



Baltimore-Washington Conference
The United Methodist Church

Ministry Field Guide

Certified Candidacy Process



Revised 9/2025

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A list of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM) contacts can be found at <https://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/leadership-development/dcoms/>

RESOURCES

★ Baltimore-Washington Conference Resources

- [BWC Candidacy Application Portal](#)
- [Baltimore-Washington Conference Homepage](#)
- [BWC Districts](#)
- [BWC Clergy Development](#)
- [BWC District Committees on Ministry \(DCOMs\)](#)
- [BWC Candidacy Resources](#)
- [BWC Center for Vital Leadership](#)
- [BWC License to Preach School](#)
- [BWC Ministerial Education Fund \(MEF\) Applications](#)

★ Seminary and Course of Study Resources

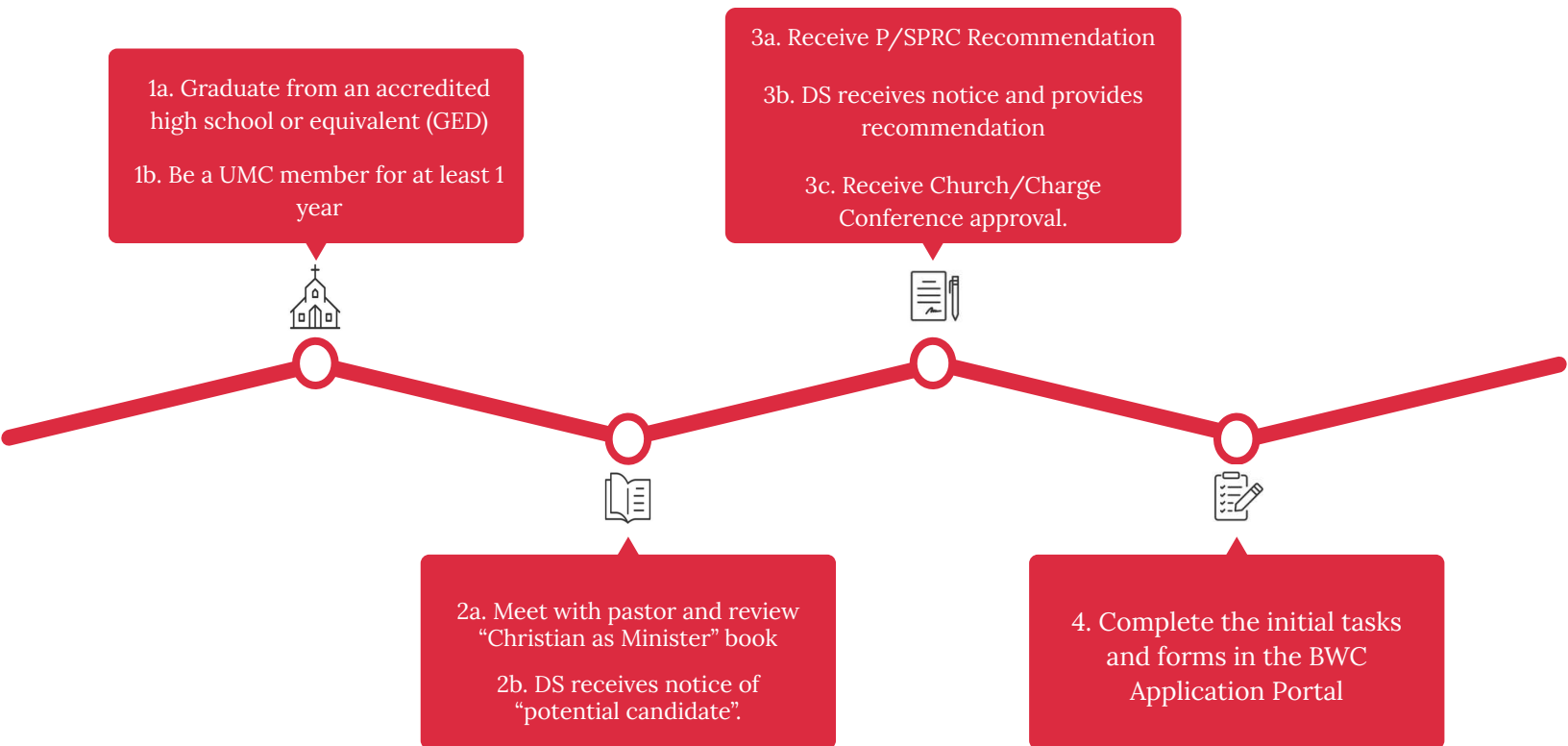
- [UMC Approved Seminaries](#)
- [Wesley Theological Seminary \(DC\) Master of Divinity Program](#)
- [Wesley Theological Seminary \(DC\) Course of Study Program](#)
- [St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute \(Baltimore\) Master of Divinity Partnership Program](#)
- [Candler School of Theology Course of Study Program](#)

