

CHAPTER 2

The District Committee on Ordained Ministry

For more information contact GBHEM's director of Candidacy, Mentoring, and Conference Relations, candidacy@gbhem.org or 615-340-7374.

The district committee on ordained ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the board of ordained ministry. (¶666.1)

The BOM shall select from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of each district committee on ordained ministry, which shall function as subcommittees of the board. (¶ 635.1g)

The committee shall supervise all matters dealing with candidacy for the ordained ministry and with the license for local pastor. (¶666.5)

Membership

The following shall be represented in the membership of the dCOM, including women, men and racial/ethnic members. All are voting members. (¶666.1)

- The district superintendent
 - At least three professing members of local churches
 - A representative from the BOM
 - At least six other clergy in the district including elders and deacons
- When possible include
- A deacon or elder age 35 or younger
 - An associate member
- The committee may include
- One local pastor who has completed the Course of Study
- The district superintendent fills interim vacancies.
 - The district superintendent, in consultation with the chairperson or executive committee of the BOM, annually nominates dCOM members for approval by the annual conference.
 - The BOM provides training for new members, including distribution of available written guidelines (such as copies of this chapter, GBHEM resources, and information about Web sites).

Organization and Function

- The *Book of Discipline* mandates the dCOM's responsibilities (§666).
- dCOM officers are elected at the first meeting following the annual conference session when the members were elected (§666.2).
- dCOMs throughout the annual conference and the BOM work closely together.

Officers

In addition to the following officers, the dCOM may appoint or elect other officers as needed (such as an enlistment or continuing education officer or a secretary). Immediately following election, a list of dCOM officers should be sent to the registrar of the BOM.

Chairperson: May be held by the BOM representative, but not the district superintendent. Duties include:

- Ensuring committee members are properly trained.
- Calling regular meetings and inform members of the time, place, and agenda.
- Presiding over meetings or appoint a temporary chair.
- Ensuring that members understand and fulfill their duties.
- Maintaining a working relationship with the BOM, especially candidacy and BOM registrar, and others who must regularly receive information from the dCOM.
- Working with the BOM and other dCOM chairs to ensure consistent procedures.

Registrar: The dCOM elects a registrar other than the district superintendent or dCOM chair. Duties include:

- Serving as custodian for all dCOM files (all files, including psychological assessment reports, belong to the annual conference).
- Keeping a separate file on each person for whom the dCOM is responsible (see worksheets at end of chapter for contents).
- Informing those responsible what materials are needed for each file, and instruct the dCOM on what decisions are required for different candidates. Immediately inform the BOM registrar of all actions taken and decisions made.
- Transferring individual files to another district or annual conference upon receipt of a written request by the receiving district or annual conference.
- Forwarding all files to the BOM registrar when candidates become associate or provisional members (copies of file material may be sent to the BOM along with any recommendations, without the written permission of the candidate).
- Informing all those interviewed regarding decisions and recommendations as soon as possible, both orally and in writing (§666.11).

Executive secretary (optional): This office may be filled by the district superintendent. Duties include:

- Recording and distributing each meeting's minutes to committee members if there is no recording secretary.
- Conducting correspondence and business as directed by the chairperson.

BOM representative: The BOM shall appoint one of its members to be its representative to the dCOM and provide communication between the BOM and dCOM (§635.1f).

Record Keeping

- Maintains service records and files on every local pastor and candidate until the individual becomes an associate or provisional member of the annual conference. A copy of the files is then forwarded to the BOM registrar.

- Records and files are kept on behalf of the annual conference and shall be maintained under [guidelines](#) provided by the [General Council on Finance and Administration](#) (GCFA) (§666.7). See Chapter 27.

Functions of the dCOM

Enlistment

- Encourage those discerning a call to licensed or ordained ministry to enter candidacy.
- Consult with the district superintendent and the vocational discernment coordinator to assign candidates to a candidacy mentoring group or to a candidacy mentor when beginning candidacy (§310.1b, §349.1).
- Aid the local church and other conference agencies in inviting candidates for licensed or ordained ministry (§310.1e).
- Maintain a list of all current candidates (§666.3).

Candidacy Mentoring

- Each candidate is assigned to a candidacy mentoring group wherever possible, or to a candidacy mentor, by the dCOM in consultation with the district superintendent and the vocational discernment coordinator (wherever named) (§349.1a).
- Candidacy mentors shall be recommended by the district superintendent, selected and trained by the BOM, and are accountable to both the dCOM and the BOM (§349.1).

Duties of the Vocational Discernment Coordinator

- Coordinates the annual conference's candidacy mentoring process.
- Ensures that the candidacy process is easily accessible.
- Guides and trains candidacy mentors.
- Implements a group candidacy mentoring process for the annual conference wherever possible.

