

Chapter Two

THE MINISTRY OF THE ORDAINED

Section I. The Meaning of Ordination and Conference Membership

¶ 301. 1. Ministry in the Christian church is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all persons to receive God's gift of salvation and follow in the way of love and service. The whole church receives and accepts this call, and all Christians participate in this continuing ministry (see ¶¶ 120-139).

2. Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God's call by offering themselves in leadership as ordained ministers (¶ 302).

¶ 302. Ordination and Apostolic Ministry—The pattern for this response to the call is provided in the development of the early church. The apostles led in prayer, teaching and preaching, ordered the spiritual and temporal life of the community, established leadership for the ministry of service, and provided for the proclamation of the gospel to new persons and in new places. The early church, through the laying on of hands, set apart persons with responsibility to preach, to teach, to administer the sacraments, to nurture, to heal, to gather the community in worship, and to send them forth in witness. The church also set apart other persons to care for the physical needs of others, reflecting the concerns for the people of the world. In the New Testament (Acts 6), we see the apostles identifying and authorizing persons to a ministry of service. These functions, though set apart, were never separate from the ministry of the whole people of God. Paul states (Ephesians 4:1-12) that different gifts and ministries are given to all persons.

¶ 303. Purpose of Ordination—1. Ordination to this ministry is a gift from God to the church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit. As such, those who are ordained make a commitment to conscious living of the whole gospel and to the proclamation of that gospel to the end that the world may be saved.

2. Ordination is fulfilled in leadership of the people of God through ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order. The Church's ministry of service is a primary representation of God's love. Those who respond to God's call to lead in service and to equip others for this ministry through teaching, proclamation, and worship and who assist elders in the administration of the sacraments are ordained deacons. Those whose leadership in service includes preaching and teaching the Word of God, administration of the sacraments, ordering the Church for its mission and service, and administration of the Discipline of the Church are ordained as elders.

3. Ordained persons exercise their ministry in covenant with all Christians, especially with those whom they lead and serve in ministry. They also live in covenant of mutual care and accountability with all those who share their ordination, especially in The United Methodist Church, with the ordained who are members of the same annual conference and part of the same Order. The covenant of ordained ministry is a lifetime commitment, and those who enter into it dedicate their whole lives to the personal and spiritual disciplines it requires.

4. The effectiveness of the Church in mission depends on these covenantal commitments to the ministry of all Christians and the ordained ministry of the Church. Through ordination and through other offices of pastoral leadership, the Church provides for the continuation of Christ's ministry, which has been committed to the church as a whole. Without creative use of the diverse gifts of the entire body of Christ, the ministry of the church is less effective. Without responsible leadership, the focus, direction, and continuity of that ministry is diminished. It is out of the faith and witness of the congregation that men and women respond to God's call to ordained ministry. Every local church should intentionally nurture candidates for ordained ministry and provide spiritual and financial support for their education, where practical, as servant leaders for the ministry of the whole people of God.

5. In keeping with ancient Christian teaching and our Wesleyan tradition, we affirm that ordination for the same, or equivalent order, is not repeatable.

¶ 304. Qualifications for Ordination—1. Those whom the Church ordains shall be conscious of God's call to ordained ministry, and their call shall be acknowledged and authenticated by the Church. God's call has many manifestations, and the Church cannot structure a single test of authenticity. Nevertheless, the experience of the Church and the needs of its ministry require certain qualities of faith, life, and practice from those who seek ordination as deacons and elders. In order that The United Methodist Church may be assured that those persons who present themselves as candidates for ordained ministry are truly called of God, the Church expects persons seeking ordination to:

- a) Have a personal faith in Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord.
 - b) Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness.
 - c) Teach and model generous Christian giving with a focus on tithing as God's standard of giving
 - d) Acknowledge a call by God to give themselves completely to ordained ministry following Jesus' pattern of love and service.
 - e) Communicate persuasively the Christian faith in both oral and written form.
 - f) Make a commitment to lead the whole Church in loving service to humankind.
 - g) Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry, evidence of God's grace in their lives, and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the Church.
 - h) Be persons in whom the community can place trust and confidence.
 - i) Accept that Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation through faith in God through Jesus Christ; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history, and Church polity; possess the skills essential to the practice of ordained ministry; and lead in making disciples for Jesus Christ.
 - j) Be accountable to The United Methodist Church, accept its Doctrinal Standards and Discipline and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to this ministry, and be prepared to live in the covenant of its ordained ministers.
2. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of the influence of an ordained minister on the lives of other persons both within and outside the Church, the Church expects those who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life. To this end, they agree to exercise responsible self-control 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 in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.
3. While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed

practicing homosexuals¹ are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.²

4. The United Methodist Church entrusts those persons who are in the ordained ministry with primary responsibility for maintaining standards of education and preparation for ordination. Having been originally recommended by a charge conference and by authorization of the ordained members in full connection with the annual conference, according to the procedures set out in the Book of Discipline for the examination and approval of candidates for ordination, persons are elected to membership in the annual conference and ordained by the bishop.

5. In all cases where the district committee on ordained ministry, conference boards of ordained ministry, or ordained members in full connection in clergy session vote on granting any status regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, it is understood that the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements only. Each person voting is expected to vote prayerfully based on personal judgment of the applicant's gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness for the mission of the Church.

Section II. Clergy Orders in The United Methodist Church

¶ 305. Orders in Relation to the Ministry of All Christians—Baptism is God's gift of unmerited grace through the Holy Spirit. It is an incorporation into Christ which marks the entrance of each person into the church and its ministry (Romans 6:3, 4, 18).

The New Testament witness to Jesus Christ makes clear that the primary form of his ministry in God's name is that of service, *diakonia*, in the world. Very early in its history, the church came to understand that all of its members were commissioned in baptism to ministries of love, justice, and service within local congregations and the larger communities in which they lived; all who follow Jesus have a share in the ministry of Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve. There is thus a general ministry of all baptized Christians (see ¶¶ 125-136).

Within the people of God, some persons are called to the ministry of deacon. The words deacon, deaconess, and diaconate all spring from a common Greek root—*diakonos*, or "servant," and *diakonia*, or "service." Very early in its history the church, as an act of worship and praise of God, instituted an order of ordained ministers to personify or focus the servanthood to which all Christians are called. These people were named deacons. This ministry exemplifies and leads

1 "Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764, 844, 984.

2 See Judicial Council Decisions 984, 985.

the Church in the servanthood every Christian is called to live both in the church and the world. The deacon embodies the interrelationship between worship in the gathered community and service to God in the world.

Within the people of God, other persons are called to the ministry of elder. The elders carry on the historic work of the presbyteros in the life of the Church. Beginning in some of the very early Christian communities, the presbyteros assisted the bishop in leading the gathered community in the celebration of sacraments and the guidance and care of its communal life. The ministry of elder exemplifies and leads the Church in service to God in the world, in remembering and celebrating the gifts of God and living faithfully in response to God's grace.

¶ 306. Order of Deacons and Order of Elders—There shall be in each annual conference an Order of Deacons and an Order of Elders. All persons ordained as clergy in The United Methodist Church upon election to full membership in the annual conference shall be members of and participate in an order appropriate to their election. An order is a covenant community within the church to mutually support, care for, and hold accountable its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. These orders, separately or together, seek to respond to the spiritual hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers during this stressful time of change in the Church, and for a deepening relationship with God.

¶ 307. Purpose of an Order—The specific and limited function of each order is to: (1) provide for regular gatherings of ordained deacons and ordained elders for continuing formation in relationship to Jesus Christ through such experiences as Bible study, study of issues facing the church and society, and theological exploration in vocational identity and leadership; (2) assist in plans for individual study and retreat experiences; (3) develop a bond of unity and common commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the annual conference; (4) enable the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust; and (5) hold accountable all members of the order in the fulfilling of these purposes. All of the functions of the order(s) shall be fulfilled in cooperation and coordination with the board of ordained ministry and do not replace the normal supervisory processes, the processes of evaluation for ordained ministers, or the responsibilities of the board of ordained ministry, the cabinet, or the clergy session.

¶ 308. Organization of an Order—The bishop shall convene and provide continuing spiritual leadership for the order, with the support and assistance of the board of ordained ministry. Necessary financial support shall be provided by the annual conference through the budget of the board. The board may also use other appropriate funding sources for this purpose. The board shall nominate

from within the order's membership and the order shall elect quadrennially a chairperson of the order who, in cooperation with and under the guidance of the bishop, will provide continuing leadership for the order. The chairperson will be responsible for implementation of plans and activities of the order and will represent the order to the conference board of ordained ministry. The chairperson will serve as a member of the board's executive committee. Activities of the order and proposals for funding shall be regularly reported to the board.

¶ 309. Membership in an Order—1. Persons shall become members of the Order of Deacons or Order of Elders following their election to full membership in the annual conference. Acceptance of the status of full membership will constitute a commitment to regular participation in the life of the order.

2. Changing Orders—Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry and vote of the clergy members in full connection in an annual conference, elders may be received as deacons in full connection, and deacons in full connection may be received as elders, provided they are in good standing and have:

- a) informed the bishop and district superintendent of their intention,
- b) applied in writing to the board of ordained ministry,
- c) articulated their call to the ministry of the deacon or the elder,
- d) completed all academic and other requirements for admission to the order for which they are applying, ¶ 324, ¶ 330, ¶ 335, and
- e) completed at least two years under appointment while licensed for the ministry of the order to which they are transitioning.

3. Such persons shall retain their credentials and full membership in the annual conference through the transition period from one order to the other. When ordained to the order to which they are transitioning, they shall surrender to the conference secretary the credentials of the order from which they are leaving.

Section III. Candidacy for Licensed and Ordained Ministry

¶ 310. Entrance Procedures into Licensed and Ordained Ministry—The licensed or ordained ministry is recognized by The United Methodist Church as a called-out and set-apart ministry. Therefore, it is appropriate that those persons who present themselves as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry be examined regarding the authenticity of their call by God to ordered ministry.

Wesley's Questions for the Examiners—In order that The United Methodist Church may be assured that those persons who present themselves as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry are truly called of God, let those who consider recommending such persons for candidacy as licensed or ordained ministers in The United Methodist Church prayerfully and earnestly ask themselves these questions:

1. Do they know God as pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation?

2. Have they gifts, as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?

3. Have they fruit? Have any been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by their service?

As long as these marks occur in them, we believe they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit.

*¶ 311. Candidacy for Licensed and Ordained Ministry—Persons, upon hearing and heeding the call to servant leadership through licensed or ordained ministry, shall contact the pastor of their local church, another clergy, or the district superintendent of the district in which their United Methodist ministry setting is located to inquire about the process of candidacy. Persons are encouraged to use resources recommended by GBHEM, such as *The Christian as Minister* and the Ministry Inquiry Process.

1. Those beginning candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry:

* a) shall have been a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church for at least one year immediately preceding the application for candidacy; including a year of service in some form of congregational leadership, either in that local church or one agreed to by the board on ordained ministry, provided that in the case of an affiliate member, there has been a consultation with and approval by the charge conference of the home church;

b) shall apply to their district superintendent in writing, in a letter describing their sense of call to licensed or ordained ministry, for admission to the candidacy program with a copy for the district committee on ordained ministry; and

c) shall be assigned to a candidacy mentor by the district committee on ordained ministry in consultation with the district superintendent;

* d) shall be registered through the candidacy mentor with the board of ordained ministry;

* e) shall complete with the mentor the preliminary studies in a way that gives consideration to the candidate's background and experience; and

* f) are encouraged to pursue their education at one of the United Methodist seminaries.

2. Candidates approved by the charge conference and seeking to become certified for licensed or ordained ministry shall:

a) request to meet with the district committee on ordained ministry. In preparation for meeting with the district committee on ordained ministry, consult with

the mentor to provide the following written information, in addition to the material written for ¶ 311.1.d.: (i) the most formative experience of their Christian life; (ii) God's call to licensed or ordained ministry and role of the church in their call; (iii) their beliefs as a Christian; (iv) their gifts for ministry; (v) their present understanding of their call to ministry as elder, deacon, or licensed ministry; and (vi) their support system;

* b) be recommended by the charge conference. To be valid, such a recommendation shall be: i) approved by written ballot by two-thirds of the charge conference present at this meeting, provided that in the case of an affiliate member there has been a consultation with the pastor of the home church, and ii) the candidate shall have completed the basic course for Lay Speakers;

* c) continue to be in contact with the assigned candidacy mentor.

d) agree 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 as clergy, to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in ¶¶ 102-104; 160-166. To this end they shall 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.³ Where possible, the local church is encouraged to assist candidates with the expenses of candidacy.

e) Upon vote of certification, shall be encouraged by the district committee on ordained ministry to attend a United Methodist seminary.

* 3. Candidates who have completed the requirements of § 1-2 and desire to be certified as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry shall:

a) appear before the board on ordained ministry for examination;

b) submit a written response providing evidence of understanding and expectation concerning the following: i) the most formative experiences of your Christian life; ii) God's call to licensed or ordained ministry and the role of the church in your call; iii) your future usefulness as a minister in The United Methodist Church; iv) your personal beliefs as a Christian; v) your personal gifts for ministry; vi) how your personal relationships may affect your future ministry;

c) submit a written response providing evidence of understanding of the ministries of local pastors, deacons and elders within The United Methodist Church;

* d) complete and release required psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks. They shall submit:

(1) a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony

³ In adopting the statements in ¶¶ 304.2 and 311.2d on the moral and social responsibility of ordained ministers, the General Conference seeks to elevate the standards by calling for a more thoroughgoing moral commitment by the candidate and for a more careful and thorough examination of candidates by district committees and boards of the ministry.

or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or

(2) a notarized statement certifying that this candidate has neither been accused in writing nor convicted of a felony, misdemeanor, any incident of sexual misconduct, or child abuse.

* e) provide other information as the board may require for determining gifts, evidence of God's grace, fruit, and demonstration of the call to licensed or ordained ministry; and

f) agree 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 as clergy, to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in ¶¶ 102-104; 160-166. To this end they shall 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. Where possible, the local church is encouraged to assist candidates with the expenses of candidacy.

* ¶ 312. Continuation of Candidacy—The progress of candidates shall be reviewed annually by the district committee on ordained ministry which shall interview the candidate annually and may then continue the candidacy when the following conditions have been met satisfactorily:

1. The candidate has received the annual recommendation of his or her charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the district committee on ordained ministry (see ¶ 311.3).

* 2. The candidate is making satisfactory progress in his or her studies. A candidate preparing for ordained ministry who is enrolled as a student in a school, college, university, or school of theology recognized by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall present annually to the

The legislation in no way implies that the use of tobacco is a morally indifferent question. In the light of the developing evidence against the use of tobacco, the burden of proof would be upon all users to show that their use of it is consistent with the highest ideals of the Christian life. Similarly, regarding beverage alcohol, the burden of proof would be upon users to show that their action is consistent with the ideals of excellence of mind, purity of body, and responsible social behavior.

Therefore, the changes here do not relax the traditional view concerning the use of tobacco and beverage alcohol by ordained ministers in The United Methodist Church. Rather they call for higher standards of self-discipline and habit formation in all personal and social relationships. They call for dimensions of moral commitment that go far beyond any specific practices which might be listed. (See Judicial Council Decision 318.)

The General Conference, in response to expressions throughout the Church regarding homosexuality and ordination, reaffirms the present language of the Discipline regarding the character and commitment of persons seeking ordination and affirms its high standards.

For more than 200 years candidates for ordination have been asked Wesley's Questions, including ". . . Have they a clear, sound understanding; right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? . . ." (¶ 310).

board of ordained ministry an official transcript from the school the person is attending.

The transcript shall be considered by the district committee on ordained ministry as part of the evidence of his or her progress.

3. The candidate continues to evidence gifts, fruits and God's grace for the work of ministry.

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.

* ¶ 313. Discontinuance and Reinstatement of Certified Candidates—

1. Discontinuance of a Certified Candidate—Certified candidates may be discontinued on their own request, upon severing their relationship with The United Methodist Church, or upon action to discontinue by the district committee on ordained ministry. The board of ordained ministry shall file a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of the certified candidate.

2. Reinstatement of Certified Candidate's Status—Certified candidates whose status has been discontinued by a district committee on ordained ministry of an annual conference of The United Methodist Church shall only be reinstated by the district committee of the district in which they were discontinued. When approved by the district committee on ordained ministry, their certified candidate's credentials shall be reissued and they shall be eligible to continue the process.

¶ 314. Appointment of Certified Candidates—A certified candidate is eligible for appointment as a local pastor upon completion of License for Pastoral Ministry (¶ 315). Those appointed as local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference (¶ 602.1) and are no longer listed as certified candidates. They do not continue with candidacy mentors but are assigned a clergy mentor (¶ 349.4)

Section IV. License for Pastoral Ministry

* ¶ 315. License for Pastoral Ministry—All persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry. The board of ordained ministry (¶ 635.2g) may recommend to the executive session of the annual conference the licensing of those persons who are:

All candidates agree to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life and to this end agree "to exercise responsible self-control, by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God" (¶ 304).

The character and commitment of candidates for the ordained ministry is described or examined in six places in the Book of Discipline (¶¶ 304, 310, 311.2, 324, 330, and 335). These say in part: "Only those shall be elected to full membership who are of unquestionable moral character and genuine piety, sound in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and faithful in the discharge of their duties" (¶ 324).

1. Provisional elders commissioned by the annual conference, or
 2. Local pastors who have completed the following:
 - a) The conditions for candidacy certification in ¶¶ 311.1-2 and;
 - * b) The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and supervised by the Board of Ordained Ministry or one-third of their basic training at a school of theology listed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry;
 - c) Been examined and recommended by the district committee on ordained ministry (¶ 665.8); or
 3. Associate members of the annual conference
 4. Deacons in full connection, seeking to qualify for ordination as an elder; or
 - * 5. Licensed or ordained clergy from other denominations who have training equivalent to the studies for license as a local pastor prescribed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry, but do not meet the educational requirements for provisional membership in the annual conference.
6. In every case, those who are licensed shall have:
- a) Released the required psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse. They shall submit, on a form provided by the conference board of ordained ministry:
 - (1) a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or
 - (2) a notarized statement certifying that the candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse.
 - b) Been approved by the board of ordained ministry (¶ 635.2g);
 - c) Provided the board with a satisfactory certificate of good health on a prescribed form from a physician approved by that board.