★ Global Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM) Resources

- [Explore Calling](#)
- [Loans and Scholarship Opportunities](#)
- [Becoming a Deacon](#)
- [Becoming an Elder](#)
- [Becoming a Local Pastor](#)
- [Licensing and Course of Study](#)

STAGE ONE

INQUIRING CANDIDATE



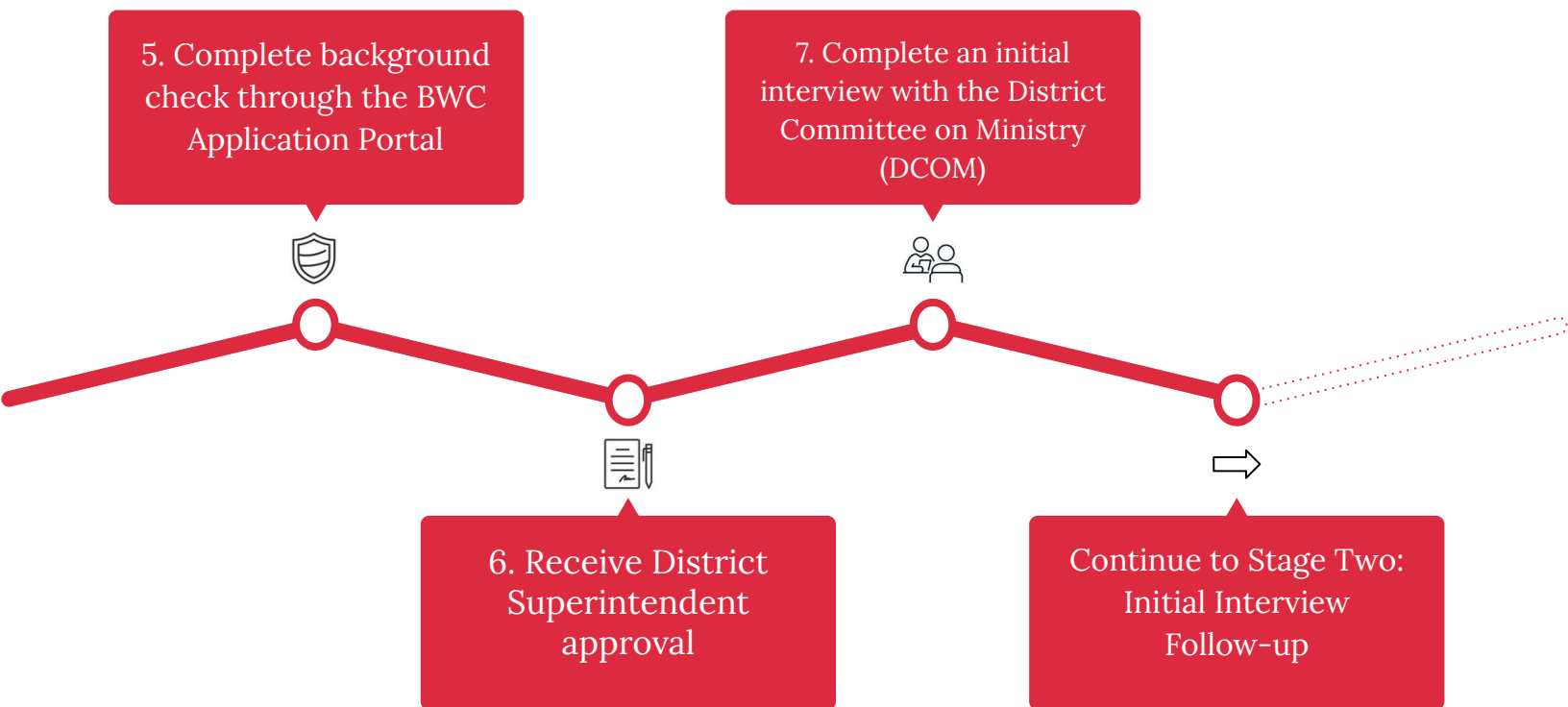
1. MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING. The candidate shall be a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one (1) year. Graduation from an accredited high school or certificate equivalent (GED) is a prerequisite.

2. THE CHRISTIAN AS MINISTER & REGISTERING FOR THE BWC APPLICATION PORTAL. The candidate reviews [The Christian as Minister](#) (ISBN 978-0-938162-63-6) with their local church pastor, another ordained deacon or elder, or their District Superintendent. The candidate proceeds to the [BWC Application and Assignment Portal](#) to initiate the process by registering their own individual login. The candidate completes the Application Stage 1 - Eligibility task. (Please use a personal, not work, email address). The DS should be notified at this point of the candidate's interest.

