



Baltimore-Washington Conference
The United Methodist Church

Ministry Field Guide

Certified Candidacy Process



Revised 2026

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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

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

★ Seminary and Course of Study Resources

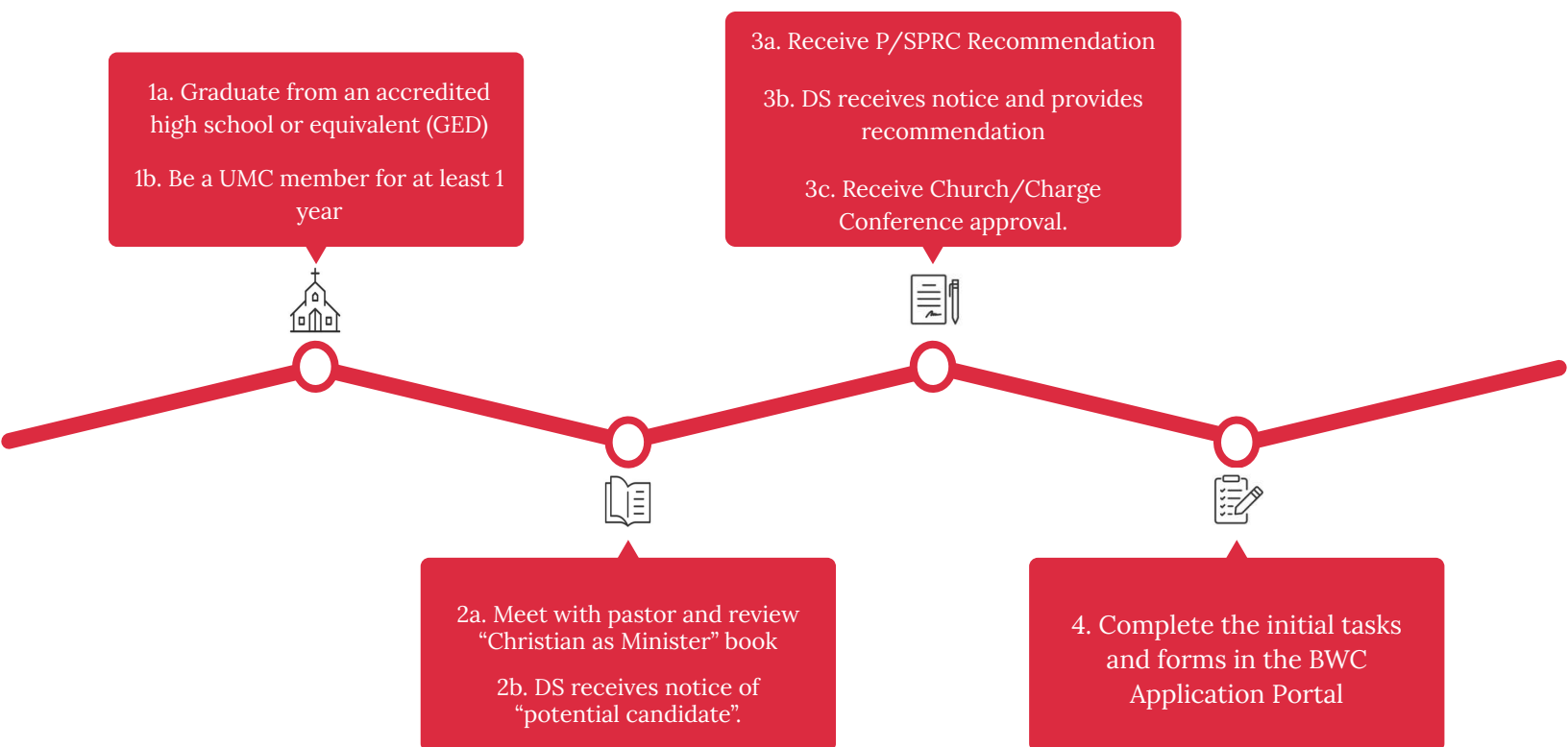
- [UMC Approved Seminaries](#)
- [Wesley Theological Seminary \(DC\) Master of Divinity Program](#)
- [Wesley Theological Seminary \(DC\) Course of Study Program](#)
- [St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute \(Baltimore\) Master of Divinity Partnership Program](#)
- [Candler School of Theology Course of Study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



