

# Draft of a *General Book of Discipline* 2020

## New Part VI

### *General Organization and Administration*

#### Chapter Two

### The Ministry of the Ordained

#### Section I. The Meaning of Ordination and Conference Membership

¶ 301. *Ministry in the Christian Church*- 1. Ministry in the Christian church is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all persons to receive God’s gift of salvation and follow in the way of love and service. All Christian ministry is grounded in the covenant of baptism by which we are initiated into the body of Christ and called to a life of discipleship. The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion ground the ministry of the whole church. They are celebrated in the Christian community as a means of grace. Thus, the whole church receives and accepts this call, and all Christians participate in this continuing ministry (see ¶¶ 120-140).

2. Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God’s grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God’s call by offering themselves in leadership as set-apart ministers, ordained and licensed. (¶ 302) Individuals discern God’s call as they relate with God and their communities, and the Church guides and confirms those calls. Calls—and the discernment and confirmation of them—are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 301.1+2 = 301.1+2

¶ 302. *Ordination and Apostolic Ministry*—The pattern for this response to the call is provided in the development of the early church. The apostles led in prayer, teaching and preaching, ordered the spiritual and temporal life of the community, established leadership for the ministry of service, and provided for the proclamation of the gospel to new persons and in new places. The early church, through the laying on of hands, set apart persons with responsibility to preach, to teach, to administer the sacraments, to nurture, to heal, to gather the community in worship, and to send them forth in witness. The church also set apart other persons to care for the physical needs of others, reflecting the concerns for the people of the world. In the New Testament (Acts 6), we see the apostles identifying and authorizing persons to a ministry of service. These functions, though set apart, were never separate from the ministry of the whole people of God. Paul states (Ephesians 4:1-12) that different gifts and ministries are given to all persons. The Wesleyan tradition has, from the beginning, encouraged a culture of call and a community of discernment, which affirms and supports the ministry of all Christians and identifies and authorizes persons into ministries of the ordained.

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GBOD ¶ 302 = 302

¶ 303. *Orders in Relation to the Ministry of All Christians*—1. Within the people of God, some persons are called to the ministry of deacon. The words deacon, deaconess, and diaconate all spring from a common Greek root—*diakonos*, or “servant,” and *diakonia*, or “service.” Very early in its history the church, as an act of worship and praise of God, instituted an order of ordained ministers to personify or focus the servanthood to which all Christians are called. These people were named deacons. This ministry exemplifies and leads the Church in the servanthood every Christian is called to live both in the church and the world. Those called to the ministry of deacon are called to witness to the Word in their words and actions, and to embody and lead the community’s service in the world for the sake of enacting God’s

compassion and justice.

2. Within the people of God, other persons are called to the ministry of elder. The elders carry on the historic work of the *presbyteros* in the life of the Church. Beginning in some of the very early Christian communities, the *presbyteros* assisted the bishop in leading the gathered community in the celebration of sacraments and the guidance and care of its communal life. Those called to the ministry of the elder are called to bear authority and responsibility to preach and teach the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church so it can be faithful in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

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GBOD ¶ 303.1-2 = 305

¶ 304. *Purpose of Ordination*—1. Ordination to ministry is a gift from God to the church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit. As such, those who are ordained make a commitment to conscious living of the whole gospel and to the proclamation of that gospel to the end that the world may be saved.

2. Ordination is fulfilled in leadership of the people of God through ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion, and Justice. The Church's ministry of service is a primary representation of God's love. Those who respond to God's call to lead in service, word, compassion, and justice and equip others for this ministry through teaching, proclamation, and worship and who assist elders in the administration of the sacraments are ordained as deacons. Those whose leadership in service includes preaching and teaching the Word of God, administration of the sacraments, ordering the Church for its mission and service, and administration of the discipline of the Church are ordained as elders.

3. Ordained persons exercise their ministry in covenant with all Christians, especially with those whom they lead and serve in ministry. They also live in covenant of mutual care and accountability with all those who share their ordination, especially in The United Methodist Church, with the ordained who are members of the same annual conference and part of the same Order. The covenant of ordained ministry is a lifetime commitment, and those who enter into it dedicate their whole lives to the personal and spiritual disciplines it requires.

4. The effectiveness of the Church in mission depends on these covenantal commitments to the ministry of all Christians and the ordained ministry of the Church. Through ordination and through other offices of pastoral leadership, the Church provides for the continuation of Christ's ministry, which has been committed to the church as a whole. Without creative use of the diverse gifts of the entire body of Christ, the ministry of the church is less effective. Without responsible leadership, the focus, direction, and continuity of that ministry is diminished. Every local church should intentionally nurture candidates for ordained ministry and provide spiritual and financial support for their education as servant leaders for the ministry of the whole people of God.

5. In keeping with ancient Christian teaching and our Wesleyan tradition, we affirm that ordination for the same, or equivalent order, is not repeatable.

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GBOD ¶ 304.1-5 = 303.1-5

¶ 305. *Qualifications for Ordination*—1. Those whom the Church ordains shall be conscious of God's call to ordained ministry, and their call shall be acknowledged and authenticated by the Church. God's call has many manifestations, and the Church cannot structure a single test of authenticity. Nevertheless, the experience of the Church and the needs of its ministry require certain qualities of faith, life, and practice from those who seek ordination as deacons and elders. In order that The United Methodist Church may be assured that those persons who present themselves as candidates for ordained ministry are truly called of God, the Church expects persons seeking ordination to:

- a) Have a personal faith in Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord.

- b) Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness.
- c) Teach and model generous Christian giving with a focus on tithing as God’s standard of giving.
- d) Acknowledge a call by God to give themselves completely to ordained ministry following Jesus’ pattern of love and service.
- e) Communicate persuasively the Christian faith in both oral and written form.
- f) Make a commitment to lead the whole Church in loving service to humankind.
- g) Give evidence of God’s gifts for ordained ministry, evidence of God’s grace in their lives, and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the Church.
- h) Be persons in whom the community can place trust and confidence.
- i) Accept that Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation through faith in God through Jesus Christ; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history, and Church polity; possess the skills essential to the practice of ordained ministry; and lead in making disciples for Jesus Christ.
- j) Be accountable to The United Methodist Church, accept its Doctrinal Standards and *Discipline* and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to this ministry, and be prepared to live in the covenant of its ordained ministers.

2. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of the influence of an ordained clergy on the lives of other persons both within and outside the Church, the Church expects those who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life. To this end, they agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

3. While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals<sup>1</sup> are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.<sup>2</sup>

4. The United Methodist Church entrusts those persons who are in the ordained ministry with primary responsibility for maintaining standards of education and preparation for ordination. Having been originally recommended by a charge conference or equivalent body (§ 309.2c) and approved by the clergy session of the annual conference, persons are elected to membership in the annual conference and ordained by the bishop.

5. In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements only.

6. In central conferences, the annual conference, upon recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry, may create an executive committee of the Board, district committees on ordained ministry, or other appropriate structure, as it serves the need to carry out the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and assign and delegate to such structures the appropriate tasks and responsibilities it chooses.

With regard to mandated sub-units of the Board of Ordained Ministry and their respective tasks and responsibilities, jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

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GBOD ¶ 305.1-5 = 304.1-5; 305.6=new

<sup>1</sup> “Self-avowed practicing homosexual” is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that person is a practicing homosexual. Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764, 844, 984, 1020.

<sup>2</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 984, 985, 1027, 1028.