* ¶ 316. Responsibilities and Duties of Those Licensed for Pastoral Ministry—1. Provisional elders and local pastors approved annually by the board of ordained ministry may be licensed by the bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor (¶ 340), including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of marriage (where state laws allow),⁴ burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry. For the purposes of these paragraphs the charge or extension ministry will be defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served.” Those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the bishop and the board of ordained ministry.

⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 694.

* 2. Such authorization granted by the license may be renewed annually by the board of ordained ministry.

3. The license shall remain valid only so long as the appointment continues and shall be recertified by the bishop when assignments change between sessions of the annual conference.⁵

4. A local pastor shall be under the supervision of a district superintendent and shall be assigned a clergy mentor while in the Course of Study or in seminary (§ 349).

⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 112.

The statement on ordination (§ 304.2) states: "The Church expects those who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life . . . [and to] agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits. . . ."

There are eight crucial steps in the examination of candidates. They are:

- (1) The self-examination of the individual seeking ordination as he or she responds to God's call in personal commitment to Christ and his church.
- (2) The decision of the committee on pastor-parish relations, which makes the first recommendation to the charge conference when a member seeks to become a candidate for ordained ministry.
- (3) The decision of the charge conference, which must recommend the candidate.
- (4) The decision of the district committee on ordained ministry, which must recommend the candidate to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and, where applicable, the decision of the district conference.
- (5) The decision of the Board of Ordained Ministry, which must recommend deacon's ordination and provisional membership. See Judicial Council Decisions 513, 536, 542.
- (6) The decision of the clergy members of the annual conference, who must elect candidates to provisional membership.
- (7) The recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry for deacon's or elder's ordination and full membership.
- (8) The election to deacon's or elder's ordination and full membership by the clergy members of the annual conference.

All clergy members of the annual conference are accountable as to character and effectiveness to the annual conference throughout their entire ministry.

The General Conference has made it clear in the "Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task" (Part II of the Discipline) that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are our guidelines. "United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine."

In the Social Principles, the General Conference has said that "we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." Furthermore, the Principles state that "we affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We believe that God's blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage."

Also, "we affirm the integrity of single persons, and we reject all social practices that discriminate or social attitudes that are prejudicial against persons because they are single."

The General Conference affirms the wisdom of our heritage expressed in the disciplinary provisions relating to the character and commitment of ordained ministers. The United Methodist Church has moved away from prohibitions of specific acts, for such prohibitions can be endless. We affirm our trust in the covenant community and the process by which we ordain ministers.

In our covenant we are called to trust one another as we recommend, examine, and elect candidates for the ordained ministry and conference membership. See Judicial Council Decision 480.

5. Local pastors shall be amenable to the clergy session of the annual conference in the performance of their pastoral duties and shall attend the sessions of the annual conference.

6. The membership of local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment is in the annual conference where they shall have the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to general, jurisdictional, or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

7. All local pastors shall receive written communication about decisions made regarding their relationship with the annual conference

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.

* ¶ 317. Interim License as Local Pastor—Between sessions of the annual conference, persons who have completed the conditions for licensing listed above may be granted interim license as a local pastor upon recommendation of the cabinet and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, and may be appointed by the bishop.

* ¶ 318. Categories of Local Pastor—Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements of ¶ 315, the district committee on ordained ministry shall certify the completion of the prescribed studies to the candidates and the board of ordained ministry, and they shall be listed in the journal as eligible to be appointed as local pastors. Award of the license shall not be made until an appointment to a pastoral charge is made in accordance with ¶ 337. In recommending to the annual conference those who have met the requirements to serve as local pastors for the ensuing year, the board of ordained ministry shall classify them in three categories with educational and other requirements of their category. Any person who fails to meet these requirements shall be discontinued as a local pastor. The categories shall be defined as follows:

* 1. Full-Time Local Pastors—Those eligible to be appointed full-time local pastors are persons (a) who may devote their entire time to the church in the charge to which they are appointed and its outreach in ministry and mission to the community; (b) who receive in cash support per annum from all Church sources a sum equal to or larger than the minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time local pastors; (c) who, unless they have completed the Course of Study or other approved theological education, shall (i) complete four courses per year in a Course of Study school, or (ii) shall

have made progress in the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry (§ 1421.3d), or (iii) be enrolled as a pre-theological or theological student in a college, university, or school of theology approved by the University Senate; (d) who, when they have completed the Course of Study, are involved in continuing education (§ 351);⁶ (e) who shall not be enrolled as a full-time student in any school.

* 2. Part-Time Local Pastors—Those eligible to be appointed as part-time local pastors are persons (a) who have met the provisions of § 315; (b) who do not devote their entire time to the charge to which they are appointed; or (c) do not receive in cash support per annum from all Church sources a sum equal to or larger than the minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time local pastors; and (d) who, unless they have completed the Course of Study or other approved theological education, shall (i) complete two courses per year in a Course of Study school, or (ii) have made progress in the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or (iii) be enrolled as a pre-theological or theological student in a college, university, or school of theology approved by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Part-time local pastors may be appointed to small membership churches that are grouped together in a charge under the supervision of a mentor.

* 3. Students Appointed as Local Pastors—Students enrolled as pre-theological or theological students in a college, university, or school of theology listed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry (a) who have met the provisions of § 315, and (b) who shall make appropriate progress in their educational program as determined by the board of ordained ministry may be appointed as part-time or full-time local pastors.

4. Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, the clergy members in full connection may vote approval annually for students of other denominations enrolled in a school of theology listed by the University Senate to serve as local pastors for the ensuing year under the direction of the district superintendent, provided that they shall indicate to the satisfaction of the board of ordained ministry their agreement to support and maintain the doctrine and polity of The United Methodist Church while under appointment.

5. Local pastors may serve on any board, commission, or committee with voice and vote, except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status, and ordination, except the board of ordained ministry and the district committee on ordained ministry (§ 635.1). they shall not be eligible to vote on or serve as delegates to the general, jurisdictional, or central conference.

6 See Judicial Council Decisions 343, 572.

* ¶ 319. Continuance as a Local Pastor—1. Persons licensed as local pastors who are not provisional members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the Course of Study.

* 2. Upon completing each year's education and other qualifications, a local pastor who is not a provisional member may be recommended for continuance by the board of ordained ministry. The clergy members in full connection of the annual conference may approve continuance of a local pastor after reference to and recommendation by its board of ordained ministry.

3. A full-time local pastor shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years and a part-time local pastor within twelve, unless a family situation or other circumstance precludes the local pastor's opportunity to meet said requirements. The local pastor may be granted an annual extension beyond the prescribed limit upon a three-fourths vote of the district committee on ordained ministry, recommendation by the conference board of ordained ministry, and the vote of the clergy members in full connection.⁷

4. A local pastor may choose to remain in a local relationship with the annual conference upon having completed the five-year Course of Study.

5. None of the provisions in this legislation shall be interpreted to change or limit authorizations to local pastors ordained as deacon and elder prior to 1996.⁸

* ¶ 320. Exiting, Reinstatement, and Retirement of Local Pastors Who Are Not Provisional Members—1. Discontinuance of Local Pastor—Whenever a local pastor retires or is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference as required in ¶ 318, whenever any local pastor severs relationship with The United Methodist Church, whenever the appointment of a local pastor is discontinued by the bishop, or whenever the district committee on ordained ministry does not recommend continuation of license, license and credentials shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference. After consultation with the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held. The board of ordained ministry shall file with the resident bishop a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of local pastor status as required in ¶ 635.3d.

2. Withdrawal Under Complaints and Charges—When a local pastor is accused of an offense under ¶ 2702 and desires to withdraw from the Church, the procedures described in ¶ 2719.2 shall apply.

3. Trial of Local Pastor—When a local pastor is accused of an offense under ¶ 2702, the procedures described in ¶¶ 2703-2713 shall apply.⁹

⁷ See Judicial Council Decisions 436, 439.

⁸ See Judicial Council Decisions 436, 439.

⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 982.

* 4. Reinstatement of Local Pastor Status—Local pastors whose approval status has been discontinued from an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors may be reinstated only by the annual conference that previously approved them, its legal successor, or the annual conference of which the major portion of their former conference is a part, only upon recommendation by the board of ordained ministry from which their license was discontinued, and the cabinet. Persons seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist church for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement. The district committee shall require a recommendation from the charge conference where his or her membership is currently held. When approved by the clergy members in full connection as provided in ¶ 337, their license and credentials shall be restored, and they shall be eligible for appointment as pastors of a charge. They shall complete current studies and meet requirements as provided in §§ 315, 318.

Whenever persons whose approval as local pastors has been discontinued by an annual conference are being considered for appointment or temporary employment in another annual conference, the board of ordained ministry where these persons are being considered shall obtain from the board of ordained ministry of the conference where approval has been discontinued verification of their qualifications and information about the circumstances relating to the termination of their approval as local pastors.

* 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 board of ordained ministry without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit.

6. Status of Retired Local Pastors—A local pastor who retires or is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference as required in ¶ 318 prior to completing the Course of Study and is not appointed in accordance with ¶ 320.5 shall be considered a layperson for all purposes of this Discipline. A local pastor who retires after having completed the Course of Study or is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference as required in ¶ 318 and is not appointed in accordance with ¶ 320.5 may elect, by notification to the bishop and the board of ordained ministry, to be recognized either as a layperson, or as a “retired local pastor.” A retired local pastor shall have the right to attend an-

nual conference with voice and such voting privileges as are accorded active local pastors. Retired local pastors shall be counted as clergy for equalization purposes. Nothing in this section shall be construed to change in any way a local pastor's pension status or rights.

Section V. Associate Membership

¶ 321. Eligibility and Rights of Associate Members—Associate members of an annual conference are in the itinerant ministry of the Church and are available on a continuing basis for appointment by the bishop. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed (and to serve as their superiors in office shall direct). They shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry and shall be granted the same security of appointment as provisional members and members in full connection.

1. Associate members shall have a right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following: (a) constitutional amendments; (b) election of delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences; (c) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

2. Associate members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of an annual conference. They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the general or jurisdictional or central conferences.

3. Associate members shall be subject to the provisions governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension.

* ¶ 322. Requirements for Election as Associate Members—1. Local pastors may be elected to associate membership by vote of the clergy members in full connection, upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, when they have met the following conditions. They shall have: (1) reached age forty; (2) served four years as full-time local pastors; (3) completed the five-year Course of Study for ordained ministry in addition to the studies for license as a local pastor, up to one half of which may be taken by correspondence or online/distance learning courses; (4) completed the educational standards of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (5) been recommended by the board of ordained ministry; (6) declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment; (7) satisfied the board regarding their physical, mental, and emotional health (the annual conference shall require psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse to provide additional information on the candidate's fitness for the ministry); (8) for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of his/her influence as a clergy member of the annual conference, be willing to make a com-

plete dedication of himself/herself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God; and (9) prepared at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the board of ordained ministry and given satisfactory answers in a written doctrinal examination administered by the board of ordained ministry. (Consideration shall be given to the questions listed in ¶ 324.9.)

2. Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, an annual conference may equate part-time service to the requirement of full-time service. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors.

3. Associate members may retire under the provisions of ¶ 358 of the Discipline. They shall retain their license for pastoral ministry for service in the local church and maintain their relationship as retired clergy members of the annual conference.

4. Associate members may be received as provisional members in the annual conference under conditions as set forth in ¶ 324.6 upon receiving a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy members of the conference in full connection, present and voting.

¶ 323. Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members—Each annual conference shall organize a Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. All licensed local pastors and associate members shall be members of and participate in the Fellowship. The Fellowship will provide mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church.

1. The specific and limited function is to:

a) provide for regular gatherings of local pastors and associate members for continuing formation in relationship to Jesus Christ through such experiences as Bible study, study of issues facing the church and society, and theological exploration in vocational identity and leadership;

b) encourage local pastors in continued study beyond the Course of Study;

c) develop a bond of unity and common commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the annual conference; and

d) enable the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust.

2. The bishop shall convene the fellowship and the board of ordained ministry shall coordinate its life and work. Necessary financial support shall be provided by the annual conference through the budget of the board. The board shall nominate from within the Fellowship membership and the Fellowship shall elect quadrennially a chairperson of the Fellowship who, in cooperation with and

under the guidance of the bishop, will provide continuing leadership for the Fellowship.

Activity of the Fellowship will be reported regularly to the board of ordained ministry.

Section VI. Provisional Membership

* ¶ 324. Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership—A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the annual conference by vote of the clergy session on recommendation of its board of ordained ministry after meeting the following qualifications.

1. Candidacy Requirement: Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for provisional membership for at least one year and no more than twelve years.

* 2. Service Requirement: Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the board of ordained ministry as a condition for provisional membership.

* 3. *Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference*

* 4. Graduate Requirement:

* a) Candidates for deacon or elder shall have completed a basic course in the Christian faith. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies must include courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; and United Methodist doctrine, polity and history.

* b) a candidate for ordination as an elder shall have completed the educational standards set by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

c) a candidate for ordination as a deacon shall have:

* (1) completed the educational standards set by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or

(2) received a master's degree in the area of the specialized ministry in which the candidate will serve

* (3) completed the basic training in the area of the specialized ministry in which the candidate will serve, and completed a theological course for deacons approved by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

* 5. *Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference*

* 6. Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership when they have:

a) reached forty years of age;

b) satisfied all requirements of Sections 1-2 and 7-14 of this paragraph.

c) completed the five-year Course of Study for ordained ministry, of which no more than one-half may be taken by correspondence or Internet; up to one-half of Course of Study may be online courses; and

* d) an Advanced Course of Study approved by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

* 7. The board of ordained ministry shall require an official transcript of credits from each school before recognizing any of the applicant's educational claims. In case of doubt, the board may submit a transcript to the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

8. Each candidate shall present a satisfactory certificate of good health by a physician on the prescribed form. Disabilities are not to be construed as unfavorable health factors when a person with disability is capable of meeting the professional standards and is able to render effective service as a provisional member.

9. Each candidate shall respond to a written and oral doctrinal examination administered by the conference board of ordained ministry. The examination shall cover the following:

a) Describe your personal experience of God and the understanding of God you derive from biblical, theological, and historical sources.

b) What is your understanding of evil as it exists in the world?

c) What is your understanding of humanity, and the human need for divine grace?

d) How do you interpret the statement Jesus Christ is Lord?

e) What is your conception of the activity of the Holy Spirit in personal faith, in the community of believers, and in responsible living in the world?

f) What is your understanding of the kingdom of God; the Resurrection; eternal life?

g) 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?

h) The United Methodist Church holds that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church?

i) Describe the nature and mission of the Church. What are its primary tasks today?

j) Discuss your understanding of the primary characteristics of United Methodist polity.

k) How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitment as a provisional member and commissioned minister in The United Methodist Church?

l) Describe your understanding of diakonia, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the provisional member.

m) What is the meaning of ordination in the context of the general ministry of the Church?

n) Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry.

o) 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 as ministers, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God. What is your understanding of this agreement?

p) Explain the role and significance of the sacraments in the ministry to which you have been called.

* 10. *Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference*

11. Each candidate shall have a personal interview with the conference board of ordained ministry to complete his or her candidacy.

12. Each candidate shall submit on a form provided by the board of ordained ministry a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony, or misdemeanor, or written accusations and its disposition of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or certifying that this candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse. The candidate also shall release required psychological reports, criminal background, credit checks and reports of child abuse.

13. Each candidate shall file with the board a written, concise, autobiographical statement (in duplicate on a prescribed form) regarding age, health, family status, Christian experience, call to ministry, educational record, formative Christian experiences, and plans for service in the Church.

14. Each candidate shall have been recommended in writing to the clergy session based on at least a two-thirds majority vote of the conference board of ordained ministry.

¶ 325. Commissioning—Commissioning is the act of the church that publicly acknowledges God's call and the response, talents, gifts and training of the candidate. The church invokes the Holy Spirit as the candidate is commissioned

to be a faithful servant leader among the people, to lead the church in service, to proclaim the Word of God and to equip others for ministry.

Through commissioning, the church sends persons in leadership and service in the name of Jesus Christ and marks their entrance into a time of provisional as they prepare for ordination. Commissioned ministers are provisional clergy members of the annual conference and are accountable to the bishop and the clergy session for the conduct of their ministry.

During the residency program the clergy session discerns their fitness for ordination and their effectiveness in ministry. After fulfilling all candidacy requirements and upon recommendation of the conference board of ordained ministry, the clergy session shall vote on the provisional membership and commissioning of the candidates. The bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide credentials as a provisional member and a commissioned minister in the annual conference.

The period of commissioned ministry is concluded when the provisional members are received as full members of the annual conference and ordained as either deacon or elder, or a decision is made not to proceed toward ordination and provisional membership is ended.

¶ 326. Service of Provisional Members—All persons who are provisional members shall be appointed by a bishop (¶ 430) and serve as a provisional member of the annual conference for a minimum of two years following the completion of education requirements for full connection. During the provisional period, arrangements shall be offered by the board of ordained ministry for all provisional members to be involved in a residency curriculum that extends theological education by using covenant groups and mentoring to support the practice and work of their ministry as servant leaders, to contemplate the grounding of ordained ministry, and to understand covenant ministry in the life of the conference. Provisional members may be appointed to attend school, to extension ministry, or in appointments beyond the local church. Wherever they are appointed, the service of provisional members shall be evaluated by the district superintendent and the board of ordained ministry in terms of the provisional member's ability to express and give leadership in servant ministry.