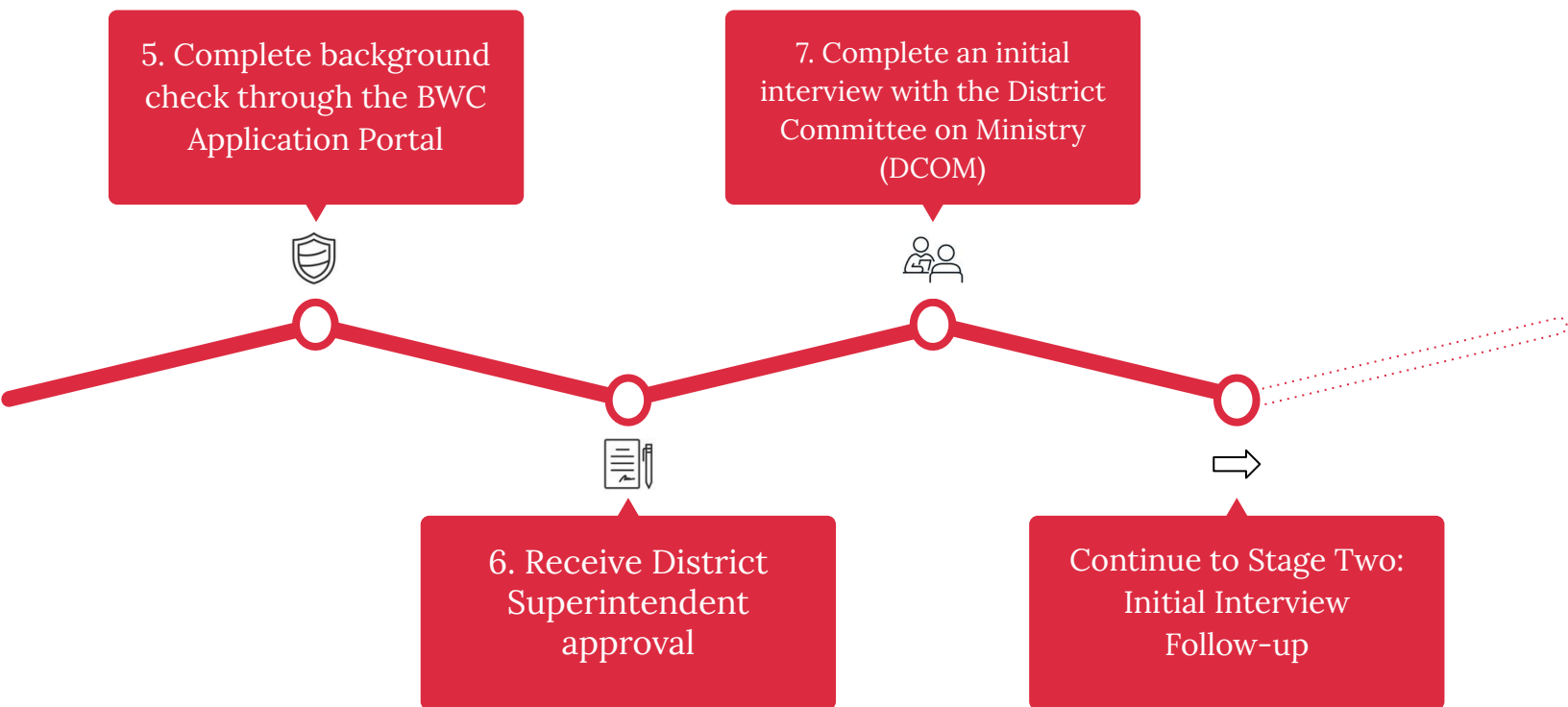
1. MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING. The candidate shall be a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one (1) year. Graduation from an accredited high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

