultation with the district superintendent
- at least six other clergy in the district including:
 - women
 - ethnic clergy
 - at least one elder who has completed the Course of Study
 - whenever possible, deacons in full connection
 - whenever possible at least one clergyperson shall be age 35 or younger
- at least three laypersons shall be members of the committee with limited vote
- interim vacancies may be filled by the district superintendent
- Clergy and lay 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.
- The BOM shall provide training for the new members, including distribution of any available written guidelines, e.g., copies of this chapter.

Organization

The organization of the dCOM must ensure a close working relationship with the conference BOM and other district committees within the annual conference.

The Book of Discipline does not prescribe a specific structure, though all responsibilities and functions must be fulfilled.

The dCOM shall elect its officers at the first meeting following the annual conference session when the members were elected. (§665.2)

The dCOM may appoint or elect officers listed below and others, such as an enlistment officer or a continuing education officer or a secretary, taking care to assign duties and responsibilities as described below.

Immediately following the election, a list of dCOM officers should be sent to the registrar of the BOM.

Officers

Chairperson: This office may be held by the BOM representative but not by the district superintendent (§422.2). The duties are:

- to ensure the members of the committee are properly trained
- to call regular meetings of the dCOM informing each member of the time, place, and agenda
- to preside over meetings or appoint a temporary chair, if necessary—it is the chairperson's responsibility to make sure the committee understands the scope of its duties and fulfills them with care
- to maintain a close liaison with the BOM, especially with the candidacy registrar, the BOM registrar, and other officers or committee chairpersons who must regularly share information from the dCOM
- to work with other chairpersons of district committees in the conference to ensure consistent use of procedure

Registrar: The dCOM should elect a person other than the district superintendent or the chair of the dCOM to act as registrar for the committee. The duties are:

- to be the custodian for all dCOM files (all dCOM candidate files, including psychological assessment reports, belong to the annual conference)
- to keep a separate file on each person for whom the dCOM is responsible (see worksheets at end of chapter for contents of file)
- to inform the persons responsible what materials are needed for each file, and instruct the dCOM on what actions to take
- to immediately inform the BOM registrar of all actions taken on persons under the care of the dCOM
- to transfer individual files to another district or annual conference upon receipt of a written request
- to forward all candidates' files to the BOM registrar when the referents become an associate or provisional member (copies of file material may be sent to the BOM along with any recommendations, without the written permission of the candidate)
- to keep all persons interviewed by the district committee informed about decisions and recommendations as soon as possible in writing

Executive secretary (optional): This office may be filled by the district superintendent. The duties are:

- to record the minutes of each meeting and distribute copies to committee members, if a recording secretary has not been assigned this responsibility
- to conduct correspondence and business necessary for the efficient functioning of the committee as directed by the chairperson

BOM representative: The BOM shall appoint one of its members to be its representative to the dCOM and provide communication between the Board of Ordained Ministry and the district committee.

Record Keeping

The district committee shall maintain a service record and file on every local pastor and candidate for the ordained ministry until the individual becomes an associate or provisional member of the annual conference.

A copy of the files shall then be forwarded to the registrar of the board of ordained ministry.

The records and files of the committee are kept on behalf of the annual conference and shall be maintained under guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA). (§665.7)

The records and files of the dCOM are an important resource for the work of the dCOM and the BOM. *"Guidelines for Keeping Ordained Clergy and Diaconal Ministry Personnel Records in The United Methodist Church,"* prepared by GCFA, are found in Chapter 3 of this Handbook.

Functions of the Committee

Enlistment

- Encourage persons to enter the candidacy program.
- Those wishing to begin candidacy “shall write to the district superintendent requesting admission to the candidacy process and the assignment of a candidacy mentor” (§311.1b) which “will be assigned by the district committee in consultation with the district superintendent.” (§349.1a)
- Aid the local church and other agencies of the conference in the process of enlisting persons for ordained ministry as deacon or elder or for service as a local pastor.
 - “In special circumstances, the district committee may authorize other United Methodist ministry settings to serve in the role of the local church for the purpose of recommending candidacy and specify the persons or bodies that will serve in the roles of pastor, pastor parish relations committee and charge conference.” (§311.3)
- Maintain a list of all candidates under its care. (§665.3)

Candidacy Mentoring

Each candidate is assigned a candidacy mentor by the dCOM in consultation with the district superintendent. The candidacy mentor shall be recommended by the District Superintendent, selected, trained, and held accountable by the Board of Ordained Ministry, and is accountable to both the dCOM and the BOM.

