



East Ohio Conference

of The United Methodist Church

CLERGY HANDBOOK





Table of Contents

<u>Conference Policies Affecting Clergy</u>	3
<u>Guidelines On Itineracy</u>	6
<u>The Itinerant System: Full-Time and Less Than Full-Time Service</u> ..	7
<u>Filing Policy for Clergy Records</u>	9
<u>Parental Leave Policy</u>	10
<u>Parental Leave Procedures</u>	12
<u>Guidelines for Clergy in Separation and Divorce</u>	14
<u>Ethical Standards and Training Policy</u>	15
<u>Sexual Ethics Policy</u>	16
<u>Guidelines for Effective Use of Digital Communication and Social Media Tools</u>	18
<u>The Ministry Vision of the East Ohio Conference</u>	21

Prepared 02/2024

CONFERENCE POLICIES AFFECTING CLERGY

The Covenant

Members in full connection with an annual conference by virtue of their election and ordination are bound in special covenant with all the ordained ministers of the annual conference. In the keeping of this covenant they perform the ministerial duties and maintain the ministerial standards established by those in the covenant. They offer themselves without reservation to be with their fellow ministers in mutual trust and concern and seek with them the sanctification of the fellowship. Only those shall be elected to full membership who are of unquestionable moral character and genuine piety, sound in fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and faithful in the discharge of their duties. (The 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶¶340, 328, 321 and Judicial Council Decision 406)

Professional Standards

Clergy shall observe the following professional standards:

- a. We respect the parish of another clergyperson and perform a service in that parish only at the invitation of the assigned clergyperson (¶341.4).
- b. A clergyperson who has retired or been appointed to a new charge shall not return to the former charge for at least one year and with the invitation of their successor(s).
- c. Clergy who attend, but are not appointed to a charge (who may be retired or serving in extension ministry) are to respect the work of the clergyperson appointed to that charge. At the invitation of the appointed clergyperson, credentialed clergy may preside over sacraments, funerals, and weddings at that charge. At all times, clergy are to seek to enhance, not undermine, the pastoral authority of the clergyperson under appointment at charge.
- d. We deal honorably with the record of our predecessor and successor.
- e. We give endorsement only to those movements, agencies, or individuals who have been thoroughly investigated and have our full personal approval.
- f. We respond to community calls for our service as a part of our ministry to the church.
- g. We promote the entire program of the church.

Retirement

A retiring clergyperson shall complete the following:

- a. Prior to announcing their retirement, clergy shall contact their Superintendent, Bishop, and the Board of Ministry with their request in writing (¶357). Retirement requests should be submitted by December 1st in order to better care for the church. Clergy are expected to retire as of June 30th unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- b. Prior to their retirement, clergy shall engage in Conference provided transition training.
- c. Prior to their retirement, clergy shall provide clear written communication, in consultation with their successor and Superintendent, to the congregation establishing clear boundaries to include at least (1.) social media contact and (2.) the expectation that all pastoral services will be conducted by the newly appointed clergy.
- d. Prior to gaining charge conference membership for retirement, clergy should request approval from the current pastor of that appointment.

- g. Local Pastors who are currently under appointment (full or part--time) shall be invited to participate in the retirement service and related retirement activities only if they have met the following requirements:
 1. The local pastor has completed the five year Course of Study (or)
 2. The local pastor has completed five years of service without interruption as an episcopally-appointed local pastor.

Sabbath Day

Clergy are expected to take one day a week for Sabbath and inform the congregation of that day. In addition, one day per week should be reserved for personal and family responsibilities.

Annual Time Away

The clergyperson shall work with the Pastor--Parish Relations Committee each year to plan as far in advance as possible concerning the needs of the clergyperson to be away for vacation, continuing education and professional responsibilities. Such advance planning will help to ensure adequate coverage of responsibilities during the clergy person's absence and to provide for a balance of time spent between serving the local church and providing for other professional opportunities and responsibilities.

Vacation

The minimum annual (July 1- June 30) vacation schedule for clergy persons be (weekly Sabbath day and personal day not to be counted as a vacation day):

1. 25 days paid vacation for clergy appointed full--time.
2. Conference members serving in less -than -full--time appointments shall be entitled to vacation in proportion to the per-cent of time they are serving. The minimum shall be:
 - a. Appointed at 75%: 18 days
 - b. Appointed at 50%: 13 days
 - c. Appointed at 25%: 6 days
3. Clergy shall be entitled to five Sundays of vacation regardless of full--time or less than full-time appointment status.
4. Service in a leadership capacity at a Conference -sponsored event or attendance at Annual Conference shall not be considered a part of the clergyperson's vacation time
5. The completion of ministerial education requirements such as seminary or the Course of Study shall not be considered a part of the clergypersons's vacation time.