Duties of the Candidacy Mentor

- Encourages and nurtures candidates as they consider different dimensions of vocational and life decisions.
- Serves as co-discerner, consultant, and catalyst in a way that provides freedom, confidentiality, flexibility, and stability for the candidate in discerning God's call.
- Assists candidates through the candidacy stages, using *Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy* or other conference approved candidacy resource.
- Records decisions made about candidates' progress in the [online candidacy application system](#) (OCAS).

Basic Guidelines for Candidacy Mentoring (see Chapter 5)

- All conversations and information shared between candidates and candidacy mentors is confidential. Candidacy mentors may release details of conversations or other data about the candidate only with the candidate's written permission.
- The candidacy mentor helps maintain communication between the candidate and the dCOM to confirm the candidate's participation in the discernment process and to help the candidate understand the work and decisions of the dCOM.
- The candidacy mentor's report to the dCOM is important for the dCOM's decisions about certification and continuance.
- If the candidate is applying for license as a local pastor or for provisional membership, the candidacy mentor report shall be part of the dCOM interview.
- Candidacy mentors work with the candidate until he or she begins serving in an appointive ministry as a local pastor or as a commissioned minister (§349).
- Mentors may work with one individual or with a group as assigned (§349.1a.).

Psychological Assessment

- Communicate with the chairperson of the BOM's psychological assessment committee for the receipt, utilization, and return of the psychological assessment report.
- Receive psychological assessment reports from the BOM psychological assessment committee for use in the dCOM's evaluation of the candidate evaluation.
- Review each psychological assessment report for the candidate's potential for gaining sufficient levels of competence and readiness for licensed and ordained ministry.
- Use the reports appropriately.
- Honor confidentiality issues as outlined in the Authorization for Release of Information signed by the candidate.
- Treat the report as a consultative factor rather than a determinative factor in recommending a decision to approve, defer, or deny the candidate.
- Return the report to the psychological assessment committee chairperson for the BOM's use.
- Refer to GBHEM's [Behavioral Health Guidelines](#) for guidance in addressing critical issues identified in the report.

Interviewing

Interviewing is at the heart of the dCOM's work and is one of the most basic personnel functions the church uses. The dCOM conducts interviews for many different purposes. The interview focus and information needed are provided in Chapter 11. Refer as well to the [Toward Effective Interviews PowerPoint](#) at www.gbhem.org/bom under Training Resources.

All who are interviewed by the dCOM shall be informed of decisions and recommendations as soon as possible, orally and in writing (§666.11).

Decisions Made by the dCOM

Candidacy Certification

- Evaluate candidates for approval of certification after they meet all requirements in §310.
- Inform the BOM candidacy registrar of all those issued certificates of candidacy (§666.3).
- Communicate with the BOM to ensure that all candidates participate in Orientation to Ministry at the proper time (§312).
- Recognize and approve service settings for certified candidates working toward provisional membership (§324.2).
- Maintain communication with all candidates.
 - Provide counsel regarding pre-theological studies (§666.4) and encourage candidates to attend a UM theological school (§ 310.2f).
 - Inform candidates about available scholarships and educational loans (see www.gbhem.org/loansandscholarships).
 - Receive transcripts and reports from college/seminary to review academic progress (§313.2).

Continuation of Certified Candidacy and Approval for Provisional Membership

Candidates' progress is evaluated and candidates are interviewed annually by the dCOM to decide recommendation for the continuation of candidacy (§313, §666.9). Candidates meet the following conditions:

- Apply in writing for candidacy renewal (§666.9).

- Receive recommendation for renewal by their charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the dCOM (§313.1, §666.9).
- Have a progress report submitted by the candidacy mentor on the exploration and discernment of the candidate's call.
- Present an official transcript demonstrating satisfactory educational progress (§313.2).
- Demonstrate gifts, graces, and fruits for the work of ministry (§312, §666.9).
- Evaluate candidates for approval of provisional membership after they meet all requirements in §324, and make a recommendation in writing to the BOM after candidate receives approval based on a three-fourths majority vote of the dCOM.

License for Pastoral Ministry for Local Pastor

The dCOM is responsible for approval, continuation and oversight of local pastors serving in their district. Duties include:

- Examining certified candidates for licensing as local pastors (§315, §666.8).
- Helping applicants enroll in a licensing school.
- Upon approval, recommending to the BOM that the executive session approve a license for all candidates who have satisfactorily completed the requirements (§315).
- Giving the BOM local pastors or elders registrar the names and addresses of all approved for licensing.
- Referring approved local pastors to the appropriate BOM registrar for enrollment in the Course of Study, and receiving progress reports through the district superintendent.
- Recommending those who qualify for annual continuance as local pastors to the BOM (§319.2, §666.8). This includes those enrolled in and those who have completed Course of Study.
- Communicating to the BOM registrar the circumstances of any discontinuance of a local pastor (§320.1).
- Recommending to the BOM those who qualify for restoration of credentials as a local pastor (§320.4, §666.8).
- Overseeing a process of supervision for personal and professional growth for local pastors.

