

Chapter 2 | District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM)

For more information, contact GBHEM's Executive Director of Candidacy and Conference Relations at 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 Board [of Ordained Ministry] shall select from its own membership an official representative to serve as a member of each dCOM, which shall function as subcommittees of the board.” (§635.1g)

“The committee shall supervise all matters of candidacy for ordained ministry and licensing for local pastors.” (§666.5)

Membership

Overall membership should include a balance of female and male members as well as racial/ethnic members (§666.1). 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 District Superintendent also fills interim vacancies.

CLERGY

- The District Superintendent (who shall not serve as the chairperson)
- At least six other clergy in the district, including elders and deacons
 - A deacon or an elder age 35 or younger, when possible
 - An associate member, when possible
 - May include one local pastor who has completed the Course of Study

LAITY – At least three professing members of local churches in the district

Officers

dCOM officers are elected at the first meeting following the Annual Conference session when the members were elected (§666.2).

CHAIR

May be held by the BOM representative, but not the District Superintendent (§666.1)

- Ensures committee members are properly trained and understand their responsibilities
- Regularly calls meetings and informs members, candidates and local pastors of the time, place and agenda
- Presides over meetings or assigns someone to preside
- Maintains a working relationship with the BOM, especially the Candidacy and BOM Registrar, and others who require information from the dCOM
- Works with the BOM and other dCOM chairs to ensure consistent expectations for candidates and procedures

REGISTRAR – The dCOM elects a Registrar other than the District Superintendent or dCOM chair.

- Serves as custodian for all dCOM files (all files, including psychological assessment reports, belong to the Annual Conference)
- Keeps a separate file on each person for whom the dCOM is responsible
- Informs those responsible which materials are needed
- Instructs the dCOM on what decisions are required for different candidates.
- Immediately informs the BOM Registrar of any actions taken and decisions made.
- Transfers individual's files to other districts or Annual Conferences upon receipt of a written request by the receiving district or Annual Conference
- Forwards all files to the BOM registrar when a candidate receives approval from the dCOM to interview with the BOM for associate or provisional membership (complete files are sent to the BOM along with any recommendations and do not require written permission of the candidate to provide to the BOM)
- Informs all interviewed candidates of decisions and recommendations both orally and in writing as soon as possible (§666.12)

BOM REPRESENTATIVE

“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)

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY (optional)

- Records and distributes each meeting's minutes to committee members if there is no Recording Secretary
- Conducts correspondence and business as directed by the chairperson

ADDITIONAL 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 BOM Registrar.

Functions

The Book of Discipline mandates the dCOM's responsibilities. (§666)

ENLISTMENT (further information provided in Chapter 3)

- Encourages those discerning a call to licensed or ordained ministry to enter candidacy
- Consults 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)
- Ensures that candidates are invited to register in United Methodist Candidate and Record Entry System (UMCARES) (§310.1b)
- Maintains a list of all current candidates (§666.3)
- Works with the District Superintendent to ensure that laity serving in pulpit supply for more than one year begin the

certified candidacy process or the application for Certified Lay Minister (§205.4)

CANDIDACY MENTORING (further information provided in Chapter 5)

- 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)
- Each candidate is expected to continue candidacy mentoring until they begin serving as a local pastor or a provisional member (§348.1a)
- **Candidacy Mentor**
 - Shall be recommended by the Cabinet and selected and trained by the BOM and are accountable to both the dCOM and the BOM
 - 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 *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* or other conference approved candidacy resources
 - Records decisions made about candidates’ progress in the online candidacy system
- **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

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (further information provided in Chapter 8)

- Communicates with the chairperson of the BOM’s Psychological Assessment Committee for the receipt, utilization and return of the psychological assessment report
- Receives psychological assessment reports from the BOM psychological assessment committee for use in the dCOM’s evaluation of the candidate
- Reviews each psychological assessment report for the candidate’s competence and readiness for licensed and ordained ministry
- Honors confidentiality issues as outlined in the “Authorization for Release of Information” signed by the candidate and uses the reports appropriately
- Treats the report as a consultative factor rather than a determinative factor in recommending a decision to approve, defer or deny the candidate
- Returns the report to the Psychological Assessment Committee chairperson for the BOM’s use
- Refers to GBHEM’s “Behavioral Health Guidelines” for guidance in addressing critical issues identified in the report

INTERVIEWING

At the heart of the dCOM’s work and one of the most basic personnel functions of the church, the dCOM uses interviews for various purposes. (further information provided in Chapter 9)