¶ 306. *Order of Deacons and Order of Elders*— All persons ordained as clergy-upon election to full membership in the annual conference shall be members of and participate in an order appropriate to their

election. An order is a covenant community within the church to mutually support, care for, and hold accountable its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. These orders, separately or together, seek to respond to the spiritual hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers, and for a deepening relationship with God.

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GBOD ¶ 306 = 306

¶ 307. *Changing Orders* — 1. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and vote of the clergy session of the annual conference, elders may be received as deacons in full connection, and deacons in full connection may be received as elders, provided they are in good standing and have:

- a) informed the bishop and district superintendent of their intention,
- b) applied in writing to the Board of Ordained Ministry,
- c) articulated to the Board of Ordained Ministry their call to the ministry of the deacon or the elder.
- d) completed all requirements for admission to the order for which they apply, ¶¶320 and 324, and
- e) completed at least two years, and no more than eight years, under appointment while licensed for the ministry of the order to which they are transitioning.

2. Such persons shall retain their credentials and full membership in the annual conference through the transition period from one order to the other. When ordained to the order to which they are transitioning, they shall surrender to the conference secretary the credentials of the order from which they are leaving.

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GBOD ¶ 307.1+2 = 309.2+3

¶ 308. *General Provisions*-1. The annual conference is the basic body of The United Methodist Church. The clergy membership of an annual conference shall consist of deacons and elders in full connection (¶¶ 325, 333), provisional members (¶ 323), associate members (¶ 317), affiliate members (¶ 340.4), and local pastors (¶ 313). All clergy are amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their duties in the positions to which they are appointed.<sup>3</sup>

2. Both men and women are included in all provisions of the *Discipline* that refer to the ordained ministry.<sup>4</sup>

3. There shall be an annual meeting of this covenant body, called “clergy session”, in executive session of all clergy members in full connection with the annual conference, with voting rights as specified by the *Discipline*, at the site of the regular session of the annual conference, or at an alternative time and location determined by the bishop after consultation with the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry, to consider questions relating to matters of ordination, character, and conference relations.<sup>5</sup>

4. A special session of the annual conference may be held at such time and at such place as the bishop shall determine, after consultation with the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry. A special clergy session shall have only such powers as stated in the call.

>VII: 308.001<

GBOD ¶ 308.1-4 = 369.1-2+5-6

<sup>3</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 327, 371.

<sup>4</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 155, 317.

<sup>5</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 406, 555, 1009.

## Section II. Candidacy for Licensed and Ordained Ministry

¶ 309. *Candidacy and Certification for Licensed and Ordained Ministry*—1. The licensed or ordained ministry is recognized by The United Methodist Church as a called-out and set-apart ministry. Therefore, it is appropriate that those persons who present themselves as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry be examined regarding the authenticity of their call by God to set-apart ministry. >VII: 309.001<

2. Those beginning candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry:

a) 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;

b) shall request a meeting of the committee on pastor-parish relations or equivalent body to consider the statement of call and to be evaluated in light of Wesley's historic questions;

(1) Do they know God as pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation?

(2) Have they gifts, as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?

(3) Have they fruit? Have any been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by their service? As long as these marks occur in them, we believe they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit.

c) Upon recommendation of the candidate by the committee on pastor-parish relations or equivalent body approved by the Board on ordained ministry, the charge conference shall meet to recommend the candidate in written ballot by two thirds majority to the Board of Ordained Ministry.

>VII: 309.002<

3. Candidates recommended by the charge conference and seeking to become certified for licensed or ordained ministry shall meet with the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry may require the candidate to provide written material and reports according to its guidelines. These shall include, but are not limited to, written answers to questions about call, experience of faith and ministry and understanding of the Christian faith; psychological reports, criminal background, an official statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse. >VII: 309.003; 309.004; 309.005<

GBOD ¶ 309.1 = 310.Intro; 309.2=310.1; 309.3=310.2a+b

¶ 310. *Continuation of Certified Candidates*—1. The progress of certified candidates shall be reviewed annually by the Board of Ordained Ministry which may continue the candidacy when the following conditions have been met satisfactorily,<sup>6</sup> but for no more than twelve years following certification:

2. The certified candidate has received the annual recommendation of his or her charge conference.

3. The certified candidate is making satisfactory progress in his or her studies.

4. The certified candidate continues to evidence gifts, fruits and God's grace for the work of ministry.

>VII: 310.001<

GBOD ¶ 310.1-4 = 313.Intro+5; +1-3

<sup>6</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 1263

¶ 311. *Discontinuance and Reinstatement of Certified Candidates* —Certified candidates may be discontinued on their own request, upon severing their relationship with the United Methodist Church, or upon action by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall keep a permanent record of the circumstances relating to discontinuance.

Certified candidates whose status has been discontinued by the Board of Ordained Ministry shall only be reinstated by the same Board.

In jurisdictional conferences, this paragraph shall also be implemented by their respective committees on ordained ministry.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 311 = 314.2

### Section III. License for Pastoral Ministry

¶ 312. *License for Pastoral Ministry*—1. All persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry.

The Board of Ordained Ministry may recommend to the clergy session of the annual conference the licensing of those persons who have provided the reports and statements required by the Board, and who are in one of the following categories:

2. Provisional elders to be commissioned by the annual conference,
3. Local pastors who have completed the conditions for candidacy certification, and the studies for the license as a local pastor.
4. Associate members of the annual conference;
5. Deacons in full connection, seeking to qualify for ordination as an elder;
6. Licensed or ordained clergy from other denominations who have training equivalent to the studies for license as a local pastor.

>VII: 312.001<

GBOD ¶ 312.1-6 = 315.Intro+.1-5

¶ 313. *Responsibilities and Duties of Those Licensed for Pastoral Ministry*—1. Provisional elders approved annually by the Board of Ordained Ministry and local pastors approved annually by the Board of ordained ministry may be licensed by the bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor (¶334), including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of marriage (where state laws allow),<sup>7</sup> burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry. For the purposes of these paragraphs the charge or extension ministry shall be defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served.” Those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. Licensed clergy shall be amenable to the clergy session of the annual conference in the performance of their pastoral duties and shall attend the sessions of the annual conference.

3. The membership of local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment is in the annual conference where they shall have the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General, central, or jurisdictional conference, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

Licensed clergy who fulfill the requirements of ¶ 35 may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and central or jurisdictional conferences.<sup>9</sup>

>VII: 313.001<

GBOD ¶ 313.1 = 316.1; 313.2=316.5; 313.3=316.6

<sup>7</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 694.

<sup>8</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 1181 and ¶35.

¶ 314. *Categories of Local Pastor*— Each central conference shall establish what categories of Local Pastor will be recognized, as well as educational or other requirements necessary for each category.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 314.001<

GBOD ¶ 314=318Intro

¶ 315. *Continuance as a Local Pastor* - 1. Upon successful continuance or completion of required studies, and other qualifications, a local pastor may be recommended for continuance by the Board of Ordained Ministry to the clergy session of the annual conference for annual approval.<sup>9</sup>

2. None of the provisions in this legislation shall be interpreted to change or limit authorizations to local pastors ordained as deacon prior to 1996.<sup>10</sup>

>VII: 315.001<

GBOD ¶ 315.1-2=319.2+5

<sup>9</sup>Judicial Council Decision 1076.

<sup>10</sup>Judicial Council Decision 1076.

¶ 316. *Exiting, Reinstatement, and Retirement of Local Pastors* 1. *Discontinuance of Local Pastors*—Whenever a local pastor retires or is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference, whenever any local pastor severs relationship with The United Methodist Church, whenever the appointment of a local pastor is discontinued by the bishop, or whenever the Board of Ordained Ministry does not recommend continuation of license, license shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference.