Continuing Education

Clergyperson serving a local church, who has graduated from the Jurisdictional Course of Study or from an accredited seminary, having completed the requirements for associate, probationary, or full Conference membership, shall be granted up to 14 days, including two Sundays, annual study time for continuing education with full remuneration and benefits. A request for further study time, with plan of scholastic study, should be made in writing to the Pastor Parish Relations Committee and district superintendent and carry approval of each. This time segment granted for continuing education is an addition to that provided for vacation. The local church is encouraged to share in the cost of continuing education.

For the completion of the education requirements of licensed and ordained ministry, an appointed clergy person shall be granted an additional up to fourteen days, including two Sundays, time away.

In our connectional church, part of the leadership responsibility must be filled by pastors and lay persons working in district and conference agencies, including Conference Camping program, and in other connectional tasks. Clergy time away from the parish for this kind of ministry will be negotiated with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee with consultation with the District Superintendent.

Educational and Professional Responsibilities

Pastors working on a graduate degree or any other major academic program shall develop a plan for the allocation of their time use among church responsibilities, study responsibilities and personal time (vacation). This plan shall be affirmed each year in consultation with the district superintendent and with the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee.

First Sunday in New Appointments

All pastors receiving new assignments shall be responsible for their new pulpits for the first time following Annual Conference on a Sunday determined by Cabinet action.

Salary Schedule

The salary for pastors shall be paid by local churches from July 1 through the succeeding June 30.

Non--Appointive Staff

Churches planning to employ a non--appointive part--time or full--time pastor, director of music, business administration or Christian education staff person, shall consult with the district superintendent concerning the person to be employed and come to a mutual agreement.

Employment of Evangelists

Our churches and pastors shall observe strictly the provisions of ¶341.1 in the 2016 Book of Discipline regarding the employment of evangelists who are not of our denomination: "Pastors shall first obtain the written consent of the district superintendent before engaging for an evangelist any person who is not a conference evangelist, a regular member of Annual Conference, a local pastor, or a certified lay speaker in good standing in The United Methodist Church."

GUIDELINES ON ITINERACY

Critical to our common life in The United Methodist Church is an awareness on the part of all pastors (those currently active and those entering the Ordained Ministry) that we are in fact a covenant community. When we give ourselves to become United Methodist pastors, we are no longer free to think simply about ourselves, focusing only on what is good for us and our own interest, be they family or otherwise. There must be consideration of the greater good and the missional priorities of the larger church.

Of primary importance within the covenant we share is a willingness to subject ourselves to the continuing availability for appointment.

Itineracy is at the heart of the way United Methodist ministry is expressed. This practice, which dates to Francis Asbury and the frontier, still has much merit for the effective deployment of personnel in the service of Jesus Christ. However, the bishop and cabinet are continually striving to adapt the itinerant system to the needs of persons. There are family, job, school, housing, health, and financial concerns that must be part of the equation in considering any and all appointments.

At the same time, there are practical realities that limit our ability to believe that all our hopes, dreams, and expectations can be met to everyone's satisfaction, given the complexities of our economy, and the multiplicity of requests and desires shed through the local church and clergy profiles.

Therefore, when pastors choose to restrict their appointability for whatever reason, they cannot expect to receive appointments that will necessarily maximize the use of their gifts, provide salary increases, or increase in responsibility. The bishop and cabinet cannot take responsibility for all the consequences of restricted itineracy. The *Book of Discipline* says that "All elders in full connection who are in good standing in an annual conference shall be continued under appointment by the bishop..." unless they are granted some form of leave. (§ 338 2016 *Book of Discipline*) However, if clergy are unable to fully itinerate within the annual conference then they may have to step out of active itineracy and accept a different relationship or type of appointment within the annual conference. (See Policy #310, and §§338, §338.1 and §338.2 of the 2012 *Book of Discipline*.)

THE ITINERANT SYSTEM: FULL-TIME AND LESS THAN FULL-TIME SERVICE

2016 Book of Discipline ¶338, 338.1, 338.2

The Itinerant System:

The itinerant system is the accepted method of the United Methodist Church by which ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor. (Judicial Council Decision 713) All ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members shall accept and abide by these appointments. Bishops and cabinets shall commit to support open itinerancy and the protection of the prophetic pulpit and diversity. Persons appointed to multiple-staff ministries, either in a single parish or in a cluster or larger parish, shall have personal and professional access to the bishop and cabinet; the committee on pastor-parish relations, as well as to the pastor in charge. The nature of the appointment process is specified in ¶¶425-429 BOD.