1. Provisional members planning to give their lives as deacons in full connection shall be in ministries of Word and Service in the local church or in an approved appointment beyond the local church.

A provisional member preparing for ordination as a deacon shall be licensed for the practice of ministry during provisional membership to perform the duties of the ministry of the deacon as stated in ¶ 328 and be granted support as stated in ¶ 331.14.

2. Provisional members planning to give their lives as elders in full connection shall be in ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service in the local church or in an approved extension ministry.

A provisional member preparing for ordination as an elder shall be licensed for pastoral ministry (§ 315).

3. Provisional members who are serving in extension ministries, enrolled in graduate degree programs, or appointments beyond the local church shall be accountable to the district superintendent and the board of ordained ministry for the conduct of ministry, and for demonstrating their effectiveness in the ministry of the order to which they seek to be ordained. In all cases, they will also demonstrate their effectiveness in servant leadership in the local church to the satisfaction of the board of ordained ministry.

4. Provisional members seeking to change their ordination track shall:

a) Write to the board of ordained ministry and inform the district superintendent and bishop of their intention.

b) Interview with the board of ordained ministry to articulate and clarify their call.

c) Fulfill academic and service requirements.

Upon the recommendation of the board of ordained ministry and by vote of the clergy session the person may be received into full connection with the annual conference and be ordained into the order to which they are transitioning.

§ 327. Eligibility and Rights of Provisional Membership—Provisional members are on trial in preparation for membership in full connection in the annual conference as deacons or elders. They are on probation as to character, servant leadership, and effectiveness in ministry. The annual conference, through the clergy session, has jurisdiction over provisional members. Annually, the board of ordained ministry shall review and evaluate their relationship and make recommendation to the clergy members in full connection regarding their continuance. No member shall be continued on probation beyond the eighth regular session following their admission to provisional membership.

1. Provisional members who are preparing for deacon's or elder's orders may be ordained deacons or elders when they qualify for membership in full connection in the annual conference.

2. Provisional members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following:

a) constitutional amendments;

b) election of delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences

c) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

3. Provisional members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the board of ordained ministry (§ 635.1). They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the General, central, or jurisdictional conferences.

4. Provisional members shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry and are subject to the provisions of the Book of Discipline in the performance of their duties. They shall be supervised by the district superintendent under whom they are appointed. They shall also be assigned a deacon or elder as mentor by the board of ordained ministry. Provisional members preparing to become elders shall be eligible for appointment by meeting disciplinary provisions (§ 315).

5. Provisional members in appointments beyond the local church shall relate themselves to the district superintendent in the area where their work is done. The district superintendent shall give them supervision and report annually to their board of ordained ministry.

6. Discontinuance from Provisional Membership—Provisional members may request discontinuance of this relationship or may be discontinued by the annual conference upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry. When provisional members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church, their action shall be considered a request for discontinuance of their relationship and their credentials shall be surrendered to a district superintendent. Prior to any final recommendation of discontinuance without consent, a provisional member will be advised of the right to a hearing before the executive committee of the conference board of ordained ministry. A report of the action will be made to the full board. The provisions of fair process (§ 362.2) shall be observed and there shall be a review by the administrative review committee under § 636 prior to hearing by the annual conference. When this relationship is discontinued, they shall no longer be permitted to exercise ministerial functions and shall return their credentials to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and their membership shall be transferred by the district superintendent to the local church they designate after consultation with the pastor. The board of ordained ministry shall file with the resident bishop and the secretary of the conference a permanent record of the circumstances relating to discontinuance as a provisional member as required in § 635.3d. After discontinuance, provisional members may be classified and approved as local pastors in accordance with the provision of § 316.

Section VII. The Ordained Deacon in Full Connection

¶ 328. The Ministry of a Deacon—From among the baptized, deacons are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop. Deacons fulfill servant ministry in the world and lead the Church in relating the gathered life of Christians to their ministries in the world, interrelating worship in the gathered community with service to God in the world. Deacons give leadership in the Church's life: in teaching and proclaiming the Word; in contributing to worship, and in assisting the elders in administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in embodying the church's mission to the world; and in leading congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. For the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the church, a pastor-in-charge or district superintendent may request that the bishop grant local sacramental authority to the deacon to administer the sacraments in the absence of an elder, within a deacon's primary appointment. It is the deacons, in both person and function, whose distinctive ministry is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry. From the earliest days of the church, deacons were called and set apart for the ministry of love, justice, and service; of connecting the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized among the children of God. This ministry grows out of the Wesleyan passion for social holiness and ministry among the poor.

Deacons lead the congregation in its servant ministry and equip and support all baptized Christians in their ministry. The distinct ministry of the deacon has evolved in United Methodism over many years—the continuing work of the deaconess, the home missionary, and the diaconal minister. The Church, recognizing the gifts and impact of all predecessor embodiments of the diaconate and providing for the continuation of the office of deaconess, affirms that this distinctiveness is made visible and central to the Church's life and ministry through ordination and that the ministry of the deacon is a faithful response of the mission of the Church meeting the emerging needs of the future. Deacons are accountable to the annual conference and the bishop for the fulfillment of their call to servant leadership.

¶ 329. Ministry, Authority, and Responsibilities of Deacons in Full Connection—1. Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word and Service to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two. Deacons exemplify Christian discipleship and create opportunities for others to enter into discipleship. In the world, the deacon seeks to express a ministry of compassion and justice, assisting laypersons as they claim their own ministry. In the congre-

gation, the ministry of the deacon is to teach and to form disciples, and to lead worship together with other ordained and laypersons.

2. The deacon in full connection shall have the rights of voice and vote in the annual conference where membership is held; shall be eligible to serve as clergy on boards, commissions, or committees of the annual conference and hold office on the same; and shall be eligible for election as a clergy delegate to the General, central, or jurisdictional conference. The deacon in full connection shall attend all the sessions of the annual conference and share with elders in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy (§ 334.1).

3. As members of the Order of Deacons, all deacons in full connection are in covenant with all other such deacons in the annual conference and shall participate in the life of their order.

§ 330. Requirements for Ordination as Deacon and Admission to Full Connection—Provisional members who are applying for admission into full connection and who have been provisional members for at least two years following the completion of the educational requirements for ordination as a deacon specified in .3 below may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference by two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference, upon recommendation by two-thirds vote of the board of ordained ministry, after they have qualified as follows:

1. They shall have served under episcopal appointment in a ministry of service for at least two full annual conference years. Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, the annual conference may equate less than fulltime or nonsalaried service as meeting this qualification. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors determined by the board. Supervision is to be: (a) by the district superintendent, and (b) by the board of ordained ministry. The applicant's service must be evaluated by the board of ordained ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection. Laypersons directly involved in the applicant's servant ministry shall be involved by the board in the annual evaluation.

2. They shall have been previously elected as a provisional member.

3. They shall have met the following educational requirements: (a) graduation with a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree from a college or university listed by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (b) graduation with a Master of Divinity degree or a master's degree from a graduate theological school recognized by the Univer-

sity Senate, or a master's degree in an area of specialized ministry;
(c) or are candidates over the age of 35 with professional certification or license in their area of ministry including a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate academic credit. Educational requirements in every case shall include the basic graduate theological studies of the Christian faith, as outlined in ¶ 324.4 (a).

4. They shall have responded to a written or oral doctrinal examination administered by the board of ordained ministry. The candidate shall demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly in both oral and written form. The candidate's reflections and the board's response shall be informed by the insights and guidelines of Part II of the Book of Discipline. The examination shall also focus upon the covenantal relationship of the applicant to God, to the Church, and to the Order of Deacon, as well as the understanding of diakonia, servant leadership, and the interrelatedness of the Church and the world. The applicant shall be able to articulate the call of God to the order of deacon and to relate that call to leadership within the ministry of all Christians, through the setting of their service, the local church, and the annual conference.

5. The following questions are guidelines for the preparation of the examination:

a) Theology.

(1) How has the practice of ministry affected your experience and understanding of God?

(2) What effect has the practice of ministry had on your understanding of humanity and the need for divine grace?

(3) What changes has the practice of ministry had on your understanding of (a) the "Lordship of Jesus Christ," and (b) the work of the Holy Spirit?

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church?

(5) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

(a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration;

(d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

(6) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness,

integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God?¹⁰

(7) What is the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

(8) Describe the nature and mission of the Church. What are its primary tasks today?

(9) What is your understanding of: (a) the kingdom of God; (b) the Resurrection; (c) eternal life?

b) Vocation.

(1) How do you understand your vocation as an ordained deacon?

c) The Practice of Ministry.

(1) How has the practice of service ministry during the provisional period affected your understanding of ministry?

(2) Do you offer yourself to be appointed by the bishop to a service ministry?

(3) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened?

(4) Are you willing to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disabilities?

(5) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

d) Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection and Ordination as Deacon—The bishop as chief pastor shall engage those seeking to be admitted in serious self-searching and prayer to prepare them for their examination before the conference. At the time

of the examination, the bishop shall also explain to the conference the historic nature of the following questions and seek to interpret their spirit and intent. The questions are these and any others which may be thought necessary:

(1) Have you faith in Christ?

(2) Are you going on to perfection?

(3) Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?

(4) Are you earnestly striving after perfection in love?

(5) Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and God's work?

(6) Do you know the General Rules of our Church?

(7) Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?

(8) Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church?

(9) After full examination do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?

(10) Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?

(11) Do you approve our Church government and polity?

- (12) Will you support and maintain them?
- (13) Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?
- (14) Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
- (15) Will you visit from house to house?
- (16) Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
- (17) Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
- (18) Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
- (19) Will you observe the following directions?

(a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.

(b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.

5. A provisional member of the annual conference who has completed the requirements for deacon's orders and admission into full membership shall be eligible for election to full membership and ordination as deacon by a bishop. Following election, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference, and following ordination, a certificate of ordination.

6. A deacon shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Deacons (see ¶ 415.6). The bishops shall be assisted by other deacons and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in other communions may join the ordaining bishop in laying hands on the head of the candidate, while participating deacons and laity may lay hands on the back or shoulders of the candidate.

* ¶ 331. Appointment of Deacons in Full Connection to Various Ministries—1. Deacons in full connection may be appointed to serve as their primary field of service:

a) Through agencies and settings beyond the local church, including ecumenical agencies, that extend the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world and connect the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized; or

b) Through United Methodist Church-related agencies, schools, colleges, theological schools, and within the connectional structures of The United Methodist Church; or

c) Within a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish leading in the congregation's mission to the world and equipping all Christians to fulfill their own calls to Christian service.

2. Deacons in full connection may be appointed to attend school as part of their renewal and personal growth.

* 3. Deacons in settings that extend the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world are amenable to the annual conference of which they are members and insofar as possible should maintain close working relationship with and effective participation in the work of their annual conference, assuming whatever responsibilities they are qualified and requested to assume.

Deacons under appointment beyond the local church shall submit annually to the bishop and the district superintendent, with a copy to their board of ordained ministry, a written report.

This report shall include a copy of the evaluation by the institution in which the deacon serves. The report and evaluation shall serve as the basis for the evaluation of these deacons in light of the missional needs of the church and the fulfillment of their ordination to be minister of Word and Service. Deacons serving in appointments outside the conference in which they hold membership shall also furnish a copy of their report to the bishop of the area in which they reside and work.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Division of Ordained Ministry, in order to assist the boards of ordained ministry and cabinets, will provide guidelines to validate the appropriateness in service beyond the local church in special settings and will be available for consultation with bishops and cabinets.

4. When deacons in full connection serve in an agency or setting beyond the local church, the bishop, after consultation with the deacon and the pastor in charge, shall appoint the deacon to a local congregation where they will take missional responsibility for leading other Christians into ministries of service. In this ministry the deacons shall be accountable to the pastor in charge, the charge conference, and other bodies that coordinate the ministry of the local church. In those instances where the appointment is in another episcopal area, the appointment to a local church shall be made in consultation with the bishop of that area.

5. This appointment shall be in a setting that allows one to fulfill the call to specialized ministry and where supervision is provided with goals, evaluation, and accountability acceptable to the bishop, cabinet, and the board of ordained ministry.

6. The appointment of deacons in full connection shall be made by the bishop.

a) It may be initiated by the bishop or the district superintendent, individual deacon in full connection, or the agency seeking their service.

b) It shall be clarified by a written statement of intentionality of servant leadership in order to establish a clear distinction between the work to which all Christians are called and the work for which deacons in full connection are appropriately prepared and authorized.

c) If the bishop and cabinet consider an appointment not to be in the best interest of the Church, the bishop may choose not to make the appointment. In such event, the bishop shall be in consultation with the deacon and the board of ordained ministry. The deacon in full connection shall then seek another appointment, request a leave of absence, transitional leave, or relinquish his or her certification of conference membership for deposit with the conference secretary, or be terminated by disciplinary procedures.

d) Deacons in full connection at their request or with their consent may be appointed to a nonsalaried position. Such missional appointments will serve to express the Church's concern for social holiness, for ministry among the poor, and for advancing emerging needs of the future. In such cases, the bishop will carefully review plans for expressing this appointed ministry and will consult with the deacon about the well-being and financial security of his or her family.

7. At the request of the deacon in full connection and with the consent of the bishop and cabinet where conference membership is held, the deacon may receive a less than full-time appointment under the following conditions:

a) The deacon in full connection shall present a written request to the bishop and the conference board of ordained ministry, giving a rationale for the request at least ninety days prior to the annual conference at which the appointment is to be made.

b) Reappointment to less than full-time service shall be requested annually of the bishop by the deacon in full connection.

c) The bishop may make an interim appointment of less than full-time service upon request of a deacon in full connection, with the recommendation of the executive committee of the conference board of ordained ministry.

8. With approval and consent of the bishops or other judicatory authorities involved, deacons in full connection from other annual conferences, other Methodist churches, or other denominations may receive appointments in the annual conference while retaining their home conference membership or denominational affiliation. Appointments are to be made by the bishop of the conference in which the deacon in full connection is to serve. Upon the recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, clergy in such appointments may be granted voice but not vote in the annual conference to which they are appointed. Their membership on

conference boards and agencies is restricted to the conference of which they are a member. Such appointments are renewable annually.

9. Deacons in full connection with the approval of their bishop and the judicatory authorities of the other denomination may receive an appointment to another denomination while retaining their home conference membership. The appointment may be made in response to exceptional missional needs.

10. Deacons in full connection who are serving outside the bounds of their annual conference will receive an appointment to a local congregation in the area in which their primary appointment is located. This arrangement will be made in consultation between the two bishops. The deacons will be under the supervision of an appropriate district superintendent who will provide a written report to the deacon's bishop.

11. Ordained deacons, after consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent and in consultation with the staff-parish relations committee of a charge conference, shall relate to a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they shall hold membership and to which they shall submit an annual report. In those instances where the appointment is in another annual conference the deacon will relate also to a charge conference where he or she resides. The deacons shall be held amenable to the annual conference in which they hold membership for the continuation of their ordination rights.

12. Ordained deacons from other annual conferences of the United Methodist Church may be received by transfer into full membership with the consent of the bishops involved. The process should be initiated by the receiving bishop. Consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the board of ordained ministry of the receiving conference shall be held prior to transfer.

13. Special provisions will be made for deacons whose primary appointment does not have accountability structures, but whose charge conference will supply this need.

14. Support for deacons under appointment of a bishop.

a) Deacons shall receive their support under the policies and agreements of the setting of their primary field of service.

b) When the deacon's primary field of service is within a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, the deacon shall receive a salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish (§ 625.2) not less than the minimum established by the equitable compensation policy of the annual conference for full-time and part-time pastors and shall participate in the denominational pension and benefit plans, programs, and in the health benefit and supplemental programs of his or her annual conference subject to the provisions and standards

of those programs as established by the annual conference where health coverage is not provided from another source.

c) The above (§ 14 [a-b]) does not apply to a deacon appointed by a bishop to a nonsalaried position (§ 6 [d]).

d) In The United Methodist Church and other employing agencies there shall be an annual review of the deacon's performance no later than ninety days prior to annual conference.

e) Since deacons are not guaranteed a place of employment in the Church, special attention shall be given to termination procedures that allow time for seeking another service appointment. Notification of dismissal shall provide a ninety-day period to final termination of employment unless the contract specifies otherwise or except for causes as listed in ¶ 2702. No deacon shall be dismissed from a local church appointment without the deacon's prior consultation with and full knowledge of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the overseeing district superintendent and the presiding bishop.

Section VIII. The Ordained Elder in Full Connection

¶ 332. Ministry of an Elder—Elders are ordained ministers who, by God's grace, have completed their formal preparation and have been commissioned and served as a provisional member, have been found by the Church to be of sound learning, of Christian character, possessing the necessary gifts and evidence of God's grace, and whose call by God to ordination has been confirmed by the Church. 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 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.

As members of the Order of Elder, all elders are in covenant with all other elders in the annual conference and shall participate in the life of their order.

¶ 333. Elders in Full Connection—1. Elders in full connection with an annual conference by virtue of their election and ordination are bound in special covenant with all the ordained elders of the annual conference. In the keeping of this covenant they perform the ministerial duties and maintain the ministerial standards established by those in the covenant. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve, after consultation, as the appointive authority may determine. They live with all other ordained ministers in mutual trust and

concern and seek with them the sanctification of the fellowship. By entering into the covenant, they accept and subject themselves to the process of clergy discipline, including serving on committees on investigation, trial courts, or appellate committees. Only those shall be elected to full membership who are of unquestionable moral character and genuine piety, sound in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and faithful in the discharge of their duties.¹¹

2. A provisional member of the annual conference who has completed the requirements for Elder's Orders and admission into full membership shall be eligible for election to full membership and ordination as elder by a bishop. Following election, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference, and following ordination, a certificate of ordination.