After consultation with the district superintendent and the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the resident bishop a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of local pastor status.

2. *Withdrawal Under Complaints and Charges*—When a local pastor is accused of a chargeable offense under ¶ 2702 and desires to withdraw from the Church, the procedures described in Judicial Administration shall apply.

3. *Reinstatement of Local Pastor Status*—Local pastors who have been discontinued from an annual conference of The United Methodist Church may be reinstated only by the annual conference that previously approved them, or its legal successor, only upon recommendation by the respective Board of ordained ministry, and the cabinet. Persons seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist church for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement and have been recommended by its charge conference. When approved by the clergy session of the annual conference their license and credentials shall be restored, and they shall be eligible for appointment.

4. *Retirement of Local Pastor*—Upon retirement, a local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study may be recognized as a retired local pastor. Retired local pastors may attend annual conference sessions with voice but not vote. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the bishop to a charge.

>VII: 316.001<

GBOD ¶ 316.1-4 = 320.1-2+4—5

#### **Section IV. Associate Membership**

¶ 317. *Eligibility and Rights of Associate Members*—1. Associate members of an annual conference are in the itinerant ministry of the Church (see ¶ 334) and are available on a continuing basis for appointment by the bishop. They shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry.<sup>11</sup>

2. Associate members shall have a right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following: (a) constitutional amendments; (b) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

3. Associate members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of an annual conference. They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the General or central or jurisdictional conferences.

4. Associate members shall be subject to the provisions for ordained elders governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 317.1-4 = 321.Intro+.1-3

<sup>11</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 1226.

¶ 318. *Requirements for Election as Associate Members* – 1. Local pastors may be elected to associate membership by a three-fourth majority vote of the clergy session of the annual conference, upon recommendation by a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry, when they have met the following conditions:

They shall have: (1) served four years as full-time local pastors; (2) completed the educational requirements for the Course of Study; (3) have reached the age requirements; and (4) fulfilled the requirements stated in ¶ 320.4-8, applicable to associate membership. >VII: 318.001<

2. Each central conference shall establish provisions for such requirements or delegate it to its annual conferences. Annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

GBOD ¶ 318.1 = 322.1; 318.2=new

¶ 319. *Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members*—Each annual conference shall organize a Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members or, where numbers are too small, combine activities with the clergy orders.

>VII: 319.001<

GBOD ¶ 319 = 323Intro

### **Section V. Provisional Membership**

¶ 320. *Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership* – 1. A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the annual conference by a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy session on recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry after meeting the following qualifications.<sup>12</sup>

>VII: 320.001<

2. *Candidacy Requirement*: Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for at least one year. Those appointed as local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference and are no longer certified candidates.

3. *Service Requirement*: Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the Board of Ordained Ministry as a condition of provisional membership.

4. Each candidate shall file with the board a written, concise, autobiographical statement regarding age, health, family status, Christian experience, call to ministry, educational record, formative Christian experiences, and plans for service in the Church. >VII: 320.002<

5. Each candidate shall submit documentation that shall include but is not limited to psychological reports, criminal background, an official statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

6. *Educational Requirement*: Candidates shall have completed theological studies in the Christian faith. These studies shall include United Methodist doctrine, polity and history. Each central conference shall establish provisions for its educational requirements.

Annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 320.003<

7. Local pastors may fulfill the educational requirements for provisional membership as elders when they have

a) completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent

b) completed the Course of Study and the Advanced Course of Study.

c) Each central conference shall establish provisions for its educational requirements for local pastors seeking provisional and full membership.<sup>13</sup> Annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 320.004<

8. Each candidate shall respond to a doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The examination shall cover the following:

- a) Describe your personal experience of God and the understanding of God you derive from biblical, theological, and historical sources.
- b) What is your understanding of evil as it exists in the world?
- c) What is your understanding of humanity, and the human need for divine grace?
- d) How do you interpret the statement Jesus Christ is Lord?
- e) What is your conception of the activity of the Holy Spirit in personal faith, in the community of believers, and in responsible living in the world?
- f) What is your understanding of the kingdom of God; the Resurrection; eternal life?
- g) How do you intend to affirm, teach, and apply Part III of the *Discipline* (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task) in your work in the ministry to which you have been called?
- h) The United Methodist Church holds that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church?
- i) Describe the nature and mission of the Church. What are its primary tasks today?
- j) Discuss your understanding of the primary characteristics of United Methodist polity.
- k) Explain your understanding of the distinctive vocations of the Order of Elder and the Order of Deacons. How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitment as a provisional deacon or provisional elder in The United Methodist Church?
- l) Describe your understanding of *diakonia*, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the provisional member.
- m) What is the meaning of ordination in the context of the general ministry of the Church?
- n) Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry.
- o) You have agreed as a candidate for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of the influence as a clergy, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God. What is your understanding of this agreement?
- p) Explain the role and significance of the sacraments in the ministry to which you have been called.

9. Each candidate shall have a personal interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry to complete his or her candidacy.

10. Each candidate shall have been recommended to the clergy session based on at least a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

GBOD ¶ 320.1 = 324Intro; 320.2=324.1; 320.3=324.2; 320.4=324.13; 320.5=324.12; 320.6=324.5; 320.7=324.6; 320.8=324.9; 320.9=324.11; 320.10=324.14

<sup>12</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 318.

<sup>13</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 823, 1077.

¶ **321. Commissioning**—Commissioning is the act of the church that publicly acknowledges God’s call and the response, talents, gifts and training of the candidate. The church invokes the Holy Spirit as the candidate is commissioned to be a faithful servant leader among the people, to lead the church in service, to proclaim the Word of God and to equip others for ministry. Commissioning of provisional members for ministry as elders by a Bishop implies the authority of a license for pastoral ministry for the time of provisional membership.

>VII: 321.001<

GBOD ¶ 321 = 325

¶ 322. *Service of Provisional Members*— All persons who are provisional members shall be appointed by a bishop (¶ 406) and serve as a provisional member of the annual conference for a minimum of two years following the completion of education requirements for full connection.

>VII: 322.001<

GBOD ¶ 322 = 326.Intro

¶ 323. *Eligibility and Rights of Provisional Membership*—1. Provisional members are on probation as to character, servant leadership, and effectiveness in ministry in preparation for membership in full connection in the annual conference as deacons or elders. They are accountable to the annual conference, through the clergy session. Annually, the Board of Ordained Ministry shall review and evaluate their relationship and make recommendation to the clergy session of the annual conference regarding their continuance. No member shall be continued on provisional membership beyond the eighth regular session following their admission to provisional membership.

2. Provisional members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following:

a) constitutional amendments;

b) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

3. Provisional members who have completed all of their educational requirements may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and central or jurisdictional conferences.<sup>14</sup>

4. Provisional members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the Board of Ordained Ministry.

5. *Discontinuance from Provisional Membership*

a). Provisional members may request discontinuance of this relationship or may be discontinued by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

(1) Voluntary Discontinuance – When provisional members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church, their action shall be considered a request for discontinuance of their relationship and their credentials shall be surrendered to a district superintendent.

(2) Involuntary Discontinuance – In the case of discontinuation without consent, prior to any final recommendation, a provisional member will be advised of the right to a fair process hearing before the committee on conference relations of the Board of Ordained Ministry. A report of the action will be made to the full board for final action. The provisions of fair process (¶ 352.2) shall be observed.

