

COMMISSION FOR THE STUDY OF MINISTRY FULL REPORT AND LEGISLATION

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REPORT OF THE 2013-2016 COMMISSION FOR THE STUDY OF MINISTRY

THE CHARGE TO THE 2013-2016 COMMISSION FOR THE STUDY OF MINISTRY

The 2012 General Conference authorized the 2013-2016 Commission for the Study of Ministry to undertake its work based on guidelines stated in Petition 20868-MH-Non-Dis, which assigned the following tasks to the Commission:

“The scope of the work will be to provide future research and recommendations on any ministry issue lacking clarity from the 2012 General Conference. Secondly, the work of the Focus Team will be constructive and futuristic, examining the following issues that continue to need work:

- 1. The nature and grounding of the elder;**
- 2. The nature and grounding of the variety of lay ministries;**
- 3. Course of Study and education for local pastors;**
- 4. The status of associate membership;**
- 5. The education of clergy in terms of seminary reform, relevant curriculum, global theological education, funding, and debt of seminary graduates; and**
- 6. The present accountability structure of United Methodist theological schools including the University Senate and Commission on Theological Education.”**

Organized by the 2012 resolution and pursuing this charge, the Commission is pleased to offer this report, including legislative proposals for the 2016 General Conference.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Note: Unless preceded by "ADCA," all Disciplinary references are to The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012.

I. The Mission of the Church and Its Challenges

The United Methodist Church is clear about its stated mission, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (§120), and is challenged today to make significant changes in order to fulfill that mission better. The Call to Action Report (www.umc.org/who-we-are/call-to-action), which served as a backdrop to restructuring proposals at the 2012 General Conference, grew out of a sense that we were not adequately fulfilling our mission as a denomination. Our challenge is an adaptive one, as technical solutions are inadequate, and defining the problem itself requires new learning (Heifetz). While we must always listen for the Spirit, this is a particularly important time to attune our ears to the Spirit, who will guide us “into all the truth” (John 16:13).

Our challenge is also generative. The United Methodist Church’s heritage as a spiritual growth movement within a sacramental church is particularly suited to “emerging”/ “emergent church” interests in liturgy, sacrament, spiritual discipline, and incarnational theology that views nature, body, mind, and soul wholistically. The Church must create networks for formation and support to advance and develop these interests for future generations.

In addition, The United Methodist Church needs to cultivate a “learning organization” culture, continuously engaging living Wesleyan theology and contemporary ministry practices. Bishops, deacons, elders, and local pastors must have avenues for constant learning and growth, enriching and fulfilling their ministries as teachers. This does not mean imposing views on church members; rather, the culture of a learning organization is a mutual, collaborative process between lay and clergy that seeks insight into how our living tradition connects with contemporary contexts and issues.

To fulfill our Church’s mission and thrive in the twenty-first century, we must find new settings and structures to adapt its heritage and practices in order to generate a living Church for our time. In particular, we must prioritize Wesleyan understandings of Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion, and Justice to articulate a compelling vision of ordination that engages leaders in lifelong formation. We must engage in *generative* work, drawing on the United Methodist way of being church as a creative resource to stir new imagination and design for today’s mission.

The 2012 General Conference charged the Commission for the Study of Ministry to lead the Church in facing these adaptive and generative challenges and resolving issues that hinder the ministry and mission of the Church. We have wrestled with the challenges in conversation with groups and constituents who have helped to shape our observations and recommendations.

II. The Contemporary Context for Ministry and Leadership Formation

If transforming the world is part of the mission to which God calls us in Jesus Christ, what does this world look like? Where do we begin the work of transformation?

The acronym *VUCA* provides a shorthand way to describe our world. We live in a world that is *volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous* (Johansen). Global climate change; economic growth and income inequality; political polarization and instability; flourishing racial-ethnic and religious diversity; and the constant onslaught of information reflect a new day. This is a challenging world, but the challenges also bring opportunities.

If this is the world in which we live and serve, what kind of leadership does the Church need? How will our context for ministry shape our visions for ministry? If our description centers on decline and demise, then our ministry may focus on recapturing what has been lost. If our description centers on volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in an age of religious change and new information, then our ministry may focus on discerning the winds of the Spirit amidst the winds of change. To discern God's way, we need to draw upon our rich theological and spiritual resources.

Yet, the future cannot be a simple return to the past. Ministry occurs in contexts—historical, social, and cultural. Jesus told stories and used images that connected with first-century listeners. When we ask questions about the nature and ordering of ministry, formation for ministry, and effectiveness in ministry, we need to consider the fullness of our contexts and God's movements in our Church and world, past and present.

III. The Leadership We Need

What kind of leadership does The United Methodist Church seek in the twenty-first century? What leadership qualities would help us in our adaptive and generative work? Many voices contributed to this conversation. Qualities might include:

- Spiritual depth, a vibrant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and a sense of call into licensed or ordained ministry that grows out of that relationship;
- Intellectual grounding in Scripture, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology;

- Intellectual openness to God’s revelation in many times and places, including an understanding of history, other religious traditions, literature, and sciences;
- Social and emotional intelligence;
- Strong basic ministry skills, especially good communication skills; and
- Adaptive leadership skills, such as conflict transformation and vision to lead change.

