



South Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church

GUIDE FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBERS



DISCIPLINARY PARAGRAPHS & BOARD POLICIES TO KEEP IN MIND

¶324. Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership—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 its Board of Ordained Ministry after meeting the following qualifications.

1. **Candidacy or Licensing Requirement:** Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate or a local pastor for at least one year. Those appointed as local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference and are no longer certified candidates (¶ 311).
2. **Service Requirement:** Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the district committee on ordained ministry as a condition for provisional membership.
3. **Undergraduate Requirement:** A candidate for provisional membership shall have completed a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate. Exceptions to the undergraduate degree requirements may be made in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in some instances, for missional purposes, for persons who have a minimum of sixty semester hours of Bachelor of Arts credit and: a) have been prevented from pursuit of the normal course of baccalaureate education, b) are members of a group whose cultural practices and training enhance insight and skills for effective ministry not available through conventional formal education, or c) have graduated with a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a college not recognized by the University Senate and have completed one half of the studies of the Master of Divinity or equivalent first professional degree in a school of theology listed by the University Senate.
4. **Graduate Requirement:** Candidates for provisional membership shall have completed the basic graduate theological studies in the Christian faith from a University Senate-approved theological school. These courses shall each be three (3) semester hours, or the equivalent, and may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies shall include courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; preaching; and United Methodist studies in doctrine, polity and history. The combined credit hours for the United Methodist studies shall be a minimum 6 semester hours, or the equivalent. Basic graduate theological studies shall not be taken pass/fail.

A) Elder—a candidate for ordination as an elder shall also:

1. have completed a minimum of one-half of the studies toward a Master of Divinity degree from a University Senate approved theological school or its equivalent; *(NOTE SCBOMP-VI.a.ii.—Candidates for provisional membership who seek to fulfill their educational requirements by attending seminary shall be required to complete their seminary degree before they may be approved for provisional status. All candidates for provisional membership shall be required to complete the basic theological studies before they may be approved for provisional membership.)*
2. Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership as elders when they have:
 - a) completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent;
 - b) satisfied all requirements of Sections 1-3 and 7-14 of this paragraph;
 - c) completed the Course of Study. Course of Study requirements may be fulfilled as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (¶ 1406.12, .13) by: 1. Completion of Course of Study, or 2. Completion of an equivalent program of study embedded in an undergraduate degree at a United Methodist related college or university.
 - d) completed an Advanced Course of Study consisting of thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study offered by a seminary recognized by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The Advanced Course of Study shall include the basic graduate theological studies (¶ 324.4a).

B) Deacon—a candidate for ordination as a deacon shall also have:

1. completed a minimum of one-half of the studies of a master's degree from a University Senate-approved theological school, or

2. received a master's degree in the area of the specialized ministry in which the candidate will serve, or

(NOTE SCBOMP-VI.a.ii.—Candidates for provisional membership who seek to fulfill their educational requirements by attending seminary shall be required to complete their seminary degree before they may be approved for provisional status. All candidates for provisional membership shall be required to complete the basic theological studies before they may be approved for provisional membership.)

3. Candidates who have professional certification may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership as deacons when they have:

- a) completed four years of full-time (or the equivalent) employment in the area of specialized ministry; and
- b) received certification in specialized ministry or are licensed in the area of ministry in which the candidate will serve, have completed a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate credit or equivalent quarter hours in the area of specialization, and have been recommended by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry;

5. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall require an official transcript of credits from each school before recognizing any of the applicant's educational claims. In case of doubt, the board may submit a transcript to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

6. Each candidate shall present a satisfactory certificate of good health from a physician on the form prescribed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Disabilities are not to be construed as unfavorable health factors when a person with disability is capable of meeting the professional standards and is able to render effective service as a provisional member.

7. Each candidate shall respond to a written and oral doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

8. Each candidate shall have been recommended in writing to the Board of Ordained Ministry, based on a three-fourths majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry.

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

10. Each candidate shall submit on a form provided by the Board of Ordained Ministry a notarized statement detailing any convictions for felony, or misdemeanor, or written accusations and its disposition of sexual misconduct or child abuse; or certifying that this candidate has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor or accused in writing of sexual misconduct or child abuse. The candidate also shall release required psychological reports, criminal background, credit checks and reports of child abuse.

11. Each candidate shall file with the board a written, concise, autobiographical statement (in duplicate on a prescribed form) regarding age, health, family status, Christian experience, call to ministry, educational record, formative Christian experiences, and plans for service in the Church.

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

¶ 325. 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.