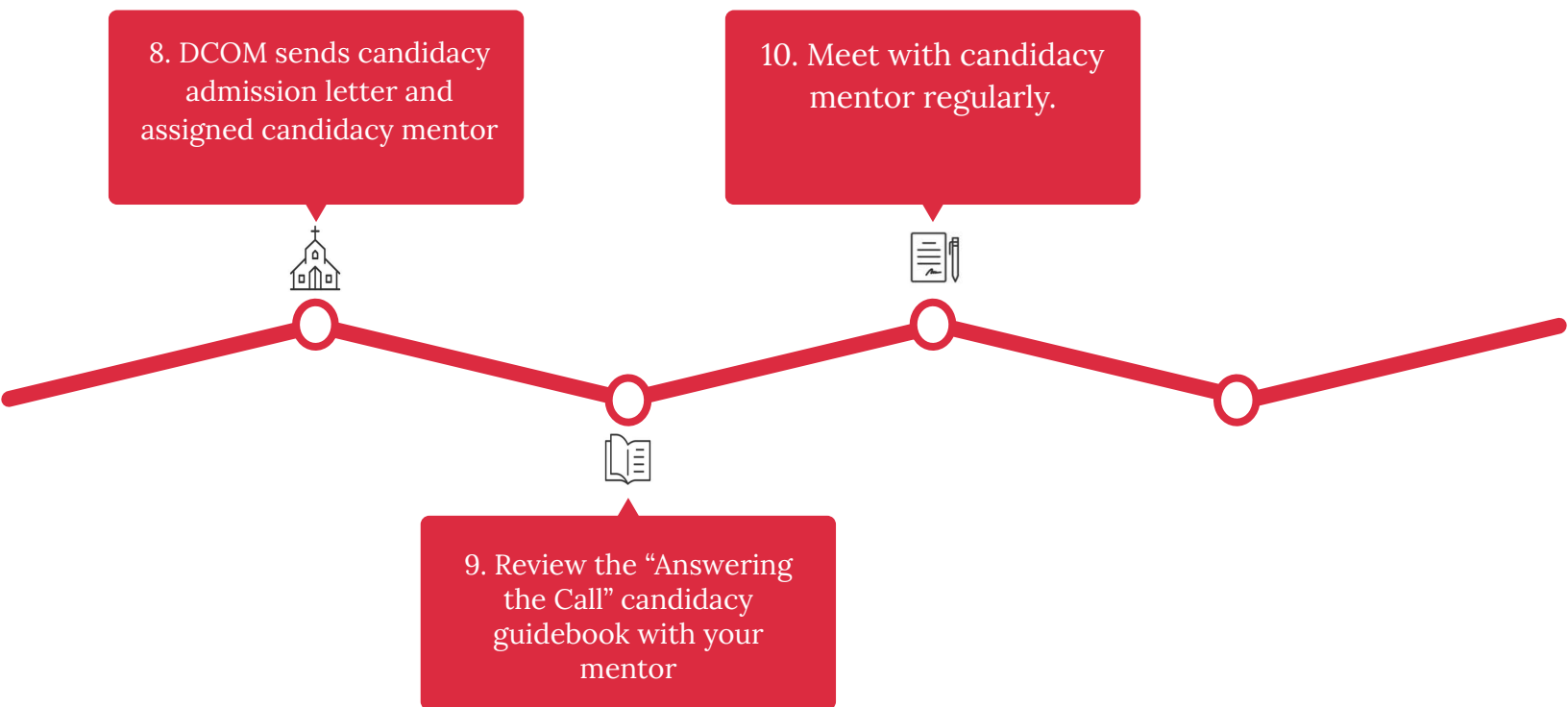
5. BACKGROUND CHECK. A background check will be completed through the [BWC Application Portal](#). Candidates will find instructions to complete the Safe Gatherings background check and required Training Course online at the cost of approximately \$62. The report will become available to the candidate 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