¶338.1: Full-Time Service

Full-time service shall be the norm for ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members in the annual conference. Full-time service shall mean that the person's entire vocational time, as defined by the district superintendent in consultation with the pastor and the committee on pastor-parish relations, is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which one is appointed by the bishop.

¶338.2: Less than Full-Time Service

At the initiative of the bishop and cabinet or at his or her request, an elder, provisional elder, or associate member may receive a less than full-time appointment under the conditions stipulated in this policy:

1. Less than full-time service shall mean that a specified amount of time less than full-time agreed upon by the bishop and the cabinet, the clergy member and the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which the person is appointed by the bishop.
2. At the initiative of the bishop and cabinet or at his or her own initiative, a clergy member may be appointed in one-quarter, one-half, or three-quarter time increments by the bishop to less than full-time service without the loss of essential rights or membership in the annual conference. See General Board of Health and Pension policies for additional information regarding health benefits for the part-time clergy.
3. Division of Ordained Ministry endorsed appointments beyond the local church may be for less than full-time service.
4. Appointment to less than full-time service is not a guarantee, but may be made by the bishop provided that the following conditions are met:
 - a. a. The ordained elder, provisional elder, or associate member seeking less than full-time service should present a written request to the bishop and the chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry at least 90 days prior to the annual conference session at which the appointment is made. Exceptions to the 90-day deadline shall be approved by the cabinet and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

- b. The bishop may appoint an ordained elder, provisional member elder, or an associate member to less than full-time service. The clergyperson shall be notified at least 90 days prior to the annual conference at which the appointment shall be made. Special attention shall be given to ensure that the values of the itineracy are preserved.
 - c. Following appropriate consultation, as established in ¶¶338 and 425-429 and upon joint recommendation of the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry, the less than full-time category shall be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference.
 - d. Reappointment to less than full-time service shall be requested by the ordained elder, provisional elder, or associate member and approved annually by the bishop and cabinet and shall not be granted for more than a total of eight years, except by a three-fourths vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference.
 - e. Ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members who receive appointment at less than full-time service remain within the itineracy and, as such, remain available, upon consultation with the bishop and cabinet, for appointment to full-time service. A written request to return to full-time appointment shall be made to the bishop and cabinet at least six months prior to the annual conference session at which the appointment is to be made.
 - f. The bishop may make *ad interim* appointments at less than full-time service upon request of the ordained elder, provisional elder, or associate member following consultation as specified in ¶¶424-428 and upon recommendation of the cabinet and executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the same to be acted upon by the next regular session of the annual conference. (See Judicial Council Decision 579)
 - g. Upon request of the bishop, cabinet or clergy a meeting with the Conference Pastoral Advisory Committee and the clergy shall be held prior to the part-time appointment.
5. Note: Please refer to Book of Discipline, 2012, ¶360 for “Administrative Location” and issues of effectiveness.
6. If the clergy requesting less than full time service appointment is seeking ordination and full membership a less than full-time appointment will be recognized by the Board of Ordained Ministry as follows:
- a. $\frac{3}{4}$ time service equals $\frac{3}{4}$ of a year towards provisional membership requirement
 - b. $\frac{1}{2}$ time service equals $\frac{1}{2}$ of a year towards provisional membership requirement
 - c. $\frac{1}{4}$ time service equals $\frac{1}{4}$ of a year towards provisional membership requirement

FILING POLICY FOR CLERGY RECORDS

Personnel Files • Supervisory Files • Complaint Files

The intent of this policy is to create a system of continual update to the permanent/master file of each active and retired clergy person and provide one location where all pertinent information about a clergy person is kept for reference. Digital or electronic files (such as E-Bridge or other related software systems) rather than paper-based files may replace the permanent/master file.

All permanent/master files for active and retired clergy shall reside in the Area Office or on the computer systems of the Area Office under the supervision of the Episcopal Staff and the Conference Secretary. Episcopal staff and the Conference Secretary shall determine access protocols for such electronic files.

Each clergy person's record (electronic or paper) in the Area Office will contain a personnel file, a supervisory file, and a complaint file if a formal complaint has been filed against that clergy person.

A "working" supervisory file for each active clergy person shall be kept in the district where the active clergy person is appointed. The District Superintendent will be responsible for maintaining this file.