Clergy Mentoring for Local Pastors

- Local pastors in the Course of Study are assigned a clergy mentor who may or may not have been their candidacy mentor. Mentors are recommended by the district superintendent and trained and assigned by the BOM (§311, §349.4).
- The local pastor and mentor review learning goals and plans the local pastor had as a certified candidate, and then establish a learning goals covenant to coincide with new responsibilities.
- The mentor reports annually to both the dCOM and BOM, in order to maintain communication between the local pastor and the dCOM in helping track the local pastor's growth and discernment process.
- Conversations between mentor and local pastor are confidential and information may be released only with written consent of the local pastor and mentor.
- The report is kept in the local pastor's file by the dCOM and BOM.
- Clergy mentors are integral to local pastors' education, both formally and informally by:
 - Assisting local pastors to reflect and learn from their experiences in ministry
 - Monitoring preparation of material for Course of Study classes
 - Helping local pastors integrate theology and theory into their practice of ministry

Certified Lay Ministers

- When a pastoral charge is not able to be served by ordained or licensed clergy, the bishop, upon

recommendation of the cabinet, may assign a qualified, trained lay person, lay minister or lay missionary to do the work of ministry in that charge . . . The lay person assigned is accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned (§205.4).

- In order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches, and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God's grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism, the certified lay minister is to be recognized and utilized (§271).
- The certified lay minister shall preach the Word, provide a care ministry to the congregation, assist in program leadership, and be a witness in the community for the growth, missional and connectional thrust of The United Methodist Church as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person (§271.1).
- A certified lay speaker or a person with equivalent training as defined by his/her district or conference may be certified as a lay minister by the district committee on ordained ministry after he/she has completed the following (§271.2):
 - Been recommended by the pastor and vote of the church council or charge conference of the local church where he/she holds membership
 - Completed courses relevant to his/her assignment, including:
 - Preaching and exegesis
 - Congregational care
 - Other courses as recommended by the General Board of Discipleship and General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in consultation with annual conference leaders and other appropriate agencies and organizations
 - Demonstrated appreciation of the history, polity, doctrine, worship, and liturgy of the UMC through service in his/her local church
 - Been recommended by the district superintendent after completion of appropriate screening
 - Made application in writing to the dCOM
 - Appeared before the dCOM for review and approval
- The certified lay minister is to apply in writing and appear for recertification biennially to the dCOM after (§271.3,4):
 - Ministry review by church council or charge conference from the congregation of which he/she is a member
 - Satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event (check annual conference guidelines)
 - Recommendation of the district superintendent
- A certified lay minister who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's dCOM confirming current certification (§271.5).
- As a lay person, the certified lay minister is not eligible to receive pension or equitable compensation funds that are provided for clergy members (§271.6).
- Each year the dCOM shall report to the BOM and annual conference a roster of all certified as lay ministers (§666.10).
- Associate and Provisional Membership Interviews and recommend to the BOM those who they approve for associate membership (§§321, 322, 666.8).
- Interview and recommend to the BOM those who they approve for provisional membership. Each candidate is recommended in writing after a three-fourth majority vote of the dCOM. (§§324.10, 666.8).

Readmission to Candidacy or Conference Membership

- If candidacy has lapsed or been discontinued, it may be reinstated only at the discretion of the dCOM in which the candidate was discontinued (§314.2).
- Interview discontinued provisional members who are requesting readmission and recommend to the BOM and cabinet those the dCOM approves for readmission to provisional membership. (§§366, 666.8)

- Interview and recommend to the BOM and cabinet those the dCOM approves who are requesting readmission from honorable location, administrative location, or who have previously exited the ministerial office. (¶¶367, 368, 666.8)

Resources from Cokesbury for the dCOM and Candidates

The Christian as Minister: An Exploration in the Meaning of God's Call 2009-2012 (ISBN# 9780938162834)

Beyond the Burning Bush: Hearing and Answering God's Call (ISBN# 9780938162810)

[Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church DVD](#) (Item# X534642)

Set of Brochures on the Ministry of Deacons, Elders, Chaplains and Local Pastors

Resources from GBHEM for the dCOM and Candidates

Action outlines and file content checklists are on the following pages and available at www.gbhem.org/bom under training resources. The dCOM chair or registrar can use these outlines to guide the dCOM's work.

[BOM Training Resources](#) Web page – www.gbhem.org/bomtraining

Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy (Candidacy Guidebook) – Available for Candidacy Mentors and candidates after enrolling in the [Online Candidacy Application System](#) (OCAS).

[Glossary of Candidacy Terms](#) (www.gbhem.org/bom)

Navigating the Candidacy Process PowerPoint

Ministry Interpretation Handbook (Red Book)

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