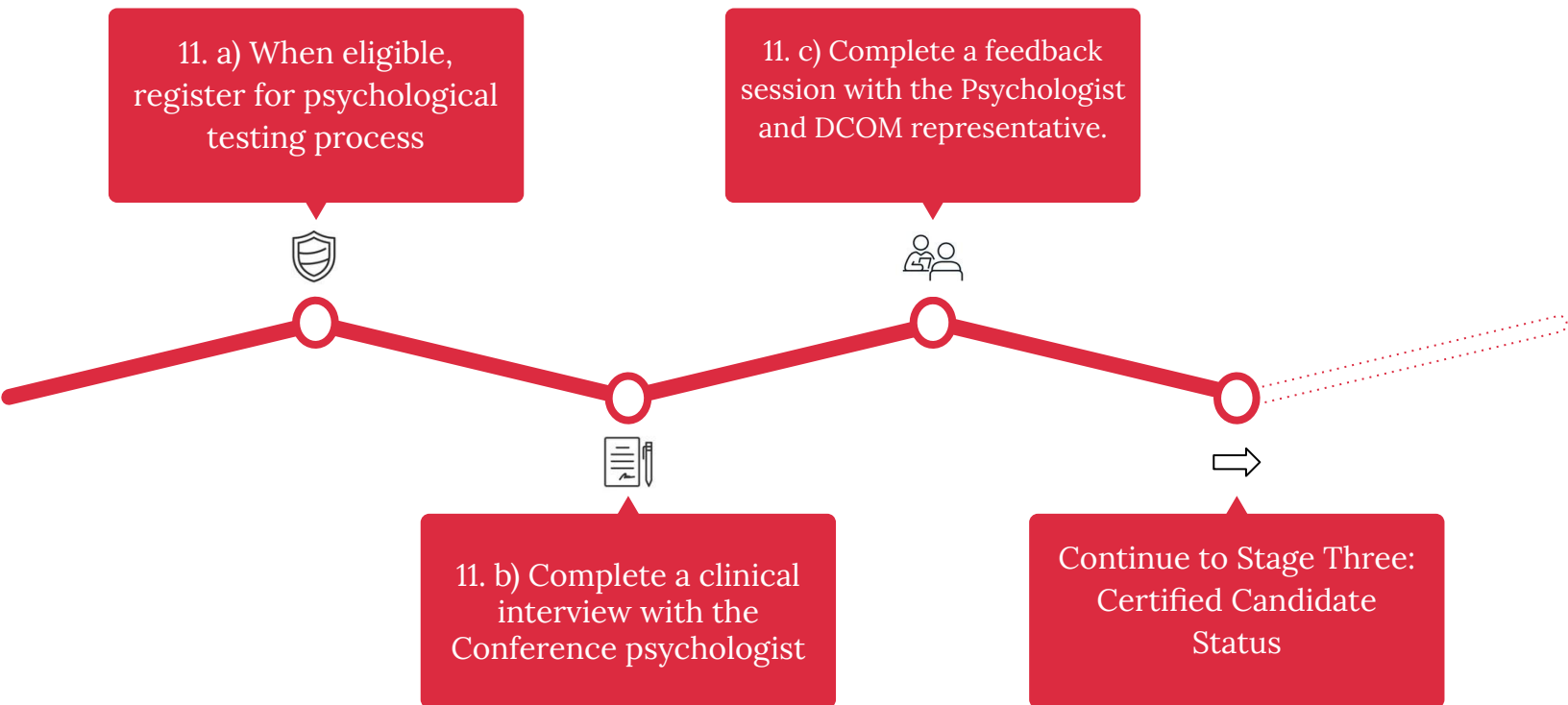
8. CONFIRMATION OF ADMISSION. If recommended for admission into the candidacy program, the candidate receives from the chair or registrar of the DCOM a letter with the name of their candidacy mentor. If not recommended for admission at this time, the chair of the DCOM sends a letter to the candidate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

- a) 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 here](#). The psychological assessment process, including payment, must be complete prior to the certification interview.
- b) After completing the initial psychological testing, the candidate will be invited to schedule a clinical interview with one of the Conference psychologists.
- c) 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.