(3) Discontinuance Due to Time Limit - No member shall be continued on provisional membership beyond the eighth regular session following their admission to provisional membership.

b) When this relationship is discontinued, they shall no longer be permitted to exercise ministerial functions and shall return their credentials to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and their membership shall be transferred by the district superintendent to the local church they designate after consultation with the pastor.

c) The Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the resident bishop and the secretary of the conference a permanent record of the circumstances relating to discontinuance as a provisional member.

d) After discontinuance, provisional members may be classified and approved as local pastors in accordance with the provisions of BOD ¶313.

6. Provisional members may not be retired under the provisions of ¶ 349. Provisional members who have reached the mandatory retirement age shall be automatically discontinued. Provisional elders may be classified as retired local pastors under the provisions of BOD ¶ 320.5. >VII: 323.001<

>VII: —<

¶ 324. *Requirements for Ordination as Deacon or Elder and Admission into Full Connection-* 1. Provisional members who are applying for admission into full connection and who have been provisional members for at least two years following the completion of educational requirements as specified in ¶324.4 may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference upon recommendation by a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry and elected by a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy session.<sup>15</sup> This process shall be informed by guidelines in Part III of the *Discipline* and shall focus upon the covenantal ministry of all Christians and the particular ministry to which the person has been ordained. Qualification requirements are:

2. *Membership requirement-* Each candidate for ordination and full membership shall have been previously elected as a provisional member.

3. *Service requirements-* They shall have served under episcopal appointment for at least two full annual conference years following the completion of the educational requirements. >VII: 324.001<

4. *Educational Requirements* – Prior to ordination and election to full membership all provisional members shall have fully completed the educational requirements.

5. The following questions are guidelines for the preparation of the examination:

a) Theology

(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

- (a) God
- (b) Humanity
- (c) The need for divine grace
- (d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ
- (e) The work of the Holy Spirit
- (f) The meaning and significance of the Sacraments
- (g) The kingdom of God
- (h) Resurrection and eternal life

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

(3) What are its primary challenges today?

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

b) Vocation

(1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained deacon?

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) Do you offer yourself to be appointed by the bishop to a service ministry?

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained clergy, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God?<sup>16</sup>

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

(5) Will your regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

6. A deacon shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Deacons (§ 405.5). The bishop shall be assisted by other deacons and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in other communions may join the ordaining bishop in laying hands on the head of the candidate, while participating deacons and laity may lay hands on the back or shoulders of the candidate.

7. An elder shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Elders (§ 405.5). The bishop shall be assisted by other elders and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in other communions may join the ordaining bishop in laying hands on the head of the candidate, while participating elders and laity may lay hands on the back or shoulders of the candidate.

8. Following election, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference, and following ordination, a certificate of ordination.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 324 = 330+335

GBOD ¶ 324.7 = new; 324.8=330.7; 324.9=333.3; 324.10=330.6/333.2

<sup>15</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 157, 344, 1199.

<sup>16</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 542.

¶ 325. *Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection* – The bishop as chief pastor shall engage those seeking to be admitted in serious self-searching and prayer to prepare them for their examination before the conference. At the time of the examination the bishop shall also explain to the conference the historic nature of the following questions and seek to interpret their spirit and intent. The questions are these and any others that may be thought necessary:

1. Have you faith in Christ?
2. Are you going on to perfection?
3. Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?
4. Are you earnestly striving after it?
5. Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and his work?
6. Do you know the General Rules of our Church?
7. Will you keep them?
8. Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church?
9. After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?
10. Will you preach and maintain them?
11. Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?
12. Do you approve our Church government and polity?

13. Will you support and maintain them?
14. Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
15. Will you visit from house to house?
16. Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
17. Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
18. Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
19. Will you observe the following directions?

a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.

b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.<sup>17</sup>

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 325 = 330.5.d + 336

<sup>17</sup> These are the questions that every Methodist preacher from the beginning has been required to answer upon becoming a full member of an annual conference. These questions were formulated by John Wesley and have been little changed throughout the years.

## Section VI. The Order of the Deacon

¶ 326. *The Ministry of a Deacon*—1. From among the baptized, deacons are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop. Deacons give leadership in the Church's life: in teaching and proclaiming the Word; in contributing to worship, and in assisting the elders in administering the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, or in presiding at the celebration of the sacraments when contextually appropriate and duly authorized; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in embodying the church's mission to the world; and in leading congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. For the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the church and offering the means of grace to the world, the resident bishop of the annual conference in which the deacon is appointed may authorize the deacon to preside at the celebration of the sacraments.

2. Deacons are accountable to the annual conference and the bishop for the fulfillment of their call to servant leadership.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 326 = 328

¶ 327. *Authority, and Responsibilities of Deacons in Full Connection* – 1. Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two.

2. The deacon in full connection shall have the right of voice and vote in the annual conference where membership is held; shall be eligible to serve as clergy on boards, commissions, or committees of the annual conference and hold office on the same; and shall be eligible for election as a clergy delegate to the General, central, or jurisdictional conference. The deacon in full connection shall attend all the sessions of the annual conference and share with elders in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy (¶ 330.1).

3. As members of the Order of Deacons, all deacons in full connection are in covenant with all other such deacons in the annual conference and shall participate in the life of their order.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 327.1-3 = 329.1-3

¶ 328. *Appointment of Deacons and Provisional Deacons to Various Ministries*—1. Deacons and provisional deacons may be appointed to serve in the following settings.

2. *Deacons and Provisional Deacons Appointed Beyond the Local Church.* – Deacons and provisional deacons may be appointed to settings not connected to either The United Methodist Church or ecumenical agencies when the appointment is approved by the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry as a ministry beyond the local church that is a witness and service of Christ’s love and justice in the world.

3. *Charge Conference Membership of Deacons and Provisional Deacons.*

a) Deacons and provisional deacons who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, shall be members of that charge conference.

b) Deacons and provisional deacons who are appointed to settings beyond the local church shall, after consultation with the pastor in charge, and the district superintendent designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they shall hold membership and to which they shall submit an annual report.

4. Each central conference shall determine the process for deacons’ appointments, equitable compensation, pension and health benefits, and the procedures when a deacon is not appointed.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 328.001<

GBOD ¶ 328.1 = 331.1; 328.2=331.4; 328.3=331.9; 328.4 (new)

## **Section VII. The Order of the Elder**

¶ 329. *Elders in Full Connection*—Elders in full connection with an annual conference by virtue of their election and ordination are bound in special covenant with all the ordained elders 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 reserve to be appointed and to serve, after consultation, as the appointive authority may determine.<sup>18</sup>

>VII: 329.001<

GBOD ¶ 329 = 333.1

<sup>18</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 492.

¶ 330. *Ministry, Authority, and Responsibilities of an Elder in Full Connection*—1. An elder in full connection is authorized to give spiritual and temporal servant leadership in the Church in the following manner:

2. Elders in full connection shall have the right to vote on all matters in the annual conference except in the election of lay delegates to the general and central or jurisdictional conferences and shall share with deacons in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. This responsibility shall not be limited by the recommendation or lack of recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry, notwithstanding provisions which grant to the Board of Ordained Ministry the right of recommendation.<sup>19</sup> They shall be eligible to hold office in the annual conference and to be elected delegates to the general and central or jurisdictional conferences under the provision of the Constitution (¶ 35). Every effective elder in full connection who is in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop.<sup>20</sup>

3. There are professional responsibilities (¶334) that elders are expected to fulfill and that represent a fundamental part of their accountability and a primary basis of their continued eligibility for annual appointment.<sup>21</sup>

Each central conference shall establish regulations on the evaluation process for fulfilling these professional responsibilities.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 330.001<

4. When an elder's effectiveness is in question, the bishop shall complete the procedures in place (¶ 349). Each central conference may establish its provisions. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

GBOD ¶ 330.1-4 = 334.Intro+1-3

<sup>19</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 690.

