The Susquehanna Annual Conference

2024-2028 Local Pastors' Handbook

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IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Chairperson, Board of Ordained Ministry:
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Registrar, Local Pastors & Associate Members:
Pastor Rebecca Cuddeback, bomcos@susumc.org

Fellowship of Local Pastors & Associate Members Chair:
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Assistant to the Board of Ordained Ministry:
Rev. Marian Hartman, bomadmin@susumc.org

Useful Abbreviations

AM – Associate Member
BOOM or BOM – Board of Ordained Ministry
DCOM – District Committee on Ordained Ministry
LP – Local Pastor
PLP – Part time local pastor
FLP – Full time local pastor
FLPAM – Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members

INTRODUCTION

THE LOCAL PASTORS' HANDBOOK

This handbook is a guide for the Local Pastor, to assist in the call to serve God and to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ through the local church. In addition, this handbook can assist district superintendents and district committees on ordained ministry as they work with Local Pastors. It is not the final authority on a situation or condition but is to serve as a practical and understandable guide to the ministry of the Local Pastor.

STEPS INTO MINISTRY

Resources for the candidacy process are found on the conference website – www.susumc.org . Click on the "Ministries" tab then select "Board of Ordained Ministry." You will be able to locate candidacy materials under Exploring Ministry and/or Candidacy tabs.

You can also go directly to https://susumc.org/boom/ .

The first steps to becoming a Local Pastor are in the *Candidate for Ministry Process* and the *Candidate for Ministry Tracking Sheet*. You can also find an electronic version of the candidacy guidebook, *Answering The Call.* One must be a Certified Candidate for Ministry to enroll in Licensing School. It is also strongly encouraged that one is Certified as a Candidate before enrolling in seminary. This makes one eligible for financial aid.

LICENSE FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY
(See 2020/2024 Bo ok of Discipline, ¶315 -319, 340)

I. Definition of Local Pastor

A local pastor is licensed pastor who is not ordained as an elder or a deacon and is appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor. A local Pastor must be approved annually by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and licensed by the Bishop. The local pastor is eligible to perform all the duties of a pastor, including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion as well as the services of marriage, burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry.

Upon completion of the candidacy requirements, the District Committee on Ordained Ministry shall vote certify the candidacy and upon completion of the prescribed studies, recommend the granting of a license. The Board of Ordained Ministry must recommend those to be licensed to the Clergy Cession of annual conference. Upon approval, they shall be listed in the journal as eligible to be appointed as local pastors. The license for pastoral ministry is not issued until the pastor is appointed to a charge.

Between sessions of Annual Conference, the Board of Ordained Ministry may approve persons for licensing, to be verified at Clergy Session.

II. Authority and Duties of the Local Pastor

1. The Local Pastor is licensed annually by the annual conference and serves only in the charge to which they are appointed. The charge is defined as the "people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served."
2. The Local Pastor may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the Bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry
3. The authorization granted by the licensing must be renewed annually by DCOM or BOOM (those who are commissioned/provisional members) to remain valid.
    a. DCOM may choose NOT to continue the license of a local pastor for failure to make adequate progress in their education, deficient performance of duties or other concerns
    b. At a local pastor's request, time away from ministry can be granted with a person remaining an approved candidate, not

appointed. An appointment can be made when the LP is ready to return

c. The Bishop and cabinet may choose NOT to appoint an approved candidate if a suitable appointment is not available or if there are other concerns

4. A Local Pastor is authorized to perform the ceremony of marriage for couples where at least one person is a member or constituent of the charge to which the LP is appointed.
    a. The couple to be married must have a valid marriage license through the appropriate local county authority
    b. The wedding may be in the church or in a venue outside of the church
    c. All pastors have the right to decline or accept a request for a wedding
5. If the Local Pastor is moved between sessions of the annual conference, the license shall be reissued by the Bishop to the new appointment.
6. The district superintendent supervises the Local Pastor.
    a. A clergy mentor will be assigned to assist and encourage the pastor's work while in Course of Study, seminary and during provisional membership.
    b. The clergy mentor will maintain all confidentiality, unless required by law (mandated reporting, threat of harm to self or others).
    c. The clergy mentor is invited to all DCOM interviews.
7. Membership of the full-time and part-time Local Pastor is in the annual conference.
    a. The local church to which the LP belonged previously should send a transfer of membership to the secretary of the annual conference
    b. If an LP is unappointed, their membership transfers back to the church of their choice
8. The Local Pastor shall attend annual conference if possible.
    a. The Local Pastor may vote on all matters presented to the annual conference, except constitutional amendments, election* (see b.) of delegates to General, jurisdictional, or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