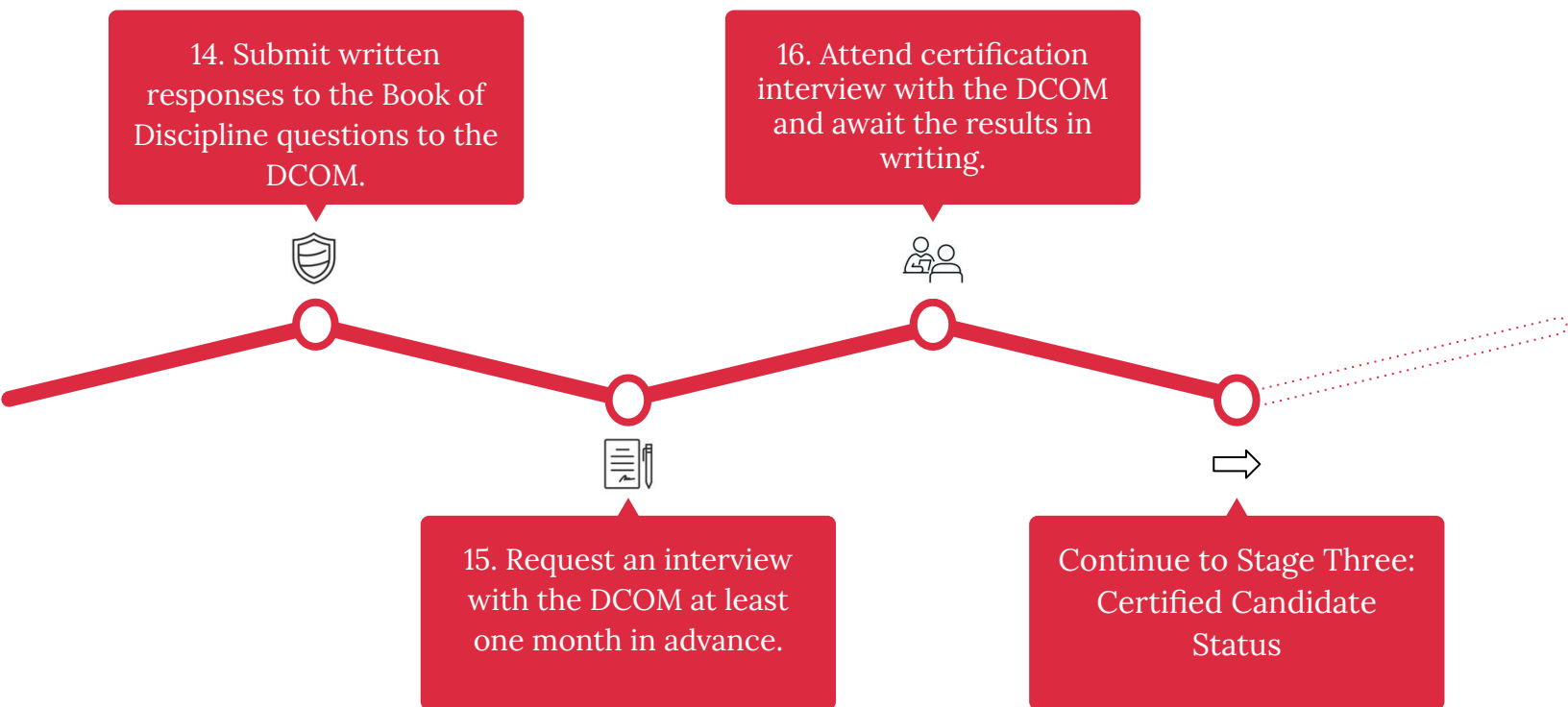
12. MENTOR REPORT. The Candidacy Mentor completes the BWC Mentor Report through the [BWC Application Portal](#). The candidate must request the report through their Portal account and review this report with their mentor before it is submitted. This report should be a reflection on insights gained and 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 answers to the following from the Book of Discipline, ¶310.2a:

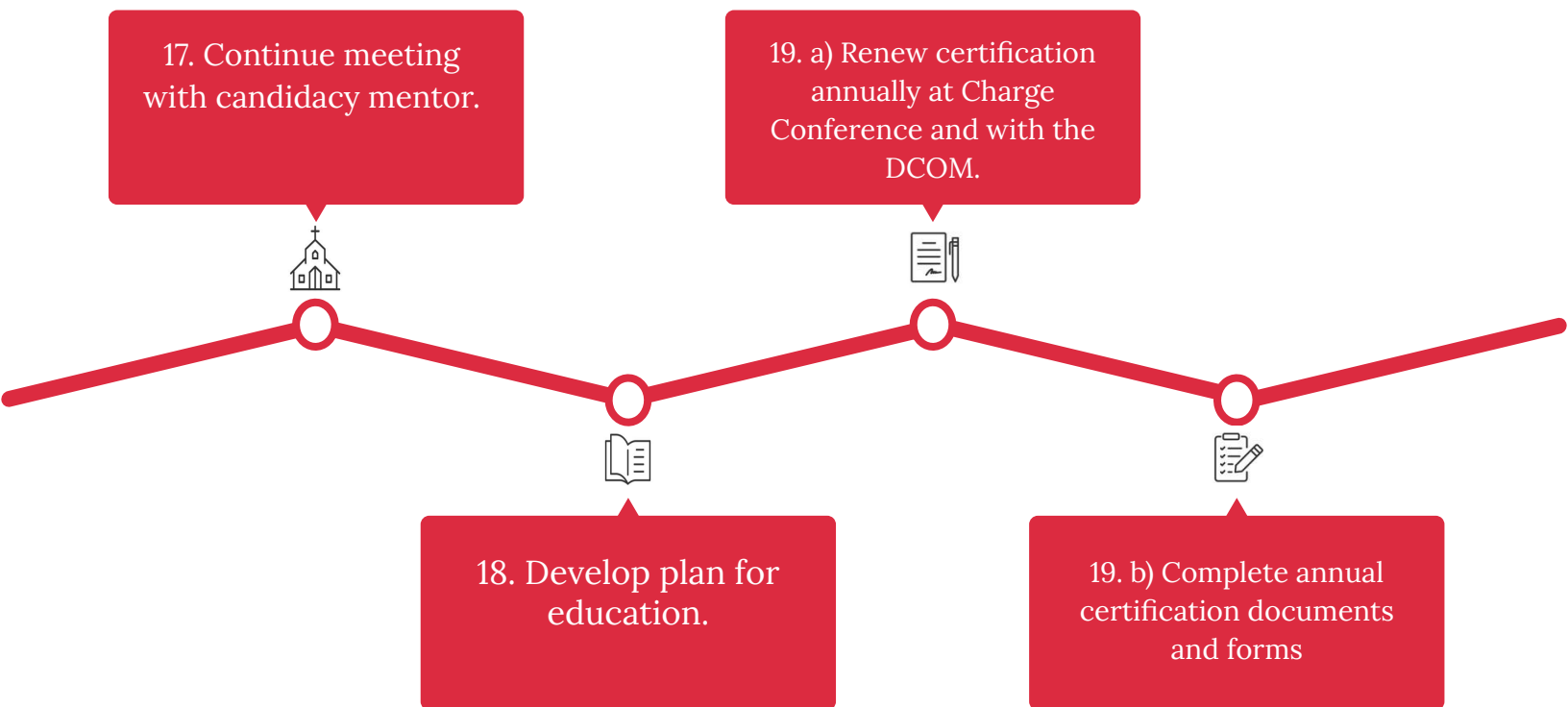
- a) The most formative experience of their Christian life; b) God's call to licensed or ordained ministry and role of the church in their call; c) Their beliefs as a Christian; d) Their gifts for ministry; e) Their present understanding of their call to ministry as elder, deacon or licensed ministry; 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 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, as well as a letter of recommendation from their district superintendent and DCOM interview form. 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 seeking Ordination as an Elder or Deacon), 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