CANDIDACY CERTIFICATION

- Evaluates candidates for certification after they meet all requirements in ¶310
- Informs the BOM Candidacy Registrar of those approved for certification (¶666.3)
- Communicates with the BOM to ensure that all candidates participate in Orientation to Ministry at the proper time (¶312)
- Approves service settings for certified candidates working toward provisional membership (¶324.2)
- Maintains communication with all candidates
- Provides counsel regarding pre-theological studies (¶666.5) and encourages candidates to attend a UM theological school (¶310.2f)
- Informs candidates about scholarships and educational loans
- Receives transcripts and reports from colleges and seminaries to review academic progress (¶313.2)

CONTINUATION OF CERTIFIED CANDIDACY AND APPROVAL FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

The dCOM annually interviews candidates and evaluates whether or not their candidacy may be continued (¶313, ¶666.10). Candidates must meet the conditions for renewal.

- Apply in writing for candidacy renewal (¶666.10)
- Receive recommendation for renewal by their charge conference or equivalent body as specified by the dCOM (¶313.1, ¶666.10)
- Present an official transcript demonstrating satisfactory educational progress and recommends a report detailing the local church spiritual and financial support of the candidate (¶313.2)
- Demonstrate gifts, grace and fruit for the work of ministry (¶313, ¶666.10)

ASSOCIATE AND PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Interviews and recommends to the BOM those whom they approve for associate membership (¶321, ¶322, ¶666.8)
- Interviews and recommends to the BOM those whom they approve for provisional membership. Each candidate is recommended in writing after a three-fourth majority vote of the dCOM (¶324.10, ¶666.8).

LICENSING OF PASTORAL MINISTRY FOR LOCAL PASTORS

- Approves, continues and oversees the work of local pastors who serve in their district
- Examines certified candidates for licensing as local pastors (¶315, ¶666.9)
- Helps applicants enroll in a licensing school
- Upon approval, recommends to the BOM that the Clergy Session approve a license for those who have satisfactorily completed the requirements (¶315)
- Gives the BOM local pastors or Elders Registrar the names and addresses of all those approved for licensing
- Refers approved local pastors to the appropriate BOM Registrar for enrollment in the Course of Study and receives progress reports through the District Superintendent
- Recommends those who qualify for annual continuance as local pastors to the BOM (¶319.2, ¶666.9). This includes those enrolled in Course of Study and those who have completed it.
- Communicates to the BOM registrar the circumstances of any discontinuance of a local pastor (¶320.1)

- Recommends to the BOM those who qualify for restoration of credentials as a local pastor (§320.4, §666.9)
- Oversees a process of evaluation and supervision for personal and professional growth for local pastors
- Oversees 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 dCOM (§348.1b, 4).
 - The local pastor and Clergy 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 their district or conference) may be certified as a lay minister by the dCOM after they have completed certain requirements.
 - Been recommended by the pastor and vote of the church council or charge conference of the local church where they hold membership
 - Completed courses relevant to their assignment, including preaching and exegesis, congregational care and other courses as recommended by Discipleship Ministries and GBHEM in consultation with Annual Conference leaders and other appropriate agencies and organizations (§271.2)
 - 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
- **Recertification** (§271.3,4)

- The Certified Lay Minister is to apply in writing and appear before the dCOM biennially
- Ministry review by the church council or charge conference from the congregation of which they are a member will have a ministry review
- 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 Lay Ministers (§666.10)

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 (§364, §666.9).
- Interview and recommend to the BOM and Cabinet those the dCOM approves who are requesting readmission from honorable location and administrative location, or who have previously exited the ministerial office (§365, §366, §666.9)

Resources for dCOM and Candidates

FROM COKESBURY

- *The Christian as Minister: An Exploration Into the Meaning of God's Call, Eighth Edition* (ISBN# 9780938162636)
- *El Cristiano como Ministro: Explora el significado del llamado de Dios al ministerio, Traducción de la Octava Edición* (ISBN# 9780938162780)

FROM GBHEM

- The BOM Library (www.bomlibrary.org) contains a variety of information and resources that are helpful to dCOMs and BOMs. Resources include:
 - Set of Brochures on the Ministry of Deacons, Ministry of Elders, Ministry of Local Pastors and Ministry of Edorsed Clergy
 - Action outlines and file content checklists. The dCOM chair or registrar can use these outlines to guide the dCOM's work
 - Glossary of Candidacy Terms
 - Handbook on Ministry Interpretation (The Red Book) – Provides a quick overview of Disciplinary requirements for dCOM/BOM action items needed for candidates and clergy conference relations changes
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* (2016) – Available for candidates and candidacy mentors after setting up a user account in UMCARES (The United Methodist Candidate and Record Entry System)