3. An elder shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Elders (see ¶ 415.6). The bishop shall be assisted by other elders and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in other communions may join the ordaining bishop in laying hands on the head of the candidate, while participating elders and laity may lay hands on the back or shoulders of the candidate.

¶ 334. Ministry, Authority, and Responsibilities of an Elder in Full Connection—An elder in full connection is authorized to give spiritual and temporal servant leadership in the Church in the following manner:

1. Elders in full connection shall have the right to vote on all matters in the annual conference except in the election of lay delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences (¶ 602.1a) and shall share with deacons in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. This responsibility shall not be limited by the recommendation or lack of recommendation by the board of ordained ministry, notwithstanding provisions which grant to the board of ordained ministry the right of recommendation.¹² They shall be eligible to hold office in the annual conference and to be elected delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences under the provision of the Constitution (¶ 35, Article IV). Every effective elder in full connection who is in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop provided that if the elder is appointed to serve in an affiliated relationship in a missionary conference (¶ 586) and that appointment is terminated by the bishop who presides in the missionary conference, then the responsibility for meeting this obligation rests with the bishop of the conference of which the elder is a member.¹³

11 See Judicial Council Decisions 406, 534, 552, 555.

12 See Judicial Council Decision 690.

13 See Judicial Council Decisions 462, 473, 492, 534, 552, 555.

2. There are professional responsibilities (§ 340) that elders are expected to fulfill and that represent a fundamental part of their accountability and a primary basis of their continued eligibility for annual appointment. These shall include:

a) Continuing availability for appointment.

b) Annual participation in a process of evaluation with committees on pastor-parish relations or comparable authority as well as annual participation in a process of evaluation with the district superintendent or comparable authority.

c) Evidence of continuing effectiveness reflected in annual evaluations by the pastor-parish relations committee and by the district superintendent or comparable authorities

d) Growth in professional competence and effectiveness through continuing education and formation. The board of ordained ministry may set the minimum standards and specific guidelines for continuing education and formation for conference members;

e) Willingness to assume supervisory and mentoring responsibilities within the connection.

3. When an elder's effectiveness is in question, the bishop shall complete the following procedure:

a) Identify the concerns. These can include an elder's failed professional responsibilities, vocational ineffectiveness, or refusal of episcopal appointment.

b) Hold supervisory conversations with the elder that identifies the concerns, and designs collaboratively with the elder, a corrective plan of action.

c) Upon evaluation, determine that the plan of action has not been carried out or produced fruit that gives a realistic expectation of future effectiveness.

4. If an elder fails to meet professional responsibilities (§ 340), does not demonstrate vocational competence or effectiveness as defined by the annual conference through the board of ordained ministry and cabinet, and/or does not accept the appointment determined by the bishop, then an appointment may be forfeited and the provisions of § 361 may be invoked.

5. Clergy who are retired, on incapacity leave, or on sabbatical leave may at their own initiative apply to the conference board of ordained ministry for affiliate membership in the annual conference where they reside. By a two-thirds vote of the executive session, such clergy may be received with rights and privileges, including service on conference boards, agencies, task forces, and committees, with voice but without vote. Voting membership shall be retained in the clergy member's home annual conference for the duration of affiliate member relationship. Such persons may serve on the board, agency, task force or committee of only one annual conference at any one time.

¶ 335. Requirements for Admission to Full Connection and Ordination as Elder—Provisional members who are candidates for full connection and ordination as elders and have been provisional members for at least two years may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference and approved for elder's ordination by two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference, upon recommendation by two-thirds vote of the board of ordained ministry,¹⁴ after they have qualified as follows. They shall have: (1) served full-time under episcopal appointment for at least two full annual conference years following the completion of the educational requirements specified in 3(b) below. Years of service in any ministry setting requiring the regular proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the short or long-term ordering of the life of the community of faith may count toward the fulfillment of this requirement. Such ministry settings may include campus ministry, college and university chaplaincy, hospital and prison chaplaincy, military chaplaincy, overseas/mission work and other ministries so recognized by the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, an annual conference may equate less than full-time to the requirement of full-time service.

Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors. Supervision is to be (a) personally assumed or delegated by the district superintendent, and (b) assumed by a mentor assigned by the board of ordained ministry. Their service shall be evaluated by the board of ordained ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection.¹⁵ In rare cases, the board of ordained ministry may, by a two-thirds vote, approve years of service in an autonomous Methodist church as meeting this requirement if adequate supervision has been provided; (2) been previously elected as provisional members; (3) met the following educational requirements: (a) graduation with a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree from a college or university listed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or demonstrated competency equivalence through a process designed in consultation with the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (b) graduation with a Master of Divinity degree from a school of theology listed by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or its equivalent as determined by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry; or (c) met the education requirements of ¶ 324.6 for local pastors; (d) educational requirements in every case shall include a minimum of two semester or three quarter hours in

¹⁴ See Judicial Council Decisions 157, 344.

¹⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 555, 719.

each of the fields of United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, provided that a candidate may meet the requirements by undertaking an independent study program provided and administered by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry (see ¶ 1421.3d);

(4) satisfied the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health; (5) prepared and preached at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the board of ordained ministry;

(6) presented a plan and outline for teaching a book or books of the Bible; (7) responded to a written or oral doctrinal examination administered by the board of ordained ministry. The candidate should demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly in both oral and written form. The candidate's reflections and the board's response should be informed by the insights and guidelines of Part II of the Discipline. The following questions are guidelines for the preparation of the examination:

a) Theology.

- (1) How has the practice of ministry affected your experience and understanding of God?
- (2) What effect has the practice of ministry had on your understanding of humanity and the need for divine grace?
- (3) What changes has the practice of ministry had on your understanding of: (a) the "Lordship of Jesus Christ," and (b) the work of the Holy Spirit?
- (4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church?
- (5) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?
- (6) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?¹⁶
- (7) What is the meaning and significance of the sacraments?
- (8) Describe the nature and mission of the Church. What are its primary

tasks today?

(9) What is your understanding of: (a) the kingdom of God; (b) the Resurrection; (c) eternal life?

b) Vocation.

(1) How do you conceive your vocation as an ordained minister?

c) The Practice of Ministry.

(1) How has the practice of ordained ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system?

(2) Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

(3) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened?

(4) Are you willing to minister with all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disabilities?

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

Admission and Continuance of Full Membership in the Annual Conference

¶ 336. Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection—The bishop as chief pastor shall engage those seeking to be admitted in serious self-searching and prayer to prepare them for their examination before the conference. At the time of the examination the bishop shall also explain to the conference the historic nature of the following questions and seek to interpret their spirit and intent. The questions are these and any others that may be thought necessary:

1. Have you faith in Christ?

2. Are you going on to perfection?

3. Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?

4. Are you earnestly striving after it?

5. Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and his work?

6. Do you know the General Rules of our Church?

7. Will you keep them?

8. Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church?

9. After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?

10. Will you preach and maintain them?

11. Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?

12. Do you approve our Church government and polity?
13. Will you support and maintain them?
14. Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
15. Will you visit from house to house?
16. Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
17. Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
18. Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
19. Will you observe the following directions?
 - a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.
 - b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.¹⁷

Section IX. Appointments to Various Ministries

¶ 337. General Provisions—1. All elders in full connection who are in good standing in an annual conference shall be continued under appointment by the bishop unless they are granted a sabbatical leave, an incapacity leave (¶ 357), family leave, a leave of absence, retirement, or have failed to meet the requirements for continued eligibility (¶ 334.2, .3), provided that if the elder is appointed to serve in an affiliated relationship in a missionary conference (¶ 586.4.b) and that appointment is terminated by the bishop who presides in the missionary conference, then the responsibility for meeting this obligation rests with the bishop of the conference of which the elder is a member.¹⁸

2. In addition to ordained elders, persons who have been granted a license for pastoral ministry and who have been approved by vote of the clergy members in full connection may be appointed to local churches as pastors in charge under certain conditions, which are specified in ¶¶ 315-318. All clergy members and licensed local pastors to be appointed shall assume a lifestyle consistent with Christian teaching as set forth in the Social Principles.

3. Elders and deacons in full connection, associate members, provisional members, and persons licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to ministry settings that extend the ministry of The United Methodist Church and the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world. They shall be given the same moral and spiritual support by the annual conference as are persons in appointments to pastoral charges. Their effectiveness shall be evaluated in the

¹⁷ These are the questions that every Methodist preacher from the beginning has been required to answer upon becoming a full member of an annual conference. These questions were formulated by John Wesley and have been little changed throughout the years.

¹⁸ See Judicial Council Decisions 380, 462, 492, 524, 702, 985.

context of the specific setting in which their ministry is performed. Such ministry settings shall include teaching, pastoral care and counseling, chaplaincy, campus ministry, social services, and other ministries so recognized by the conference board of ordained ministry and approved by the bishop.

a) Full connection and provisional elders, associate members, and persons licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to Extension Ministries serving in ministries of pastoral care in specialized settings. See ¶¶ 326, 343-344 for specific information about Extension Ministries.

b) Deacons in provisional membership and full connection may be appointed to appointments beyond the local church that extend the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in a ministry to both the community and the church. This ministry connects community and church and equips all Christians to fulfill their own calls to Christian service. See ¶¶ 326, 328, 329, 331 for specific information about these ministries.

c) All persons in such appointments should:

(1) be appointed to a setting that provides an appropriate support and accountability structure;

(2) continue to be accountable to the annual conference for the practice of their ministry;

(3) provide an annual report, including a narrative of their ministry, evidence of continuing education, and evidence of an annual evaluation in their setting;

(4) maintain a relationship with a charge conference.

¶ 338. The Itinerant System—The itinerant system is the accepted method of The United Methodist Church by which ordained elders are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor.¹⁹ All ordained elders shall accept and abide by these appointments. Persons appointed to multiple-staff ministries, either in a single parish or in a cluster or larger parish, shall have personal and professional access to the bishop and cabinet, the committee on pastor-parish relations, as well as to the pastor in charge. The nature of the appointment process is specified in ¶¶ 430-434.

1. Full-time service shall be the norm for ordained elders in the annual conference. Full-time service shall mean that the person's entire vocational time, as defined by the district superintendent in consultation with the pastor and the committee on pastor-parish relations, is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which one is appointed by the bishop.

2. Less than full-time service may be rendered by a clergy member under the conditions stipulated in this paragraph.²⁰ Less than full-time service shall mean that a specified amount of time less than full-time agreed upon by the bishop

¹⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 713.

²⁰ See Judicial Council Decision 719.

and the cabinet, the clergy member, and the annual conference board of ordained ministry is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which the person is appointed by the bishop. At his or her own initiative, a clergy member may request and may be appointed in one-quarter, one-half, or three-quarter time increments by the bishop to less than full-time service without loss of essential rights or membership in the annual conference. Division of Ordained Ministry-endorsed appointments beyond the local church may be for less than full-time service. Appointment to less than full-time service is not a guarantee, but may be made by the bishop, provided that the following conditions are met:

a) The ordained elder seeking less than full-time service should present a written request to the bishop and the chairperson of the board of ordained ministry at least three months prior to the annual conference session at which the appointment is made. Exceptions to the three-month deadline shall be approved by the cabinet and the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry.

b) Following appropriate consultation, as established in ¶¶ 338 and 430-434, and upon joint recommendation of the cabinet and the board of ordained ministry, the less than full-time category shall be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference.

c) Reappointment to less than full-time service shall be requested by the ordained elder and approved annually by the bishop and cabinet and shall not be granted for more than a total of eight years, except by a three-fourths vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference.

d) Ordained elders who receive appointment at less than full-time service remain within the itineracy and, as such, remain available, upon consultation with the bishop and cabinet, for appointment to full-time service. A written request to return to full-time appointment shall be made to the bishop and cabinet at least six months prior to the annual conference session at which the appointment is to be made.

e) The bishop may make ad interim appointments at less than full-time service upon request of the ordained elder, following consultation as specified in ¶¶ 429-433 and upon recommendation of the cabinet and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, the same to be acted upon by the next regular session of the annual conference.²¹

3. Interim appointments may be made to charges that have special transitional needs.

a) Interim clergy may serve outside the annual conference where membership is held under the provision of ¶ 346.1, with approval and consent of the bishops involved.

21 See Judicial Council Decision 579.

b) Interim appointments will be for a specified length of time, established in advance following consultation with the district superintendent, the pastor-parish relations committee, and the interim pastor.

¶ 339. Definition of a Pastor—A pastor is an ordained elder, provisional deacon (according to 1992 Book of Discipline) or licensed person approved by vote of the clergy members in full connection and may be appointed by the bishop to be in charge of a station, circuit, cooperative parish, extension ministry, ecumenical shared ministry,²² or to a church of another denomination, or on the staff of one such appointment.

¶ 340. Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors—

1. The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops.

2. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment.

a) Word and ecclesial acts:

(1) To preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.²³

(a) To ensure faithful transmission of the Christian faith.

(b) To lead people in discipleship and evangelistic outreach that others might come to know Christ and to follow him.

(2) To counsel persons with personal, ethical, or spiritual struggles.

(3) To perform the ecclesial acts of marriage and burial.

(a) To perform the marriage ceremony after due counsel with the parties involved and in accordance with the laws of the state and the rules of The United Methodist Church. The decision to perform the ceremony shall be the right and responsibility of the pastor.

²² Ecumenical shared ministries are ecumenical congregations formed by a local United Methodist church and one or more local congregations of other Christian traditions. Forms of ecumenical shared ministries include: (a) a federated congregation, in which one congregation is related to two denominations, with persons holding membership in one or the other of the denominations; (b) a union congregation, in which a congregation with one unified membership roll is related to two denominations; (c) a merged congregation, in which two or more congregations of different denominations form one congregation which relates to only one of the constituent denominations; and (d) a yoked parish, in which a United Methodist congregation is yoked with one or more congregations of other denominations.

²³ See Judicial Council Decision 694.

(b) To conduct funeral and memorial services and provide care and grief counseling.

(4) To visit in the homes of the church and the community, especially among the sick, aged, imprisoned, and others in need.

(5) To maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.

b) Sacrament:

(1) To administer the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord according to Christ's ordinance.

(a) To prepare the parents and sponsors before baptizing infants or children, and instruct them concerning the significance of baptism and their responsibilities for the Christian training of the baptized child.

(b) To encourage reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant and renewal of baptismal vows at different stages of life.

(c) To encourage people baptized in infancy or early childhood to make their profession of faith, after instruction, so that they might become professing members of the church.

(d) To explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper and to encourage regular participation as a means of grace to grow in faith and holiness.

(e) To select and train deacons and lay members to serve the consecrated communion elements.

(2) To encourage the private and congregational use of the other means of grace.

c) Order:

(1) To be the administrative officer of the local church and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately provided for.

(a) To give pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership, equipping them to fulfill the ministry to which they are called.

(b) To give oversight to the educational program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media.

(c) To be responsible for organizational faithfulness, goal setting, planning and evaluation.

(d) To search out and counsel men and women for the ministry of deacons, elders, local pastors and other church related ministries.

(2) To administer the temporal affairs of the church in their appointment, the annual conference, and the general church.

(a) To administer the provisions of the Discipline.

(b) To give an account of their pastoral ministries to the charge and annual conference according to the prescribed forms.

(c) To provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation.

(d) To model and promote faithful financial stewardship and to encourage giving as a spiritual discipline by teaching the biblical principles of giving.

(e) To lead the congregation in the fulfillment of its mission through full and faithful payment of all apportioned ministerial support, administrative, and benevolent funds.

(f) To care for all church records and local church financial obligations, and certify the accuracy of all financial, membership, and any other reports submitted by the local church to the annual conference for use in apportioning costs back to the church.

(3) To participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities.

(a) To seek out opportunities for cooperative ministries with other United Methodist pastors and churches.

(b) To be willing to assume supervisory responsibilities within the connection.

(4) To lead the congregation in racial and ethnic inclusiveness.

d) Service:

(1) To embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership.

(2) To give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world.

(3) To build the body of Christ as a caring and giving community, extending the ministry of Christ to the world.

(4) To participate in community, ecumenical and inter-religious concerns and to encourage the people to become so involved and to pray and labor for the unity of the Christian community.

¶ 341. Unauthorized Conduct—1. Pastors shall first obtain the written consent of the district superintendent before engaging for an evangelist any person who is not a general evangelist (¶¶ 630.3f, 1113.7), a clergy member of an annual conference, a local pastor, or a certified lay speaker in good standing in The United Methodist Church.

2. No pastor shall discontinue services in a local church between sessions of the annual conference without the consent of the charge conference and the district superintendent.

3. No pastor shall arbitrarily organize a pastoral charge. (See ¶ 259 for the method of organizing a local church.)

4. No pastor shall hold a religious service within the bounds of a pastoral charge other than the one to which appointed without the consent of the pastor of the charge, or the district superintendent. No pastor shall hold a religious service within the bounds of a pastoral charge or establish a ministry to a college or university campus served by The United Methodist Church without the consent of the pastor of the charge, or campus minister or chaplain serving the charge, or the district superintendent. If that pastor does not refrain from such conduct, he or she shall then be liable to the provisions of ¶ 361.1 and ¶ 2702.

5. All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.²⁴

6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

7. No pastor shall re-baptize. The practice of re-baptism does not conform with God's action in baptism and is not consistent with Wesleyan tradition and the historic teaching of the church. Therefore, the pastor should counsel any person seeking re-baptism to participate in a rite of re-affirmation of baptismal vows.

