

CHAPTER 21

Continuing Education

For more information contact GBHEM's director of Clergy Lifelong Learning, Division of Ordained Ministry, 615-340-7409, clergy lifelonglearning@gbhem.org, or www.gbhem.org/clergy lifelonglearning.

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. ¶351.1

The BOM's continuing education responsibilities are listed in ¶ 635.2o-q. The BOM provides support services for the ordained minister's career development, and works with the Orders of Deacons and Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to offer financial support for continuing education and coordination of formation activities with BOM activities.

Goals for Excellence in Christian Leadership Through Continuing Education

While individual ministry responsibility and experience changes and grows over time, the BOM's role is to identify and set expectations for the continuing education of clergy throughout ministry. In setting these standards, the BOM should consider the needs of the annual conference, the ministry settings that are served by the clergy, and the clergy's individual needs. Establishing standards of effectiveness in partnership with the bishop and cabinet, and providing events that support clergy excellence, are the foundation for a strong continuing education structure. A holistic plan for continuing education includes:

- Establishing clear goals that support clergy effectiveness and the development of expert leadership skills.
- Cultivating a culture where growth in discipleship is expected.
- Identifying learning as a lifelong spiritual discipline and practice that is shaped by the church's understanding of Wesleyan theology.
- Nurturing global leadership by fostering opportunities for education within and beyond the annual conference.
- Relying on current technology for enrollment in online education opportunities as well as promoting events for onsite education.

Developing a Continuing Education Plan

As the BOM develops a comprehensive plan for continuing education, it should consider the needs of all clergy, including groups that are represented (i.e. female or male clergy, young clergy, second-career clergy, pastors, deacons, extension ministers, etc.). It should also develop working relationships with the Chairs of the Orders of Deacons and Elders, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to help identify the needs of these groups.

In addition, the BOM should consider how to enhance learning opportunities for people at different career stages, and offer events that meet the needs for those who are newer in ministry, more experienced, approaching retirement, etc. The BOM should also find ways to ensure that educational opportunities are available for clergy in all geographical areas of the conference. This may occur through offering a variety of online courses as well as onsite educational experiences.

Establishing Guidelines

Ongoing continuing education provides one way for clergy to grow in effectiveness and expertise. The BOM should consider the goals of the annual conference, the amount of continuing education that will be required, and the units that will be awarded for participation in different events.

- What are the goals for continuing education in the conference, and how do proposed events contribute toward meetings those goals?
- Who is included under the guidelines for continuing education? Most conferences require continuing education for all clergy under appointment.
- How many hours/CEUs are required annually for each clergyperson? Do requirements meet or exceed the current disciplinary standards listed in ¶ 351? Are provisions made for clergy who may seek Sabbatical Leave (¶ 352)?
- Does the annual conference have an established practice for awarding Continuing Education Units (CEUs)? A CEU, according to The Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry (SACEM), is defined as “10 contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction.”

Standards of Quality and Accountability

Beyond establishing minimum required CEU's, the BOM ensures the quality of continuing education events that are offered or approved for clergy attendance. Additionally, the BOM determines what will be in the annual report that clergy must complete to document continuing education.

Quality

- Determine acceptable settings for continuing education (onsite, online, reading groups, clergy peer groups, etc.).
- Provide guidance for the DS, S/P-PRC, and the clergy in determining what type of continuing education events clergy will attend.
- Provide financial assistance using the guidelines established by the annual conference. MEF funds may be used (¶ 816).

Accountability

- Maintain at least the minimum requirements listed in the *Discipline* (¶ 351).
- Require a report from each clergyperson detailing what was learned, how the information learned will be

used, and any necessary follow-up steps to track the value of a particular event.

- Monitor annual reports for variety in subject matter and teaching methodology (self-directed, leader or peer directed, online education).
- Seek feedback from participants after every continuing education event the annual conference offers.

Responsibilities of the BOM Continuing Education Team

- Attend continuing educators' consultations for leadership development and networking, such as GBHEM-sponsored meetings.
- Consult with the cabinet regarding established standards for effectiveness and the kinds of continuing education events that will support clergy in ongoing effectiveness.
- Encourage the use of online continuing education through the [UMC's Cyber Campus](#) and the seminaries' [Online Continuing Education Consortium](#).
- Supply a list of retreat centers or other organizations that offer high quality events.
- Encourage sabbatical, study, or renewal leaves when appropriate.
- Award Ministerial Education Funds to individuals and groups (§635.2x) based on conference guidelines.
- Develop an accountability system to confirm that clergy complete continuing education.
- Share information with the annual conference about continuing education programs offered by nearby seminaries.
- Contract with a seminary, the Division of Ordained Ministry, or other agency for consultant services.

Resources

[American Association of Pastoral Counselors \(AAPC\)](#) – Provides continuing education for those serving in hospitals, nursing homes, and as pastoral counselors.

[The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education \(ACPE\)](#) – An interfaith organization devoted to providing education and improving the quality of ministry and pastoral care.

[The Association of Practical Theology](#) – Promotes critical discourse that integrates theological reflection and practice.

[Clergy Lifelong Learning](#) – GBHEM's Continuing Education Web page.

[Faith and Wisdom](#) – An ecumenical listing of continuing education events.

[The United Methodist Endorsing Agency \(UMEA\)](#)

[United Methodist Theological Schools](#)

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