b. Local pastors who have completed Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment before the election may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional or central conferences.
c. This includes all LP's serving under appointment, including retired LP's
d. Those who are recognized as Retired Local Pastors (RLP) may attend annual conference with voice but not vote
    i. Those who have completed Course of Study, M Div or made appropriate progress in their studies may be recognized as RLP
    ii. Those who are serving an appointment as RLP have voice and vote

9. The Local Pastor may serve on any board, commission, or committee with voice and vote, except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status, and ordination.
    a. Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study or an M Div may serve on the District Committee on Ordained Ministry or Board of Ordained Ministry with voice and vote
    b. Local Pastors who serve on BOOM have voice and vote on all matters of character and conference relationship during the Clergy Session
10. In matters regarding the relationship of the Local Pastor to the charge or to their association with the Annual Conference in which they serve, the Local Pastor will be advised in writing of any change in their standing or affiliation.

*Note: Only ordained Elders and Deacons may wear clergy stoles. Other clergy attire, such as clergy collars, may be worn by LP's. In printed media Local Pastors are referred to as "Pastor." The title "Reverend" is reserved for Elders and Deacons.

III. Categories of Local Pastor

In recommending to the annual conference those who have met the requirements to serve as Local Pastors for the ensuing year, the Board of Ordained Ministry shall classify them in four categories of service:

1. Full-time Local Pastor
    a. Serves under appointment to a charge on a full-time basis
    b. Salary is at least the minimum salary and benefits as established by the annual conference for full-time Local Pastors
    c. Makes adequate progress towards the appropriate educational requirements
        i. Course of Study must be completed within 8 years
        ii. Adequate progress in undergraduate or approved seminary
        iii. At least 10 Continuing Education Units per quadrennium after completion of COS or M Div
    d. May not be a full-time student in any school, university, or seminary.
2. Part-time Local Pastor
    a. Serves an appointment that is less than full time
    b. Salary and cash benefits may not be equal to or larger than the minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time Local Pastors
    c. Makes adequate progress towards the appropriate educational requirements
        i. Course of Study must be completed within 12 years
        ii. Adequate progress in undergraduate or approved seminary
        iii. At least 10 Continuing Education Units per quadrennium after completion of COS or M Div
3. Student Appointed as Local Pastor (full or part time)
    a. Local Pastor is enrolled in an appropriate school of higher education or seminary listed by the University Senate
    b. Makes appropriate progress in the required educational program as determined by the DCOM or BOOM
    c. May be appointed as student Local Pastors in another conference
        1. Students who are appointed as Local Pastors in

another conference continue to relate to DCOM in the Susquehanna conference
2. Students appointed as LP in another conference are under the DS of that conference

4. Local Pastors serving on Loan
    a. Local Pastors may be appointed for up to 5 years as part-time or full-time LPs in another conference
    b. LPs on loan will relate to both conferences
        i. The Susquehanna Conference DCOM is responsible for continuation of their Certified Candidate status
        ii. The DCOM of the conference in which they serve is responsible for licensing and continued eligibility for appointment

IV. Licensing School for Local Pastors

1. The Licensing School seeks to provide a basic theological foundation for the practice of ministry and to provide beginning skills for those persons who seeking to serve a local church as a Local Pastor. Successful completion of the school provides the basic knowledge and skill components essential to the practice of ministry. Licensing School is the beginning of the educational process and is to be followed by Course of Study or Seminary.
2. A person must be a certified candidate to attend licensing school. The application may be obtained from your District Superintendent or can be found on the BOOM website.
    a. Registration fee and books required for Licensing School are the responsibility of the candidate.
    b. The candidate's home church should be encouraged to help support the candidate.
    c. In cases of hardship, consult with the District Superintendent for possible aid
    d. Susquehanna Conference offers a yearly licensing school in the late winter/spring
    e. If the Susquehanna Licensing school schedule does not fit, one may attend Licensing school in another conference (consult with the LP registrar)
3. A license may be granted upon appointment to a charge only after

one of the following

a. Successful completion of an approved Licensing School
b. Successful completion of one-third of the credit hours required for an M Div at a seminary approved by the University Senate
c. Completion of Licensing school or Seminary credits does not guarantee an appointment to a local church, except that those who are commissioned are guaranteed an appointment as Provisional Members