<sup>20</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 462, 492, 534, 555.

<sup>21</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 492.

**¶ 331. *General Provisions for Appointments of Elders, Provisional Elders, Associate Members, and Licensed Ministers***—1. 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 a leave, retirement, or have failed to meet the requirements for continued eligibility.<sup>22</sup> (¶ 330).>VII: 331.001<

2. In addition to ordained elders, persons who have been granted a license for pastoral ministry may be appointed to local churches as pastors in charge.<sup>23</sup> All clergy members and licensed local pastors to be appointed shall assume a lifestyle consistent with Christian teaching as set forth in the Social Principles.

3. Elders in effective relationship, associate members, provisional elders, and persons licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to ministry settings that extend the ministry of The United Methodist Church and the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world beyond the local church. Persons in these appointments remain within the itineracy and shall be accountable to the annual conference. Institutions, agencies, or clergy desiring such appointment shall consult with the clergy person's bishop and/or district superintendent prior to any interviews relative to such an appointment. >VII: 331.002<

GBOD ¶ 331.1-3 = 337.1-3

GBOD ¶ 331.3 see also 343.1 (+references in 326 Intro, 331.4) and 343.2+3+344.1(d)

<sup>22</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 380, 462, 492, 524, 702, 985, 1226.

<sup>23</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 1226

**¶ 332. *The Itinerant System***—1. 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.<sup>24</sup> All ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members shall accept and abide by these appointments.<sup>25</sup> Bishops and cabinets shall commit to and support open itineracy and the protection of the prophetic pulpit and diversity. The nature of the appointment process is specified in ¶ 406. >VII: 332.001<

2. When an elder, provisional elder, or associate member is appointed to full-time service, that 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. >VII: 332.002<

3. At the initiative of the bishop and cabinet, or when an elder, provisional elder, or associate member requests, or declares in writing that itineracy is limited, he or she may be appointed to a less than full-time appointment. >VII: <332.003

4. Elders and associate members in appointments extending the ministry of the local United Methodist church are full participants in the itinerant system. Therefore, a conference member in an appointment beyond the local United Methodist church must be willing upon consultation to receive an appointment in a pastoral charge.

GBOD ¶ 332.1 = 338.Intro; 332.2-3=338.1-2; 332.4=344 Intro

<sup>24</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 713.

<sup>25</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 492.

¶ 333. *Definition of a Pastor*—A pastor is an elder, associate member, provisional elder, or local pastor approved by vote of the clergy session of the annual conference and may be appointed by the bishop to be in charge of a local church or extension ministry. >VII: 333.001<  
GBOD ¶ 333 = 339

¶ 334. *Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors*— 1. The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment.

2. The responsibilities and duties of elders and licensed pastors are:

a) *Word and ecclesial acts:*

(1) To preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.

(a) To ensure faithful transmission of the Christian faith.

(b) To lead people in discipleship and evangelistic outreach that others might come to know Christ and to follow him.

(2) To counsel persons with personal, ethical, or spiritual struggles.

(3) To perform the ecclesial acts of marriage and burial.

(a) To perform the marriage ceremony after due counsel with the parties involved and in accordance with the laws of the state and the rules of The United Methodist Church. The decision to perform the ceremony shall be the right and responsibility of the pastor.

(b) To conduct funeral and memorial services and provide care and grief counseling.

(4) To visit in the homes of the church and the community, especially among the sick, aged, imprisoned, and others in need.

(5) To maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.

b) *Sacrament:*

(1) To administer the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord according to Christ's ordinance.

(a) To prepare the parents and sponsors before baptizing infants or children, and instruct them concerning the significance of baptism and their responsibilities for the Christian training of the baptized child.

(b) To encourage reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant and renewal of baptismal vows at different stages of life.

(c) To encourage people baptized in infancy or early childhood to make their profession of faith, after instruction, so that they might become professing members of the church.

(d) To explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper and to encourage regular participation as a means of grace to grow in faith and holiness.

(e) To select and train deacons and lay members to serve the consecrated communion elements.

(2) To encourage the private and congregational use of the other means of grace.

c) *Order:*

(1) To be the administrative officer of the local church and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately provided for.

(a) To give pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership, equipping them to fulfill the ministry to which they are called.

(b) To give oversight to the educational program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media.

(c) To be responsible for organizational faithfulness, goal setting, planning and evaluation.

(d) To search out and counsel men and women for the ministry of deacons, elders, local pastors and other church related ministries.

(2) To administer the temporal affairs of the church in their appointment, the annual conference, and the general church.

(a) To administer the provisions of the *Discipline*.

(b) To give an account of their pastoral ministries to the charge and annual conference. Central conferences may establish provisions for this. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 334.001<

(c) To provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation. To ensure membership care including compliance with charitable giving documentation requirements and to provide appropriate pastoral care, the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, shall have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records.

(d) To model and promote faithful financial stewardship and to encourage giving as a spiritual discipline by teaching the biblical principles of giving.

(e) To lead the congregation in the fulfillment of its mission through full and faithful payment of all apportioned ministerial support, administrative, and benevolent funds.

(f) To care for all church records and local church financial obligations, and certify the accuracy of all financial, membership, and any other reports submitted by the local church to the annual conference for use in apportioning costs back to the church.

(3) To participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities.

(a) To seek out opportunities for cooperative ministries with other United Methodist pastors and churches.

(b) To be willing to assume supervisory responsibilities within the connection.

(4) To lead the congregation in racial and ethnic inclusiveness.

d) *Service*:

(1) To embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership.

(2) To give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world.

(3) To build the body of Christ as a caring and giving community, extending the ministry of Christ to the world.

(4) To participate in community, ecumenical and inter-religious concerns and to encourage the people to become so involved and to pray and labor for the unity of the Christian community.

GBOD ¶ 334.1-2 = 340.1-2

¶ 335. *Unauthorized Conduct*—1. Pastors shall first obtain the written consent of the district superintendent before engaging for an evangelist any person who is not a general evangelist in the connection, a clergy member of an annual conference, a local pastor, or a certified lay servant in good standing in The United Methodist Church.

2. No pastor shall discontinue services in a local church between sessions of the annual conference without the consent of the charge conference and the district superintendent.

3. No pastor shall arbitrarily organize a pastoral charge.

4. No pastor shall hold a religious service within the bounds of a pastoral charge other than the one to which appointed without the consent of the pastor of the charge, or the district superintendent. >VII: 335.001<

5. All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.<sup>25</sup>

6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.<sup>26</sup>

7. No pastor shall re-baptize. The practice of re-baptism does not conform with God's action in baptism and is not consistent with Wesleyan tradition and the historic teaching of the church. Therefore, the pastor should counsel any person seeking re-baptism to participate in a rite of re-affirmation of baptismal vows.

GBOD ¶ 335.1-7 = 341.1-7

<sup>25</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 936.

<sup>26</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 1115.