3. LOCAL CHURCH RECOMMENDATION. Receive P/SPRC recommendation (or equivalent body as determined by dCOM). If recommendation is gained by the P/SPRC, the DS should be notified along with supporting rationale of the decision. **If the DS concurs**, the candidate meets with the Church/Charge conference and must receive 2/3 written vote of Church/Charge Conference to officially begin the process toward certification. (Use [Declaration of Candidacy Form](#), signed by district superintendent or presiding elder). A special Church/Charge Conference can be called, if needed. **If the DS does not concur**, a special DS interview should be scheduled.

STAGE ONE ➡

INQUIRING CANDIDATE



4. INITIAL TASKS AND FORMS. The candidate completes remaining tasks in Application Stage 1 of the [BWC Application Portal](#), including Applicant Information, Statement of Call, notarized Candidate's Disclosure Form (replaces Form 114), and review of Expectations of Leaders. These tasks must be completed at least one month prior to the DCOM interview.

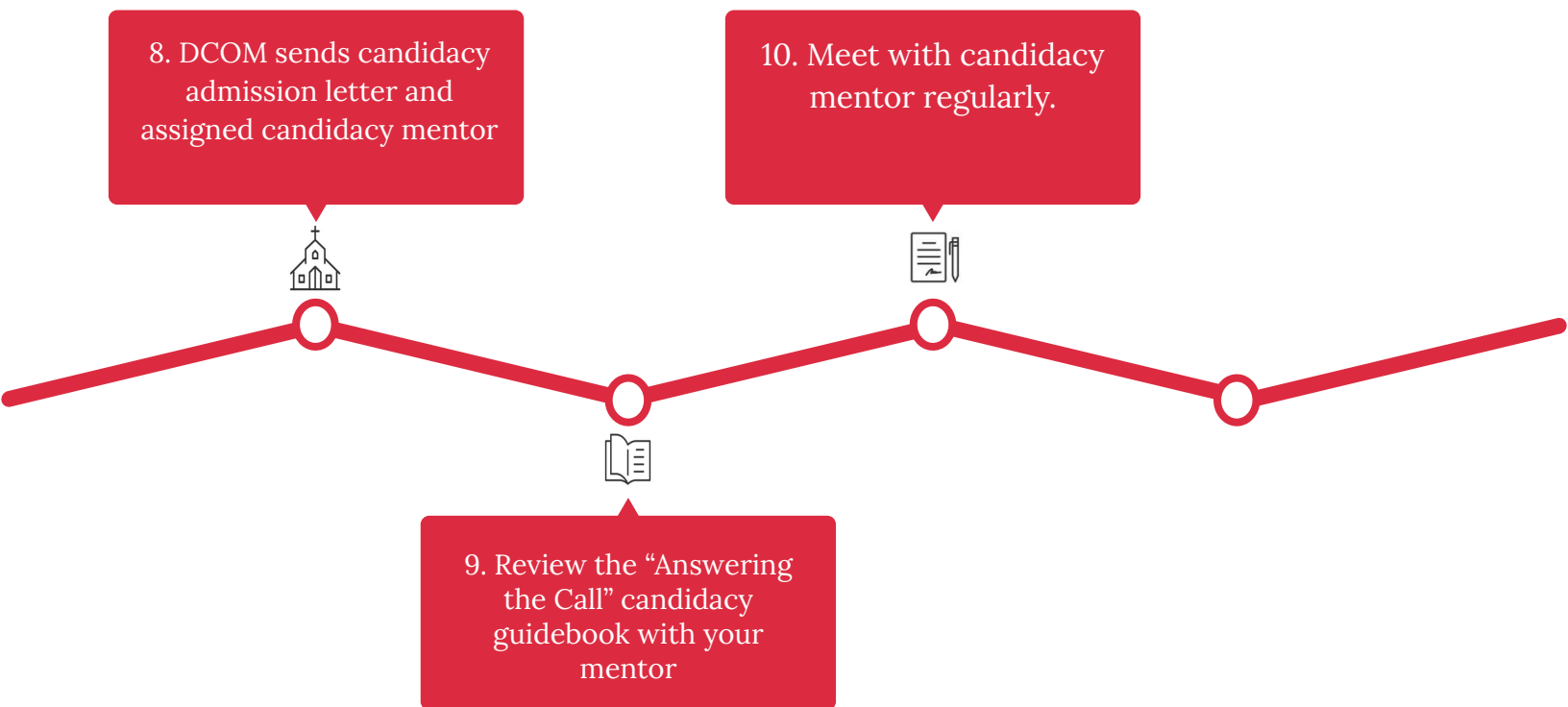
5. BACKGROUND CHECK. A background check will be completed through the [BWC Application Portal](#). Candidates will receive instructions to complete the background check and required Training Course online at the cost of approximately \$62. The report will become available to the candidate and DCOM chair for review. This action must be completed at least one month prior to the DCOM interview.