V. Continuance as a Local Pastor

It is the responsibility of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to annually interview, review and recommend for continuance all persons who are licensed Local Pastors. The following guidelines will be used:

1. Persons licensed as Local Pastors who are not provisional members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in Course of Study.
2. A full-time local pastor shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years and a part-time local pastor within twelve, unless a family situation or other circumstance precludes the local pastor's opportunity to meet said requirements.
3. The local pastor may be granted an annual extension beyond the prescribed limit upon a three-fourths vote of the DCOM, recommendation by the BOOM, and the vote of the clergy members in full connection at clergy session.
4. DCOM will also consider effectiveness in ministry, personal and family situations, appropriateness of the appointment ("fit") or other factors influencing the LP's performance of ministry
    a. No one is expected to be perfect
    b. DCOM's will support, encourage, and address areas that need improvement

VI. Mentoring

1. The District Superintendent shall assign a clergy mentor.
    a. Clergy mentors may be Elders, Associate Members or Local Pastors who have completed COS or Seminary and have been trained as Clergy Mentors.
    b. Clergy Mentoring is confidential

i. A clergy mentor is a mandated reporter and so would need to report any suspicions that fall within reportable matters, or the threat to harm self or others
ii. All other communication with the LP is confidential, mentor reports only the dates of meetings
iii. Clergy mentors are invited to all DCOM interviews as a silent, prayerful presence (LP should notify and invite mentor to the interview)
iv. Mentor should send DCOM chair/DS a note with dates of meetings prior to annual interview

2. The Local Pastor is responsible to initiate meetings at least every other month
    a. It is suggested that new LP's meet monthly the first year
    b. Mentors can assist in understanding administration, best practices, situations in the local church, course work, balancing family and church (and job)
3. Local Pastor with COS or Seminary complete no longer need a mentor

VII. Discontinuance of the Local Pastor and Reinstatement

1. Please refer to the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline, ¶ 320.1 for information regarding discontinuance and surrendering of license and credentials.
2. When a DCOM no longer approves the continuance of a Local Pastor, they will be discontinued as a candidate and as a local pastor and a permanent record of the circumstances of the discontinuance will be filed with the resident Bishop
3. In cases where an appointment is not available, or circumstances are such that a LP requires some time away from ministry, the person may be continued as a candidate and listed under the category "approved but not appointed."
4. Persons seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist church since their discontinuance or for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement.
    a. A recommendation from the charge conference where membership is held is required.
    b. Reinstatement may then be approved by DCOM after examining

the circumstances of the discontinuance.

c. Reinstatement is completed by vote of the clergy members in full connection at Clergy Session.

VIII. Retirement of the Local Pastor (see 2020/2024 Book of Discipline, ¶320.5)

1. Those who have completed Course of Study, M Div or made appropriate progress in their studies may be recognized as RLP
2. Those who retire without having made appropriate progress in their studies will be celebrated at Annual Conference but will not be listed in the "retired local pastors" section of the Clergy Report
    a. If approved to continue by DCOM, they may serve part time beyond the mandatory retirement age of seventy-two and retain voting rights while appointed
    b. If they are not serving, their status is that of laity, with all rights and privileges in the church where their membership is held
3. Those who are recognized as Retired Local Pastors (RLP) may attend Annual Conference with voice but not vote
    a. Those who are serving an appointment as RLP have voice and vote
    b. A Retired Local Pastor may NOT serve as a Lay Member of the Annual Conference
4. Pensions and Related Benefits information can be obtained from the conference pension officer.

IX. Course of Study

1. Course of Study is the basic theological education program for Local Pastors
    a. Course of Study consists of twenty prescribed classes
    b. The curriculum can be found here: https://www.gbhem.org/ministry/course-of-study-curriculum/
    c. There are residential options, hybrid/weekend options and fully online options
2. Full Time Local Pastors in the Course of Study (COS) must complete the program within eight years. Part Time Local Pastors must

complete the COS within twelve.

