

Chapter 16 | Licensing School

For more information, visit www.gbhem.org/localpastors or contact the Office for Course of Study at localpastors@gbhem.org or 615-340-7416. The Assistant General Secretary for Clergy Formation can be reached at 615-340-7388.

Visit the *Licensing & Course of Study* webpage for additional information about these programs.

Studies for License as a Local Pastor

A certified candidate is eligible for appointment as a local pastor upon completion of License for Pastoral Ministry (§311). 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)

The BOM (§635.2h) may recommend to the Clergy Session the licensing of local pastors who have completed the following as noted in (§315):

- The conditions for candidacy certification in §310.1-2
- The Orientation to Ministry
- The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the Division of Ordained Ministry or one-third of the M.Div. degree
- Examination and recommendation by the dCOM

Licensing School schedules and locations are posted on the GBHEM website. A candidate who cannot attend a school in one conference may attend in another conference and receive recommendation to their home dCOM from that school's faculty.

AUTHORITY AND INITIATIVE

The Studies for License as a Local Pastor are a joint enterprise among the dCOM, the BOM and the Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM). The DOM prescribes the curriculum for licensing a local pastor, but the operation of a licensing school is the BOM's responsibility. The DOM offers guidelines based on competence in the skills of ministry rather than academic achievement. Within these guidelines, however, each Annual Conference has latitude as to method, time, place, instructors, accents and interest.

The purpose is to provide the best quality of this initial preparation for ministry. Studies should be relevant to the Annual Conference while establishing high educational standards. GBHEM prescribes the basic curriculum, offers the resources currently available in the church and maintains a system of supervision and accountability.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF LICENSING STUDIES

Most candidates' first education about the practice of ministry comes through the licensing studies. However, they are not a substitute for seminary education or the Course of Study schools. They provide an opportunity for full and active members of the Annual Conference to take part in the initial preparation of future colleagues.

The school assumes that candidates have been certified for ministry (§315.2a) and have already explored the basic vocational questions of call and the meaning of ministry. These studies are a crash course for those who may be appointed when license studies are completed. The license permits regular appointment and should not be granted unless the faculty recommends that a candidate is fit and has the beginning competencies to be a pastor in charge. Although most local pastors will be appointed to a charge, they also may receive an appointment to an extension ministry. (§316.1)

Further, granting the license is only the initial stage in ministry. The 80 hours required for completion of studies for licensing does not give adequate preparation for church work. A candidate who is granted a license must continue in education for ministry either through college and seminary or through the Course of Study school. (§319)

LIMITATIONS OF THE LICENSE

- After the candidate meets study requirements, the school's faculty and/or administrator can certify the completion of the prescribed studies; the dCOM and BOM can recommend the license; and the clergy session can approve the license. However, the license shall not be awarded until an appointment to a pastoral charge is made in accordance with §337 (§318).
- The license is limited by three specific provisions that are repeated for emphasis several times in the *The Book of Discipline*:
 - Authority extends only within the appointment or extension ministry and does not extend beyond that charge.
 - The local pastor is under specific and direct supervision of the DS.
 - Continuation of the license is subject to annual renewal by the dCOM and BOM.

Those who are licensed must exhibit basic minimum competencies before the dCOM and BOM recommend an appointment. These studies are not simply a formality. They provide the knowledge and skills the church considers essential to the practice of ministry.

Every practicing pastor recognizes that these competencies are never perfected, but that work begun in the license studies is developed through the practice of ministry. The studies offer the basic preparation for new candidates to receive their first appointment.

DURATION, SETTINGS AND FACULTY

The BOM decides where licensing schools are held, for how long and who leads and teaches the school. Once decided, the BOM should send the dates, location and director's name with contact information to the Licensing School/Course of Study office for posting on the GBHEM website.

DURATION

A minimum of 80 contact hours is required. Studies may be offered in an intensive residential school, a hybrid residential/online school or in a series of weekends. Studies should not be offered in a correspondence format. The BOM decides the structure that meets the Annual Conference's needs best. In addition to setting a time frame, one of the first tasks of the school is to find ways to add enrichment and additional studies for students from a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds.

