

The Ministry of the Elder

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2008

Section VIII. The Ordained Elder in Full Connection

¶332. *Ministry of an Elder* – “. . . Elders are ordained to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. By the authority given in their ordination, they are authorized to preach and teach the Word of God, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the Church for the service in mission and ministry. The servant leadership of the elder, in both parish and extension ministries, is expressed by leading the people of God in worship and prayer, by leading persons to faith in Jesus Christ, by exercising pastoral supervision, and by ordering the Church in mission in the world.”

¶335. Graduate Requirements

Receive a Masters of Divinity degree from a school of theology listed by the University Senate. Additionally, according to Texas Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry policy (1996), certified candidates shall have two (2) courses in homiletics.

Ministerial Settings

The unique focus of the elder is the responsibility for administration of the sacraments and the ordering of the ministry of the church. For most elders, this will be lived out as the pastor in charge of a local congregation, but the elder's ministry is not restricted to the parish. They may be appointed to extension ministries (¶343), serving in a variety of settings including but not limited to campus ministry, college and university chaplaincy, hospital and prison chaplaincy, military chaplain, overseas missionary, and pastor of a local congregation. Because elders have been ordained to ordering the ministry of the church and administering the Discipline, bishops and district superintendents are chosen from ordained elders. Elders lead and serve the whole church in ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Order.

Elders usually serve in a full time appointment, are itinerant and serve at the pleasure of the bishop.

“All ordained ministry is rooted in servant leadership. Ordination to service makes clear that elders embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership wherever they are appointed. (¶340.2d) For Wesley, this meant refusing the constraints of parish boundaries and claiming the world as his parish. For us it means that elders lead in service to order the Church for its mission and service in the world.

Through prophetic preaching, biblical interpretation, sacramental administration, theological reflection, and ordering the Church for ministry, the elder equips all Christians for their ministry of service in the world. Wherever they serve, elders carry their vows of 'Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service' as ordained representatives of the church of Jesus Christ.” (GBHEM)

For more information:

http://www.gbhem.org/site/c.lsKSL3POLvF/b.3743777/k.7320/The_Ministry_of_the_Elder.htm