- 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:
 - One digital recording of a sermon along with the manuscript for that sermon. (See specific directions in the BWC Application portal)
- Through the [BWC Application Portal](#), submit written responses to the following questions (3-5 pages):
 - What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments?
 - Talk about the nature of the Kingdom of God and then use a biblical parable to illustrate one aspect of the Kingdom.
 - What is your understanding of the Wesleyan concept of divine grace?
 - How will you discern and implement God's vision for your ministry setting?
- The candidate interviews with the DCOM (§315.2a-d) and may be recommended to the Board of Ordained Ministry for licensing.
- 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.
- 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)
- 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.



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MINISTRY OF LOCAL PASTORS



The Rev. Debbie Williams

Mike DuBose, UMNS

Licensed to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service

Local pastors answer God's call by serving a local congregation or extension ministry. When appointed, local pastors perform the pastor's duties, including preaching and teaching; leading in worship and liturgy; receiving new members; administering the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion; and officiating at the services of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, and confirmation. Local pastors' authority is limited to the appointment setting. Local pastors serve 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)

Local pastors oversee the Church's ministry to fulfill its mission of witness and service in the world where appointed. Local pastors give pastoral support and guidance, equip Christians for lives of service, have administrative oversight of the charge, and supervise programs within the appointment.

Local Pastor Relationships

Local pastors are supervised by a district superintendent and bishop and meet regularly with a clergy mentor and the district committee on ordained ministry (dCOM) for annual approval to serve. Most local pastors receive theological education through the Course of Study. After completing the Course of Study, local pastors may pursue the Advanced Course of Study for provisional membership. Along with associate members, they participate in the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members for ongoing peer support.

Students Appointed as Local Pastors

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

First Steps – Local Pastor

- Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* with a clergy person or candidacy mentor. This book is available at Cokesbury.com.
- Contact the pastor of your church, another elder or deacon, or the district superintendent to inquire about admission and invitation into the candidacy process.



The Rev. Daniel Hayes

Mike DuBose, UMMS

- Participate in a candidacy mentoring group or meet with a candidacy mentor (as assigned by the annual conference) to study [Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook](#) and refine your call to ministry.

Becoming a Certified Candidate – Local Pastor (§310)

- Be a member of the UMC or active in a United Methodist ministry setting for at least one year.
- Follow your annual conference's process for enrolling as a certified candidate.
- Complete all required steps to become a certified candidate as listed in §§310-314 and determined by the annual conference.