Through commissioning, the church sends persons in leadership and service in the name of Jesus Christ and marks their entrance into a time of provisional membership as they prepare for ordination. Commissioned ministers are provisional clergy members of the annual conference and are accountable to the bishop and the clergy session for the conduct of their ministry.

During the residency program the clergy session discerns their fitness for ordination and their effectiveness in ministry. After fulfilling all candidacy requirements and upon recommendation of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy session shall vote on the provisional membership and commissioning of the candidates. The bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide credentials as a provisional member and a commissioned minister in the annual conference.

The period of commissioned ministry is concluded when the provisional members are received as full members of the annual conference and ordained as either deacon or elder, or a decision is made not to proceed toward ordination and provisional membership is ended.

¶ 326. Service of Provisional Members—All persons who are provisional members shall be appointed by a bishop (¶ 425) 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. During the provisional period, arrangements shall be offered by the Board of Ordained Ministry for all provisional members to be involved in a residency curriculum that extends theological education by using covenant groups and mentoring to support the practice and work of their ministry as servant leaders, to contemplate the grounding of ordained ministry, and to understand covenant ministry in the life of the conference. Provisional members may be appointed to attend school, to extension

ministry, or in appointments beyond the local church. Wherever they are appointed, the service of provisional members shall be evaluated by the district superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry in terms of the provisional member's ability to express and give leadership in servant ministry.

1. Provisional members planning to give their lives as deacons in full connection shall be in ministries of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice in the local church or in an approved appointment beyond the local church. A provisional member preparing for ordination as a deacon shall be commissioned to the practice of ministry within the appointment setting during provisional membership to perform the duties of the ministry of the deacon as stated in ¶ 328 and be granted support as stated in ¶ 331.10. The appointment setting is defined as "people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served." Such authorization may be renewed annually by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. Provisional members planning to give their lives as elders in full connection shall be in ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service in the local church or in an approved extension ministry.

A provisional member preparing for ordination as an elder shall be licensed for pastoral ministry (¶ 315). Such authorization granted by the license may be renewed annually by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

3. Provisional members who are serving in extension ministries, enrolled in graduate degree programs, or appointments beyond the local church shall be accountable to the district superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry for the conduct of ministry, and for demonstrating their effectiveness in the ministry of the order to which they seek to be ordained. In all cases, they will also demonstrate their effectiveness in servant leadership in the local church to the satisfaction of the Board of Ordained

4. Provisional members seeking to change their ordination track shall: a) Write to the Board of Ordained Ministry and inform the district superintendent and bishop of their intention. b) Interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry to articulate and clarify their call. c) Fulfill academic and service requirements. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and by vote of the clergy session the person may be received into full connection with the annual conference and be ordained into the order to which they are transitioning.

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

1. Provisional members who are preparing for deacon's or elder's orders may be ordained deacons or elders when they qualify for membership in full connection in the annual conference.

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. Provisional clergy members who have completed all of their educational requirements may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional or central conferences.

3. Provisional members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the Board of Ordained Ministry (¶ 634.1). They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the General, central, or jurisdictional conferences.

4. Provisional members shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry and are subject to the provisions of the Book of Discipline in the performance of their duties. They shall be supervised by the district superintendent under whom they are appointed. They shall also be assigned a deacon or elder as mentor by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Provisional members preparing to become elders shall be eligible for appointment by meeting disciplinary provisions (¶ 315).

5. Provisional members in appointments beyond the local church shall relate themselves to the district superintendent in the area where their work is done. The district superintendent shall give them supervision and report annually to their Board of Ordained Ministry.

6. Discontinuance from Provisional Membership—Provisional members may request discontinuance of this relationship or may be discontinued by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry. 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. In the case of discontinuation without consent, prior to any final recommendation, a provisional member will be advised of the right to receive a fair process hearing before the committee on conference relations of the Board of Ordained Ministry. To receive a fair process hearing, the provisional member shall notify the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry in writing no later than forty-five days preceding the beginning of the annual conference session. A report of the action will

be made to the full board for final action. The provisions of fair process (§ 362.2) shall be observed and there shall be a review by the administrative review committee under § 635 prior to hearing by the annual conference. 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. 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 as required in § 634.3d. After discontinuance, provisional members may be classified and approved as local pastors in accordance with the provision of § 317. Members of the Cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Relations Committee, and Administrative Review Committee shall not vote in the clergy session on recommendations for discontinuance from provisional membership if they were involved in any prior discussions, communications, proceedings, and/or decisions concerning such discontinuance.

7. Provisional members may not be retired under the provisions of § 358. 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 § 320.5.