* ¶ 342. Support for Elders in Full Connection Appointed to Pastoral Charges—To strengthen the effectiveness of the connectional system, assumption of the obligations of the itinerant ministry required upon admission to the traveling connection places upon the Church a counter obligation to provide adequate support for the entire ministry of the Church (¶ 620). The Church shall provide, and the ordained minister is entitled to receive, not less than the equitable compensation established by the annual conference for clergy members according to provisions of ¶ 625.3.²⁵

1. Support for Elders in Full Connection Appointed to Pastoral Charges Who Render Full-Time Service—Each elder in full connection of an annual conference who is in good standing and who is appointed to full-time service under the provision of ¶ 338.1 shall have a claim upon the conference Equitable Compensation Fund and a right to receive not less than base compensation established by the annual conference for persons in full-time service.²⁶

2. Support for Ordained Elders Appointed to Pastoral Charges Who Render Less than Full-Time Service—Each elder in full connection who is in good standing and who is appointed by the bishop to less than full-time service under the provisions of ¶ 338.2 shall have a claim upon the conference Equitable Compen-

24 See Judicial Council Decision 936.

25 See Judicial Council Decision 968.

26 See Judicial Council Decisions 579, 587, 968.

sation Fund in one-quarter increments according to the guidelines established by the annual conference commission on equitable compensation.

* 3. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, the benefits provided to ordained ministers, in addition to the cash compensation, may be different for ordained ministers serving full-time as pastors to local charges and for ordained ministers serving other types of appointments.

4. No pastor shall be entitled to any claim for unpaid base compensation against any church or charge served after pastoral connection with the church or charge has ceased.

Section X. Appointments to Extension Ministries

¶ 343. Appointments Extending the Ministry of The United Methodist Church—1. Elders in effective relationship may be appointed to serve in ministry settings beyond the local United Methodist church in the witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Persons in these appointments remain within the itineracy and shall be accountable to the annual conference. They shall be given the same moral and spiritual support by it as are persons in appointments to pastoral charges.²⁷ Their effectiveness shall be evaluated in the context of the specific setting in which their ministry is performed.

2. The institution or agency desiring to employ an ordained minister shall, when feasible, through its appropriate official, consult the ordained minister's bishop and secure approval before completing any agreement to employ the ordained minister. If the institution or agency is located in another area, the bishop of that area shall also be consulted.

3. Elders desiring an appointment extending the ministry of the United Methodist church or change of appointment shall consult with their bishop and/or district superintendent prior to any interviews relative to such an appointment.

* ¶ 344. Provisions for Appointment to Extension Ministries—Elders and associate members in appointments extending the ministry of the local United Methodist church are full participants in the itinerant system. Therefore, a conference member in an appointment beyond the local United Methodist church must be willing upon consultation to receive an appointment in a pastoral charge. When either the conference member or the annual conference requests appointment to a pastoral charge, the request shall be made in writing to or from the bishop, the cabinet, and the board of ordained ministry. Such a request should be made at least six months prior to annual conference. In both instances, consultation shall give due regard to the individual's special training, experience, skills, and leadership potential.

27 See Judicial Council Decisions 321, 325, 466, 579.

1. Categories of Appointment—In order to establish a clear distinction between the work to which all Christians are called and the tasks for which clergy are appropriately prepared and authorized, the following categories are established for appointments of elders and associate members within the itineracy and those licensed for pastoral ministry of The United Methodist Church.

a) Appointments within the connectional structures of United Methodism:

* (1) Appointments for which the annual conference is liable as employer such as district superintendents, staff members of conference councils and boards, treasurers, bishops' assistants, superintendents or directors of parish development, general evangelists, and campus ministers. Only elders in full connection may be appointed district superintendents;

(2) Appointments to a general agency for which the general agency provides pension contributions through December 31, 2006 to the Ministerial Pension Plan and, effective January 1, 2007, to the Retirement Security Program for General Agencies of The United Methodist Church;

(3) Appointments to a United Methodist institution or other ministry, such as superintendents or directors of parish development, general evangelists, campus ministers, missionaries, faculty and administrators of United Methodist schools of theology or other educational institutions approved by the University Senate; and

(4) Appointments to an ecumenical agency.

* b) Appointments to extension ministries of elders in full connection and other ministry settings which the bishop and conference board of ordained ministry may designate. The board shall annually verify the appropriate employment of persons under its endorsement and request their reappointment.

c) Elders, associate members, and those licensed for pastoral ministry in service under the General Board of Global Ministries may be appointed to the ministries listed in a) and b) above. They may be assigned to service either in annual conferences or central conferences, or with affiliated autonomous churches, independent churches, churches resulting from the union of Methodist Churches and other communions, mission institutions, or in other denominational or ecumenical ministries. They may accept such rights and privileges, including affiliate membership, as may be offered them by central conferences or by other churches to which they are assigned without impairing their relationship to their home annual conference. If appointment is to a missionary conference, the terms of the appointment shall be as provided in ¶ 586.4.

d) Elders, associate members, and those licensed for pastoral ministry may receive appointments beyond the ministry usually extended through the local United Methodist church and other institutions listed above in a) and b)²⁸ when considered by the bishop and the annual conference board of ordained ministry

28 See Judicial Council Decisions 380, 877.

to be a true extension of the Christian ministry of the Church. They may be appointed to pastoral ministry in other Christian denominations at the request of appropriate judicatory officers of that denomination. These ministries shall be initiated in missional response to the needs of persons in special circumstances and unique situations and shall reflect the commitment of the clergy to intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. These appointments may involve clergy with expertise from other vocations. Conference members in such appointments retain conference membership, and the annual conference may choose to extend financial support and benefits for its clergy by vote of the annual conference. (See ¶ 625.3, .5.)

Conference members who serve as staff members of ecumenical agencies or as pastors of non-United Methodist congregations may also be considered as holding an extension ministry, provided their position is approved by the bishop and the conference board of ordained ministry. They shall remain accountable to their vows as members of their annual conference.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, in order to assist boards of ordained ministry, will provide standards and consultation to assist in validating the appropriateness of special ministry settings. In addition, it will provide advocacy for persons serving in settings approved under this paragraph and shall encourage the development of emerging ministries that extend the ministry of the Church into the world.

Those seeking such an appointment shall submit a written statement to the cabinet, and the board of ordained ministry, describing in detail the proposed setting for their ministry, sharing a sense of calling to that ministry and their gifts and evidence of God's grace for it, and expressing the intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows. This material will be submitted not later than 120 days before desired appointment to the proposed setting. On recommendation of the cabinet and the board of ordained ministry, such positions are to be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members of the annual conference.

The bishop may make ad interim appointments in this category after consultation with the cabinet and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, the position to be formally acted upon by the next session of the annual conference.

* 2. Relation to the Annual Conference—a) Accountability to the Annual Conference—All clergy in extension ministries are amenable to the annual conference of which they are members and insofar as possible should maintain close working relationship with and effective participation in the work of their annual conference, assuming whatever responsibilities they are qualified and requested to assume.

All clergy under appointment in extension ministries shall submit annually to the bishop, the district superintendent, and the board of ordained ministry a written report. This report shall serve as the basis for the evaluation of these clergy in light of the missional needs of the Church and the fulfillment of their licensing or ordination to be minister of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order. All clergy formally evaluated by the institutions in which they serve will provide, instead of an evaluation, a narrative report reflecting their ministry. All clergy serving in appointments outside the conference in which they hold membership shall furnish a copy of their report also to the bishop of the area in which they serve. Annual conferences shall review the qualifications of persons in extension ministry status and integrate them into the ongoing work of the annual conference.

b) Responsibility of the Annual Conference—The bishop, representatives of the cabinet, and an endorsed representative from extension ministries within the board of ordained ministry shall provide an opportunity to meet annually with clergy in extension ministries who perform their ministry within the bounds of annual conference, both of that annual conference and those who hold membership elsewhere. The bishop shall convene the meeting, which is to be planned by the cabinet and the board of ordained ministry. The purpose of this meeting is to gain understanding of one another's role and function in ministry; to report to other ordained ministers appointed to extension ministries and discuss with them matters concerning the overall approach to ministry in the episcopal area; to interpret the role and function of extension ministries to the larger church through the offices of the bishop and his or her representatives; to nurture the development of various ministries as significant in assisting the mission of the Church; and to discuss specific programs and services that the bishop and his or her representatives may initiate, in which the various ordained ministers serving in appointments beyond the local church may be qualified as consultants and supervisors. Using the appropriate resources and personnel of the annual conference, the bishop shall provide for an annual visit to the ministry setting of all persons under appointment in extension ministries assigned within the geographical bounds of the annual conference and shall provide a report of the visit to the bishop of persons from other annual conferences.

3. Relation to the Local Church—a) All clergy appointed in extension ministries shall establish membership in a charge conference in their home annual conference in consultation with the pastor in charge and with approval of the district superintendent and the bishop. They shall submit to their home charge conference an annual report of pastoral duties and the fulfillment of their licensing or ordination through their special appointment, including ministerial activities in the charge where they have an affiliate membership relation and in other units of

the Church at large, as well as continuing formation experiences completed and anticipated. This report may be the one submitted to the bishop, district superintendent, and board of ordained ministry (§ 344.2a). District superintendents, because of the nature of their work and the relationship defined in §§ 429.3, 361.1a, and 660, shall not be required to have a charge conference affiliation.

All conference members who are elders in full connection, including those in extension ministries, shall be available and on call to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as required by the Discipline (§ 340.2a) and requested by the district superintendent of the district in which the appointment is held.

b) *Affiliate Relation to a Local Church*—All clergy under appointment to extension ministries and serving outside of the geographical bounds of their home annual conference shall promptly notify the bishop of the area in which they reside of their names, addresses, and the annual conferences in which their credentials are held. They shall be affiliate members without vote of a charge conference either within the district where they carry out the primary work of their appointment or within the district where they reside. Persons serving outside the geographic bounds of any annual conference are exempt from this requirement. The selection of the charge conference shall be made after consultation between the person in extension ministry and the pastor of the local United Methodist church.

These clergy under appointment in extension ministries and serving outside the geographical boundaries of their home annual conference shall submit to the charge conference of which they are affiliate members a copy of the report submitted to their home charge conference and/or an oral report concerning their ministry and the fulfillment of their licensing or ordination. The district superintendent shall be responsible for the notification to these ministers concerning the time and place of the charge conference.

4. *Affiliate Relation to Annual Conference*—Ordained clergy appointed to extension ministries or appointments beyond the local church outside the boundary of their annual conference may at their own initiative apply to the board of ordained ministry for affiliate membership in the annual conference in which their appointment is located or in which they reside. By a two-thirds vote of the clergy session,²⁹ such clergy may be received with rights and privileges, including service on conference boards, agencies, task forces, and committees, with voice and vote but with voice and without vote in the annual conference session. Voting membership shall be retained in the appointee's home annual conference for the duration of affiliate member relationship. Nomination to general Church boards and agencies and election as delegates to general and jurisdictional confer-

²⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 555.

ences shall originate in the appointee's home annual conference. Such persons may serve on the board, agency, task force, or committee of only one annual conference at any one time.³⁰

5. General Provisions—*a)* These appointments shall be made only to positions related to adequate accountability structures, according to guidelines established by the board of ordained ministry and cabinet in the annual conferences in which membership is held.

b) For information regarding pensions, the conference will continue to list the source of annuity claim for each of its clergy.

** c) Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference*

d) All clergy appointed to extension ministries shall attend the annual conference in which membership is held.

** e) Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference*

Provisions for Appointments to Ecumenical Shared Ministries

¶ 345. United Methodist clergy members in full connection may be appointed annually to churches of other Christian denominations or to ecumenical shared ministries. Persons in these appointments remain in the itineracy and shall be accountable to the annual conference. Their effectiveness shall be evaluated in the context of the specific setting in which their ministry is performed. (See ¶ 344.1[d].)

Section XI. Clergy from Other Annual Conferences, Other Methodist and Christian Denominations

* ¶ 346. Provisions for Clergy from Outside the Annual Conference—Ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences and Christian denominations may receive an appointment in the annual conference in the following manner:

* 1. Ordained Clergy or Provisional Members from Other Annual Conferences and Other Methodist Denominations—With approval and consent of the bishops or other judicatory authorities involved, ordained clergy or provisional members of other annual conferences or other Methodist churches may receive appointments in the annual or missionary conference while retaining their home conference membership or denominational affiliation. Appointments are to be made by the resident bishop of the conference in which the clergy person is to serve. If appointment is to a missionary conference, the terms of the appointment shall be as provided in ¶ 586.4. Otherwise upon the recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, clergy in such appointments may be granted voice

³⁰ See Judicial Council Decision 554.

but not vote in the annual conference to which they are appointed. Their membership on conference boards and agencies is restricted to the conference of which they are a member. They shall be compensated no less than the equitable salary provisions of the annual conference in which they serve and participate in the pension and insurance programs of that annual conference. Such appointments are renewable annually.

2. Elders or Ordained Clergy from Other Denominations—On recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, the clergy members in full connection may approve annually clergy in good standing in other Christian denominations to serve appointments or ecumenical ministries within the bounds of the annual conference while retaining their denominational affiliation, provided they present suitable credentials, give assurance of their Christian faith and experience, and release required psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse. They shall submit, on a form provided by the conference board of ordained ministry: a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or a notarized statement certifying that the candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse. They shall give evidence of their agreement with and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity. Their ordination credentials shall be examined by the bishop and the board of ordained ministry and, upon its recommendation, may be recognized as valid elders in The United Methodist Church while they are under appointment. When the board of ordained ministry certifies that their credentials are at least equal to those of United Methodist elders, they may be accorded the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following: (a) constitutional amendments; (b) election of delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences; (c) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of ministers. They may serve on any board, commission, or committee of an annual conference, except the board of ordained ministry and the board of trustees (§§ 635.1, 2512.1). They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the general, jurisdictional, or central conferences. They shall also be subject to the provisions governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension. They shall not have security of appointment.

3. Between conference sessions, the board of ordained ministry may approve them for appointment pending the recognition of their orders. The bishop may make ad interim recognition of valid ordination after consultation with the cabinet and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, pending recognition by the vote of the clergy members in full connection. In every case, prior

examination shall be made of the ordained minister's understanding, acceptance, and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity.³¹

* ¶ 347. Transfers—1. From Other Annual Conferences—Ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences of The United Methodist Church may be received by transfer into provisional or full membership with the consent of the bishops involved. Consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the board of ordained ministry shall be held prior to the transfer.

2. From Other Methodist Denominations—a) Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Methodist churches shall be received by transfer into provisional or full conference membership or as local pastors, with the consent of the bishops or other authorities involved, without going through the process required for ministers from other denominations. The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns shall provide the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry with a list of denominations that meet this definition. Prior consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the board of ordained ministry shall be held in order to determine that the minister meets the standards for conference membership established by the Discipline and the annual conference. A psychological report, criminal background and credit check, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse shall be required. They shall submit, on a form provided by the conference board of ordained ministry:

(1) a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or

(2) a notarized statement certifying that this candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

* b) Ordained elders or ordained clergy being transferred from other Methodist churches shall meet the educational requirements of The United Methodist Church, or the equivalent approved by the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

* c) The Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall certify the satisfaction of educational requirements for conference membership and, in cases where additional education is required, shall develop an educational program in consultation with the board of ordained ministry.

* 3. From Other Denominations—a) On recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, the clergy members in full connection may recognize the orders of ordained clergy from other denominations and receive them as provisional members or local pastors. They shall present their credentials for examination by the bishop and board of ordained ministry and give assurance of their

31 See Judicial Council Decision 444.

Christian faith and experience. They shall give evidence of their agreement with and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity and present a satisfactory certificate of good health on the prescribed form from a physician approved by the board of ordained ministry. The board of ordained ministry, in consultation with the Northern Europe & Eurasia Board of Higher Education and Ministry, shall determine whether they meet the educational requirements for conference membership. A psychological report, criminal background and credit check, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse shall be required. They shall submit, on a form provided by the conference board of ordained ministry:

(1) a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct of child abuse; or

(2) a notarized statement certifying that the candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

b) Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Christian denominations shall serve as provisional members for at least two years and complete all the requirements of ¶ 335, including courses in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, before being admitted into full conference membership.

c) Following the provisional member's election to full conference membership as a deacon or elder as provided in ¶ 326, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference.

4. The board of ordained ministry of an annual conference is required to ascertain from an ordained clergy person seeking admission into its membership on credentials from another denomination whether or not membership in the effective relation was previously held in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors, and if so, when and under what circumstances the ordained minister's connection with such annual conference was severed.

5. Ordained clergy seeking admission into an annual conference on credentials from another denomination who have previously withdrawn from membership in the effective relation in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors shall not be admitted or readmitted without the consent of the annual conference from which they withdrew or its legal successor, or the annual conference of which the major portion of their former conference is a part, such consent to be granted upon recommendation of its board of ordained ministry.

¶ 348. Recognition of Orders of Clergy from Other Denominations—

1. Clergy from other denominations may have their orders recognized by the

clergy members in full connection of the annual conference after examination of their credentials by the bishop and board of ordained ministry. Prior to admission to membership in the annual conference, such recognition of orders may be given upon recommendation of the bishop and board of ordained ministry.

2. When the orders of an ordained minister of another church shall have been duly recognized, the certificates of ordination by said church shall be returned to the minister with the following inscription written plainly on the back:

These orders are recognized by the _____ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, this _____ day of _____, _____ [year].
 _____, President
 _____, Secretary

The ordained minister also will be furnished with a certificate of recognition of orders signed by the bishop.

Section XII. Mentoring and Mentors

* ¶ 349. Mentors—1. Mentors shall be recommended by the cabinet, selected, trained and held accountable by the board of ordained ministry. There are two categories of mentor, each with distinct functions and responsibilities as follows:

a) Candidacy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide counsel and guidance related to the candidacy process. Candidates will be assigned a candidacy mentor by the district committee on ordained ministry in consultation with the district superintendent (¶ 311). Candidacy mentors will work with the candidate until that candidate begins serving in an appointive ministry as a local pastor or a commissioned minister.

* b) Clergy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide ongoing oversight and counsel with local pastors and with provisional members pursuing ordained ministry. Local pastors will be assigned a clergy mentor by the board of ordained ministry in consultation with the district superintendent. Provisional members will be assigned a clergy mentor in full connection by the conference board of ordained ministry in consultation with the district superintendent. A candidacy mentor may continue with the same person if trained to serve as a clergy mentor.

2. Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth. An effective mentor has a mature faith, models effective ministry, and possesses the necessary skill to help

individuals discern their call in ministry. Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry, local pastors and provisional members of an annual conference. Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.

3. The conference board of ordained ministry may assign one mentor to work either with one individual or with a group of local pastors and/or provisional members. Persons transferring from other denominations will also be assigned a clergy mentor (§ 347.3.b).

4. Clergy mentoring begins when a person receives an appointment as a local pastor or as a commissioned minister entering provisional service.

Section XIII. Evaluation for Continuing Formation for Full Members and Local Pastors

¶ 350. Evaluation—Evaluation is a continuous process for formation in servant ministry and servant leadership that must take place in a spirit of understanding and acceptance. Evaluation serves as a process for pastors to assess their effectiveness in ministry and to discern God's call to continue in ordained ministry.

1. The district superintendent, in consultation with the pastor-parish relations committee, will evaluate annually the pastors' effectiveness for ministry (§§ 334.2c, 421, 635.2n, q), using criteria, processes, and training developed by the cabinet and the board of ordained ministry. The pastors in local churches shall participate annually in an evaluation with the committee on pastor-parish relations for use in an ongoing effective ministry and for identifying continuing education needs and plans (§ 258.2g[5]), using criteria, processes, and training developed by the board of ordained ministry and the cabinet.

2. Clergy serving in appointments to extension ministries will undergo annual evaluation by their immediate supervisors, engage in annual self-evaluation, and include copies of these evaluations in the annual report submitted to their bishop, district superintendent, and the board of ordained ministry (§ 344.2a). When possible, they shall have a conversation with their district superintendent about their ministry.

¶ 351. Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth—1. Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities.

2. A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program should include such leaves at least one week each year and at least one month during one year of every quadrennium. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the ministers' vacations and shall be planned in consultation with their charges or other agencies to which they are appointed as well as the bishop, district superintendent, and annual conference continuing education committee.

3. A clergy member may request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment in the local church. Such leaves are available to clergy members who have held full-time appointments for at least six years. Such a leave shall be with the approval of the committee on pastor-parish relations, the church council, and the district superintendent. Annual conferences are encouraged to assist with pulpit supply and other temporary support for such leaves.

4. Financial arrangements for continuing education as part of one's professional development, formation, and spiritual growth shall be negotiated in the following manner: (a) for elders and local pastors it shall be done in consultation with the district superintendent and the committee on pastor-parish relations; (b) for deacons, with an appropriate supervisory body; (c) for district superintendents, with the district committee on superintendency; (d) for conference staff, with the appropriate supervisory body; (e) for others in extension ministries, with the appropriate persons in their agency.

5. Clergy shall be asked by the district superintendent in the charge conference to report on their programs of continuing education, formation, and spiritual growth for the past year and plans for the year to come. The district superintendent shall also ask the local church to describe its provision for time and financial support of continuing education for ministry, professional development, formation and spiritual growth for the pastors, diaconal ministers and deacons serving their primary appointment in that local church.

6. Clergy in extension ministries shall give evidence of their continuing formation and spiritual growth program and future plans in their annual reports (§ 344.2a).

§ 352. Sabbatical Leave—A sabbatical leave should be allowed for a program of study or travel approved by the conference board of ordained ministry. Associate members or clergy members in full connection who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years, or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, from the time of their reception into full or associate membership may be granted a sabbatical leave for up to one year. Whenever possible, the compensation level of the last appointment served before the leave should be maintained in the appointment made at

the termination of the leave. The appointment to sabbatical leave is to be made by the bishop holding the conference, upon the vote of the annual conference after recommendation by the board of ordained ministry. Associate members and clergy members in full connection shall submit a written request for a sabbatical leave, including plans for study or travel, to the board of ordained ministry, with copies to the bishop and district superintendent, ordinarily six months before the opening session of the annual conference. To be eligible for an additional sabbatical leave, associate members and clergy members in full connection shall have served six consecutive years under full-time appointment, or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, following the previous sabbatical leave.³² After consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members granted sabbatical leave shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they shall hold membership and to which they shall submit an annual report.

Section XIV. Changes of Conference Relationship

¶ 353. Provision for Change in Conference Relationship—When a change in conference relationship is deemed necessary or desirable by a provisional or associate member, clergy in full connection, district superintendent or bishop, whether for a short or long term, the person(s) requesting the change shall make written request to their board of ordained ministry stating the reasons for the requested change of relationship. In addition, the board of ordained ministry may request personal interviews with the provisional or associate members and members in full connection named in the requested change, except where personal appearance results in undue hardship.³³ Clergy appointed to a general agency of The United Methodist Church shall be covered by the policies of the agency in relation to family leave, maternity or paternity leave, and incapacity leave.

* ¶ 354. Voluntary Leave of Absence—

1. Provisional, associate, or members in full connection of the annual conference who for sufficient reason choose to temporarily take leave from their ministerial appointment may request in writing with a copy to the bishop and their district superintendent a voluntary leave through the board of ordained ministry. This leave is granted or renewed by vote of the clergy members in full connection upon recommendation by the board of ordained ministry.

2. A voluntary leave of absence may be taken for a variety of reasons:

32 See Judicial Council Decision 473.

33 See Judicial Council Decisions 524, 530.

a) Personal Leave—A relationship that is granted to clergy who self-determine for personal reasons that they are temporarily unable or unwilling to continue in a ministry appointment.

b) Family Leave—A relationship that is granted to clergy who, because of an immediate family member's need for full-time care, are temporarily unable to continue in a ministry appointment.

c) Transitional Leave—A leave granted for up to twelve months with approval of the bishop and the board of ordained ministry Executive Committee to provisional and associate members and full clergy members in good standing who are temporarily between appointments.

A transitional leave of absence may be granted for the following reasons:

(1) A provisional or full member deacon needs to seek and secure an appointable primary position—compensated or nonsalaried.

(2) A provisional member, associate member, or full member elder needs to transition from an extension ministry to another appointment.

During transitional leave, the clergyperson shall provide quarterly substantiation of his or her effort to obtain such an appointable position to the bishop and to the board of ordained ministry Executive Committee.

3. Written request for a voluntary leave of absence, with the exception of transitional leave, should be made at least ninety days prior to the annual conference session giving specific reasons for the request.³⁴ Representatives of the annual conference board of ordained ministry may interview the clergy member to determine sufficient cause.³⁵ This relationship shall be approved annually upon written request of the clergy member and personal or family leave shall not be granted for more than five years in succession, except by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection.³⁶ The leave shall be counted as a part of the eight-year limit for provisional members (§ 327) unless the limit is extended by the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference upon the recommendation of the board of ordained ministry.

4. Between sessions of the annual conference, voluntary leave of absence may be granted or terminated, with the approval of the bishop and district superintendents, by the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry.³⁷ This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference at its next session.³⁸

34 See Judicial Council Decision 689.

35 See Judicial Council Decision 782.

36 See Judicial Council Decisions 581, 782.

37 See Judicial Council Decision 689.

38 See Judicial Council Decision 689.

5. Should there be active complaints or charges, a request for voluntary leave of absence shall not be permitted until those complaints or charges have been resolved.

6. Clergy on voluntary leave of absence shall have no claim on the conference funds. Notwithstanding the foregoing, where the conference has made certain elections under applicable benefit plans that require continued participation by clergy on voluntary leaves of absence, the clergy shall continue to participate in such plans. They may participate in the conference health program through their own contributions, if applicable. However, in exceptional circumstances, on recommendation of the bishop and district superintendents, salary and/or other benefits, subject to the terms of the applicable benefit plans, may be granted to a clergy member, if applicable, by vote of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference. In an interim between sessions of the annual conference, by vote of the bishop, cabinet, and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, salary and/or benefits, subject to the terms of the applicable benefit plans, may be granted, if applicable.

7. Clergypersons on voluntary leave shall be eligible for membership on annual conference committees, commissions, or boards. They may vote for other clergy delegates to general or jurisdictional conferences and may be elected to serve as delegates themselves.

8. After consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent and the staff-parish relations committee of a local church, clergy members shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and submit an annual report. They shall report all marriages performed, baptisms administered, funerals conducted and other ministerial activities to the charge conference, pastor in charge, and board of ordained ministry. The exercise of this ministry shall be limited to the charge conference in which their membership is held and with the written permission of the pastor in charge unless special permission is granted by the bishop of the conference where membership is held. With the permission of the bishop of the conference where membership is held, under the supervision of the district superintendent, the clergy member may preach, teach, perform marriages, and, if holding sacramental privileges, administer the sacraments outside of the charge where membership is held.

9. Those on voluntary leave of absence shall be held amenable to the annual conference for their conduct and the performance of their ministry. In case of failure to report to the board of ordained ministry, the complaint procedures may be invoked (§ 361).

* 10. Clergy members on voluntary leave of absence may, with the permission of the bishop, continue to hold an existing reserve commission as an armed forces chaplain, but may not voluntarily serve on extended active duty.

11. When an end to voluntary leave of absence is requested, except for transitional leave, it shall be by written request at least six months prior to the session of annual conference.³⁹ The board of ordained ministry shall review the circumstances surrounding the granting of the leave for the purpose of determining whether those circumstances have been alleviated or resolved. When the board has determined that the circumstances of the voluntary leave have not been alleviated or resolved and the request is denied, the board will inform the person of the remaining options, which include:

a) remaining on voluntary leave of absence; b) taking honorable location; c) being recommended to the bishop and district superintendents to be placed on involuntary leave, administrative location, or involuntary retirement,⁴⁰ using the fair process of ¶ 362.2; or d) such other action as deemed appropriate.

12. When clergy members on voluntary leave of absence do not request an annual extension of the leave of absence during the five-year period or do not indicate willingness to return to the itinerant ministry at the end of the five-year period, following documented efforts to make contact with the clergyperson, the provisions of location (¶ 359)⁴¹ or the complaint procedures of ¶ 361 may be invoked.

¶ 355. Involuntary Leave of Absence—

1. The bishop and the district superintendents may request an involuntary leave of absence without the consent of the provisional, associate, or full member, preferably ninety days prior to the annual conference session. They shall give to the clergy member and the board of ordained ministry in writing specific reasons for the request. The fair process for administrative hearings as set forth in ¶ 362.2 shall be followed in any involuntary leave of absence procedure. The clergyperson has a right to a hearing before the bishop, district superintendents,⁴² and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry prior to being placed on involuntary leave of absence.

2. An involuntary leave may be requested by the bishop and the district superintendents when:

a) A written or signed complaint is not resolved through the supervisory response process (¶ 361.1b) within 120 days and is referred as an administrative complaint (¶ 361.1d).

39 See Judicial Council Decision 721.

40 See Judicial Council Decision 689.

41 See Judicial Council Decisions 450, 459, 508, 524, 530.

42 See Judicial Council Decisions 917.

b) Remedial action is required to address allegations of incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform ministerial duties, which becomes an administrative complaint (§§ 362.1a and 363.2).

c) An administrative or judicial complaint requires more than a ninety-day suspension (§ 361.1c).

Should there be complaints or charges pending at the time of a request for involuntary leave of absence, they should be placed in the personnel file of the clergyperson. All subsequent actions concerning such entries should be duly noted and placed in the file.

3. Involuntary leave of absence shall be approved by two-thirds vote of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference.⁴³ By two-thirds vote of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference, upon recommendation of the bishop, district superintendents, and board of ordained ministry, the ninety-day notice requirement may be waived. Involuntary leave shall be approved annually upon written request of the district superintendents and shall not be approved for more than three years in succession.

4. Between sessions of the annual conference, an involuntary leave of absence may be granted or terminated, with the approval of the bishop and cabinet, by the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry. This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference at its next session.

5. Clergy on involuntary leave shall have no claim on the annual conference funds. The annual conference assumes no financial responsibility for salary, pension, or other benefits for clergy on involuntary leave of absence. Notwithstanding the foregoing, where the conference has made certain elections under applicable benefit plans that require continued participation by clergy on involuntary leaves of absence, the clergy shall continue to participate in such plans. They may participate in the conference health plan through their own contributions, if applicable. In exceptional circumstances, with the recommendation of the bishop and cabinet, salary and/or other benefits, subject to the terms of the applicable benefit plans, may be granted by vote of the clergy session of the annual conference. Between sessions of the annual conference, in unusual circumstances, the bishop and cabinet may recommend and the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry may approve funding of pensions and other benefits, subject to the terms of the applicable benefit plans, pending approval by the annual conference.

6. Clergy placed on involuntary leave shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference. Ministerial service shall be limited to

43 See Judicial Council Decision 782.

that charge and shall only be provided with the written consent of the pastor in charge and with the approval of the district superintendent, bishop, and pastor/staff parish relations committee.

7. Clergy on involuntary leave shall not participate in the boards and agencies of the annual conference, be delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, or vote on other clergy delegates.

8. When an end to the involuntary leave of absence is requested by the bishop and district superintendents, it shall be by written request at least six months prior to the session of annual conference. The board of ordained ministry shall review the circumstances surrounding the granting of the relationship for the purpose of determining whether the conditions of the leave have been met. If the board determines that the conditions of the involuntary leave have not been resolved, they may recommend other courses of remedial action as stated in ¶ 363.2.

9. If the district superintendents and bishop do not intend to appoint a person after three (3) years on involuntary leave, they shall notify both the board of ordained ministry and the clergyperson at least six months prior to the session of the annual conference and recommend an appropriate change in conference relationship. The clergyperson shall have the right to request a change to a voluntary leave of absence or termination of the involuntary leave of absence.

10. The administrative review committee (¶ 636) shall ensure that the disciplinary procedures for involuntary leave of absence were properly followed. The entire process leading to the recommendation for involuntary leave of absence and its resolution shall be reviewed by the administrative review committee, and it shall report its findings to the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference.

* ¶ 356. Maternity or Paternity Leave—Maternity or paternity leave, not to exceed one fourth of a year, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption.

1. Persons desiring maternity or paternity leave should file their request with the committee on pastor-parish relations after consulting with the district superintendent at least ninety days prior to its beginning to allow adequate pastoral care for the churches involved to be developed.

2. During the leave, the clergy member's annual conference relations will remain unchanged, and the health and welfare benefit plans will remain in force.

* 3. A maternity or paternity leave in accordance with the laws of the country will be considered as an uninterrupted appointment for pension purposes.

* 4. Compensation will be maintained in accordance with the laws of the country.

5. During the leave time, pastoral responsibility for the church or churches involved will be handled through consultation with the committee on pastor-parish relations of the local church(es) and the district superintendent.

6. Special arrangements shall be made for district superintendents, bishops, and those under special appointment.

* ¶ 357. Incapacity Leave Resulting From Health Matters and Disabling Conditions—* 1. When clergy who are members of an annual conference (¶ 369) are unable to perform their ministerial work because of incapacity due to health matters and disabling conditions, upon recommendations of the conference board of ordained ministry and the conference board of pensions, and by a majority vote of the executive session of clergy members in full connection with the annual conference who are present and voting, they may be granted annual incapacity leave without losing their relationship to the annual conference; provided, however, that such leave may be granted or renewed upon reasonable and appropriate investigation by the board of ordained ministry. This relationship may be initiated by the clergy member or cabinet with or without the consent of the clergy member through the board of ordained ministry. When incapacity leave is given without the clergy member's consent, reasonable accommodation shall be offered whenever possible. When a clergy member is granted incapacity leave by the annual conference, if the medical evidence has not yet met the standards for the receipt of benefits as set forth in the Comprehensive Protection Plan, section 5.04, the conference board of pensions may authorize payment of the benefits in the amount that would otherwise be payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan. The payments shall be made by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits as a charge to the annual conference granting the incapacity leave. If payments from the Comprehensive Protection Plan are subsequently approved, the annual conference will be reimbursed for benefits already paid, not to exceed the amount otherwise payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan. Each incapacity leave granted by the annual conference shall be recorded in the conference minutes.

* 2. When clergy who are members of an annual conference are unable to perform their ministerial work between sessions of the annual conference on account of health matters and disabling conditions, with the approval of a majority of the district superintendents, after consultation with the executive committee of the conference board of ordained ministry and the executive committee of the

conference board of pensions, an incapacity leave may be granted by the bishop for the remainder of the conference year.

* 3. When clergy members on incapacity leave provide medical evidence that they have recovered sufficiently to resume ministerial work, or are able to return through reasonable accommodation, they may receive an appointment from a bishop between sessions of the annual conference, thereby terminating the incapacity leave. Such termination of leave, together with the effective date, shall also be recorded in the minutes of the annual conference at its next regular session.⁴⁴

* 4. A person under consideration for incapacity leave shall have the right to appear before the board of ordained ministry or to designate someone to meet with the Board on his or her behalf.

* ¶ 358. Retirement—Retired clergy members are those who have been placed in the retired relation either at their own request or by action of the clergy session upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry.⁴⁵ Requests for retirement shall be stated in writing to the bishop, cabinet, and board of ordained ministry at least one hundred twenty days prior to the date on which retirement is to be effective unless waived by the bishop and cabinet. The board of ordained ministry shall provide guidance and counsel to the retiring member and family as they begin a new relationship in the local church.

1. Mandatory Retirement—Every clergy member of an annual conference who will have attained age seventy-two on or before July 1 in the year in which the conference is held shall automatically be retired.⁴⁶

* 2. Voluntary Retirement—a) With Twenty Years of Service—Any clergy members of the annual conference who have completed twenty years or more of service under appointment as ordained ministers or as local pastors with pension credit may request the annual conference to place them in the retired relation with the privilege of receiving their pensions for the number of approved years served in the annual conference or conferences and such other benefits as the final annual conference may provide.