Educational Requirements and Academic Qualifications – Local Pastor (§§315.2, 319)

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- Licensing school or completion of one-third of a Master of Divinity degree at a University Senate-approved school of theology.
- [Basic Course of Study](#) – A prescribed course of required theological education for Local Pastors.

- [Advanced Course of Study](#) (optional) – 32-semester hours of graduate theological study which begins after the Basic Course of Study is completed.

Continuing Steps – Local Pastor

- Annual renewal of the License for Pastoral Ministry through the district committee on ordained ministry (dCOM) with approval by the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) and the Clergy Session.
- Receive appointment from the bishop.
- Local pastors may continue to serve in that capacity after completing Course of Study or may apply for associate membership after meeting additional requirements.
- Local pastors or associate members may apply for provisional membership after completing Advanced Course of Study and meeting additional requirements.

The candidacy process is listed in §§310-314 in [The Book of Discipline](#). The ministry of the Local Pastor is described in §§315-320 and §340 in [The Book of Discipline](#).

PATH B

PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Candidates who hold or will complete a Bachelor's degree from a college/university and:
 - either a Master of Divinity degree (elder or deacon track) or a Master's degree in an area of specialized ministry (deacon track)
 - have been a certified candidate for at least one year, and
 - 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)*)
- 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.
- 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

- Candidates will be asked to submit a sermon, a Bible study, and written responses to the Book of Discipline and additional required questions to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Each submission must receive a passing grade for the candidate to be recommended to be further examined for Provisional Membership. Additional instructions and deadlines are posted on the [Conference website](#).
- Additional requirements prior to sitting for the provisional member exam include letters of recommendation, submission of transcripts, and a complete medical examination.

PATH C

ALTERNATE ROUTE TO ORDINATION

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

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; 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.



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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MINISTRY OF DEACONS



The Rev. Kim Houff

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 specialized ministry roles while some serve in a variety of extension ministry settings such as chaplaincy, social-service organizations, schools, and legal services. Deacons assist in administering the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion or may preside at the celebration of the sacraments when contextually appropriate.

Service

Ordained ministry is rooted in servant leadership that sets apart clergy in ministries to represent God's love. Ordination is a lifetime covenant that includes mutual care and accountability and 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 to New Testament times. The word "deacon" means "servant" and "messenger." Deacons lead ministries of compassion and justice and lead the faithful in these ministries. United Methodist deacons are appointed to their places of ministry, often finding their place of service and requesting appointment from the bishop. Wherever they serve, deacons carry their vows of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice as ordained representatives of Christ's church.

In the Congregation

Deacons lead worship and assist the pastor with baptism and Holy Communion and may preside at sacraments when contextually appropriate (§328). Deacons 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 to carry the love and hope of Christ to the world.

In the World

Beyond the local congregation, deacons may serve in social service agencies, church-related schools, institutions, agencies, and other settings where people are hungry to know a loving God. While lay people may also carry out many of these ministries, ordained deacons are distinct in their accountable relationship with the Church, their representative ministry, serving the church in world and the world in the church, their leadership, and their lifelong commitment to this relationship.

First Steps – Deacon

- Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* with a clergyperson or candidacy mentor. This book is available at Cokesbury.com.
- Contact the pastor of your church, another elder or deacon, or the district superintendent to inquire about admission and invitation into the candidacy process.

- Participate in a candidacy mentoring group or meet with a candidacy mentor (as assigned by the annual conference) to study [Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook](#) and refine your call to ministry.

Becoming a Certified Candidate – Deacon (¶310)

- Be a member of the UMC or active in a United Methodist ministry setting for at least one year.
- Follow your annual conference's process for enrolling as a certified candidate.
- Complete all required steps to become a certified candidate as listed in ¶¶310-314 and determined by the annual conference.

Educational Requirements and Academic Qualifications – Deacon (¶324.3 (undergrad), ¶324.4.b, (graduate), ¶330.3 overview))

- High school diploma or equivalent
- Bachelor's degree from an approved institution (some exceptions apply)
- Graduate degree options include:
 - Master of Divinity degree, or other master's theological degree from a University Senate-approved school of theology, or
 - Master's degree in an area of specialization and completion of Basic Graduate Theological Studies
- Alternative education is available for candidates who hold a bachelor's degree, Certification in Professional Ministry, have completed four years of full-time service in this area of specialization, and have completed the Basic Graduate Theological Studies.



