

Chapter 19 | Continuing Education

For more information, contact GBHEM's Executive Director of Clergy Lifelong Learning at clergy lifelonglearning@gbhem.org or 615-340-7409. See also 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. These practices embody the Wesleyan emphasis on lifelong growth in faith, fostered by personal spiritual practices and participation in covenant communities. Each Annual Conference, through the chairs of the clergy Orders and Fellowship or other leaders designated by the bishop, shall provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders and local pastors.” (§350.1)

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.

Responsibilities of the BOM regarding Continuing Education

- Identify and set expectations for the continuing education of clergy throughout ministry
- Set standards that consider the needs of the Annual Conference, the clergy's ministry settings and the clergy's individual needs
- Establish standards of effectiveness with the bishop and Cabinet and provide events that support these standards
- Design a holistic continuing education plan
 - Set clear goals that support clergy effectiveness as well as development of leadership skills
 - Cultivate a culture of growth in discipleship
 - Identify the Wesleyan heritage of lifelong learning as a spiritual discipline
 - Nurture global leadership by encouraging educational opportunities in the Annual Conference and outside the Annual Conference
 - Promote educational opportunities online and in more traditional settings

Continuing Education Plan

- Considers the needs of all clergy, including groups that are represented (i.e. female or male clergy, young clergy, second-career clergy, local pastors, deacons, extension ministers, etc.)
- Develops working relationships with the chairs of the Orders of Deacons and Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to help identify each group's needs
- Considers how to enhance learning opportunities for people at different career stages and offers events that meet the needs for those who are newer in ministry, more experienced, approaching retirement, etc.

- Ensures 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
- Designs and implements Eight-Year Assessment
 - In order to enhance the commitment to lifelong learning and development, the 2016 General Conference added a requirement for all clergy to participate in an in-depth process of personal and professional assessment every eight years.
 - The process is designed and implemented by the Cabinet and the BOM.
 - Continuing education plans should reflect the goals that are established as a result of this evaluation process and should support the time and resources needed to enable this process to happen. (§349.3)
- Establishes guidelines that consider the Annual Conference's goals, the required amount of continuing education 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 meeting those goals?
 - Who is included under the guidelines for continuing education? Most conferences require continuing education for all clergy under appointment.
 - How many hours/continuing education units (CEUs) are required annually for each clergyperson? Do requirements meet or exceed the current disciplinary standards listed in §350? Are provisions made for clergy who may seek sabbatical leave (§351)?
 - Does the Annual Conference have an established practice for awarding 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.”
- Ensures the quality of continuing education events offered or approved for clergy
 - Determines acceptable settings for continuing education (on-site, online, reading groups, clergy peer groups, etc.)
 - Provides guidance for the District Superintendent, P/S-PRC, and the clergy in determining what type of continuing education events clergy will attend
 - Provides financial assistance using the guidelines established by the Annual Conference. MEF funds may be used. (§816)
- Establishes accountability of the clergy mentoring plan
 - Maintains at least the minimum requirements listed in *The Book of Discipline* (§350)
 - Determines the annual report, which documents continuing education, which clergy must complete
 - Requires a report from each clergyperson to detail what was learned, how the information will be used and any necessary follow-up steps to assess the value of a particular event
 - Monitors annual reports for variety in subject matter and teaching methodology (self-directed, leader or peer-directed, online education)
 - Seeks feedback from participants after every continuing education event the Annual Conference offers

Responsibilities of the BOM Continuing Education Team

- Attends continuing educators' consultations for leadership development and networking such as GBHEM-sponsored meetings
- Consults with the cabinet regarding established standards for effectiveness and the kinds of continuing education events that will contribute to clergy in ongoing effectiveness
- Encourages the use of online continuing education through the UMC's Cyber Campus

- Supplies a list of retreat centers or other organizations that offer high quality events
- Encourages sabbatical, study or renewal leaves when appropriate
- Awards Ministerial Education Funds (§635.2w) based on conference guidelines
- Develops an accountability system to confirm that clergy complete continuing education
- Shares information with the Annual Conference about continuing education programs offered by nearby seminaries
- Contracts with a seminary, the Division of Ordained Ministry or other agency for consultant services

Resources

- www.umccybercampus.com – UMC Cyber Campus is a gateway to theological and higher education which provides a single entry point through an online catalog and aims to enhance global access to free and affordable high-quality educational resources
- www.facebook.com/clergylifelong.learning – Facebook page of the Clergy Lifelong Learning at GBHEM that provides continuing education opportunities
- *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
- *United Methodist Theological Schools* – A list of the UMC's theological schools