When an active clergy person changes appointments and moves to another district, the sending District Superintendent will review the "working" supervisory file in their possession and take out any supervisory materials that are to be preserved and forward those on to the Area Office for deposit in the permanent/master file (electronic or paper) of that clergy person.

The sending District Superintendent will also copy any current supervisory material that will be of importance to the receiving District Superintendent and put it in a new "working supervisory file" to be given to the receiving superintendent prior to the change of appointment. A summary form will also be completed that appraises the receiving superintendent of any supervisory history or current matters that may affect the new pastor's performance in the new situation.

East Ohio Parental Leave Policy

Statement of Purpose

“We believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity.”¹ While recognizing that families take on different shapes and sizes, and the needs of each family are unique, we seek to love one another and enable all members of the body of Christ to grow and flourish. The East Ohio Conference supports families and advocates for parental leave for all persons welcoming a child into their home, both clergy and lay. Further, we encourage all parents who are welcoming a child into their home to make full use of parental leave policies.

The World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization advocate for “at least 14 weeks of parental leave”² and The United Methodist Book of Discipline allows for up to 13 weeks of parental leave for clergy families.³ The East Ohio Conference has developed this policy in order to assist clergy families, local churches, District Superintendents, and the Annual Conference in caring for family and advocating for parental leave in the church and beyond the church.

1. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*, ¶161b.
2. Maternity Protection, Compliance with International Labor Standards.
<https://www.who.int/data/nutrition/nlis/info/maternity-protection-compliance-with-international-labour-standards>
3. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*, ¶355.

BOD Foundations

¶ 355. Maternity or Paternity Leave—Maternity or paternity leave, not to exceed one-fourth of a year, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption.

1. Persons desiring maternity or paternity leave should file their request with the committee on pastor-parish relations after consulting with the district superintendent at least ninety days prior to its beginning to allow adequate pastoral care for the churches involved to be developed.
2. During the leave, the clergy member’s annual conference relations will remain unchanged, and the health and welfare benefit plans will remain in force.
3. A maternity or paternity leave of up to one-quarter of a year will be considered as an uninterrupted appointment for pension purposes.
4. Compensation will be maintained for no less than the first eight weeks of leave.
5. During the leave time, pastoral responsibility for the church or churches involved will be handled through consultation with the committee on pastor-parish relations of the local church(es) and the district superintendent.

Special arrangements shall be made for district superintendents, bishops, and those under special appointment.

EOC Policy for Births and Adoptions

1. All clergy in the East Ohio Annual Conference who are expecting the birth or adoption of a child are eligible for Parental Leave (maternity or paternity leave in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*, ¶ 355). This policy applies to all clergy, regardless of their part-time or full-time status. Parental leave is guaranteed to all clergy who request it within the guidelines of this policy.

2. Clergy are encouraged to begin communication with their DS as soon as they are able to publicly share the anticipation of a child's arrival. Families giving birth are encouraged to begin planning as soon as they are public about their pregnancy. Adoptive parents are encouraged to make a plan as soon as they are approved for adoption/foster parenting. Parental leave must be requested at least 90 days in advance of the anticipated beginning of the leave, in accordance with the Book of Discipline.
3. Parental leave shall be encouraged and permitted for up to 13 weeks with full pay and will not affect the clergy person's pension, health benefits, and appointment status.
4. Churches will maintain their regular compensation for clergy on leave for the duration of the leave.
5. The DS will consult with the pastor to arrange coverage for the duration of leave.
6. The Annual Conference will assist local churches with additional funding for pastoral coverage and compensation, in consultation with the pastor and the SPRC, up to \$10,000* per leave.
7. Parental leave may be taken consecutively or nonconsecutively, full or part time, according to the needs of the family. All parental leave must be taken within 9 months of the placement or birth of the child.
8. Parental leave is not vacation. The use of parental leave does not affect the clergy person's use of their annual vacation granted in the Annual Conference Rules.
9. Churches will make reasonable accommodations for breastfeeding and pumping parents, as well as for the feeding of infants. This can include private space, access to an outlet, and time/space to feed according to the infant's needs.
10. Churches will also examine their personnel policies for lay staff and are encouraged to ensure adequate and equal parental leave for all.

Clergy in the Annual Conference will support and promote parental leave, including by providing pastoral care coverage if asked and needed, in accordance with their schedule.

*Note: At the time of the pre-conference workbook deadline, "up to \$10,000" per birth or adoption was approved by the EOC Board of Ministry and Cabinet, contingent upon conversation with Conference Council on Finance and Administration. This is based upon the expectation of two to four births or adoptions per year, as well as the amounts often paid to retired clergy who substitute for clergy out on medical reprieve for conditions such as cancer, joint replacement, etc. This recommendation will be affirmed or revised at Annual Conference 2023.

