

# Upper NY Annual Conference

## Steps Into Ministry

### A Guide for Candidates

#### **To the Seeker:**

Welcome to this amazing and wonderful adventure of discerning God's calling on your life. In our United Methodist Church, we have a process which is designed to help you along that journey of discernment; a process which includes many people and resources. You may find some more helpful than others, as each one of us enters the process from our own place on our own unique journey. Please trust that each step is designed to help your discernment and help the Church to confirm the calling that you are experiencing.

The process steps below are derived from our United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2008 and include any process steps specific to our Upper NY Annual Conference within the outline below.

We pray that your journey will be a fruitful one for you and for the Kingdom which our Lord Jesus Christ announced. Blessings on your way.

#### **Step One: Inquiring Candidate: 2008 Book of Discipline ¶311**

1. Contact your pastor (or DS, or another deacon or elder) and read and discuss The Christian as Minister with her/him.
2. If you or your pastor (or DS or another deacon or elder) would like to explore further before you begin the more structured candidacy process, you may wish to spend time with another book, Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process.

Both of these resources are available through Cokesbury (our United Methodist Bookstore and church supply outlet) at 1-800-672-1789 or at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

## **Step Two: Beginning Candidacy ¶311.1.a-c**

This is the beginning of the candidacy process which involves the DCOM (District Committee on Ordained Ministry) and a trained mentor to work through the process with you. The steps are as follows:

1. In order to begin the candidacy process, you need to have been a member of the United Methodist Church or baptized participant of a recognized UM campus ministry or other UM ministry setting for one year.
2. As you and your pastor (or DS, or another deacon or elder) feel the time is right, have her/him complete the required Pastor's Recommendation Form to the DCOM and submit it to the DCOM Chair for your district.
3. You will need to write a letter to your District Superintendent (copy to DCOM) requesting admission into the candidacy process. Include with this letter a statement of your sense of call (2-3 pages is generally a good guideline for this statement).
4. The DCOM chair or District Superintendent's office will then contact you to invite you to meet with the DCOM to begin your candidacy process.
  - In preparation for this meeting, you will prepare a written response to these questions: "What experiences have you had which have led you to this point in your journey? What is your vision of future ministry?" Please send this at least one week in advance of the meeting to the DCOM chair.
  - You will also need to bring a copy of the satisfactory completion of a local church "Safe Sanctuaries" level background check to this meeting. It will be included in your file by the DCOM registrar.

At the DCOM meeting and following:

1. At the discretion of the DCOM, and if you have not already done so, you may be asked to complete the MIP (Ministry Inquiry Process book listed above) with an MIP guide assigned by the DS.
2. If the MIP is not required, the DS will assign a candidacy mentor (in consultation with the DCOM) and enroll you in the online candidacy process.
3. You will be given information on how to complete the online enrollment and pay the \$75 enrollment fee. You will then receive The Candidacy Guidebook so that you and your mentor can begin your work together.
4. You will now work through the beginning stages of candidacy with your mentor at your pace. It is up to you to make appointments and decide how quickly or slowly you need to move through this part of the process.
5. The DCOM reserves the right NOT to assign a mentor or enroll a candidate in the candidacy process. If this is the case, they will explain their reasons.

### **Step Three: Declaring Candidacy ¶311.1.d, e**

This is the point at which you will make a public declaration of your candidacy. You will seek the support of your local church's Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee and Church Conference. At this time, you also may want to begin the Psychological Assessment process as it can take up to four months. By the time you declare your candidacy and seek local church approval, you will need to have completed a high school diploma or equivalent.

Your steps will be as follows:

1. Request interview by Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee or equivalent in your ministry setting. (This may take some time to set up as they may need some orientation to their part of this process.) Prior to your meeting, provide your S/PPRC chair with a written statement of your call; and your responses to the disciplinary questions in ¶310.
2. Following the recommendation of your S/PPRC, request recommendation by your charge conference or equivalent as specified by the DCOM. You may request this charge conference meeting through your pastor.
3. Once you have received the recommendation of your charge conference, continue to work with your mentor on the candidacy program and begin to address your academic requirements if you have not already done so.
4. You are required to send a letter to the DCOM annually to report on your progress in the candidacy process and provide any updates on contact information. If you, as a declared candidate, do not send an update after two years, you will be discontinued.
5. If at any point you choose to withdraw from the process, please notify the DCOM chairperson.

#### **Step Four: Becoming a Certified Candidate ¶311.2**

When you request certified candidate status, you are asking the DCOM to interview you and to review a variety of records and information which you will need to supply to them. They will be looking to confirm your call and your gifts and graces for the ministry track of your choosing on behalf of the United Methodist Church. Before your certification interview, you will need to provide the following information and documentation to the DCOM chair:

1. Written responses to ministry questions in ¶311.2a as well as in ¶310.
2. A biographical information form (form 102).
3. A psychological assessment per Upper NY Annual Conference policy (see UNYUMC.org) with proof of payment of ½ of the fee.
4. A criminal background, and credit check per Upper NY Annual conference policy (see UNYUMC.org)
5. A notarized statement certifying that you have neither been accused in writing nor convicted of a felony, misdemeanor, or any incident of sexual misconduct or child abuse (form 114)
6. Transcript(s) from your latest formal educational experience (this could be a high school transcript, college or grad school transcript, or latest semester of college/grad school courses taken)
7. Proof of graduation from high school (or GED)
8. Medical report completed by you and your primary health care provider (form 103)
9. If you have not yet completed a Disciple 1 Bible Study (or its equivalent – see UNY UMC requirement #2 for licensing on following page) you may wish to find a group to join soon. This is a 34 week study and its completion is required before you can be approved for a Local Pastor's License in Upper NY Annual Conference.
10. Additional requirements may be added as deemed necessary by the DCOM.

### **Continuing Candidacy ¶312**

During this time, you may be continuing to work with your mentor on the Candidacy Guidebook, making decisions about which educational track you will pursue, and actually working on your schoolwork. In order to maintain your status as a certified candidate, you will need to do the following:

1. Request and receive an annual written recommendation by your charge conference. This is to be supplied to DCOM prior to your annual interview
2. Prepare a written report of your progress over the past year and supply to DCOM prior to your annual interview
3. Participate in an annual interview and receive a recommendation to be continued as a candidate by DCOM – This may be cared for through Skype, phone interview, etc.
4. Supply an annual report of satisfactory progress of studies and copy of transcripts university or school of theology (if applicable) to the DCOM registrar.

### **Requirements for being Eligible for Licensing as a Local Pastor ¶315**

Many candidates are passionate about responding to their call as soon as possible. The United Methodist Church allows for such candidates to serve in the limited role of Licensed Local Pastor while they complete their educational requirements either through Seminary or the five to ten year Course of Study program. In order to be eligible for this license, you will need to meet the following:

1. Meet all requirements and be certified as a Candidate by DCOM
2. Complete one-third of your studies toward Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree or successfully complete an approved Local Pastor's Licensing School.
3. Complete a Disciple I Bible Study course or the equivalent as a student. Equivalency is defined as follows: A minimum of 30 contact hours of Biblical studies which introduce Biblical criticism and context in both the Old and New Testaments. This may be fulfilled by a Disciple Bible Study, Bethel Series Bible Study or college or seminary course. College courses must be taken at schools accredited by a major regional accreditation agency; seminary courses at a school recognized by the University Senate.