6. RECEIVE DS APPROVAL. Once Stage 1 Portal tasks are completed and submitted, the candidate should email their DS to begin approval process.

7. INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH DCOM. Interviews are scheduled at the invitation of the DCOM.

STAGE TWO ➡

EXPLORING CANDIDATE



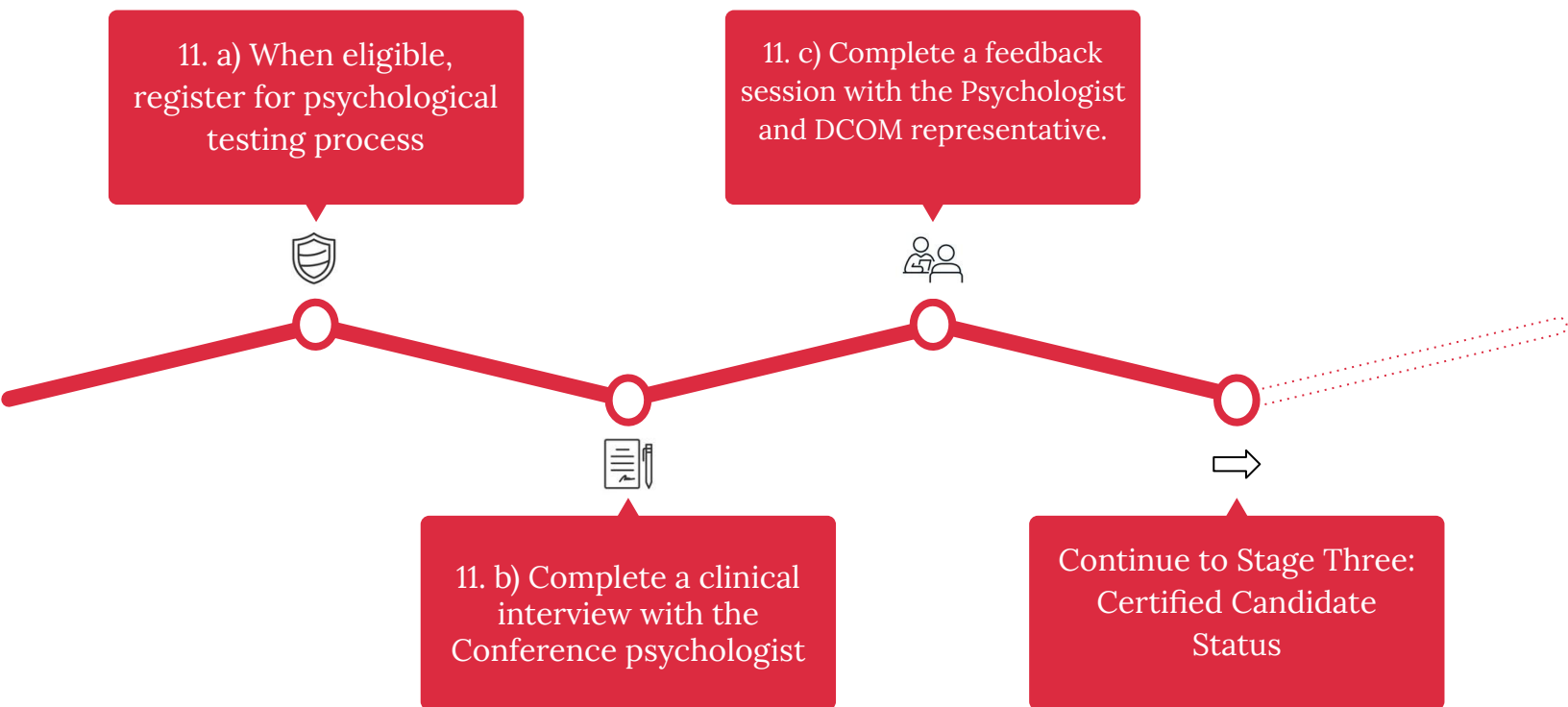
8. CONFIRMATION OF ADMISSION. If recommended for admission into the candidacy program, the candidate receives from the chair or registrar of the DCOM a letter with the name of their candidacy mentor. If not recommended for admission at this time, the chair of the DCOM sends a letter to the candidate outlining the reasons for the committee’s decision.