SETTINGS

The BOM should consider geographical location, cost, housing and meals when selecting a site. They also will take into account the classroom, study space, accessibility, access to medical assistance and whether or not there is a chapel.

FACULTY

Deacons and elders have a continuing responsibility to support the preparation of new candidates. They can fulfill that responsibility by sharing practical knowledge and skills, enhancing theological education and illustrating the shared responsibility of BOMs and schools of theology to prepare candidates for ministry.

There is not a set number for faculty. They should be able to share their skills with new candidates and should have experience and expertise in leading prayer and worship, preaching, church administration, education and pastoral care. Some faculty may have experience in specialized ministries, counseling, chaplaincy and Christian education. The teaching team should include diversity in gender, ethnicity and theology.

Every school should have a director to oversee registration and secure the location, instructors and materials. At larger schools, a registrar or other administrative personnel is helpful. These persons will communicate registration procedures to the dCOM, DS, registrars and others who keep records for BOM.

Practice varies among schools for paying faculty. Generally, expenses are paid for those with minor or brief responsibilities, while a modest honorarium may be appropriate for one who devotes a full two-week period. This should be considered part of the basic pastoral responsibility of the clergy involved and not considered vacation.

MENTORING

The assignment of Clergy Mentors to local pastor candidates attending licensing school is a vital part of the educational process.

- District Superintendents identify and invite clergy members in the district (full conference members, associate members and full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study) to be trained and serve as clergy mentors to local pastors.
- The dCOM assigns Clergy Mentors to those attending licensing school, and the mentors' names are included on the registration form. If a group mentoring process is established, the local pastor candidate's mentoring group and group leader will be assigned.
- Mentors may be asked to be present at a licensing school and participate in a class on mentoring which reviews their responsibilities and provides practice in the process of theological reflection through case studies or role plays.
- Upon completion of the licensing school and the appointment of a local pastor, the local pastor and the Clergy Mentor (or local pastor group and the mentor group leader) develop a covenant for ministry following guidelines found in "Clergy Mentoring – A Manual for Commissioned Ministers, Local Pastors, and Clergy Mentors", p. 15.
- It is the local pastor's responsibility to initiate contact with the assigned mentor in order to establish their meeting schedule. If a group mentoring process is used, the group mentor will initiate the contact with the members of the group.

TEACHING METHODS AND RESOURCES

Instructors and school directors have latitude in establishing teaching methods and resources so that the licensing school will be relevant to the students' context and needs. A wide variety of teaching methods should be used. Written resources should be practical and current, and each instructor should recommend applicable materials. Basic texts listed below are required; however, each licensing school will decide what additional resources to add. This varies from school to school.

THESE BASIC RESOURCES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN ANY CURRICULUM:

- *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*
- *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (New Revised Standard Version)
- *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, 1992
- *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 1989

THESE TEXTBOOKS ARE REQUIRED AS A MINIMUM AND CAN BE ORDERED IN A BUNDLE FROM COKESBURY FOR LOCAL PASTOR LICENSE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

- *Administration in the Small Membership Church* – John Tyson
- *Christian Education in the Small Membership Church* – Karen Tye

- *From Pew to Pulpit* – Clifton F. Guthrie
- *Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church* – James L. Killen Jr.
- *Worshipping with United Methodists* (Revised Edition) – Hoyt Hickman

To get the discounted price, orders should be placed under the Kit ISBN-13 of 9780687654826. The bundled books will be sold under this ISBN for \$44.99 – a 43 percent discount. This price is subject to change and no further discounts apply.

Instructors should design courses based on students' needs, experiences, cultural backgrounds, learning styles and theology. Include time for community building throughout the school. The knowledge/skill competencies expected at the completion of licensing school are listed below and based on demonstrated practical ministry needs. Instead of giving specific required course outlines and teaching methods, consider the desired results and design the courses to achieve these outcomes.

Basic Minimum Competencies

BASIC SKILLS

A candidate's effectiveness in an appointment or in other educational settings is dependent upon reading, math and language skills. Since proficiency in these areas is not always apparent, licensing school students are tested using the McGraw-Hill Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to determine whether or not they have basic skills required for pastoral ministry.