EOC Policy for Foster Care Placements

The EOC recognizes the significant need for foster care families. The intended temporary nature, often short notice, and government financial support of foster present different needs to address and support from birth or adoption.

1. Clergy who serve as foster parents should be in communication with their DS and the SPRC at the time of appointment or during the licensing process.
2. Foster parents are encouraged to make an advance plan of contingencies as soon as they are approved for adoption/foster parenting.
3. Should a clergy family welcome a child into their home for foster care, a specific plan will be worked out between the DS, SPRC, and the clergy family, with the goal of caring for the family.
 - a. Foster parents generally anticipate taking off work for some days at the beginning of the placement, to arrange for daycare and/or school enrollment, potential medical or case-worker appointments, etc., and then returning to a more normal work schedule more quickly than after the birth of a child. Foster parents may also need a few days at the end of a placement as well, to care for both the logistics and grief of transition.

East Ohio Parental Leave Procedures

Clergyperson's Responsibilities & Action Steps:

1. Clergy are encouraged to begin planning for Parental Leave as soon as possible. Think through the logistics and needs of your family, ensuring that you consider what will best serve your family. Parental Leave may be taken for up to 13 weeks for birth or adoption, consecutively or nonconsecutively, full or part time, and must be taken within 9 months of the birth/arrival of a child.
2. Talk with your District Superintendent before sharing the news with your Local Church.
3. Share your plans for Parental Leave with your SPRC.
4. Submit a formal Parental Leave request at least 90 days in advance to the District Superintendent, Episcopal Office, and the Board of Ministry Conference Relations Registrar.
5. If needed or desired, the District Superintendent will meet with the SPRC to discuss the Parental Leave Policy, benefits, and needs of the congregation.
6. Work with the SPRC to determine the local church resources and needs during the leave. Request funding (up to \$10,000* per leave) by submitting a budget for the expenses of pastoral coverage during leave to the District Superintendent.
7. Arrange pastoral coverage for the duration of your leave. The District Superintendent is available to assist you if desired.
8. Communicate your Parental Leave plans to the SPRC, District Superintendent, and Local Church/ministry setting.
9. As the child's arrival date nears, ensure all notes and pastoral coverage plans are in place and have been communicated to all involved.
10. Set appropriate boundaries with Local Church leadership as to your needs during leave. Think about if you wish to be contacted during your leave, and under what circumstances. Communicate your boundaries clearly, and ensure that the Local Church/ministry setting understands your availability during leave. (Think about how or if you will respond when a parishioner calls you. What about if there is a funeral? What will happen to emails that are sent during your leave?) Ensure that communication is kind and clear so that all know what to expect.
11. As the child's arrival date nears, it may be helpful to have back up pastoral coverage and worship services ready, in case of unanticipated circumstances. Consider developing a lay-led service or two and equipping members to be prepared in the event they need to lead without you.
12. When your child arrives and your leave begins, inform your District Superintendent and SPRC.

Take full advantage of the Parental Leave benefits offered to you, for the benefit of your family.

*Note: At the time of the pre-conference workbook deadline, "up to \$10,000" per birth or adoption was approved by the EOC Board of Ministry and Cabinet, contingent upon conversation with Conference Council on Finance and Administration. This is based upon the expectation of two to four births or adoptions per year, as well as the amounts often paid to retired clergy who substitute for clergy out on medical reprieve for conditions such as cancer, joint replacement, etc. This recommendation will be affirmed or revised at Annual Conference 2023.

District Superintendent and Conference Responsibilities & Action Steps:

1. District Superintendents will support clergy and encourage the full use of the EOC Parental Leave Policy.
2. If desired, District Superintendents will meet with the SPRC to discuss the Parental Leave Policy, Foster Care Placement Policy, benefits, and needs of the congregation, for birth, adoption, or foster care placement.
3. District Superintendents will receive Parental Leave coverage budgets from Local Churches/ ministry settings and will ensure that funding is provided (up to \$10,000 per leave) in accordance with the EOC Parental Leave policy.
4. District Superintendents will remain in consultation with the clergy as pastoral coverage is arranged. If desired, the District Superintendent will assist the clergyperson in finding appropriate coverage.
5. District Superintendents will help interpret and support the need for space and time for grieving for clergy families experiencing pregnancy or infancy loss or at the end of a foster placement. District Superintendents will be in consultation with clergy and the SPRC to arrange this time. This time will not affect a clergy person's annual vacation.
6. District Superintendents will encourage good boundaries during Parental Leave.
7. The Annual Conference will support and promote Parental Leave and will advocate for Parental Leave in all aspects of society.