The Rev. DeAndre Johnson



The Rev. Dr. Erika Stalcup

Continuing Steps – Deacon

- Demonstrate gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the district committee on ordained ministry (dCOM).
- Complete all application requirements including health certificate, background checks, written theological exam, and autobiographical statement.
- Interview with the dCOM and Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) and receive recommendation for commissioning.
- Receive Clergy Session approval for election to provisional membership and be commissioned by a bishop.
- After completing the requirements of provisional membership, seek recommendation by the BOM and approval by the Clergy Executive Session for ordination and full membership.
- Be ordained by a bishop.

The candidacy process is listed in ¶¶310-314 in [The Book of Discipline](#). The ministry of the Deacon is described in ¶¶328-331 in [The Book of Discipline](#).



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General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MINISTRY OF ELDERS



Bishop Cedrick Bridgeforth

Mike DuBose, UMNS

Ordained to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service

Elders are ordained clergy who lead the Church in the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. Their 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 are responsible for ordering the Church's ministry. Most elders serve as pastors of local congregations, though some serve in extension ministries such as chaplaincy or pastoral counseling. Bishops and district superintendents are also elders, reflecting the responsibility for ordering ministry and administering the Discipline.

Service

Ordained ministry is rooted in servant leadership that sets apart clergy in ministries to represent God's love. Ordination is a lifetime covenant that includes mutual care and accountability and is founded in the sacrament of baptism, through which all Christians are called into service. Elders are ordained into this lifetime relationship.

As servant leaders, elders embody Jesus's teaching. For John Wesley, this meant refusing the limits of parish boundaries and claiming the world as his parish. Today, elders lead by organizing the Church for its mission and service in the world. Through preaching, biblical interpretation, sacramental administration, theological reflection, and ordering the Church's ministry, elders equip

Christians for lives of service. Elders appointed to extension ministries (e.g., chaplaincy, counseling, campus ministry, and education) do the same in this calling. Wherever they serve, elders carry their vows of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service as ordained representatives of Christ's church.

Itinerant Clergy

For more than 280 years of Methodism, elders have been distinguished by 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 authority of the bishop. Through itineracy, the Church assures pastoral leadership for every local congregation.

Elders who remain in good standing and continue to fulfill professional responsibilities are continued under appointment 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. Their leadership includes administrative oversight, evangelistic leadership, program planning, spiritual nurturing, and pastoral care. As pastors, elders lead the congregation in worship and its liturgical life and, in partnership with lay leadership, set the vision and direction for its witness in the world.

First Steps – Elder

- Read and discuss *The Christian as Minister* with a clergy person or candidacy mentor. This book is available at Cokesbury.com.
- Contact the pastor of your church, another elder or deacon, or the district superintendent to inquire about admission and invitation into the candidacy process.
- Participate in a candidacy mentoring group or meet with a candidacy mentor (as assigned by the annual conference) to study *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* and refine your call to ministry.

Becoming a Certified Candidate – Elder (§310)

- Be a member of the UMC or active in a United Methodist ministry setting for at least one year.
- Follow your annual conference's process for enrolling as a certified candidate.
- Complete all required steps to become a certified candidate as listed in §§310-314 and determined by the annual conference.

Educational Requirements and Academic Qualifications – Elder (§324.3 (undergrad), §324.4.a (graduate), §335 (overview))

- High school diploma or equivalent

- Bachelor's degree from an approved institution (some exceptions may apply)
- Master of Divinity degree from a University Senate-approved school of theology or completion of the Basic and Advanced Course of Study
- Completion of the Basic Graduate Theological Studies as part of all theological education

Continuing Steps – Elder

- Demonstrate gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the district committee on ordained ministry (dCOM).
- Complete all application requirements including health certificate, background checks, written theological exam, and autobiographical statement.
- Interview with the dCOM and Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) and receive recommendation for commissioning.
- Receive Clergy Session approval for election to provisional membership and be commissioned by a bishop.
- After completing the requirements of provisional membership, seek recommendation by the BOM and approval by the Clergy Session for ordination and full membership.
- Be ordained by a bishop.

The candidacy process is listed in §§310-314 in *The Book of Discipline*. The ministry of the Elder is described in §§332-340 in *The Book of Discipline*.



Front row, newly ordained elders: the Rev. María Magdalena Zelaya Cruz, the Rev. Héctor Mauricio Láinez Rodríguez and the Rev. Juana Jamileth Moncada Torres. Second row: Bishops José Roberto Peña Nazario, Juan Miguel Simpson Bennett, Rubén Sáenz Jr. and Lizette Gabriel Montalvo.

Rev. Gustavo Vasquez, UM News