The TABE tests are achievement tests in reading, mathematics and language adapted from the California Achievement Tests. They reflect language and content appropriate for adults and measure the understanding and application of principles. They are not intended to measure specific knowledge or recall of facts.

TABE provides pre-instructional information about the student's level of achievement in the basic skills, identifies areas of weakness in these skills, measures growth in the skills after instruction, involves students in appraisal of their learning difficulties and assists the instructor in preparing a program to meet the student's individual needs. TABE test forms are available through the Licensing School/Course of Study office by emailing localpastors@gbhem.org.

Each BOM should establish a policy about the use of TABE tests or another form of basic skills assessment. The policy may require all licensing school attendees to use this assessment tool, or a conference policy may use the TABE test for individuals without baccalaureate degrees. Or, a policy may require the TABE test be administered when a dCOM requests such an assessment in language skills.

Where deficiencies are found, the student shall be encouraged to seek remedial help through the adult education program of a local high school or community college. The licensing school instructors shall be aware of the reading and language needs of the students, and the dCOM and BOM shall be given a report on the basic skills measurements. When applicable, the measurements should be sent to the director of the Course of Study school the local pastor attends.

Although deficiencies in basic educational skills do not automatically disqualify a person for licensing, they do indicate that a review is necessary to determine whether or not the student can meet the skill level necessary to serve a local church. Deficiencies are normally regarded as indications that remedial work is necessary. In a few cases, students may be required to make progress in their tutorial work before being allowed to register for Course of Study school.

REPORTING AND OTHER ACCOUNTABILITY

The DOM prescribes the outline and supervises the administration of the studies for licensing (§ 315.2c). At the completion of licensing school, a recommendation is made and a report given by the licensing school to the student, the dCOM, the BOM Local Pastor Registrar and the DOM that indicates if a student has successfully completed the coursework. The report indicates the student's strengths and areas of growth. The coordinating director submits a list of students to the DOM who have been

recommended for licensing and, when requested, an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the school. This information is reported on the Licensing School Faculty Evaluation and Recommendation Form.

FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH LOCAL PASTORS AND MENTORS

Local pastors are clergy members of the Annual Conference (§602.1) and are no longer listed as certified candidates. They do not continue with Candidacy Mentors, but are assigned a Clergy Mentor. (§311) The licensing studies begin a lifelong process of preparation for the effective practice of ministry. No one imagines that these studies can be an end unto themselves or serve as the completion of the process for ministry preparation.

Clergy Mentors, therefore, are assigned to each local pastor or group of local pastors in the Course of Study to support the local pastor in ongoing ministry formation.

The Clergy Mentor:

- Works with the local pastor(s) while in the Course of Study program or in seminary (§316.4)
- Develops a covenant of supportive accountability for growth and decision making in the pursuit of effective ministry
- Supports and counsels the local pastor(s) regarding preaching and teaching the Scriptures, celebration of the sacraments and other services of worship, ordering the life of the congregation for nurture and care and all other aspects of the practice of ministry

The selection and assignment of effective Clergy Mentors is important for the local pastor's ongoing formation. Where possible, mentors should be present for at least part of the license studies and even during faculty evaluation so mentors may gain insights into the strengths and the needs of the local pastors they will mentor.

The Book of Discipline requires that each local pastor make satisfactory progress in the Course of Study. At a minimum, each part-time local pastor will complete at least half the basic assignments that are expected in an academic year (two courses), and a full-time local pastor will complete a full year of Course of Study work each academic year (four courses).

The dCOM has an ongoing responsibility for the care and supervision of candidates throughout and after the Course of Study through the annual recommendation to renew the local pastor's license. The dCOM must keep track of students' progress as well as their current ministry practice.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND FUNDING RESPONSIBILITIES

Although the DOM provides materials and guides for the licensing schools, all funding for the school comes from the Annual Conference, district, local church or students. Many conferences find that this is a legitimate and valuable use of the 25 percent of the Ministerial Education Fund retained by the Annual Conference. Other conferences apply resources set aside for leadership development.