### **Section VIII. Clergy From Other Annual Conferences, Other Methodist and Christian Denominations**

¶ 336. *Provisions for Clergy from Outside the Annual Conference*—1. Ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences and Christian denominations may receive an appointment in the annual conference in the following manner:

2. *Ordained Clergy or Provisional Members from Other Annual Conferences and Other Methodist Denominations*—With approval and consent of the bishops or other judicatory authorities involved, ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences or other Methodist churches may receive appointments while retaining their home conference membership or denominational affiliation. >VII: 336.001<

3. *Elders or Ordained Clergy from Other Denominations*—On recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy session of the annual conference may approve annually clergy in good standing from other Christian denominations to receive appointments within the bounds of the annual conference while retaining their denominational affiliation, provided they meet all requirements for certified candidates, except church membership, present suitable credentials, have given evidence of their agreement with and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity, and have been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

When the Board of Ordained Ministry certifies that their credentials are at least equal to those of United Methodist elders, the clergy session of the annual conference may grant them the same rights in the annual conference as provisional members. While under appointment, they are subject to the provisions of the *Discipline*, but are not part of the itinerant system. >VII: 336.002<

GBOD ¶ 336.1-3 = 346.Intro+1-2

¶ 337. *Transfers*—1. *From Other Annual Conferences*—Ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences of The United Methodist Church may be received by transfer into provisional or full membership with the consent of the bishops involved. Recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approval of the clergy session shall take place prior to the transfer.

Transfers are conditioned on the passing of their character by the conference to which they are amenable. Members on transfer shall not vote twice on the same constitutional amendment, nor be counted twice, nor vote twice for delegates to the same general, jurisdictional, or central conferences.

Whenever clergy members are transferred to another annual conference, either in connection with a transfer of the pastoral charge to which they are appointed or by reason of the dissolution or merger of

the annual conference, they shall have the same rights and obligations as the other members of the conference to which they are transferred.

2. *From Other Methodist Denominations*— Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Methodist churches may be received by transfer into provisional or full conference membership or as local pastors, with the consent of the bishops or other authorities involved, without going through the process required for ministers from other denominations. Prior consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be held in order to determine that the clergy meets the educational requirements and standards for conference membership established by the *Discipline* and the annual conference.

3. *From Other Denominations*—a) On recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy session of the annual conference may recognize the orders of ordained clergy from other denominations and receive them as provisional members or local pastors. They shall present their credentials for examination by the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry. They shall give assurance of their Christian faith and experience, and their willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity. They shall meet the educational requirements and standards for conference membership.

b) Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Christian denominations shall serve as provisional members for at least two years and complete all the requirements, including courses in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, before being admitted into full conference membership.

c) Following the provisional member's election to full conference membership as a deacon or elder, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference.

4. The Board of Ordained Ministry of an annual conference is required to ascertain from an ordained clergy person seeking admission into its membership on credentials from another denomination whether or not membership in the effective relation was previously held in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors, and if so, when and under what circumstances the ordained clergy's connection with such annual conference was severed.

5. Ordained clergy seeking admission into an annual conference on credentials from another denomination who have previously withdrawn from membership in the effective relation in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors shall not be admitted or readmitted without the consent of the annual conference from which they withdrew or its legal successor, such consent to be granted upon recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry.

6. After the orders of an ordained minister of another church shall have been duly recognized, and the minister has been approved for full membership, the certificates of ordination by said church shall be returned to the minister with the following inscription written plainly on the back:

*These orders are recognized by the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ [year].*

\_\_\_\_\_, *President*

\_\_\_\_\_, *Secretary*

GBOD ¶ 337.1 = 347.1+604.6+7; 337.2=347.2a; 337.3-6=347.3-6

## **Section IX. Mentoring, Evaluation, Continuing Education, and Sabbatical Leave**

¶ 338. *Mentors*— 1. Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth. An effective mentor has a mature faith, models effective ministry, and possesses the necessary skill to help individuals discern their call in ministry. Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry, local pastors and provisional members of an annual conference. Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.

2. Mentors shall be recommended by the cabinet, selected, trained and held accountable by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Each central conference shall establish a mentoring program for candidates and provisional members, and for local pastors who have not completed educational requirements. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 338.001<

GBOD ¶ 338.1+2 = 348.2+ 1Intro

¶ 339. *Evaluation*—1. Evaluation is a continuous process for formation in servant ministry and servant leadership that must take place in a spirit of understanding and acceptance. Evaluation serves as a process for clergy to assess their effectiveness in ministry and to discern God’s call to continue in ordained ministry.

2. The district superintendent, in consultation with the pastor-parish relations committee, will evaluate the clergy’s effectiveness for ministry, using criteria, processes, and training developed by the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry.

>VII: 339.001<

GBOD ¶ 339.1-2 = 349Intro+1

¶ 340. *Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth*—Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

>VII: 340.001<

GBOD ¶ 340.1-5 = 350-3+5-6

¶ 341. *Sabbatical Leave*—A sabbatical leave should be allowed for a program of study or travel approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Clergy members in full connection, or in associate membership, who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, from the time of their reception into full or associate membership, may be granted a sabbatical leave for up to one year.<sup>27</sup> The appointment to sabbatical leave is to be made by the bishop holding the conference, upon the vote of the annual conference after recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

>VII: 341.001<

GBOD ¶ 341 = 351

<sup>27</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 473.

## **Section X. Changes of Conference Relationship**

¶ 342. *General Provisions for Changes in Conference Relationship*— 1. When a change in conference relationship is deemed necessary or desirable by a clergy in full connection, or a provisional or associate member, whether for a short or long term, the person requesting the change shall make written request to the Board of Ordained Ministry stating the reasons for the requested change of relationship.

>VII: 342.001<

2. *Conference Relationship in Voluntary Leaves and Retirement* - In voluntary leaves of absence, maternity or paternity leaves, medical leaves, and any form of retirement, clergy members remain members of the annual conference, and eligible for membership on annual conference units, and eligible to serve as delegates to General or central or jurisdictional conferences.<sup>28</sup> With regard to their respective charge conference, the following regulations shall be followed:

a) *Voluntary Leaves of Absence* – With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference. Their ministerial activities

shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge. With the permission of the bishop and under the supervision of the respective district superintendent, they may exercise ministerial activities outside of their charge.<sup>29</sup>

b) *Retirement* – All retired clergy members in full or associate membership who are not appointed as pastors of a charge, after consultation with the pastor in charge and the district superintendent, shall have a seat in the charge conference and all the privileges of membership in the church where they elect to hold such membership except as set forth in the *Discipline*. They shall submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference.

If they reside outside the bounds of the annual conference, they shall forward their report to the charge conference where membership is held, signed by the pastor in charge of the affiliate charge conference where they reside. >VII: 342.002<

3. *Conference Relationship in Honorable Location* - In honorable location, clergy members shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference. With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, located clergy members shall designate the local church in which they shall hold membership. They shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference, and forward the report to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Failure to submit the report for two consecutive years may result in termination of orders upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and vote of the clergy session.

The ministerial activities of located clergy shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge. With the permission of the bishop and under the supervision of the respective district superintendent, they may exercise ministerial activities outside of their charge. When approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry, a clergy on honorable location may be appointed *ad interim* by the bishop as a local pastor. >VII: 342.003<

4. *Conference Relationship in Involuntary Leave* - In involuntary leaves of absence, clergy members remain members of the annual conference, but shall not be members on annual conference units, nor elect delegates or be eligible as delegates to General or central or jurisdictional conferences.

With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference. Their ministerial activities shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge.

5. *Conference Relationship in Administrative Location* - In administrative location, clergy members shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference. With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, located clergy members shall designate the local church in which they shall hold membership. They shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference, and forward the report to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Failure to submit the report for two consecutive years may result in termination of orders upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and vote of the clergy session.

The ministerial activities of located clergy shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge. >VII: 342.004<

GBOD ¶ 342.1 = 352; 342.2=353.7+8+357.5; 342.3=358.2; 342.4=354.8+7; 342.5=359.3

<sup>28</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 473.