9. ANSWERING THE CALL GUIDEBOOK. The candidate will arrange to pick up a Candidacy Guidebook from the Conference Mission Center or [download a digital copy](#) (ISBN 9780938162674)

10. CANDIDACY MENTOR ASSIGNMENT. The Candidacy Mentor will initiate the first meeting with the candidate and set up a schedule for working through the Candidacy Guidebook in a way that gives consideration to the candidate’s background and experience. Following the initial meeting, the candidate will then take responsibility for scheduling regular mentoring sessions.

STAGE TWO ➡

EXPLORING CANDIDATE



11. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT. Candidates will undergo a psychological evaluation process which includes assessments, a clinical interview with a licensed psychologist, and a feedback session with a representative of the DCOM.

- The candidate, DS and DCOM Chair will complete the prerequisite steps in the BWC Portal. Once the candidate becomes eligible for the psychological assessment process, the Ministerial Services Administrator will follow up to guide the candidate through the full process. [Download a detailed guide to the psychological assessment process](#). The psychological assessment process, including payment, must be complete prior to the certification interview.
- After completing the initial psychological testing, the candidate will be invited to schedule a clinical interview with one of the Conference psychologists.
- When the psychological report is received from the psychologist, a feedback session will be scheduled to review the results with a DCOM representative present.

STAGE THREE ➡

CERTIFIED CANDIDATE

12. Request a mentor report through the BWC Application Portal.



13. Complete certification interview forms and other requirements in the portal.



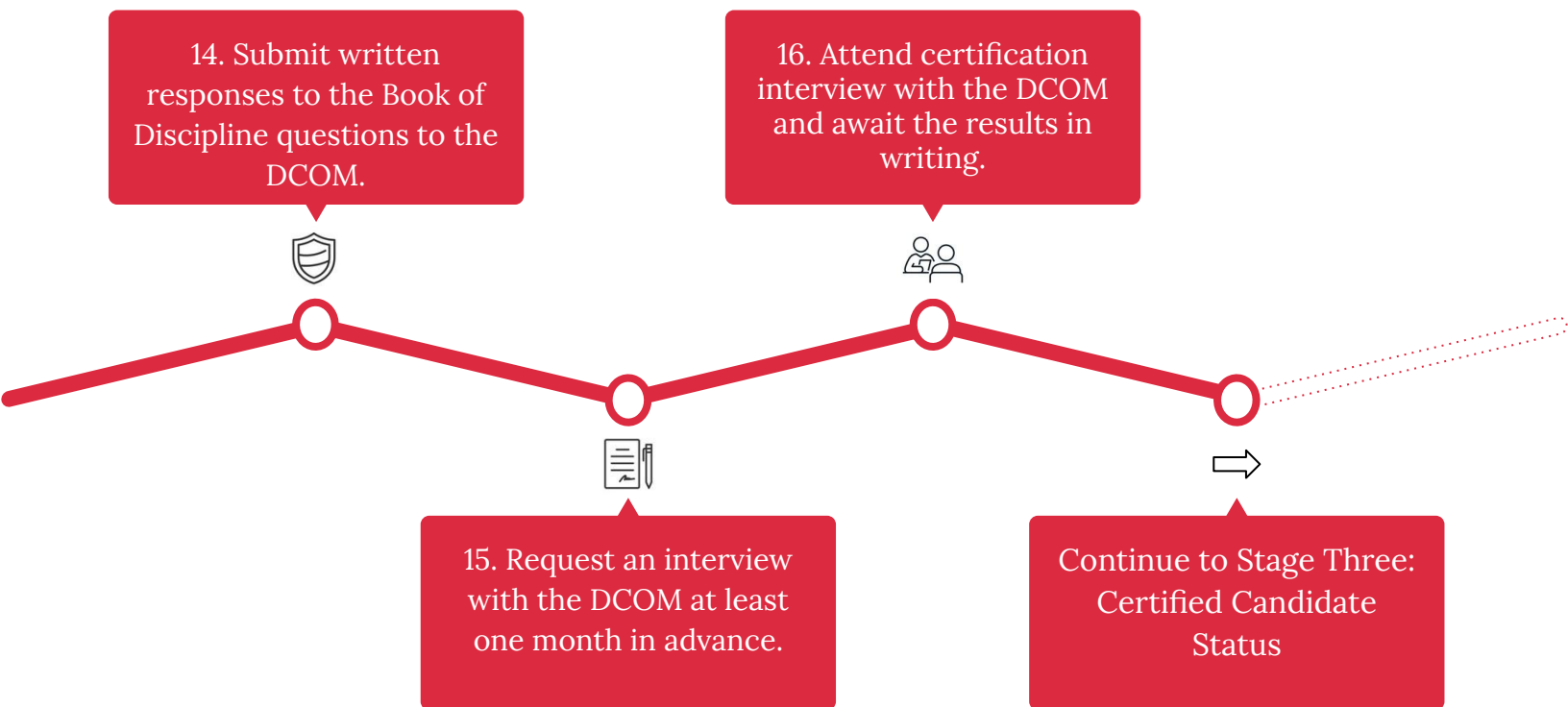
12. MENTOR REPORT. The Candidacy Mentor completes the BWC Mentor Report through the [BWC Application Portal](#). The candidate must request the report through their Portal account, and be consulted and review this report before it is submitted. This report should be a reflection on insights gained and growth perceived in the candidate during the mentoring process, not recommendations to the committee.