SCBOMP-VI.a.ii. South Carolina Provisional Membership Eligibility Policy —Candidates for provisional membership who seek to fulfill their educational requirements by attending seminary shall be required to complete their seminary degree before they may be approved for provisional status. All candidates for provisional membership shall be required to complete the basic theological studies before they may be approved for provisional membership.)

SCBOMP-VI.b.ii. Additional South Carolina Provisional Membership Requirements — 1. All candidates for Provisional Member/Commissioning on the Elder track shall successfully complete a Sermon (Elder track) and a Bible Study on the assigned book. All candidates for Provisional Member/Commissioning on the Deacon track shall successfully complete a Contextual Project or Sermon; and a Bible Study on the assigned book.

2. Any question regarding satisfactory completion of the United Methodist studies requirement shall be resolved by referring the seminary transcript to the Division of Ordained Ministry for evaluation.

3. Provisional Members shall be required to meet annually with the District Committee on Ordained Ministry of the district under which they are appointed for support and nurture. dCOM shall submit an observation report on the annual meeting to the Office of Clergy Services.

4. The BOM shall review written Annual Report from the Mentor and a copy of the report shall be sent to the Office of Clergy Services for Clergy Mentors.

5. After election and commissioning to provisional membership, candidates shall complete the Formation in Ministry program designed by the Committee on Formation in Ministry and approved by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The Provisional Formation Program is primarily a two-year Residency program. Candidates not approved for full membership/ordination after the initial two year Residency program are required to participate in a continuing Residency Support program. Maternity/Paternity leave will not exempt the provisional member from full participation (attendance) in the Formation in Ministry two-year Residency program.

SCBOMP-VI.c. Additional South Carolina Provisional Membership Discontinuance Policy — c. A provisional member will not be continued when it has become evident that it is impossible to obtain full connection within the eight year period stipulated by The Discipline. In such instances or when a provisional member is discontinued for lack of progress in study, the person will not be considered for readmission until all of the educational requirements of full connection have been completed.

Provisional Membership

Who does this? *Those who are called to ordained ministry as a deacon or elder. Completed seminary or the BCOS, ACOS, & Bachelors Degree.*

Who to talk to:	Steps:
	<div>Prerequisites</div> <div>Prerequisites</div> <div> <div>1. Complete a Bachelor's degree</div> <div>2. BCOS Route: <div> <div>a. 4 years of full-time service, or the equivalent</div> <div>b. Complete BCOS and ACOS with no more than 1/2 taken online</div> </div> </div> <div>3. Seminary Route: <div> <div>a. Be a certified candidate for at least one year, and up to 12 years maximum.</div> <div>b. Education:</div> </div> </div> </div>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elder Track: Complete M.Div. 2. Deacon Track: Complete M.Div or MA degree in specialized field and all Basic Graduate Theological Studies Courses.
DS or the Coordinator of Clergy Services	<p>Becoming a Provisional Member</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with and be recommended by your dCOM 2. Complete and Submit an Application for Clergy Relationship Form (105) 3. Attend the Change of Status Meeting (in June of each year) 4. Complete the forms in the Provisional Membership Packet and return to Clergy Services <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Medical Report (Form F-103) b. Credit Statement (Form 06SCBOM) c. Criminal Background Statement d. Biographical Form or Pastor Profile with current photograph (.jpeg) e. Sermon on assigned passage. f. Bible Study on assigned book of the Bible g. Theology & Doctrine Disciplinary Questions h. Call & Discipline Life Disciplinary Questions i. Academic Integrity Statement (13SCBOM) j. Statement of Fulfillment of Theological Studies k. 2 Seminary Recommendations l. Official transcripts showing degree conferred m. Mentor Report n. dCOM Action report (submitted on your behalf by the dCOM) 5. Complete the Criminal & Credit Background Screening. <i>(After you submit your Criminal Background Statement, an email invitation will be sent with a link for you to complete a Criminal & Background Screening. The cost will be \$20.00 and will be paid by you online.)</i> 6. Meet with the interview team of the BOM and be recommended by the BOM for Provisional membership. 7. Receive the approval of the Clergy Session at Annual Conference. <p><i>Notes: Submit a copy of all Completed Forms and Requested documents to the Office of Clergy Services and a copy to your district office.</i></p>

Congratulations! You're A Provisional Member!

Once you become a Provisional member you must: Continue to meet Annually with the dCOM

- Become Ordained and a Full Member within eight years
- Participate & complete the two-year Formation in Ministry Program
- Complete one unite of Clinical Pastoral Education (if you have not already done so.).
- Complete courses in Women's Studies and Black Studies (if you have not already done so.).