3. Course of Study classes are offered in several formats. Check https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/course-of-study-schools/ for more information.
4. Courses 121 and 122 are prerequisites. After that, courses may be taken in any order.
5. Following completion of a course with a grade of "C" or higher, BOOM will reimburse the Local Pastor at the rate of $225 per course. This is subject to change based on the availability of funds. Notice will be given if a change is anticipated.
6. Continuing Education funds from your charge can be used for COS.

X. Applying for Commissioning/ Provisional Membership towards Elders Orders

1. The Susquehanna Conference allows persons to apply for Commissioning and Provisional Membership during the final year of seminary providing graduation will occur prior to Annual Conference.
2. There is no time limit to apply for commissioning and provisional membership after earning an M Div
3. Please see the information listed under candidacy here: https://susumc.org/candidacy-elders-deacon/

XI. Advanced Course of Study

The purpose of the Advanced Course of Study for Ordained Ministry is to provide a curriculum which will enable a Local Pastor to meet the educational requirements for full conference membership and ordination as an elder. ¶324.4.A.d

1. Advanced Course of Study will include thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological studies offered by a seminary recognized by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
2. It must include the basic graduate theological studies as found in ¶ 324.4.a
3. It must also include the prescribed courses in the Educational Requirements for Commissioning found here: https://susumc.org/dcom-resources/

XII. Applying For Associate Membership

Some Local Pastors may wish to apply for Associate Membership in the Annual Conference after they have completed Course of Study. An Associate Member has the same appointment security as Elders have and are fully itinerant.

1. Refer to ¶ 321-322 in The Book of Discipline
    a. Local Pastors must have reached 40 years of age
    b. Served four years as full-time Local Pastor
        i. Per Susquehanna Conference policy, two of these years are to be served following completion of COS.
        ii. Those years must be full time and may not to be rolled into a 2-year equivalent.
    c. Completed the Course of Study
    d. Completed a minimum of sixty semester hours toward a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent at an approved school or university.
    e. Be recommended by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry for Associate Membership.
    f. Contact the Elders/Deacons Registrar for the application packet and information for written work.
    g. Interview and be recommended by BOOM

XIII. Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members (FLPAM)

All local pastors and associate members shall be members of and participate in the Fellowship.

1. The specific function of FLPAM is to:
    a. Provide for regular gatherings of local pastors and associate members for continuing formation in relationship to Jesus Christ through such experiences as Bible study, study of issues facing the church and society, and theological exploration in vocational identity and leadership.
    b. Encourage local pastors and associate members to continue studying beyond COS and Advanced COS.
    c. Develop a bond of unity and common commitment to the ministry and mission of the United Methodist church and the annual conference.

d. Enable the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust

2. Organization
    a. The Chair of FLPAM is nominated by BOOM in consultation with the current chair and is elected by the membership of FLPAM for a quadrennium
    b. The Steering Committee is composed of
        i. Chair of FLPAM – call meetings and direct the work of the committee
        ii. A secretary elected by FLPAM – keep minutes and communicate the work of the committee
        iii. A treasurer elected by FLPAM – request approved expenditures through BOOM or the conference treasurer
        iv. Two to five representatives from each District to include at least one retired LP and one retired AM – participate in the planning and work of the committee
        v. Local Pastors' and Associate Members' Registrar – ex officio
        vi. Local Pastors' Licensing School Dean (one person if there is more than one dean) – ex officio
        vii. Chairperson of the Order of Elders – ex officio
        viii. Cabinet Representative – ex officio
        ix. Liaison to Order of Deacons – ex officio
        x. A CLM representative – ex officio
    c. The resident Bishop serves to convene and guide the Fellowship.
        i. The Bishop, in consultation with the Cabinet and the BOOM, will select Steering Committee members in accordance with the above.
        ii. Members of the Steering Committee must be under appointment, with the possible exception of the retirees
    d. The Chair of FLPAM serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry
3. Funding & Budget Process – Necessary financial support is provided through the Board of Ordained Ministry

XIV. An Overview of the Work of the Fellowship

1. The Fellowship will organize its ministry in accordance with the *Discipline* as outlined above and seek to:
    a. Address basic information and spiritual growth needs among Local Pastors and Associate Members
    b. Offer training in best ministry practices and opportunities for

spiritual development

c. Utilize connectional resources to learn and grow so our ministries increase in effectiveness
d. Offer varied, timely, practical help via programs and avenues to develop a spirituality supporting and sustaining transformational leadership as Pastors live out the gospel in all aspects of life.