13. CERTIFICATION INTERVIEW REQUIREMENTS. In Application Stage 2 of the Portal, the candidate will upload other requirements prior to their interview for certification.

- a. A completed observation report from the home pastor;
- b. A completed observation report from the chair of the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations committee; and
- c. A completed medical summary report (replacing Form 103), completed and signed by a medical professional.

STAGE THREE ➡

CERTIFIED CANDIDATE



14. WRITTEN RESPONSES. In Application Stage 2 of the Portal, the candidate will submit in writing the following from the Book of Discipline, ¶310.2a:

- a) The most formative experience of their Christian life; b) God's call to licensed or ordained ministry and role of the church in their call; c) Their beliefs as a Christian; d) Their gifts for ministry; e) Their present understanding of their call to ministry as elder, deacon or licensed ministry; and f) Their support systems.

15. INTERVIEW REQUEST. The candidate requests an interview with the DCOM when all required documents have been submitted, at least one month prior to the anticipated Certification Interview.

16. CERTIFICATION INTERVIEW. The candidate interviews with DCOM for certification. Approval for certification as a candidate for ordained ministry requires a three-fourths written ballot. The candidate is informed of the results in writing.

STAGE FOUR ➡

CONTINUING CANDIDATE

17. Continue meeting with candidacy mentor.



19. a) Renew certification annually at Charge Conference and DCOM.



18. Develop plan for education.



19. b) Complete annual certification documents and forms

17. CONTINUE MEETING WITH MENTOR. The Candidacy Mentor maintains a minimum of four annual meetings with the Certified Candidate until the candidate is licensed or commissioned. An annual report from the mentor is required.

18. EDUCATION PLAN. The Candidacy Mentor and candidate meet to discuss the interview. The Candidacy Mentor and candidate work together to develop a plan for education. Candidates pursuing licensing must enroll in and complete the License to Preach School or have completed one-third of their seminary education at a United Methodist Seminary OR a University Senate-accredited school. [Learn more about the UMC educational requirements.](#)

19. ANNUAL CERTIFICATION INTERVIEWS. Certified candidacy is renewed annually by Church/Charge Conference and the DCOM. An annual interview with the DCOM is required. Also, a letter of recommendation from their district superintendent and DCOM interview form must be completed annually for the candidate's file. The following documents must be submitted to the DCOM each year for the candidate to be recertified, through the BWC Application and Assignment Portal:

a) Mentor's Report; b) Updated Biographical Information Form; c) Educational transcripts; d) Plan for education; and e) An annual report from the candidate indicating educational progress, service in the church or other approved service site (if applicable), and growth in spiritual maturity.

MOVING FORWARD

CERTIFICATION INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

Upon Certification, candidates are expected to choose the path of Local Pastor, Deacon, or Elder. Progress from this point is determined by this choice.

For Path A: Local Pastor Licensing, continue on to page 12.

For Path B: Provisional Membership (For those in the Ordained Elder or Ordained Deacon Track), continue on to page 14.

For Path C: Alternate Route to Ordination (For Licensed Local Pastors or Associate Members seeking Ordination), continue on to page 15.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND

Certified Candidate status enables the candidate to apply for financial assistance for their education through the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF). To request funding, please follow these steps:

- **Course of Study MEF Reimbursement***
 - For the Course of Study (COS) or Advanced Course of Study (ACOS) courses, Certified Candidates or Licensed Local Pastors may request assistance of 100% of the cost per course, which is paid directly to the school.
 - Visit the [Candidacy web page](#) for details on how to submit a request.
- **Seminary Student MEF Grant/Loan***
 - For Master's level Degree (or UM-required courses) from a University Senate Approved school, Certified Candidates or Licensed Local Pastors may request partial assistance per credit hour which is paid directly to the school.
 - Visit the [Candidacy web page](#) for details on the current year's per credit rate, and how to submit a request.

*Please note: reimbursement and grant requests can take up to 3-4 weeks to process

Visit [GBHEM's website](#) to learn about other loan and scholarship opportunities.