<sup>29</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 581.

¶ 343. *Voluntary Leave of Absence*—

1. Members in full connection, or provisional or associate members of the annual conference who for sufficient reason choose to temporarily take leave from their ministerial appointment may

request in writing with a copy to the bishop and their district superintendent a voluntary leave through the Board of Ordained Ministry. The leave is granted or renewed annually by vote of the clergy session of the annual conference upon recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. Each central conference shall determine a procedure for granting voluntary leaves of absence. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 343.001<  
GBOD ¶ 343.1 = 353.1; 344.2=new

¶ 344. *Involuntary Leave of Absence*— 1. The bishop and the district superintendents may request an involuntary leave of absence without the consent of the provisional, associate, or full member. They shall give to the clergy member and the Board of Ordained Ministry in writing specific reasons for the request. The request shall be referred to the Board of Ordained Ministry. The fair process for administrative hearings as set forth in ¶ 352.2 shall be followed in any involuntary leave of absence procedure.

2. Involuntary leave of absence shall be approved by two-thirds vote of the clergy session of the annual conference,<sup>30</sup> renewable annually for a maximum of three years.

3. Between sessions of the annual conference, the bishop and cabinet may request that an involuntary leave of absence be granted or terminated by the Board of Ordained Ministry. This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of the annual conference at its next session.

4. Each central conference shall determine a procedure for granting voluntary leaves of absence. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 344.001<  
GBOD ¶ 344.1 = 354.1; 344.2-3=354.4-5; 344.3=new

<sup>30</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 782.

¶ 345. *Maternity or Paternity Leave*—Maternity or paternity leave, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and 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, subject to keeping minimum standards of civil law. >VII: 345.001<

GBOD ¶ 345 = 355.Intro

¶ 346. *Medical Leave Due to Medical and Disabling Conditions that Prevent Performance of Ministerial Duties*—1. When clergy who are members of an annual conference (¶ 308) are unable to perform their ministerial duties because of medical and disabling conditions, upon recommendations of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the appropriate board of pensions, and by a majority vote of the clergy session of the annual conference who are present and voting, they may be granted annual medical leave without losing their relationship to the annual conference; provided, however, that such leave may be granted or renewed upon reasonable and appropriate investigation of the case by the appropriate committee, or in its absence by the Board of Ordained Ministry. >VII: 346.001<

2. When clergy who are members of an annual conference are unable to perform their ministerial duties between sessions of the annual conference on account of medical conditions, with the approval of a majority of the district superintendents, after consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry a medical leave may be granted by the bishop for the remainder of the conference year; provided, however, that such leave may be granted upon reasonable and appropriate investigation of the case. >VII: 346.002<

3. The policies for termination of medical leave shall follow procedures in compliance with local and national civil laws. >VII: 346.003<

4. Any person eligible to receive an appointment from a bishop and able to perform ministerial duties may not be placed on involuntary medical leave solely because of a medical condition. All reasonable accommodations should be made to enable qualified clergy with disabilities to serve in ministry settings compatible with their gifts and graces.

GBOD ¶ 346.1-2 = 356.1-2; 346.3=356.3+new; 346.4=356.5

¶ 347. *Honorable Location*—An annual conference may grant clergy members in full or associate membership certificates of honorable location at their own request, provided that the Board of Ordained Ministry shall have first examined their character and found them in good standing, and provided that the clergy session shall also pass on their character after the request is made, and provided further, that this relation shall be granted only to one who intends to discontinue service in the itinerant ministry. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, an annual conference may offer transition assistance.

>VII: 347.001<

GBOD ¶347 = 358.1

¶ 348. *Administrative Location*—1. When the effectiveness of a clergy in associate or full membership is in question, the bishop shall complete the following procedure:

- a) Identify the concerns on failed professional responsibilities or vocational ineffectiveness.
- b) Hold supervisory conversations with the clergyperson that identifies the concerns and designs collaboratively with the clergyperson a corrective plan of action.
- c) Evaluate whether the plan of action has produced fruit that gives a realistic expectation of future effectiveness.

2. If the process defined above (§1) has been completed and has failed to produce sufficient improvement, the bishop and the district superintendents may request that an associate or full member be placed on administrative location without the consent of the clergy member. They shall provide to the clergy member and the Board of Ordained Ministry, in writing, specific reasons for the request. The conference relations committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall conduct a fair process hearing as set forth in ¶ 352.2 in any administrative location procedure. The committee shall report the result of the hearing to the full Board of Ordained Ministry for its action. Any recommendation to administrative location shall be presented from the Board of Ordained Ministry at the next following meeting of the clergy session for final action. Between sessions of the annual conference, an associate or full member may be placed on administrative location by the Board of Ordained Ministry. This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of the annual conference at its next session.<sup>31</sup>

>VII: 348.001<

GBOD ¶348.1-2 = 359.1-2

<sup>31</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 695.

¶ 349. *Retirement*—1. Retired clergy members are those who have been placed in the retired relation either at their own request or by action of the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.<sup>32</sup> Requests for retirement shall be stated to the bishop, cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry at least one hundred twenty days prior to the date on which retirement is to be effective unless waived by the bishop and cabinet. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall provide guidance and counsel to the retiring member and family as they begin a new relationship in the local church.<sup>33</sup> >VII: 349.001<

2.. *Mandatory Retirement*—Every clergy member of an annual conference who will have attained age seventy-two on or before the end of the month in which the conference session is concluded shall automatically be retired.<sup>34</sup> Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.>VII: 349.002<

3. *Voluntary Retirement— With Twenty Years of Service*—Any clergy members of the annual conference who have completed twenty years or more of service under appointment as ordained clergy or as local pastors may request the annual conference to place them in the retired relation.<sup>35</sup> Each annual conference within central conferences may establish further provisions for when and how voluntary retirement can take place. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 349.003<

4. *Involuntary Retirement*—By a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, the clergy session of the annual conference may place any clergy members in the retired relation with or without their consent and irrespective of their age if such relation is recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the cabinet.<sup>36</sup> The procedures for fair process shall be followed in any involuntary retirement procedure. Written notice of the intended action shall be given to such member by the Board of Ordained Ministry at least 180 days prior to annual conference. >VII: 349.004<

5. *Appointment of Retired Clergy*—All retired clergy member in full or associate membership shall be eligible to receive an appointment when requested by the bishop and cabinet.<sup>37</sup> >VII: 349.005<

6. *Return to Effective Relationship*—A clergy member in full or associate membership who has retired under the provisions of § 2 may at his or her own request be made an effective member upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the bishop and cabinet, and by majority vote of the clergy session of the annual conference and thereby be eligible for appointment so long as he or she remains in the effective relation or until § 1 applies. Each clergy member requesting return to effective relationship after voluntary retirement must meet the following conditions: (1) presentation of their certificate of retirement; (2) a satisfactory certificate of good health. >VII: 349.006<

GBOD ¶349.1-2 = 357Intro+1; 349.3=357.2a; 349.4=357.3; 349.5-6=357.6-7

<sup>32</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 87, 88, 531.

<sup>33</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 995.

<sup>34</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 7, 165, 413, 578.

<sup>35</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 717.

<sup>36</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 522, 769.

<sup>37</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 87, 531, 558.

¶ 350. *Withdrawal*—1. *Withdrawal to Unite with Another Denomination*.<sup>38</sup>—When ordained members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination, their certification of conference membership, and their written request to withdraw shall be deposited with the conference secretary.

