

Candidacy Process: Frequently Asked Questions

Baltimore-Washington Conference of the UMC

Important: Educational and candidacy requirements are governed by the current *Book of Discipline* and applicable Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference policies & procedures. Candidates should always confirm current requirements with their Annual Conference before making educational or vocational decisions.

Exploring a Call to Ministry

How do I begin the candidacy process?

If you believe God may be calling you to licensed or ordained ministry, begin by talking with someone who knows you and can help you explore that call. This may be your:

- Local church pastor
- Campus chaplain
- Youth pastor
- Other ministry leader who knows you well

Your first conversations should focus on discerning your call, your gifts for ministry, and whether licensed or ordained ministry may be the right path for you.

Do I need to be certain that I am called to ministry before I begin?

No. The candidacy process is part of discerning your call, not simply a process for people who have already made a final decision about their vocation. Talking with a pastor, chaplain, or other ministry leader can help you explore your sense of call and determine what your next steps should be.

What is *The Christian as Minister*, and why do I need to read it?

The Christian as Minister is a resource designed to help people explore Christian ministry and vocation. After speaking with your pastor, chaplain, or ministry leader about your call, read *The Christian as Minister* and discuss it with them. Your conversation should help you reflect on your understanding of ministry, your gifts, and your sense of call. Order your copy at

<https://www.gbhem.org/publishing/publications/the-christian-as-minister/>

What happens after I talk with my pastor or chaplain and read *The Christian as Minister*?

Your next step is to contact your District Superintendent, who can help connect you with the appropriate people and processes of the Conference. Because candidacy procedures can vary by Annual Conference, always be sure to follow the instructions provided by your Conference.

Educational Requirements

What education is required to become a Deacon?

A Deacon must complete either:

- A Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from an approved seminary, or
- A master's degree in a specialized field of work, plus 27 hours of theological study.

For additional information about educational requirements for Deacons, consult the [General Board of Higher Education and Ministry \(GBHEM\)](#).

What education is required to become an Elder?

An Elder must complete a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from an approved seminary. For information about approved seminaries, consult [GBHEM's list of approved seminaries](#).

What education is required to become a Local Pastor?

A Local Pastor must complete:

- Licensing School
- The basic Course of Study
- The Advanced Course of Study, if pursuing ordination or Associate Membership

Course of Study requirements are administered through the United Methodist educational system. Consult GBHEM for current information about [Course of Study requirements](#).

Do I have to attend seminary to become a Local Pastor?

Not necessarily. Local Pastors follow the Course of Study pathway rather than the seminary education pathway required for Elders and many Deacons. However, if you are pursuing ordination as an Elder or Deacon through another educational pathway, different requirements apply.

Becoming a Provisional Member

What is a provisional member?

After you have been certified as a candidate for at least one year (and no more than 12 years) and have completed at least half of your educational requirements, your annual conference may choose to approve you for commissioning. Once commissioned, you begin provisional membership and are brought into the clergy covenant. Candidates must meet specific educational, candidacy, ministry, and denominational requirements before being considered for provisional membership.

Learn more about Provisional Membership in the UMC by visiting [GBHEM's Provisional Membership Page](#).

Who determines whether I am ready to become a provisional member?

Your District Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) first evaluates your progress and readiness. You must demonstrate gifts for ministry of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the dCOM. The dCOM must then interview you and recommend you in writing to the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM)

What education must I have completed before becoming a provisional member?

For provisional membership in the Baltimore-Washington Conference through the graduate education pathway, you must have completed your seminary training, including the Basic Graduate Theological Studies requirements. Additionally, the BWC requires a Master's level Ethics course from an approved seminary.

Are there other requirements for provisional membership?

Yes. Before being considered for provisional membership, candidates must also:

- Present a certificate of good health
- Complete the Candidate's Disclosure Form
- Submit a Sermon, Bible Study, and Written Responses to the Book of Discipline for evaluation
- Be interviewed by the Board of Ordained Ministry

The BOM must recommend the candidate to the clergy session by a three-fourths majority vote. Final approval for provisional membership requires a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy session.

Does becoming a provisional member mean that I will automatically be ordained?

No. Provisional membership is an important stage in the process, but it does not guarantee election to full membership or ordination. Candidates continue to be evaluated throughout the process. Final approval requires the required recommendation and vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry and approval by the clergy session, followed by ordination by a Bishop.

Becoming a Full Member

What happens after I become a provisional member?

After becoming a provisional member, you continue to develop your ministry through the Residence in Ministry program, supervised ministry, and service under appointment. You must serve under appointment for at least three years before being eligible for consideration for full membership.

What is required for full membership?

Candidates must:

- Have previously been elected as a provisional member
- Serve under appointment for at least three full annual conference years in the BWC
- Submit a Sermon, Bible Study, and Written Responses to the Book of Discipline for evaluation
- Present a project demonstrating fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- Be interviewed by the Board of Ordained Ministry
- Receive a three-fourths majority recommendation from the BOM
- Receive three-fourths majority approval from the clergy session
- Participate in the ordination service and be ordained by a Bishop

Understanding the Process

Who can help me understand where I am in the process?

Your candidacy process involves several people and groups, including your pastor or ministry leader, district superintendent, District Committee on Ordained Ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, and other conference staff or leaders.

If you are unsure about your next step, ask rather than guess. Candidacy requirements can be detailed, and completing one step does not necessarily mean that you are ready to move to the next.

Where can I find the official requirements?

The Book of Discipline is the primary governing resource for United Methodist candidacy, licensed ministry, provisional membership, full membership, and ordination.

You should also consult your annual conference for conference-specific procedures, forms, deadlines, and requirements.

For educational requirements, consult the [General Board of Higher Education and Ministry \(GBHEM\)](#).

What should I do if I am not sure whether I am pursuing ministry as a Deacon, Elder, or Local Pastor?

That is okay. You do not need to have every detail of your vocational path figured out at the beginning. Begin by talking with your pastor, chaplain, or another ministry leader about your call. As you move through the candidacy process, conversations with your dCOM, BOM, and other ministry leaders can help you understand the different pathways and determine which one aligns with your call and gifts.

What is the most important thing to remember when beginning candidacy?

Candidacy is a process of discernment, preparation, and formation. Take time to explore your call, learn the requirements, communicate with the people responsible for guiding you, and complete each step carefully. Do not assume that you need to navigate the process alone—your pastor, district, Board of Ordained Ministry, and conference staff are there to help you understand what is expected and what comes next.