Conferences that offer residential schools have found that candidates' local churches are often willing to support their candidacy by offsetting some portion of the registration fees, room and board or travel expense. When a seminary or college campus is used, the costs of these institutions must be considered. Finally, it is important that the student makes a financial investment.

THE UNITED METHODIST COURSE OF STUDY

The Course of Study is a basic theological education program of the DOM. It is provided for those who are licensed as local pastors and unable to attend an approved seminary. Participants in the program shall have been certified as candidates, completed the studies for license as a local pastor and approved for license by the dCOM.

The Course of Study is offered at regional Course of Study schools on the campuses of eight United Methodist theological seminaries. Most courses are offered in a variety of formats that allow both full-time and part-time local pastors to attend. Many of the regional schools have extension centers for part-time local pastors only. These extension centers also offer courses in a variety of formats (two or three weekends, hybrid residential/online or one-week intensive) which allows bi-vocational local pastors to participate without taking too much time away from work or family. Students who are unable to attend any of these schools may, with the BOM's permission, take some courses through the DOM's online curriculum.

Students are discouraged from moving through the Course of Study at a pace that inhibits adequate preparation or time to integrate the information being learned. Therefore, Course of Study students are limited to four courses per conference year. This allows for the reading and writing needed for class preparation, the integration of learning while working with a Clergy Mentor and maintaining the time needed to adequately minister to the congregation(s).

EVALUATION OF TRANSCRIPTS FOR APPLYING PREVIOUS COURSEWORK TO COURSE OF STUDY

A candidate may request that work completed at a recognized school of theology be evaluated by the DOM for transfer to the Course of Study curriculum. The evaluation request must come from the BOM, and a transcript must be supplied. Requests, along with transcripts, should be emailed to cosregistrar@gbhem.org or faxed to (615) 340-7377.

No undergraduate credit is recognized in the Course of Study unless the BOM requests an exception for missional purposes. However, some graduate studies in counseling, business and education may be applied to the Advanced Course of Study as elective credit.

The DOM policies allow a limited number of credit hours from a regionally accredited graduate program to be applied to the Advanced Course of Study. Graduate transcripts must be sent to the DOM for evaluation before such credit is granted.

ORDINATION

Local pastors who complete the Course of Study may continue their preparation for full conference membership and ordination as elders through the Advanced Course of Study program.

The Book of Discipline (2016) requires that local pastors seeking ordination (§324.6):

- Earn a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate, or in some instances, for missional purposes, a minimum of 60 semester hours of undergraduate credit
- Must have completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent
- Complete the Course of Study of which no more than 10 courses may be taken by online
- Complete 32 semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM that shall include the Basic Graduate Theological Studies as prescribed in §324.4a. The other hours may be electives, including a basic unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE). UM History, Doctrine and Polity classes may be taken at an approved school of theology or through the DOM's online program.

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOLS

Regional Course of Study schools are held on the campuses of United Methodist theological seminaries. Extension Course of Study Schools are held in different locations throughout the jurisdictional conferences. Consult the GBHEM website at www.gbhem.org/cos for the list of schools, dates and contact information.

ONLINE CURRICULUM

Course of Study students may complete DOM online courses when circumstances prevent them from attending a regional school or the extension program for part-time local pastors. The BOM must approve enrollment in online courses using Form 110. Students may enroll in one course per online session (currently two sessions are offered in a given year.). The tuition fee is \$300, not including the cost of the textbooks.

When the DOM receives an enrollment application, the student will receive instructions regarding access to the online platform and their book lists and pre-work.

Online sessions are 10 weeks in length; the first assignment must be submitted within 2 weeks of the start of the session. Online work is graded by the instructors as the student progresses through the course, and the DOM receives a grade report from the faculty when the session has concluded. Failure to submit assignments at the due dates will result in a failing grade.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE COURSE OF STUDY CURRICULUM AND OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS OF THE COURSE OF STUDY PROGRAM ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE DOM:

COS Online
Division of Ordained Ministry
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
P.O. Box 340007
Nashville, TN 37203-0007
Phone: (615) 340-7416 Fax: (615) 340-7377
Email: cosregistrar@gbhem.org