2. A regular Meeting Schedule will be set by the Steering Committee.

XV. Pensions and Related Benefits for Local Pastors

Contact the Conference Benefits Officer at csims@susumc.org

XVI. Clergy Taxes – see https://www.gcfa.org/forms-and-assets and scroll down to Tax Packets

United Methodist Clergy taxes are challenging. Many tax preparers are NOT familiar with the nuances of clergy taxes. Clergy are considered employees for IRS purposes but self-employed for Social Security. You must make quarterly payments towards your Social Security taxes. State and local taxes may be withheld. Federal tax may be withheld or paid quarterly along with the Social Security tax.

XVII. Paperwork and Reports

1. Vital Sign reporting – keep up to date at least monthly
2. Charge conference begins as soon as one is appointed to a charge and continues through the year. These steps will help to ensure a successful charge conference:
    a. Announcements through QuikLink or from the district superintendent will let you know when the charge conference forms are available
    b. Attend any pre-Charge Conference gatherings (even if you have been a pastor for many years)
    c. The District Superintendent generally assigns dates for Charge/Church conferences. When known, place the date on the charge calendar and announce it to the charge. Follow the guidelines in the Discipline for announcing Charge/Church Conference.
    d. Be sure to schedule meetings with your committees (depending on your structure) so they can begin their work and be prepared at charge or church conference with accurate information.
    e. As soon as possible begin meeting with the committee on lay leadership to secure the necessary personnel to do the work of

ministry in the local church.

f. Some forms and reports need to be distributed to lay persons (such as the Report of the Trustees to the trustee chairperson, lay speakers, etc.) well ahead of the scheduled charge or church conference. If possible, make copies of the previous year's reports to assist them in the completion of the reports for the current year.
g. Keeping good records throughout the year helps to ensure that everything needed for the charge or church conference reports is accurate and up to date.
h. The clergy mentor should be a primary resource to the Local Pastor in preparing for the charge conference.

3. End of the Year Reports
    a. These reports will be available online. Watch for information through the QuikLink.
    b. Note the dates by which all monies are to be paid on your yearly shares of ministry by the conference treasurer.
    c. Schedule a time to work with the church treasurer to meet and figure the amounts to be reported.
    d. Request information from others as needed for help in obtaining membership, financial and other figures.
    e. Ensure that all reports are submitted by the January 31 deadline.
    f. Annual audit is due March 15.
4. Membership Records - see ¶ 230 – 234

XVIII. Who's Who

1. District Superintendent (DS) or Conference Superintendent is your immediate supervisor but is also a person for support
    a. Notify the DS immediately of any crisis in your church
        i. Fire, theft, accusations of misconduct, arrest of a congregant, etc.
        ii. Document everything you know about the situation and ask witnesses to do the same
    b. Keep the Superintendent informed of any family or personal situation that may require time away from ministry, such as illness, planned surgery, death of a family member, care for elderly parent, etc.

    c. Attend district gatherings to get to know your DS in non-urgent settings
2. District Committee on Ordained Ministry
    a. You will be scheduled to meet with DCOM at least yearly
    b. Respond to all communications from your DCOM promptly
3. Clergy Mentor
    a. You are responsible to schedule meetings with your mentor
    b. Ask your mentor questions about routine administration, church situations, etc. before contacting the DS
4. Registrar for Local Pastors and Associate Members
    a. Coordinate registrations for the Course of Study
    b. Send official transcripts of completed COS classes to the registrar to receive reimbursement for classes
5. Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry
6. Assistant to the Board of Ordained Ministry
    a. Helps track the path from candidate to Local Pastor to Ordination
    b. Supports the work of the DCOM
    c. Compiles the annual Clergy Report
    d. Can answer lots of questions about process and procedures
7. Pensions and Health Insurance: Contact the Conference Benefits Officer at csims@susumc.org

XIX. Continuing Formation

All local pastors and associate members, along with Elders and Deacons, are expected to be life-long learners. To this end, the Board of Ordained Ministry has requirements for education beyond Seminary and Course of Study. The Continuing Formation Manual can be found here, along with information about funding that is available beyond the Continuing Education funds in the church budget. https://susumc.org/clergy-continuing-formation/