Updated: Annual Conference 2023

The BOM, Cabinet, and COSROW will review and update the Parental Leave policy at least quadrennially

GUIDELINES FOR CLERGY IN SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

The covenant relationship between God and humankind is modeled in Christian Marriage. Clergy, as leaders of the Church, are challenged to model exemplary marital relationships. They are encouraged to nurture their marriages by seeking opportunities for continued growth. When destructive marital stress occurs, clergy are asked to seek help through professional counseling, friends, and colleagues in ministry.

It is recognized, however, that clergy separation and divorce become a reality in some cases. When this is so, the following process should be followed in the honorable termination of the marriage relationship. The impact of the pastor's professional status will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

After seeking counsel and support from appropriate counseling resources, friends, and colleagues, if the couple concludes that the most responsible and reasonable action in dealing with their marriage and family is marital separation/divorce, the following course shall be taken:

- The pastor shall notify the District Superintendent to inform him/her of the separation and/or divorce proceedings.
- The District Superintendent shall consult with the pastor and offer compassion and support for their situation. The District Superintendent may also consult with the clergy spouse if the spouse desires.
- The pastor and District Superintendent shall contact the Staff-Parish Relations Chairperson to discuss the impending separation and/or divorce. Together they shall devise a plan for sharing the information with the congregation. The plan shall then be shared with the SPRC, with the District Superintendent offering ongoing support and counsel. The local congregation shall then be informed with intent toward enabling all parties to be treated with compassion and care.
- The pastor and spouse are encouraged to seek support and care from colleagues and friends in the covenant community.

Revised 11/29/23

Ethical Standards and Training Policy

Board of Ordained Ministry

Policy:

In ¶ 635.2(r) The United Methodist Book of Discipline 2016 charges the Board of Ordained Ministry:
“To interpret the high ethical standards of ordained ministry set forth in the *Discipline* and to study matters pertaining to character (¶605.7).”

Therefore, the Board of Ordained Ministry of the East Ohio Conference will coordinate and provide clergy ethics training to be offered each quadrennium. This training will be required for all clergy, licensed or ordained, and serving under episcopal appointment.

Created 12/9/2014

Sexual Ethics Policy

Statement of Purpose & Theological Foundation

All human beings are created in the image of God, and are beloved of God, deserving of love and respect. In the East Ohio Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, we honor God and one another by pursuing healthy and life-giving relationships with each another. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

Our relationship with and knowledge of God guides and illuminates our reflections on human sexual behavior. Together we affirm that:

- God calls us to honor our bodies and gives us responsibility over our own bodies (I Corinthians 6:12-20).
- God calls us to honor the integrity of our neighbors, and their authority over their own personhood (Deuteronomy 22:25-30).
- God calls us into covenant with each other within the family of God (Deuteronomy 14:1-2; Ephesians 4:14-16).
- God calls us to support each other. (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NRSV)
- God, through the church, calls leaders (whether ordained, consecrated, elected or appointed) to witness to the preciousness of bodies, our own and others; and to declare that each person is unique and of divine worth (I Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 4:1).

In light of these understandings, The East Ohio Conference is committed to honor the complete integrity of one another, and in doing so, we honor and remember the Body of Christ.

This policy exists to safeguard relationships, to build up the Body of Christ, and to provide guidelines for the prevention and reporting of sexual and professional misconduct to the East Ohio Annual Conference. This policy applies to all Ministry Professionals working in East Ohio Annual Conference Churches and [shall become a part of Local Church policies](#). The East Ohio Annual Conference is committed to responding to all violations of this policy in a way that promotes true justice and accountability and in such a way that promotes healing.