PATH A

LOCAL PASTOR LICENSING

1. If the Certified Candidate is seeking licensing for pastoral ministry, an interview for licensing may be conducted on the same day as the certification interview. The candidate must submit the following:
 - a. One digital recording of a sermon along with the manuscript for that sermon. (See specific directions in the BWC Application portal)
2. Through the [BWC Application Portal](#), submit written responses to the following questions (3-5 pages):
 - a. What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments?
 - b. Talk about the nature of the Kingdom of God and then use a biblical parable to illustrate one aspect of the Kingdom.
 - c. What is your understanding of the Wesleyan concept of divine grace?
 - d. How will you discern and implement God's vision for your ministry setting?
3. The candidate interviews with the DCOM (§315.2a-d) and may be recommended to the Board of Ordained Ministry for licensing.
4. The license to preach is granted only to those who have received an appointment to serve as a local pastor. Candidates who no longer are serving under an appointment must return their license to the district superintendent (§320.1). Completion of the License to Preach School is a requirement to receive a license. It is, however, not equal to a granting of a license.
5. Full-time local pastors shall complete four courses annually in the Course of Study, with a maximum of eight years to complete. (§319.3) OR Part-time local pastor shall complete at least two courses annually in the Course of Study, with a maximum of twelve years to complete. (§319.3) OR Student pastors must be enrolled in a college, university, United Methodist Seminary, OR Seminary approved by the University Senate and must be making adequate annual progress in their educational program. (§318.3)
6. Licensed local pastors shall meet annually with the DCOM to be continued in their status as local pastors. Required for this action are (a) a completed local pastor's interview form, (b) a completed mentor's report, (c) a letter of recommendation by their district superintendent, and (d) a current transcript documenting their progress in the Course of Study. Local pastors must be making adequate progress in the Course of Study or in seminary in order to be continued in this status.



Ministry of **LOCAL PASTORS**

Licensed to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service

A local pastor answers God's call by serving a local congregation or extension ministry. When appointed, the local pastor performs the pastor's duties, including preaching and teaching; leading in worship and liturgy; receiving new members; performing the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion; and the services of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, and confirmation. The local pastor's authority is limited to the appointment setting. The local pastor is not ordained and serves by virtue of a license for pastoral ministry after completing certified candidacy, licensing school, and annual conference requirements. Local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference.

Licensed to Order the Life of the Congregation(s)

The local pastor oversees the Church's ministry to fulfill its mission of witness and service in the world where appointed. The local pastor gives pastoral support and guidance and trains lay leadership to fulfill their ministries. The local pastor has administrative oversight of the charge and supervises the programs of the congregation(s) he or she serves.

Local Pastor Relationships

The local pastor is supervised by a district superintendent and bishop and meets regularly with a clergy mentor and the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (dCOM) for annual approval to serve. Local pastors receive theological education through the Course of Study each year. After completion of the Course of Study, a local pastor may complete the Advanced Course of Study to pursue provisional membership. Along with associate members, they participate in the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members for ongoing peer support while in ministry.

Students Appointed as Local Pastors

Students who are enrolled in pre-theological or theological studies in a college, university, or school of theology listed by the University Senate may be appointed as local pastors. Students may be appointed to serve either in the annual conference where their certification is held or in another annual conference where they attend school (§318.3).



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PATH B

PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

1. Candidates who hold or will complete a Bachelor's degree from a college/university and: a. either a Master of Divinity degree (elder or deacon track) or a Master's degree in an area of specialized ministry (deacon track), b. Have been a certified candidate for at least one year, and c. have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministry and service to the satisfaction of the DCOM are eligible for recommendation to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry for Provisional Membership. (§324.1-2) Please note that candidates for deacon over the age of 35 may have received, in place of a Master's degree, professional certification or license in their area of ministry including a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate credit plus the additional theological graduate courses listed below. (§324.4)
2. Course work and degrees must be taken from an accredited college, university, or seminary. The UMC requires candidates for Provisional Membership to have completed the appropriate Master's degree program (see #1 above) as well as the required credits in Old Testament; New Testament; systematic theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; preaching; and United Methodist studies in doctrine, polity and history. The BWC requires an additional course (at least 2 credits) in ethics. Courses must be taken for credit and the student must receive a "C" or better.
3. Candidates seeking recommendation by the DCOM for Provisional Membership may be interviewed by the DCOM during their second-to-last year of seminary. An official transcript must be provided, as well as a plan for completing their degree during the upcoming conference year. Candidates shall submit to the DCOM, in writing, answers to the questions found in §324.7a-p at least one month prior to the interview. Candidates shall interview with the DCOM regarding written answers and readiness for ministry. The vote to recommend must pass by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority.