* b) With Thirty Years of Service or at Age Sixty-two—At their own request and by vote of the clergy members in full connection, any clergy members who will have attained age sixty-two on or before July 1 in the year in which the session of the annual conference is held or will have completed thirty years of service under appointment as an ordained minister or a local pastor.

* c) With Forty Years of Service or at Age Sixty-five—At their own request and by vote of the clergy members in full connection, any clergy members who will have attained age sixty-five on or before July 1 in the year in which the ses-

44 See Judicial Council Decision 473.

45 See Judicial Council Decisions 87, 88, 531.

46 See Judicial Council Decisions 7, 165, 413, 578.

sion of the conference is held or will have completed forty years of service under appointment as an ordained minister or as a local pastor, as of the conference session may be placed in the retired relation with the privilege of making an annuity claim

d) The dates specified in ¶ 358.1 and .2a-c notwithstanding, between sessions of the annual conference any member who attains the age and/or number of years of service specified in those sections may, upon the member's own request and with the approval of the bishop, cabinet, and executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, be granted the retired relation ad interim, with applicable annuity claim, subject to the approval of the clergy members in full connection at the next annual conference session.

e) The annual conference, at its discretion, upon joint recommendation of the board of ordained ministry and the conference board of pensions, may designate any time within the ensuing conference year as the effective date of retirement of a clergy member who is placed in the retired relation under the provisions of § 2b or § 2c above.⁴⁷

3. Involuntary Retirement—By a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, the clergy members in full connection may place any clergy members in the retired relation with or without their consent and irrespective of their age if such relation is recommended by the board of ordained ministry and the cabinet.⁴⁸ The procedures for fair process in administrative hearings shall be followed in any involuntary retirement procedure. Written notice of the intended action shall be given to such member by the board of ordained ministry at least one hundred and eighty days prior to annual conference. Written notice also should be given to the chairperson of the administrative review committee.

The administrative review committee (¶ 636) shall ensure that the disciplinary procedures for involuntary retirement were properly followed. The entire process leading to the recommendation for involuntary retirement shall be reviewed by the administrative review committee, and it shall report its findings to the clergy session of members in full connection of the annual conference. Any clergy member who is placed in the retired relationship under this subparagraph shall be entitled to the privilege of receiving his or her pension for the number of approved years served in the annual conference or conferences and such other benefits as the final annual conference may provide, payment to begin the first of any month after the ordained minister attains age sixty-two. If pension begins prior to the age at which retirement under ¶ 356.2c could have occurred, then the provisions of ¶ 1506.4i shall apply.

47 See Judicial Council Decision 769.

48 See Judicial Council Decisions 522, 769.

4. Preretirement Counseling—The board of ordained ministry in cooperation with the conference board of pensions shall offer to all clergy members anticipating retirement preconsultation at least five years prior to the date of anticipated retirement (§ 635.2n). The purpose of the consultation will be to assist the clergy and spouses to plan and to prepare for the adjustments associated with retirement as well as providing guidance and counsel for their return to a new relationship in the local church. In preretirement counseling the board of ordained ministry and the conference board of pensions may relate to the annual conference association of retired ministers or similar organization where it exists. The boards shall take initiative in assisting retirees to establish such organizations.

5. Charge Conference Membership—a) All retired clergy members who are not appointed as pastors of a charge, after consultation with the pastor and the district superintendent, shall have a seat in the charge conference and all the privileges of membership in the church where they elect to hold such membership except as set forth in the Discipline. They shall report to the charge conference and to the pastor all marriages performed, baptisms administered, and other pastoral functions. If they reside outside the bounds of the conference, they shall forward annually to the conference where membership is held a report of their Christian and ministerial conduct, together with an account of the circumstances of their families, signed by the district superintendent or the pastor of the charge within the bounds of which they reside. Without this report, the conference, after having given thirty days' notice, may locate them without their consent.

6. Appointment of Retired Ordained Ministers—A retired ordained minister shall be eligible to receive an appointment when requested by the bishop and cabinet. A retired ordained minister appointed to a pastoral charge shall have neither a claim upon minimum compensation, nor further pension credit. Retired ordained ministers may serve on conference agencies.⁴⁹

7. Return to Effective Relationship—A clergy member who has retired under the provisions of § 358.2 may at his or her own request be made an effective member upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, the bishop and cabinet, and by majority vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference and thereby be eligible for appointment so long as he or she remains in the effective relation or until § 358.1 applies. Each clergy member requesting return to effective relationship after voluntary retirement must meet the following conditions: (1) presentation of their certificate of retirement; (2) a satisfactory certificate of good health on the prescribed form from a physician approved by the board of ordained ministry. However, any pension being received through the Annual Conference shall be discontinued upon their return to the effective relationship. The pension shall be reinstated upon subsequent retirement.

⁴⁹ See Judicial Council Decisions 87, 88, 531, 558.

¶ 359. Honorable Location—1. An annual conference may grant clergy members in full connection certificates of honorable location at their own request, provided that the board of ordained ministry shall have first examined their character and found them in good standing, and provided that the clergy session shall also pass on their character after the request is made, and provided further, that this relation shall be granted only to one who intends to discontinue service in the itinerant ministry. The board of ordained ministry shall provide guidance and counsel to the locating member and family as they return to a new relationship in the local church.⁵⁰ Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, an annual conference may offer transition assistance.

2. Location shall be certified by the presiding bishop. Associate members or clergy members in full connection located according to the provisions of this paragraph shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference, and they shall surrender their certification of conference membership for deposit with the conference secretary. After consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent and the staff-parish relations committee of a local church, located clergy members shall designate the local church in which they shall hold membership. Documentation of this consent and approvals shall be filed with the board of ordained ministry. As clergy members of the charge conference, they shall be permitted to exercise ministerial functions only with the written permission of the pastor in charge. They shall have all the privileges of membership in the church where they elect to hold charge conference membership, except as set forth in the Book of Discipline. When approved by the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, a person on honorable location may be appointed ad interim by the bishop as a local pastor. A copy of the annual report to the charge conference shall be forwarded to the registrar of the board of ordained ministry in order for location to be continued. They shall report to the charge conference and the pastor all marriages performed, baptisms administered, and funerals conducted and shall be held amenable for their conduct and the continuation of their ordination rights to the annual conference within which the charge conference membership is held.

Failure to submit the report for two consecutive years may result in termination of orders upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry and vote of the clergy session. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to persons granted involuntary location prior to the General Conference of 1976. The names of located members after the annual passage of their character shall be printed in the journal.

50 See Judicial Council Decision 366.

3. Ordained ministers on honorable location may request the annual conference to grant them the status of honorable location-retired.⁵¹ Requests for retired status shall be stated in writing to the bishop, cabinet, and registrar of the board of ordained ministry at least ninety days prior to the annual conference session. Those granted honorable location retired status shall be accountable for all ministerial services performed to the charge conference in which they hold membership. If such services have been performed, they shall report to that charge conference and exercise their ministry under the supervision of the pastor in charge therein as outlined in ¶ 359.2. They shall continue to be held amenable for their conduct, through accountability to their charge conference, to the annual conference in which charge conference membership is held.

¶ 360. *Withdrawal*—1. *Withdrawal to Unite with Another Denomination*⁵²—When ordained members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination, their certification of conference membership, and their written request to withdraw shall be deposited with the conference secretary.

2. *Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office*—Ordained members of an annual conference in good standing who desire to leave their ministerial office and withdraw from the conference may be allowed to do so by the annual conference at its session. The ordained minister's certifications of ordination and conference membership, and their written request to withdraw, shall be given to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and his or her membership may be transferred to a church which he or she designates, after consultation with the pastor, as the local church in which he or she will hold membership.⁵³

3. *Withdrawal Under Complaints or Charges*—When clergy members are named as respondents to a complaint under ¶ 361.1(d) and desire to withdraw from the membership of the annual conference, it may permit them to withdraw under the provisions of ¶ 2719.2. The clergy member's certifications of ordination and conference membership shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and their membership may be transferred to a local church that they designate, after consultation with the pastor.⁵⁴

Withdrawn under complaint or withdrawn under charges shall be written on the face of the credentials.

51 See Judicial Council Decision 717.

52 See Judicial Council Decision 696.

53 See Judicial Council Decision 552.

54 See Judicial Council Decisions 552, 691.

4. **Withdrawal Between Conferences**⁵⁵—In the event that withdrawal by surrender of the ministerial office, to unite with another denomination, or under complaints or charges, should occur in the interval between sessions of an annual conference, the clergy member's credentials, under the provisions of ¶ 360.1 and .3, shall be surrendered to the bishop or district superintendent along with a letter of withdrawal from the ordained ministry. Both the credentials and the letter of withdrawal shall be deposited with the secretary of the conference. This action shall be reported by the board of ordained ministry to the annual conference at its next session.⁵⁶ The effective date of withdrawal shall be the date of the letter of withdrawal.⁵⁷

Section XV. Complaints

¶ 361. **Complaint Procedures**—1. Ordination and membership in an annual conference in The United Methodist Church is a sacred trust. The qualifications and duties of local pastors, associate members, provisional members, and full members are set forth in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, and we believe they flow from the gospel as taught by Jesus the Christ and proclaimed by his apostles. Whenever a person in any of the above categories, including those on leaves of all types, honorable or administrative location, or retirement, is accused of violating this trust, the membership of his or her ministerial office shall be subject to review.

This review shall have as its primary purpose a just resolution of any violations of this sacred trust, in the hope that God's work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Christ.

A just resolution is one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right in so far as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. In appropriate situations, processes seeking a just resolution as defined in ¶ 361.1(b) may be pursued. Special attention should be given to ensuring that cultural, racial, ethnic and gender contexts are valued throughout the process in terms of their understandings of fairness, justice and restoration.

When a complaint is received by the bishop, both the person making the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is made will be informed in writing of the process to be followed at that stage. When and if the stage changes, those persons will continue to be informed in writing of the new process in a timely fashion.

55 See Judicial Council Decision 696.

56 See Judicial Council Decision 552.

57 See Judicial Council Decision 691.

a) Supervision—In the course of the ordinary fulfillment of the superintending role, the bishop or district superintendent may receive or initiate complaints about the performance or character of a clergyperson.⁵⁸ A complaint is a written and signed statement claiming misconduct or unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties.⁵⁹ The person filing the complaint and the clergyperson shall be informed by the district superintendent or bishop of the process for filing the complaint and its purpose.⁶⁰

b) Supervisory Response—The supervisory response is pastoral and administrative and shall be directed toward a just resolution among all parties. It is not part of any judicial process. The complaint shall be treated as an allegation or allegations during the supervisory process. At all supervisory meetings no verbatim record shall be made; no legal counsel shall be present; the person against whom the complaint was made may choose another person to accompany him or her with the right to voice; the person making the complaint shall have the right to choose a person to accompany him or her with the right to voice.⁶¹

The supervisory response shall be carried out by the bishop or the bishop's designee in a timely manner, with attention to communication to all parties regarding the complaint and the process. At the determination of the bishop, persons with qualifications and experience in assessment, intervention, or healing may be selected to assist in the supervisory response. The bishop also may consult with the committee on pastor-parish relations for pastors, the district committee on superintendency for the district superintendents, appropriate personnel committee or other persons who may be helpful.

The supervisory response may include a process that seeks a just resolution in which the parties are assisted by a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s), in reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties.⁶² The bishop, the person filing the complaint, the respondent, and other appropriate persons shall enter into a written agreement outlining the process, including any agreements on confidentiality. If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the parties and the parties shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties.

A process seeking a just resolution may begin at any time in the supervisory or complaint process. This is not an administrative or judicial proceeding.

When the supervisory response is initiated, the bishop may notify the chairperson of the board of ordained ministry that a complaint has been filed, of the

58 See Judicial Council Decision 685.

59 65. See Judicial Council Decisions 763, 777.

60 See Judicial Council Decision 751.

61 See Judicial Council Decision 836.

62 See Judicial Council Decisions 691, 700, 751, 763, 768.

clergy person named, of the general nature of the complaint; and, when concluded, of the disposition of the complaint.⁶³

c) Suspension—When deemed appropriate, to protect the well-being of the person making the complaint, the congregation, annual conference, other context for ministry, and/or clergy, the bishop, with the recommendation of the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, may suspend the person from all clergy responsibilities, but not from an appointment, for a period not to exceed ninety days. During the suspension, salary, housing, and benefits provided by a pastoral charge will continue at a level no less than on the date of suspension.⁶⁴ The person so suspended shall retain all rights and privileges as stated in ¶ 334. The cost of supply of a pastor during the suspension will be borne by the annual conference.

d) Referral of a Complaint—Upon receiving a written and signed complaint, the Bishop shall, within 45 days, either dismiss the complaint after consultation with the cabinet, as having no basis in law or fact, or shall initiate the supervisory response process. If within 120 days after the initiation of the supervisory response, resolution is not achieved, the bishop shall either:

(1) Refer the matter to a 3rd party mediator(s) if this has not been attempted;⁶⁵ or

(2) Dismiss the complaint with the consent of the cabinet giving the reasons therefore in writing, a copy of which shall be placed in the pastor's file; or

(3) Refer the matter as an administrative complaint (¶ 362.1a) or judicial complaint (¶ 2704).⁶⁶

All time limitations may be extended for 30 days upon the consent of the complainant and the respondent.

e) Supervisory Follow-up and Healing—The bishop and cabinet shall provide a process for healing within the congregation, annual conference, or other context of ministry if there has been significant disruption by the complaint. This process may include sharing of information by the bishop or the bishop's designee about the nature of the complaint without disclosing alleged facts, which may compromise any possible forthcoming administrative or judicial process. When facts are disclosed, due regard should be given to the interests and needs of all concerned, including the respondent and complainant who may be involved in an administrative or judicial process. This may include a process of a just resolution, which addresses unresolved conflicts, support for victims, and reconciliation for parties involved.⁶⁷

63 See Judicial Council Decisions 691, 982.

64 See Judicial Council Decision 776.

65 See Judicial Council Decision 700.

66 See Judicial Council Decision 700.

67 See Judicial Council Decision 763.

Section XVI. Administrative Complaint: Fair Process, Referral, and Disposition

¶ 362. Administrative Complaint—1. Definition of Referred Complaints—a) Administrative Complaint—If the bishop determines that a complaint is based on allegations of incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform ministerial duties, he or she shall refer the complaint as an administrative complaint to the board of ordained ministry for its consideration of remedial or other action⁶⁸ (see ¶ 363.2).

b) Judicial Complaint—If the bishop determines that the complaint is based on allegations of one or more offenses listed in ¶ 2702.1, the bishop shall refer the complaint to counsel for the church, in accordance with the provisions of ¶ 2704.2.

2. Fair Process in Administrative Hearings—The following procedures are presented for the protection of the rights of individuals and for the protection of the Church in administrative hearings. The process set forth in this paragraph commences upon referral of a matter as an administrative complaint. Special attention should be given to the timely disposition of all matters and to ensuring racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the committee hearing the complaint.

a) In any administrative proceeding the bishop or the bishop's designee and the respondent (the person against whom the administrative complaint has been filed) shall have a right to be heard before any final action is taken.

b) Notice of any hearing shall advise the respondent of the reason for the proposed procedures with sufficient detail to allow the respondent to prepare a response. Notice shall be given not less than twenty days prior to the hearing.

c) The respondent shall have a right to be accompanied by a clergyperson in full connection to any hearing, in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary provisions. The clergyperson accompanying the respondent shall have the right to voice.⁶⁹

d) In any administrative hearing, under no circumstances shall one party, in the absence of the other party, discuss substantive issues with members of the pending hearing body. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer of the hearing body.

e) The respondent shall have access to all records relied upon in the determination of the outcome of the administrative process.⁷⁰

f) In the event that a clergyperson fails to appear for supervisory interviews, refuses mail, refuses to communicate personally with the bishop or district super-

68 See Judicial Council Decision 763.

69 See Judicial Council Decision 972.

70 See Judicial Council Decision 974.

intendent, or otherwise fails to respond to supervisory requests or requests from official administrative committees, such actions or inactions shall not be used as an excuse to avoid or delay any Church processes, and such processes may continue without the participation of such individual.

3. Immunity from Prosecution—In order to preserve the integrity of the Church's administrative process and ensure full participation in it at all times, the bishop, cabinet, board of ordained ministry, witnesses, advocates, administrative review committee, clergy in full connection voting in executive session, and all others who participate in the Church's administrative process shall have immunity from prosecution of complaints brought against them related to their role in a particular administrative process, unless they have committed a chargeable offense in conscious and knowing bad faith. The complainant/plaintiff in any proceeding against any such person related to their role in a particular judicial process shall have the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence, that such person's actions constituted a chargeable offense committed knowingly in bad faith. The immunity set forth in this provision shall extend to civil court proceedings, to the fullest extent permissible by the civil laws.