Definitions

Ministry Professionals

Ministry Professionals (paid and unpaid) are those persons (clergy and lay) serving in positions of power and authority. Ministry professionals are charged with the sacred trust of creating and maintaining environments where all can encounter the living Christ and grow in their knowledge and love of God.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual Misconduct within ministerial relationships is a betrayal of sacred trust. It is a continuum of sexual or gender-directed behaviors by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship (paid or unpaid). It can include child abuse, adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual assault, sexualized verbal comments or visuals, unwelcome touching and advances, use of sexualized materials including pornography, stalking, sexual abuse of youth or those without capacity to consent, or misuse of the pastoral or ministerial position using sexualized conduct to take advantage of the vulnerability of another. It includes criminal behaviors in some nations, states, and communities and is a chargeable offense in The United Methodist Church. (2016 Book of Resolutions, #2044)

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is a form of Sexual Misconduct, defined as unwanted sexual or gender-directed behavior within a pastoral, employment, ministerial (including volunteers), mentor, or colleague relationship that is so severe or pervasive that it alters the conditions of employment or volunteer work or unreasonably interferes with the employee or volunteer's performance. It can create a hostile, offensive environment that can include unwanted sexual jokes, repeated advances, touching, displays, or comments that insult, degrade, or sexually exploit women, men, elders, children, or youth. (2016 Book of Resolutions, #2045)

Reporting & Responding to Complaints of Misconduct

1. Violations of this policy may be reported to your SPRC, pastor, any United Methodist clergy person, the District Superintendent, or the Bishop.
2. All persons who have knowledge of alleged misconduct are encouraged to come forward.
3. Keep a journal to document specifics surrounding all incidents in question. Include conversation and contacts with the person, dates, times, witnesses and descriptions of the incidents.
4. When the alleged conduct constitutes a criminal act, report it to the police. A complaint which involves a child under the age of 18 must also be reported to the nearest agency charged with child protection.
5. In order for a violation of this policy to become an official complaint (subject to ¶362 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*) it must be presented in writing and signed by the person making the complaint.
6. All complaints will be dealt with promptly and in confidence according to ¶362. All investigations of clergy will be conducted according to ¶2701-2706 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*. All appropriate legal reporting practices shall also be followed.
7. Confidentiality is an important part of this process. Confidentiality means that information will only be shared on a need to know basis, at the discretion of the Bishop. In the event of a signed complaint, information will be shared as outlined in ¶362, for the purposes of accountability and repairing the harm that has been done.
8. Remember that you are not alone in this process. All persons who bring forward complaints will be heard, affirmed for coming forward, given access to support persons, and prayed for throughout the process.

The East Ohio Annual Conference takes seriously any violations of the sacred trust by Ministry Professionals.

Policy Against Retaliation

The East Ohio Annual Conference has a zero tolerance policy for retaliation against those who report misconduct or submit a complaint.

Updates to the Sexual Ethics Policy

COSROW shall update this policy at least once every four years. If any provision of this policy is in conflict with the current Book of Discipline, the Discipline shall prevail. Such conflict shall not be grounds for invalidating this policy.

Additional Resources

UM Sexual Ethics: www.umsexualethics.org

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women: www.gcsrw.org

Do No More Harm: <https://donomoreharm.org>

Guidelines for Effective Use of Digital Communication and Social Media Tools

Modern forms of communication encompass a wide array of devices and services that may be used both to communicate interpersonally and as methods of broadcast communication. Tools such as email, texting, blogging and social media services offer novel ways to connect with one another. Of course, the proliferation of tools also increases the opportunity for misuse. This document is intended to provide guidelines for the safe and effective use of digital communication. It is not intended to comprehensively deal with every possible use of digital communication and social media tools. As with all communication, thoughtfulness, kindness, and a desire to share the love of God with others should inform our efforts as we use digital communication tools.

It is important to keep in mind that if a pastor participates in social media activity, any statements, images, or material the pastor posts may be viewed as being on behalf of local church, The East Ohio Conference or The United Methodist Church – especially if the pastor mentions or lists that he/she is the pastor of a local church. Your identity matters. The way in which you comment or share on social media sites will impact your ministry and possibly the ministry of the local church you are serving.

To protect the ministry of Church, while recognizing the rights of individuals, and to ensure compliance with applicable laws, please keep the following general considerations in mind. In his day, John Wesley asked the members of his Society to think about their words and actions in daily life. He crafted a rule of life for his Society that was based on three principles: do no harm; do good; attend to the ordinances of God. These principles can be applied to the use of digital communications tools by churches, pastors, and conference leaders.

Do No Harm

Take care that in your use of digital communication tools you avoid causing harm to yourself or others.

One of the benefits of social media is that it provides the opportunity to share views, thoughts, joys, and concerns about all areas of life. Our social media contributions can be very effective tools for ministry if we apply caution before we post. We will be careful that our posts are not “doing harm” by insulting or damaging the reputation of others. We will make sure our posts are respectful and in good taste. And we will remember that everything we post—status updates, comments, tweets, blogs—becomes public immediately after we click “send” (even if we’re using a limited-access setting). We can’t take it back once it’s out there, so we will use discernment with everything we post.