PATH B, CONTINUED

PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

4. Candidates will be contacted by the Provisional Member Registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry regarding the requirements and deadlines in order to be examined by the BoOM for Provisional Membership and Commissioning.
5. Candidates will be asked to submit a sermon and a Biblical Study to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Each submission must receive a passing grade for the candidate to be recommended for Provisional Membership. Additional instructions and deadlines are posted on the [website](#).
6. Additional requirements prior to sitting for the exam include a final revision of written work, complete medical examination and notarized documents.

PATH C

ALTERNATE ROUTE TO ORDINATION

For those Licensed Local Pastors seeking Recommendation for Provisional Membership (and ordination as Full Members):

1. Satisfied all requirements in ¶324.1-3, 6-12 of the 2020/2024 *Book of Discipline*;
2. Completed the five-year [Course of Study](#) program, of which no more than one-half may be taken by correspondence or Internet; up to one-half of Course of Study may be online courses; and completed “an equivalent program of study embedded in an undergraduate degree at a UM-related college or university;” and
3. Completed the [Advanced Course of Study](#) consisting of 32 semester hours of graduate theological study offered by a seminary recognized by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by GBHEM that shall include United Methodist studies in doctrine, polity and history.



Ordained to Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice

Deacons are ordained clergy who lead the people of God through ministries of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. Some deacons serve congregations in ministries of Christian education, music, outreach, administration, or pastoral care. Some deacons serve outside the church in such ministries as social-service organizations, schools, legal services, or as chaplains.

Ordination and Leadership

Ordained ministers are leaders who are set apart in ministries that represent God's love. Ordination is a lifetime covenantal relationship that includes mutual care and accountability. It is founded in the sacrament of baptism, through which all Christians are called into service. Deacons are ordained into this lifetime relationship.

The office of the deacon dates back to New Testament times. The word "deacon" carries the meaning of "servant" and "messenger." A deacon's work includes ministries of compassion and justice and leading the faithful in these ministries. United Methodist deacons are appointed to their places of ministry. They typically find their place of service and request appointment from the bishop.

In the Congregation

In the congregation, deacons help to lead worship and assist the pastor with presiding at the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. They also preach and teach; raise the congregation's awareness of the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world; lead outreach ministries; and conduct funerals and weddings. Their ministry in a church includes sending the faithful into ministry outside the church walls.

In the World

Beyond the local congregation, deacons may serve in social service agencies; in church-related schools, institutions, agencies, and in places where people are hungry to know a loving God. While many of these ministries can be performed by lay people, the ordained are distinct in their accountable relationship to the church, their representative ministry (representing service to the church and the church to the world), their leadership, and their lifetime commitment to this relationship. Deacons serving beyond the local church also have a "secondary appointment" to a congregation, connecting the church to the needs of the world.



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Ordained to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service

Elders lead and serve the Church in the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. Elders' primary responsibilities are communicating the faith and proclaiming God's Word through preaching and teaching. Elders administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion and order the Church's ministry. Most elders serve as pastors in charge of local congregations. However, elders may also serve in a variety of extension ministry (§1343) settings (such as chaplaincy or pastoral counseling). Bishops and district superintendents are chosen from among the elders, because the ordering of ministry and administering the *Discipline* are elders' responsibilities.

Service

Ordained ministry is rooted in servant leadership. As servant leaders, elders embody Jesus's teaching. For John Wesley, this meant refusing the limitations of parish boundaries and claiming the world as his parish. Today, elders lead in service by organizing the Church for its mission and service in the world. Through prophetic preaching, biblical interpretation, sacramental administration, theological reflection, and organizing the Church for ministry, elders equip Christians for their ministry of service in the world. Elders appointed to extension ministries (e.g., chaplaincy, counseling, campus ministry, and education) also carry out this task. Wherever appointed, elders carry their vows of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service as ordained representatives of Christ's church.

Itinerant Clergy

In more than 230 years of Methodism, the elders' distinguishing mark has been their willingness to offer themselves "without reserve to be appointed and to serve" (§1333). Elders commit to full-time, itinerant service in the Church under the bishop's authority. Through itineracy, the Church also assures pastoral leadership for every local congregation.

Elders who are in good standing and continue to fulfill their professional responsibilities are continued under appointment unless they are on leave and are assured equitable compensation for their ministry.

Elder as Pastor in Charge

Elders oversee the local church's ministry as it fulfills its mission of service and witness in the world. This includes administrative oversight, evangelistic leadership, programmatic planning, spiritual nurturing, and pastoral care in the congregation. The pastor sets the vision and direction of the congregation for its witness in the world and leads the church in worship and liturgical life.



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