2. *Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office*—Ordained members of an annual conference in good standing who desire to leave their ministerial office and withdraw from the conference may be allowed to do so by the annual conference at its session. The clergy's certifications of ordination and conference membership, and their written request to withdraw, shall be given to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and his or her membership may be transferred to a church which he or she designates, after consultation with the pastor, as the local church in which he or she will hold membership.<sup>39</sup>

3. *Withdrawal Under Complaints or Charges*—When clergy members are named as respondents to a complaint under ¶ 353 and desire to withdraw from the membership of the annual conference, it may permit them to withdraw under the provisions of ¶ 2703.2 The clergy member's certifications of ordination and conference membership shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and their membership may be transferred to a local church that they designate, after consultation with the pastor.<sup>40</sup> Withdrawn under complaint or withdrawn under charges shall be written on the face of the credentials.

4. *Withdrawal Between Conferences*—In the event that withdrawal by surrender of the ministerial office, to unite with another denomination, or under complaints or charges, should occur in the interval between sessions of an annual conference, the clergy member's credentials, under the provisions of §1 and §3, shall be surrendered to the bishop or district superintendent along with a letter of withdrawal from the ordained ministry, for deposit with the secretary of the conference. This action shall be reported by the Board of Ordained Ministry to the annual conference at its next session.<sup>41</sup> The effective date of withdrawal shall be the date of the letter of withdrawal.<sup>42</sup>

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶350.1-4 = 360.1-4

<sup>38</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 696.

<sup>39</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 552, 695, 1055.

<sup>40</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 691.

<sup>41</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 552.

<sup>42</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 691.

¶ **351. *Readmission to Provisional Membership*** – Each central conference shall establish procedures for readmission to conference relationship for each of the following categories: termination of provisional membership, honorable or administrative location, leaving the ministerial office, termination by action of the annual conference, and involuntary retirement. All readmission procedures shall require readmission in the conference in which clergy membership was previously held or, in the case of readmission for transfer to a new conference, consultation with the bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry for each conference involved in the readmission procedure. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 351.001-351.005<

GBOD ¶ 351 = 364

## **Section XI. Administrative Fair Process and Complaint Procedure**

¶ **352. *Involuntary Status Change and Fair Process***—1. When there is a request for an involuntary status change, the bishop and cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry shall take action in a timely manner. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline* in regards to the conference relations committee. >VII: 352.001<

2. *Fair Process*—As a part of the holy covenant that exists within the membership and organization of The United Methodist Church, each central conference shall develop a method for the disposition of requests for involuntary status changes, excluding complaints, for the protection of the rights of individuals and for the protection of the Church. These procedures shall be written and applied consistently to all requests for involuntary status change, and shall include but not be limited to the following:

a) In any administrative proceeding the bishop or the bishop's designee and the respondent (the person against whom involuntary action [excluding complaints] is directed) shall have a right to be heard before any final action is taken.

b) Notice of any hearing shall advise the respondent of the reason for the proposed procedures with sufficient detail to allow the respondent to prepare a response. Notice shall be given not less than twenty days prior to the hearing.

c) The respondent shall have a right to be accompanied to any hearing by a clergyperson who is a member in full connection of the respondent's annual conference, in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary provisions. The clergyperson accompanying the respondent shall have the right to voice.<sup>43</sup>

d) In any administrative hearing, under no circumstances shall one party, in the absence of the other party, discuss substantive issues with members of the pending hearing body. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer of the hearing body.

e) The respondent shall have access, at least seven days prior to the hearing, to all records relied upon in the determination of the outcome of the administrative process.<sup>44</sup>

f) In the event that a clergyperson fails to appear for supervisory interviews, refuses mail, refuses to communicate personally with the bishop or district superintendent, or otherwise fails to respond to supervisory requests or requests from official administrative committees, such actions or inactions shall not be used as an excuse to avoid or delay any Church processes, and such processes may continue

without the participation of such individual. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the additional procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 352.002<

3. *Immunity from Prosecution*—In order to preserve the integrity of the Church’s administrative process and ensure full participation in it at all times, the bishop, cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, witnesses, advocates, administrative review committee, clergy in full connection voting in executive session, and all others who participate in the Church’s administrative process shall have immunity from prosecution of complaints brought against them related to their role in a particular administrative process, unless they have committed a chargeable offense in conscious and knowing bad faith. The complainant/plaintiff in any proceeding against any such person related to their role in a particular judicial process shall have the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence, that such person’s actions constituted a chargeable offense committed knowingly in bad faith. The immunity set forth in this provision shall extend to civil court proceedings, to the fullest extent permissible by the civil laws. GBOD ¶ 352.1 = 361.2; 352.2a-d=362.2Intro+a+c+d+f; 352.3=362.3

<sup>43</sup> See Judicial Council Decisions 921, 972.

<sup>44</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 974.

¶ 353. *Complaint Procedures*— 1. *Review* - Ordination and membership in an annual conference in The United Methodist Church is a sacred trust. The qualifications and duties of local pastors, associate members, provisional members, and full members are set forth in the *Discipline*, and we believe they flow from the gospel as taught by Jesus the Christ and proclaimed by his apostles. Whenever a person in any of the above categories, including those on leaves of all types, honorable or administrative location, or retirement, is accused of violating this trust, the membership of his or her ministerial office shall be subject to review.

This review shall have as its primary purpose a just resolution of any violations of this sacred trust, in the hope that God’s work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Christ.

A just resolution is one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right in so far as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. In appropriate situations, processes seeking a just resolution may be pursued. Special attention should be given to ensuring that cultural, racial, ethnic and gender contexts are valued throughout the process in terms of their understandings of fairness, justice and restoration.

A complaint is a written and signed statement claiming misconduct as defined in ¶ 2702. When a complaint is received by the bishop, both the person making the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is made will be informed in writing of the process to be followed at that stage. When and if the stage changes, those persons will continue to be informed in writing of the new process in a timely fashion. >VII: 353.001<

2. *Supervision*—In the course of the ordinary fulfillment of the superintending role, the bishop or district superintendent may receive or initiate complaints about the performance or character of a clergyperson. The person filing the complaint and the clergyperson shall be informed by the district superintendent or bishop of the process for filing the complaint and its purpose.

3. *Supervisory Response*—The supervisory response of the bishop shall begin upon receipt of a formal complaint. The response is pastoral and administrative and shall be directed toward a just resolution among all parties. It is not part of any judicial process. Each central conference shall develop a method for the disposition of judicial complaints. These procedures shall be written and applied consistently to all judicial complaints. The person against whom the complaint was made may choose another person to accompany him or her with the right to voice; the person making the complaint shall have the right to choose a person to accompany him or her with the right to voice.

The supervisory response shall be carried out by the bishop or the bishop's designee in a timely manner, with attention to communication to all parties regarding the complaint and the process. When the supervisory response is initiated, the bishop shall notify the chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry that a complaint has been filed, of the clergyperson named, of the general nature of the complaint, and, when concluded, of the disposition of the complaint.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the additional procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.  
>VII: 353.002<

4. *Suspension*—When deemed appropriate, to protect the well-being of the person making the complaint, the congregation, annual conference, other context for ministry, and/or clergy, the bishop, with the recommendation of the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, may suspend the person from all clergy responsibilities, but not from an appointment, for a period not to exceed ninety days. With the agreement of the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the bishop may extend the suspension for only one additional period of thirty days.<sup>45</sup> >VII: 352.003<

GBOD ¶ 353.1 = 362.1Intro; 353.2=362.1a; 353.3=362.1b; 353.4=362.1d

<sup>45</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 776.