

Chapter 6

Candidacy and Candidacy Forms

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

"Individuals discern God's call as they relate with God and their communities, and the Church guides and confirms those callings. Calls – and the discernment and confirmation of them – are gifts of the Holy Spirit." (¶301.2)

"The Wesleyan tradition has, from the beginning, encouraged a culture of call and a community of discernment, which affirms and supports the ministry of all Christians and identifies and authorizes persons into ministries of the ordained." (¶302)

"The licensed and 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 set-apart ministry." (¶310)

The Candidacy Process

Candidacy is a vocational discernment and decision-making process recognized by the UMC to assist candidates and Annual Conferences in discerning and affirming an applicant's call to licensed or ordained ministry. Candidacy is the first formal step toward Annual Conference membership, ordination as a deacon or an elder or licensing for pastoral ministry. Candidacy begins when the potential candidate enquires about ministry and continues until that person is commissioned as a provisional member or is approved, appointed and licensed as a local pastor. Candidacy also ends if a person withdraws from candidacy or is denied by the dCOM.

BEGINNING CANDIDACY (¶310.1)

- Preconditions
 - A professing member in good standing of the UMC or a baptized participant of a recognized UM campus ministry or other UM ministry setting for a minimum of one year
 - Graduated from an accredited high school or received a certificate of equivalency
- Write to the District Superintendent to request admission to the candidacy process
- Study candidacy resources as directed by the conference BOM
- Write a statement of call
- Request a meeting of the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee (P/S-PRC) to consider recommendation for candidacy. In some situations, the dCOM may specify an equivalent alternative body to consider recommendation for candidacy.

CERTIFICATION AS A CANDIDATE (¶310.2)

- Meet with the charge conference (the dCOM may specify an equivalent alternative) to receive a written recommendation for certification
- Request a meeting with the dCOM
 - Prepare a written response to the information requested in ¶310.1d
 - Complete and release required background checks (psychological, criminal and credit)

- Provide any further information the dCOM may require
- Agree to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life as set forth in the UM Social Principles
- The dCOM interviews the candidate regarding these prepared materials and completed tasks.
- A candidate becomes certified upon receiving a three-fourths majority approval of dCOM members present. The vote must be completed by written ballot (¶666.6).
- To ensure the recorded completion of candidacy, the certified candidate's qualification for GBHEM scholarships and seminary receipts of MEF funding, the decision about certification recommendation must be recorded in the online candidacy system following the dCOM decision.

CONTINUATION AS A CERTIFIED CANDIDATE

- Orientation to Ministry (¶312)
 - A BOM-sponsored event to which attendance is required for all candidates
 - Offers a place where those discerning a call can receive a clear explanation of the various types of ministry
 - Builds collegiality among those interested in serving in different types of ministry
 - Guides candidates to discern which path of ministry to take in the church
 - Takes place early in the candidacy process, either before or after certification depending on the decision of the BOM
- A certified candidate may continue in this status under the supervision of the dCOM for one to 12 years before becoming a provisional member of the Annual Conference, receiving an appointment as a local pastor, withdrawing or being discontinued from candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry. (¶314, ¶324.1)
- During this time, candidates continue to work with Candidacy Mentors who monitor the candidates' educational, spiritual and vocational goals.

FLEXIBILITY OF CANDIDACY PROCESS

- Applicants must complete all requirements in ¶310 before becoming a certified candidate. However, the timing of the steps may be altered.
 - Some candidates have already made most of their vocational decisions and are preparing for ordination as a deacon or an elder through college or seminary studies.
 - Some candidates may be deciding how they are called to pursue ministry as a second career, entering candidacy with English as a second language or discerning among local pastor, elder or deacon ministry.
- It is important to consider background, experience, education, training and circumstances. Allow flexibility to move through the candidacy process (¶310.2b).
- Most candidates will likely meet with a mentor before being recommended as a candidate by the P/S-PRC and the charge conference (or equivalent bodies). However, some candidates may receive a charge conference recommendation before applying for candidacy through the District Superintendent. Conferences may be flexible with the order in which a candidate moves through the beginning stages of candidacy, provided that the requirements of ¶310 are complete prior to certification by the dCOM.

Goals of Candidacy

GOALS FOR THE CANDIDATE

- Explore the vocational options of lay, licensed and ordained ministry in the UMC
- Understand the personal and professional ministry development needed in order to reach decisions that best express a faithful response to God's call
- Respond to God's call in a way that is faithful to the candidate's gifts and grace while partnering with the Annual Conference to discern ways to serve in ministry

GOALS FOR THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND THE UMC

- Provide the environment and opportunity to discern God's call
- Offer thoughtful resources and settings to examine and affirm personal and vocational gifts and choices, whether for lay, licensed or ordained ministry
- Enable the church to provide pastoral care to candidates and their families, friends and ministry settings
- Examine the calling, grace, gifts and potential effectiveness of those who present themselves as candidates for lay, licensed or ordained ministry
- Enlist, assess, encourage and recommend candidates with the potential to serve as effective clergy leaders

Candidacy Resources

- *The Christian as Minister: An Exploration into the Meaning of God's Call* – Discusses the call to ministry and the many ways to serve in the UMC. It is based on the concept of servant ministry and servant leadership that is affirmed in baptism.
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* – An exploratory and procedural study for candidates to discuss in a mentoring group or with a candidacy mentor. Candidacy Mentors are trained through the BOM and assigned by the dCOM, in consultation with the District Superintendent and Vocational Discernment Coordinator. Available in English and Spanish through GBHEM's online candidacy system upon registration for candidacy.
- UMCARES (United Methodist Candidate and Record Entry System) – The central information point for all applicants pursuing certified candidacy
- The BOM Library website – Forms that may be helpful as dCOMs track the progression of candidates through the process are posted at www.bomlibrary.org.
 - Form 102: Biographical Information Form
 - Form 103: Medical Report
 - Form 104: Declaration of Candidacy
 - Form 105: Application for Clergy Relationship
 - Form 109: Theological School Recommendation
 - Form 114: Candidate's Disclosure Form