The Purposes and Intent of the Candidacy Mentor:

- To encourage and nurture as the candidate comprehends and considers the many dimensions of vocational and life decisions
- To serve as co-discerner, consultant, and catalyst in a way that provides freedom, confidentiality, flexibility, and stability
- To assist through the stages of candidacy, using the discernment process of the call to ministry outlined in the *Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy*.

The Responsibilities of the Candidacy Mentor:

- All conversations and information are confidential between candidate and candidacy mentor. Only with candidate's written permission may the candidacy mentor release details of the conversations or other data about the candidate.
- Maintain a line of communication between the candidate and dCOM, which will help the committee know discernment and reflection are taking place and will help the candidate process the work and decisions of the dCOM.
- Annual reporting to the dCOM by the candidacy mentor is encouraged as part of the process for recommending a candidate for continuance.
- If the candidate is applying for license as a local pastor or for provisional membership, the candidacy mentor report shall also be part of the dCOM interview.
- Candidacy mentors will work with the candidate until that candidate begins serving in an appointive ministry as a local pastor or as a commissioned minister. (§349)
- Mentors may work with one individual or with a group as assigned. (§349.1a.)

Psychological Assessment

The role of dCOM is to maintain communication with the chairperson of the psychological assessment committee of the BOM for the *receipt, utilization, and return* of the psychological assessment report:

- Receive the psychological reports from the chairperson of the BOM psychological assessment committee for use in the dCOM process of candidate evaluation.
- Review the psychological report for the candidate's potential for gaining sufficient levels of competence and readiness for ordained ministry.
- Use the reports appropriately:
- Honor issues of confidentiality as outlined in the Authorization for Release of Information signed by the candidate.

- Treat the report as consultative rather than determinative in recommending a decision to accept, defer or reject the candidate.
- Return the report to the psychological assessment committee chairperson for use in the conference board of ordained ministry.

Interviewing

Interviewing is one of the most basic personnel functions used by the church and is at the heart of the work of the dCOM. The dCOM conducts interviews for a number of different purposes. The interview focus and information needed are provided in Chapter 9. Also see the *Toward Effective Interviews PowerPoint* at the following link: www.gbhem.org/BOM

“All persons interviewed by the dCOM shall be informed of decisions and recommendations as soon as possible, both orally and in writing.” (§665.11)

Candidacy Certification

- Candidates seeking to become certified request to meet with the district committee.
- District committee address with the candidates their statement of call; responses to Wesley’s historic questions in §310; and the written responses to the questions in §311.2a:
 - the most formative experience of their Christian life
 - God’s call to licensed or ordained ministry and role of the church in their call
 - their beliefs as a Christian
 - their gifts for ministry
 - their present understanding of their call to ministry as elder, deacon, or licensed ministry; and
 - their support system
- Examine and approve qualified applicants for certification and annual renewal as certified candidates toward election as probationary (provisional) members. (§§312, 665.9)
- Inform the BOM candidacy registrar of the names and addresses of all who are issued certificates of candidacy (§665.3)
- Recognize and approve the service setting for certified candidates working toward probationary (provisional) membership (§324.2)
- Maintain ongoing communication with all candidates:
 - Counsel them regarding pre-theological studies (§665.4)
 - Inform candidates about scholarships and loans for education

- Review academic progress (receive transcripts and reports from college/seminary) (§312.2)

Continuation of Certified Candidacy

The progress of candidates is reviewed and certification renewed annually by the dCOM or equivalent body as specified by the district committee following an interview with the candidate and the meeting of the following conditions:

- The candidate has applied in writing for renewal of candidacy (§665.9)
- The candidate has received the recommendation for renewal by their charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the dCOM (§312.1, 665.9)
- The candidacy mentor has submitted a progress report on the exploration and discernment of the candidate's call
- The candidate has presented an official transcript from the school the person is attending and demonstrates satisfactory progress in his or her studies and. (§312.2)
- The committee has reviewed the candidate's gifts, graces, and fruits for the work of ministry. (§312, 665.9)
- If a candidacy has lapsed; it may be reinstated at the discretion of the dCOM (§313.2)

Local Pastor's License

- Examine qualified applicants for licensing as local pastors (§315, §665.8)
- Help applicants enroll in a licensing school
- Recommend to the BOM the issuance of a license to all applicants who have satisfactorily completed the requirements (§315)
- Give the BOM local pastors' registrar the names and addresses of all persons approved for licensing as local pastors
- Refer local pastors to the appropriate BOM registrar for enrollment in the Course of Study, and receive reports on their progress through the district superintendent
- Recommend to the BOM persons who qualify for continuance as local pastors (§319.2, 665.8)
- Communicate to the BOM registrar the circumstances of any discontinuance of a local pastor (§320.1)
- Recommend to the BOM those persons who qualify for restoration of credentials as a local pastor (§320.4, 665.8)
- Oversee a process of supervision of personal and professional growth for local pastors