¶ 363. Disposition of Administrative Complaints—1. When a complaint has been received, the board of ordained ministry shall develop a response in a timely manner. The complaint shall be referred to a committee of the board that deals with matters of conference relations (other than the executive committee) and this committee shall conduct an administrative hearing following the fair process provisions of ¶ 362.1a. The bishop or a cabinet representative shall present the administrative complaint to the committee. The respondent shall be given an opportunity to address the administrative complaint in person, in writing and with the assistance of a clergyperson in full connection, with voice. Once the committee has heard the bishop or the bishop's designee, the respondent, and others as determined by the chairperson of the committee, it may recommend remedial action, discontinuance, leave of absence, administrative location, dismissal of the complaint or such other action that it deems appropriate, to the board of ordained ministry. The board may accept or amend the recommendations of the committee, or it may dismiss the complaint. In rare instances, the board may refer the complaint back to the bishop for possible referral as a judicial complaint. The board alternately may refer the matter to the resident bishop as deemed appropriate for a process that seeks a just resolution (see ¶ 361.1b). The bishop shall institute such a process and may use the assistance of a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s). Such referral will not constitute a dismissal. The appropriate persons, including a cabinet member and a representative of the board of ordained ministry, shall enter into a written agreement outlining

the process including any agreement on confidentiality. The parties shall be told that any resolution remains subject to final approval by the board. If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the parties and the parties shall agree on any matters disclosed to third parties. If the just resolution process results in resolution, the signed written statement of resolution shall be given to the board, and the board may dismiss the matter, retain oversight relating to any terms or conditions of the statement of resolution or take such other action as deemed appropriate. If the process does not result in resolution, it is returned to the board for further action. The board's response will be shared with the clergyperson, the bishop, the cabinet, and the person bringing the original complaint.⁷¹

2. Remedial Action—In cooperation with the cabinet and in consultation with the clergyperson, the board of ordained ministry may choose or recommend one or more of the following options for a program of remedial action, subject to regular oversight by the board and annual review:

- a) Program of continuing education (§ 351);
- b) Leave of absence, voluntary or involuntary (§§ 354, 355);
- c) Early retirement (§ 358.2) or involuntary retirement (§ 358.3);
- d) Sabbatical leave (§ 352);
- e) Honorable location (§ 359);
- f) Surrender of ordained ministerial office (§ 360.2);
- g) Personal counseling or therapy;
- h) Program of career evaluation;
- i) Peer support and supervision;
- j) Private reprimand: a letter signed by the chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the clergyperson's district superintendent, addressed to the clergyperson with a file copy in the permanent file of the board of ordained ministry (§ 606.6) stating the appropriateness of the complaint, the specific remedial action required, and the conditions under which the reprimand shall be withdrawn. A report of the reprimand and the remedial action taken shall remain in the personnel file of the respondent once the reprimand has been withdrawn.

3. Administrative location—*a) Clergy Residing Beyond the Bounds of the Conference*—Any clergy members residing beyond the bounds of the conference in which membership is held shall be subject to administrative complaints or process exercised by the appropriate officers or committees of the conference of which he or she is a member, unless the presiding bishops of the two annual conferences and the clergy member subject to the process agree that fairness would be

71 See Judicial Council Decision 917.

better served by having the process carried out in the annual conference in which he or she is serving under appointment, or if retired, currently residing.

b) Recommendation to Administrative Location—(1) Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, the annual conference may place members on administrative location when, in the judgment of the annual conference, members have demonstrated a pattern of being unable effectively and competently to perform the duties of itinerant ministry; provided that the annual conference shall have first examined their character and found them in good standing. The requirements of fair process as set forth in ¶ 362.1a shall be followed in any administrative location procedure.

(2) The board of ordained ministry shall notify the clergy member, chairperson of the administrative review committee, bishop, district superintendent, and the complainant of the recommendation to administrative location at least sixty days before the opening of the next annual conference.

The notice to the clergy member shall also inform the member of the right to a hearing before the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry prior to the recommendation being forwarded to the clergy session for consideration and action.⁷² Such choice by the ordained member must be made and notification of the choice sent to the bishop and the chairperson of the board of ordained ministry within thirty days following receipt of notice from the board.⁷³ The chairperson of the board of ordained ministry shall preside at such a hearing. The recommendation of the board of ordained ministry shall be acted upon by the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference.

(3) The administrative review committee (¶ 636) shall ensure that the disciplinary procedures for administrative location were properly followed. The entire process leading up to the recommendation to administrative location shall be reviewed by the administrative review committee, and it shall report its findings to the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference.

(4) The provisions of ¶ 363.3b above apply to administrative location, except that a person on administrative location may not be given ad interim appointments by the bishop. Upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry, an annual conference may offer financial assistance from conference resources in this transition.

4. Recommendation to Discontinue Provisional Membership—

a) The board of ordained ministry shall recommend the discontinuance of a provisional member in keeping with the provisions of ¶ 327.6.

b) This process shall be reviewed by the Administrative Review Committee pursuant to ¶ 636.

72 See Judicial Council Decisions 917, 950

73 See Judicial Council Decisions 384, 485.

Section XVII. Readmission to Conference Relationship

¶ 364. Readmission to Provisional Membership—Persons who have been discontinued as provisional members under the provisions of ¶ 327.6 from an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors may be readmitted by the annual conference in which they held previously such membership and from which they requested discontinuance or were discontinued, or its legal successor, or the annual conference of which the major portion of their former conference is a part, upon their request and recommendation by the district committee on ordained ministry, the board of ordained ministry, and the cabinet after review of their qualifications, as required in ¶ 324, and the circumstances relating to their discontinuance. When reinstated by vote of the clergy members in full connection, their provisional membership in the conference shall be restored, they shall serve a minimum of two years of provisional according to ¶ 326 prior to ordination, and they shall be authorized by licensing and/or commissioning to perform those ministerial functions for which they are qualified.

* ¶ 365. Readmission after Honorable or Administrative Location—Associate members or clergy members in full connection requesting readmission after honorable or administrative location must meet the following conditions:

1. Presentation of their certificate of location.
2. A satisfactory report and recommendation by the charge conference and pastor of the local church in which their membership is held.
3. A satisfactory certificate of good health on the prescribed form from a physician approved by the board of ordained ministry. The board of ordained ministry should require psychological evaluation.

* 4. Recommendation by the board of ordained ministry, and the cabinet after review of their qualifications, the circumstances relating to their location and conduct during the period of time while on location. When reinstated by vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference that granted the location, their membership in the conference shall be restored, and they shall be authorized to perform all ministerial functions. The board of ordained ministry may require at least one year of service as a local pastor prior to readmission to conference membership.

* ¶ 366. Readmission After Leaving the Ministerial Office—Associate members or clergy members in full connection who have left the ministerial office under the provisions of ¶ 360 to an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors may be readmitted by the annual conference in which they held previously such membership and to which they surrendered the ministerial office, or its legal successor, or the annual conference of

which the major portion of the former conference is a part, upon their request and recommendation by the board of ordained ministry, and the cabinet after review of their qualifications and the circumstances relating to the surrender of their ministerial office. A period of at least two years service as a local pastor shall be required prior to readmission to conference membership. This service may be rendered in any annual conference of The United Methodist Church with the consent of the board of ordained ministry of the annual conference in which members previously held membership. When reinstated by vote of the clergy members in full connection, their membership in the conference and their credentials shall be restored, and they shall be authorized to perform all ministerial functions.⁷⁴

¶ 367. Readmission After Termination by Action of the Annual Conference—Persons who have been terminated by an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors may seek full membership in the annual conference in which they previously held membership and from which they were terminated, or its legal successor, or the annual conference of which the major portion of their former conference is a part, upon recommendation of the cabinet and completion of all requirements for full membership, including all requirements for election to candidacy and provisional membership. The provisions of this paragraph shall apply to all persons terminated or involuntarily located prior to General Conference of 1976.

* ¶ 368. Readmission After Involuntary Retirement—Clergy members of an annual conference desiring to return to effective relationship after having been placed in involuntary retirement (¶ 358.3) must meet the following conditions:

1. Submit a written request for reinstatement to the board of ordained ministry.

2. The board of ordained ministry and the cabinet shall review the member's qualifications and the circumstances relating to his or her retirement.

3. Recommendation by the board of ordained ministry, the bishop, cabinet, and a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference that granted the involuntary retirement. A period of at least two years of service as a local pastor shall be required prior to readmission to conference membership.

4. Presentation of the certificate of retirement.

* 5. Presentation of satisfactory certificate of good health on the prescribed form from a physician approved by the board of ordained ministry. The board of ordained ministry may require a psychological evaluation.

74 See Judicial Council Decisions 515, 552.

Section XVIII. General Provisions

* ¶ 369. 1. The annual conference is the basic body of The United Methodist Church. The clergy membership of an annual conference shall consist of deacons and elders in full connection (¶¶ 329, 333), provisional members (¶ 327), associate members, affiliate members (¶¶ 344.4, 586.4), and local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment to a pastoral charge (¶ 317). All clergy are amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their duties in the positions to which they are appointed.⁷⁵

2. Both men and women are included in all provisions of the Discipline that refer to the ordained ministry.⁷⁶

* 3. In all cases where boards of ordained ministry, or clergy in executive session vote on granting any status regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, it is understood that the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements only. Each person voting is expected to vote prayerfully based on his or her personal judgment of the applicant's gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness for the mission of the Church.

4. All clergy members mentioned in ¶ 369.1 shall receive written communication about decisions made regarding their relationship with the annual conference.

5. There shall be an annual meeting of this covenant body, in executive session of clergy members in full connection with the annual conference, including both deacons and elders, at the site of the regular session of the annual conference, or at an alternative time and location determined by the bishop after consultation with the cabinet and the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, to consider questions relating to matters of ordination, character, and conference relations (¶¶ 605.6, 636.2).

6. A special session of the annual conference may be held at such time and at such place as the bishop shall determine, after consultation with the cabinet and the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry. A special clergy session shall have only such powers as stated in the call.

75 See Judicial Council Decisions 327, 371.

76 See Judicial Council Decisions 317, 155.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

Approved by

The United Methodist Church Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference
2009

1. Lay Speaker (Certified Lay Speaker or Local Preacher)

BoDNEE 2009 § 266.1.2.3. § 267.1.2.3..268. § 269.

To earn a certificate as a Lay Speaker, a person needs theoretical and practical training in close connection with the local church where the person is a member. The purpose is to develop skills for leadership of the spoken word and care-giving ministry in the local congregation.

A training course for certified Lay Speakers must include:

Bible study

Introduction to Old and New Testaments; self studies of the Bible; use of commentaries and Bible dictionaries

Spoken communication

Personal testimonies; Biblical meditations, addresses and sermons, as well as conduct of worship and devotion

Leadership

Church and community leadership, including leading of small group meetings for prayer, training, study and discussion

Care-giving ministry

Counselling, spiritual advise, visiting and pastoral care

Methodist theology

Doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, BoDNEE 2009: § 101 – 166, (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, The ministry of all Christians and Social Principles),

A Methodist presentation of the Christian faith and selected Wesley Standard Sermons.

Methodist policy

Connectional structure, organization and church culture

Methodist history

Methodist history in England, Northern Europe, and the local area (nation).

The United Methodist Theological Seminaries within the Central Conference, the Annual Conference board of ordained ministry, or another board or agency authorized by the Annual Conference develop the curriculum with literature available in each national language and the framework of time for the total training course:

Either

- a training course based on part time studies over minimum 20 two hours course days spread over 2 years, under the leadership of the ordained Elder in charge,

Or

- a training course scheduled as a one year full time bible school.

Or

- a training course based on a combination of self studies and seminars planed for all lay speakers of an Annual Conference by a Theological Seminary or the board of ordained ministry.

The training course might be open to any active member, but license as a lay speaker is depending on the recommendation of the Elder in charge and the sanction of the Charge Conference. License is given by the District Superintendent.

2. Ordained Elder

BoDNEE 2009 § 332 – 336.

To be an Ordained Elder a person needs academic education at seminary or university and practical training in connection with a local church. The purpose is to develop pastoral leaders for ministry in the local congregation and in the Annual Conference, especially as servants of preaching, sacraments and leadership.

The ordained Elder in Full Connection

In order to be ordained elder a person must have completed:

- equivalent to 5 years full time training at seminary or university on level of: Candidatus Theologiae, Master of Divinity, Theological candidate examine or equivalents.

- a 2 years period of practical training in a local congregation mentored by an Elder.

The Commissioned Minister as Provisional Member towards Elder ordination

BoDNEE 2009 § 324 – 327.

A person who has:

- received license as Lay Speaker, and
- for at least one year received the status as certified candidate for ordained ministry, BoDNEE 2009 § 310 – 314,
- finished studies on level of a Master of Divinity, or equivalents, or
- finished studies on level of a Bachelor of Divinity, or equivalents,

can be Commissioned Minister as Provisional Member of the Annual Conference, mentored by an ordained. BoDNEE 2009 § 349.

The time a person can be Commissioned Minister is no shorter than 2 years and no longer than 8 years.

If the provisional member has finished studies on the level of Bachelor or equivalent, studies on Master level must be fulfilled.

During the period of provisional membership all student must fulfil the requirements of the congregational based studies prescribed by the NEBE.

The Theological Seminaries of the UMC within the Central Conference area have the authority to approve the curriculum for studies at the level of, and equivalent to:

- the Bachelor of Divinity degree, 3 years of full time studies,
 - the Master of Divinity degree, 2 years of full time studies,
- in line with the international academic standards and the theological tradition of the UMTSA and the UMTSE.

(UMTSA: United Methodist Seminaries, America,
UMTSE: United Methodist Theological Seminaries, Europe)

The Annual Conference board of ordained ministry can recognize Master degrees from other theological seminaries, universities and colleges, if they meet the same educational standards as the Master degree from a United Methodist Seminary. In

all cases the degree must include or be extended by studies in the areas of United Methodist doctrine, polity and history.

3. Ordained Deacon
BoDNEE 2009 § 328 – 331.

To be an ordained Deacon a person needs education in the fields of care, pedagogic, music, leadership, teaching AND theological training at seminary or university AND practical training in connection with a local church. The purpose is to educate Deacons for the local congregation and social institutions and the society in which we live.

The ordained Deacon in Full Connection

In order to be ordained Deacon a person must have completed:

- 3 years full time education in the field of current interest to receive the degree on Bachelor level or equivalent, e.g. teacher, musician or therapist.
- 2 year of full time theological and diaconal training on Master level.
- a 2 years period of practical training mentored by an ordained and in connection with a local congregation.

The Commissioned Minister as Provisional Member
towards Deacon ordination
BoDNEE 2009 § 324 – 327

A person who has:

- received license as Lay Speaker, and
- passed studies on Bachelor level, or equivalents, and
- fulfilled the first year of theological and diaconal training on Master level for deacons, and
- for at least one year received the status as certified candidate for ordained ministry, BoDNEE 2009 § 310 – 314,

can be Commissioned Minister as Provisional Member of the Annual Conference, mentored by an ordained. BoDNEE 2009 § 349.

The time a person can be Commissioned Minister is no shorter than 2 years and no longer than 8 years. During this period the Commissioned Deacon has to fulfil the educational requirements for a provisional member toward deacon ordination. The training must include extended diaconal studies equivalent to ¼ of full

time study period. In these studies, the provisional member shall each year read a part of the curriculum (350 page study) and write an essay where ones personal ministry as a deacon is related to the curriculum. In addition the congregational based studies as prescribed by NEBE must be fulfilled.

The academic and practical studies are fulfilled in combination with ministry under Episcopal appointment.

The Theological Seminaries of the UMC within the Central Conference area have the authority to approve the curriculum for:

- the 2 year of full time theological and diaconal studies for the basic education, in line with the international standards and the theological tradition of the UMTSA and the UMTSE.

4. Local Pastors

BoDNEE 2009 § 315 – 320.

Local Pastors are non-ordained Lay Speakers who are appointed to serve in a local congregation with pastoral functions under the guidance and supervision of the accountable Elder.

A person, appointed Local Pastor, who is:

- certified Lay Speaker, and
- certified candidate for Pastoral Ministry, BoDNEE 2009 § 314, and
- not able to follow the fulltime professional training for Bachelor or Master degrees, and
- licensed Local Pastor in according to BoDNEE 2009 § 315.2.b
- is more than 35 year of age

has to follow a 5 year part-time study program:

- equivalent to 1½ years fulltime academic theological training without studies in biblical language.

The Local Pastor going for provisional membership and commissioning BoDNEE 2009 § 324.6

A person who has:

- completed an Advance Course which upgrade the Local Pastor course to a Bachelor of Divinity degree or equivalent, (this course is 1½ years fulltime studies or 3 – 5 years part-time studies at seminary,) and
- reached forty years of age.

**The Commissioned Minister as Provisional Member towards
Elder ordination
BoDNEE 2009 § 324 – 327**

A person who has:

- fulfilled the requirements of Course of Study program and Advanced Course study program, and thereby passed studies on Bachelor of Divinity level, or equivalents,

can be Commissioned Minister as Provisional Member of the Annual Conference, mentored by an ordained. BoDNEE 2009 § 349.

The time a person can be Commissioned Minister is no shorter than 2 years and no longer than 8 years.

The Theological Seminaries of the UMC within the Central Conference area have the authority to approve the curriculum for studies at the level of, and equivalent to:

- the 5 years part-time studies for Local Pastors, equivalent to 1 ½ years fulltime studies, and
- the Advance Study programme to upgrade Local Pastors to the Bachelor of Divinity degree, equivalent to 1½ years fulltime studies, in line with the international study programs determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

**The Student Local Pastor
BoDNEE 2009 § 318.3.**

A person who has:

- received license as Lay Speaker, and
- finished the studies of one-third of the work for a Master of Divinity degree or equivalents, and
- for at least two year received the status as certified candidate for ordained ministry, BoDNEE 2009 § 310 – 314, and
- upon recommendation of the board of ordained ministry,

can be appointed as Student Local Pastor to a local congregation under the supervision of the appointed Elder, BoDNEE 2009 § 318.3.

UMC THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES

within the area of the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference

Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary

Narva Street 51
10152 Tallinn
Estonia
www.emkts.edu.ee

Høyskolen for kristendom – Metodistkirkens Studiesenter

(Akersbakken 37)
Postboks 2744 St. Hanshaugen
0172 Oslo
Norway
www.metodistkirken.no

Russia United Methodist Theological Seminary

Khamovnichesky val 24/2
Moscow 119048
Russia
www.umc-eurasia.ru

Metodistkirkens Nordiska Teologiska Seminarium, Överås

Danska Vägen 20
412.66 Gothenburg
Sweden
www.metodistkyrkan.se/overas

Metodistikirkon Teologinen Seminaari

Punavurenkatu 2 B
FIN-00120 Helsinki
Finland

Teologiska Högskolan Stockholm

Åkeshovsvägen 29
SE-168.39 Bromma
Sweden
www.ths.se

