

CHAPTER 13

Licensed Ministry

For more information, visit www.gbhem.org/localpastors or contact the Local Pastor/Course of Study Office, localpastors@gbhem.org or 615-340-7388.

Licensed 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 (§ 315). Licensed pastors may perform all the duties of a pastor listed in § 340, including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, as well as the service of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge.

A charge is defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served” and not simply the members of a local church. Those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the bishop and the BOM (§ 316.1).

Responsibility and Accountability

Licensed pastors receive a license upon appointment that is valid only while under appointment and in the setting where they are appointed. Their license is renewed annually at the discretion of the dCOM and BOM (§ 315.2, § 666.8) and must be recertified by the bishop when changing appointments.

While serving an appointment, they are clergy members of the annual conference and have voice and vote at the annual conference session. They are accountable to the annual conference and the bishop for their ministry and leadership, and serve under appointment by the bishop. Local pastors are not guaranteed an appointment.

Categories of Clergy Licensed for Pastoral Ministry

- Provisional elders (§ 315.1, § 326.2)
- Full-time, part-time, and student local pastors (§ 315.2, § 318)
- Associate members (§ 315.3, § 321)
- Deacons in full connection who are changing orders (§ 315.4, § 309.2e)
- Clergy from other denominations who have transferred, but do not meet the educational requirements for provisional membership (§ 315.5, § 347.3)

Provisional Elders (§ 315.1, § 326.2)

Provisional elders are commissioned and receive a license for pastoral ministry. They shall be appointed by a bishop (§ 326) and serve a minimum of two years following the completion of education requirements for full connection before being ordained. Their pastoral authority is limited to their appointment setting.

Rights and Responsibilities of Provisional Members

- May vote on all matters except constitutional amendments and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
- May serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the BOM (§327.3).
- Ineligible for election as delegates to the General, central, or jurisdictional conferences.
- Supervised by the DS where they are appointed.
- Assigned a clergy mentor by the BOM ([Chapter 14, BOM Handbook](#)).
- Receive supervision and an annual report to the BOM from the DS of their appointment setting.
- If serving in extension ministries, relate to the DS in the area where appointed.

Local Pastors (§ 315.2, § 318)

Local pastors may serve in full-time or part-time appointments. Students may be appointed as student local pastors while attending school outside of their home annual conference. A local pastor shall be under the supervision of a DS, and shall be assigned a clergy mentor while in the Course of Study or seminary (§ 316.4, § 349.1b).

Rights and Responsibilities of Local Pastors

- Local pastors shall attend sessions of the annual conference.
- Their membership is in the annual conference where they have the right to vote on all matters except:
 - Constitutional amendments.
 - Matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
- Those who have completed all educational requirements and have served a minimum of two years immediately preceding the election shall have the right to vote on election of delegates to General, jurisdictional, or central conferences ([Judicial Council Decision 1181](#)).
- Local pastors who have completed the Course of Study and are retiring may request a license annually from the dCOM and the bishop to serve in the local church where they hold membership in order to baptize and serve Holy Communion at the request of the appointed pastor (§ 316.8).
- A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study may be recognized as a retired local pastor (§ 320.5), and may be appointed and licensed by the bishop upon recommendation by the dCOM.

Process for Local Pastors to Receive a License (§ 315.2)

In order to receive a license for pastoral ministry, local pastor candidates must complete:

- The conditions for candidacy certification in § 310.
- The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the Division of Ordained Ministry, or one-third of their work for a Master of Divinity degree at a school of theology listed by the University Senate.
- The Orientation to Ministry.
- Examination and recommendation by the dCOM.

Categories for Local Pastor Ministry

Full-Time Local Pastor (§ 318.1)

Full-time local pastors work full-time in the charge to which they are appointed, and receive a salary equal to or more than the minimum base compensation established for full-time local pastors. While enrolled in Course of Study,

they must complete four courses per year and shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years (§ 319.3). They are subject to annual review by the dCOM, cabinet, and BOM, and are approved for continuation of their license on an annual basis.

Part-Time Local Pastor (§ 318.2)

Part-time local pastors work part-time for the charge to which they are appointed, and are not guaranteed the minimum base salary established for full-time local pastors. While enrolled in Course of Study, they must complete two courses per year and shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within 12 years (§ 319.3). They are subject to annual review by the dCOM, cabinet, and BOM, and are approved for continuation of their license on an annual basis.

Student Local Pastor (§ 318.3)

Student local pastors are enrolled as pre-theological or theological students in a college, university, or school of theology listed by the University Senate, and are appointed to serve in an annual conference other than the conference where they are certified. They must make appropriate educational progress and may be appointed to full or part-time settings. They are responsible to the dCOM where they serve for continuation of their license, and shall be responsible to the dCOM in the conference where they are certified for continuation of their candidacy.

Associate Members (§ 315.3, § 321)

Associate members are itinerant members of an annual conference and have a permanent license for pastoral ministry. Their license is not restricted to a charge and is not dependent upon an appointment by the bishop. Associate members may retire under the provisions of § 358 and retain their license for pastoral ministry for service in the local church, and their relationship as retired clergy members of the annual conference (§ 322.3).

Rights and Responsibilities of Associate Members

They:

- Are available for appointment on a continuing basis and serve in the itinerant system.
- Are granted the same security of appointment as elders.
- Receive a permanent license for pastoral ministry.
- May vote on all matters except constitutional amendments and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy (§ 321.1).
- May serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference (§ 321.2).
- Are ineligible for election as delegates to the General, central, or jurisdictional conferences.
- Are subject to the provisions governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension (§ 321.3).

Deacons in Full Connection Changing Orders (§ 315.4, § 309.2e)

Though licensed for pastoral ministry, deacons who are changing orders continue as full clergy members of the annual conference and are not subject to the limitations placed on other licensed clergy not in full connection. If they are ordained as an elder, they surrender their credentials as a deacon to the conference secretary.

Deacons in full connection seeking to qualify for ordination as an elder shall be licensed for pastoral ministry for at least two years after having:

- Informed the bishop and DS of their intention.
- Applied in writing to the BOM.

- Articulated their call to the BOM and annual conference into the ministry of the elder.
- Completed all academic and other requirements for admission to the Order of Elders.

Transfers from Other Denominations (§ 315.5, § 347.3, § 348)

When an ordained minister is transferring membership into the UMC, the clergy session may, upon recommendation of the BOM, recognize the orders of elders or ordained clergy from other denominations and receive them as provisional members or local pastors. When the educational requirements for provisional membership (§ 324) are not met, an annual conference may grant clergy being transferred from another denomination the license for pastoral ministry until they qualify for provisional membership.

Note: If an ordained minister from another denomination is serving within an annual conference but is not seeking to transfer membership, that person serves under the provisions of § 346.2.

Rights and Responsibilities of Transferring Clergy

- The supervision of clergy transferring into conference membership as local pastors may be under the dCOM or the BOM.
- Clergy who transfer from other denominations and are licensed for pastoral ministry function as local pastors in the annual conference, even when previously ordained.
- They shall have the right to vote on all matters except:
 - Constitutional amendments.
 - Election of delegates to the General, central, or jurisdictional conferences.
 - All matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

Record Keeping

The dCOM recommends and records local pastors who have been approved for a license, or have been continued each year. That information is reported to the BOM and included in the report approved by the clergy session. Licenses that have been awarded based on provisional membership or transferring into the annual conference are recorded by the BOM registrar and presented for approval each year to the clergy session.

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