Clergy Mentoring for Local Pastors

- Each local pastor continuing in the Course of Study is assigned a clergy mentor who may or may not be the same person who worked with the candidate as a candidacy mentor. The mentor will be recommended by the district superintendent and be trained and assigned by the BOM. (§314)
- Local pastor and mentor will review the learning goals and plans the local pastor had as a certified candidate; then establish a learning goals covenant with modified goals to coincide with new responsibilities.
- The mentor will make an annual report both to the dCOM and to the BOM, continuing in the nature of the candidacy mentor report; that is, to maintain a line of communication between the local pastor and the district committee to help the dCOM and the BOM track the growth of the local pastor, and to know that discernment and reflection are continuing.
 - Remember that conversations between mentor and mentee are confidential and information may be released only with written permission and signed by both local pastor and mentor.
 - The report will be kept in the local pastor's file by the dCOM and BOM until that person is received into associate or provisional membership in the annual conference.
- Mentors are an integral part of the educational program of local pastors, both formal and informal education:
 - They assist local pastors in reflection of their experiences in ministry to help them learn from those experiences.
 - They monitor preparation of material for Course of Study classes.
 - They help local pastors integrate into their practice of ministry theology and theory they have learned.

Certified Lay Ministers

When a pastoral charge is not able to be served by an ordained or licensed clergy, the Bishop, upon recommendation of the Cabinet, may assign a qualified and trained lay person, lay minister or lay missionary to do the work of ministry in that charge...The lay person assigned is accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned. (§205.4)

In order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God's grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism, the certified lay minister is to be recognized and utilized. (§271)

- The certified lay minister shall preach the Word, provide a care ministry to the congregation, assist in program leadership, and be a witness in the community for the growth, missional and connectional thrust of The United Methodist Church as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person. (§271.1)

- A certified lay speaker or a person with equivalent training as defined by his/her district or conference may be certified as a lay minister by the district committee on ordained ministry after he/she has completed the following. (§271.2)
 - a) been recommended by the pastor of the local church where he/she holds membership and by vote of the Church Council or Charge Conference
 - b) completed courses relevant to his/her assignment including
 - preaching and exegesis
 - the care of the congregation
 - other courses as recommended by the *General Board of Discipleship and General Board of Higher Education and Ministry* in consultation with leaders in the annual conference, and other appropriate Agencies and organizations
 - c) demonstrated appreciation of the history, polity, doctrine, worship and liturgy of The United Methodist Church through service in his/her local church
 - d) been recommended by the district superintendent after completion of appropriate screening
 - e) made application in writing to the district committee on ordained ministry
 - f) appeared before the district committee for review and approval
- The certified lay minister is to apply in writing for recertification biennially to the district committee on ordained ministry after:
 - ministry review by Church Council or Charge Conference from the congregation of which he/she is a member
 - satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event
 - recommendation of the district superintendent (§271.3)
- The certified lay minister under assignment is to appear biennially before the district committee on ordained ministry for re-certification after:
 - ministry review by Church Council or Charge Conference where assigned
 - satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event
 - recommendation of the district superintendent (§271.4)
- Transfer of Certification by Certified Lay Ministers

A certified lay minister who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's dCOM confirming current certification. (§271.5)
- The certified lay minister is a lay person and as such is not eligible for support by equitable compensation funds or pension which are provided for clergy members. (§271.6)

- The district committee shall report annually to the annual conference through the annual conference board of ordained ministry a roster of all persons certified as lay ministers. (§665.10)

Associate Members

Recommend to the BOM persons who qualify for associate membership.

(See §§321, 322, and 665.8)

Provisional Membership

- Recommend to the BOM those persons who qualify for provisional membership. Each candidate must be recommended in writing on the basis of a three-fourth majority vote of the dCOM. (§§665.8, 324.10)
- Recommend to the BOM and cabinet readmission to provisional membership those persons who have been discontinued and have requested readmission (§§665.8, 363).

Readmission to Conference Membership

- Recommend to the BOM and cabinet persons requesting readmission from honorable location, administrative location, or who have previously exited their ministerial office (§§665.8, 364, 365).

Resources for the dCOM

The Christian As Minister, 2006 Edition

Exploring God's Call for your Life, 2006 Edition

Ministry Inquiry Process, 2008 Edition

New Ministry Brochures

Navigating Candidacy Process PowerPoint

Ministry Interpretation Handbook (Red Book)

This handbook includes on the following pages recommended action outlines and file content checklists. It will be helpful for the dCOM registrar to have these outlines available to guide the committee through its work.