- Care should be taken to abide by all policies of the Annual Conference, including the Sexual Ethics Policy.
- Speaking or writing about colleagues, parishioners, and others in ways that undermine their integrity or personhood is never acceptable in any forum.
- Harassment, discrimination, racist, and hate speech should never be indulged in digital communication. Sexual harassment violates the policy of the Annual Conference and is a chargeable offense for clergy and laity in the Book of Discipline.

- Viewing and/or sharing pornographic images or videos violates the policy of the Annual Conference and is a chargeable offense for clergy in the Book of Discipline.
- Disclosing confidential information is a violation of trust; and, for those who are licensed or ordained, it is a violation of ordination vows, and a chargeable offense in the Book of Discipline.
- Posting photographs or videos of others without their consent is unacceptable; doing so with minors violates the principles of Safe Sanctuaries and may be a violation of the law.
- Engaging on social media with children under 18 years of age also violates the principles of Safe Sanctuaries and may be a violation of the law.
- Respect other people’s content and intellectual property rights. Do not claim authorship of something that is not yours. If you are using another party’s content, make certain they are credited for it in your post and they approve of you utilizing their content. Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or similar rights of others, without the necessary permissions of the rights holder(s).

TO THINK ABOUT

- Is the post “doing harm” to the reputation of the church, Christ, or another person or organization?
- Can the post be interpreted as harmful, offensive rude, or distasteful? If I’m posting photos, do I have the permission of the people pictured?
- If using the post as an outlet to vent, what’s the most productive and least harmful way to seek resolution or reconciliation? Is there a less public, more respectful way to do so?
- Do I have permission to use this content, trademark, copyright, or intellectual property?

Do Good

Digital communication tools offer tremendous opportunity to connect with parishioners and members of the community who are not involved with your church.

Social media can serve as an effective method of church networking and communicating. It has the potential to have an encouraging influence on our congregations and communities and to serve as a powerful tool for delivering the Gospel message to a large audience that extends beyond our contact list. It’s also a great way to share news about our church and ministry—and to invite others to join us in worship and service. Additionally, it can be a useful tool for obtaining feedback and ideas from our audience and can be used to gain insight for sermons, Bible study topics, worship times, and needs of the community. The “good” and positive uses of social media are endless.

- Post about what God is doing in your ministry context, advertise ministry events, use digital communication tools and social media to share the Gospel.
- For pastors who are using social media, be mindful of accepting friend requests from parishioners especially those who are underage the age of 18: don’t play favorites; and maintain appropriate boundaries.

TO THINK ABOUT

- Can the post be described as “good”?
- Will it help the kingdom and fellow believers? How will it be perceived by non-believers? How will the post be received by people with different cultural or faith backgrounds?
- Are we communicating effectively by asking questions in addition to providing information?

Attend to the Ordinances of God

Digital communication and social media tools offer us an opportunity to spread the Gospel message in previously unimagined ways.

Social media is a great way to find meaningful devotional materials, thought-provoking blogs, inspiring worship videos and media resources, and current articles and tools for our ministry. Users have reported that their social media usage helps keep them informed and enthusiastic about their ministry on a daily basis. While it can definitely help us “stay in love with God,” it also can be very distracting. We will make sure our use of social media does not occupy so much of our time that we are no longer fully participating in meaningful devotion, worship, Bible study, and conversations with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Social media can serve as a tool to aid, promote, and conduct discussions, studies, and devotional times but should not be our primary source of interaction with the world.

- Streaming worship services are a great way to give potential visitors a taste of what your faith community is like.

TO THINK ABOUT

- How is social media helping me to stay in love with God? How is it hindering me?
- How am I helping others stay in love with God by my social media contributions?
- How am I engaging in meaningful interactions that don't involve social media? When is personal dialogue more beneficial?



The Ministry Vision of the East Ohio Conference

East Ohio Conference Vision

The East Ohio Conference equips and supports pastors, congregations, and faith communities to grow in their capacity to bear fruit that lasts by:

- being disciples, making disciples, and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ;
- being God's agents of transformation in our communities and throughout the world; and
- being bold and courageous leaders in reaching new people, younger people, and a more diverse people.

East Ohio Conference Guiding Principles

- *Discipleship* is our foundation.
- *Covenant* guides us.
- *Connection* strengthens us.
- *Leadership* moves us forward.

From "About Us: Welcome/Vision" on <https://www.eocumc.com>, accessed February 23, 2024.



CLERGY HANDBOOK
East Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church

8800 Cleveland Ave NW
North Canton, OH 44270
www.eocumc.com
(330) 499-3972