We risk reaching for a technical solution to answer questions of leadership. If we understand leaders as “outcomes” with a set of features, we might easily conclude that we can determine a clear path or process for developing leaders. Such linear, product-driven, technical thinking may not honor the organic, messy, and contextual reality of how God calls and deploys leaders for the Church. Scripture suggests that leaders are less a product of a linear process than a gift of God to the faith community, called for a particular time to serve God—even with their shortcomings—and to shape, guide, develop, and lead.

A variety of sources and influences develop and deepen the leaders described in Scripture. Cooperating with God’s vision for creation, transformed leaders and transformed communities—not theological schools or learning systems—reshape the Church and society through leading the work and witness of social justice, compassion, mission, and ministry.

The following are guiding questions as we consider leadership for the Church in the twenty-first century:

- What are the fruits of someone called to and gifted for licensed or ordained ministry?
- What formative experiences and curricula transform individuals for vibrant ministry? What is needed in academic degrees, mentoring, apprenticeships, and core teachings?
- How might we accommodate each leader’s unique gifts? How might the needs of a first-career young adult be different from a third-career, middle-aged adult? How might curricula adapt to accommodate differences?
- What contextual learning must occur to transform the community where one serves? What core skills are needed regardless of context?
- What strategies are needed for ongoing transformation of the leader in a culture of shifting tensions and ever-changing contexts?

IV. Formation for Leadership

Given the complexity of our world and the challenges we face, the education and formation of clergy and pastoral leaders is more complicated and challenging than ever before. Currently, four components—often understood implicitly as stages—mark the

trajectory of vocation into ordained and/or set-apart ministry: vocational discernment, spiritual/intellectual formation, practice and placement, and mentoring.

These components are often assumed to focus on individuals. However, this individual-focused, linear picture does not account for the complexity that envelops our ecclesial and broader cultures. Thus, we need to identify places where systemic integration and collaboration occur in forming persons for set-apart ministry.

First, United Methodist seminaries collaborate with local churches and judicatory bodies (e.g., bishops, cabinets, Boards of Ordained Ministry). Learning from these collaborations and providing incentives to replicate and expand collaborations will strengthen United Methodist theological education and formation. Though there is disagreement about the current structure of theological education and the amount of direct input the Church should have in seminary curriculum, collaborations between the Church and seminaries can open both to the world's changing dynamics and promising resources. As Bishop Grant Hagiya says, ". . . [T]he academy must work more directly with the needs of the church and . . . the church must reduce its huge expectations of the seminary" (45).

Collaborations might include:

1. Assessing and deploying technology to enhance the intentionality and accessibility of education and formation for pastoral leaders;
2. Learning from vital congregations and their leaders in the global south; and
3. Working in partnership with immigrant communities within our neighborhoods to develop leadership formation.

Numerous opportunities wait for us in the midst of challenges and complexity.

Second, The United Methodist Church must examine how to use our financial resources most effectively for ministry formation. Many socio-economic factors impinge on education for ministry, among them the costs of higher education. By requiring graduate education for ordination, for instance, we are asking persons to invest significant resources; often seminary graduates accumulate debt, and then serve in positions with a compensation rate that makes repaying that debt difficult (Early). We are grateful that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Seminary Indebtedness Task Force is studying educational debt in the Church, and that several United Methodist seminaries are developing programs to address the problem. The task force's report is printed in the *Advance Daily Christian Advocate* and posted at www.gbhem.org/gc16.

RECOMMENDATIONS

V. Increasing Flexibility in Leadership Preparation

Recommendations in Section V address points 3, 5, and 6 as outlined above in the Commission's task.

Our discussions have led us to conclude that The United Methodist Church needs to provide more entry points for Church leadership and be more flexible in how we define and prepare for the leadership we need. Our proposals for achieving those goals are as follows:

- 1. Remove the minimum age restriction for local pastors to apply for provisional membership:** The current requirement for local pastors to have reached 40 years of age before applying for provisional membership is no longer relevant or useful. Its removal broadens another pathway into ordained ministry. This proposal pairs with efforts to strengthen Course of Study (*see ADCA, ¶324.6*).
- 2. Charge the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry with continued conferencing on theological education:** Theological education should be a continuous topic of exploration through venues created and sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Such conversations should include seminaries, educational institutions, bishops, and annual conference leadership.
- 3. Engage United Methodist seminaries to strengthen Course of Study:** We propose that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry draw on the resources of United Methodist seminaries and educational institutions continuously to improve Course of Study.
- 4. Online Study of United Methodist courses:** Allow candidates to complete the required United Methodist courses in history, doctrine, and polity through approved online offerings. This proposal pairs with the strengthened mentoring and formation structures discussed in Section VII below.
- 5. Alternative advanced degrees:** Advanced degrees (beyond the bachelor's degree) combined with basic graduate theological studies could be considered by Boards of Ordained Ministry as educational preparation for ordained ministry. Should Boards of Ordained Ministry have flexibility to investigate and accept advanced degrees in fields relevant to ministry, when integrated with basic graduate theological studies in an approved seminary, revising ¶335(3)(b)? The issues here require further

study and we commend this question to the next Commission (*see ADCA, Non-Disciplinary Resolution to renew Commission*).

VI. Leadership and the Nature of Ordination

Recommendations in Section VI address points 1 and 2 as outlined above in the Commission's task.

A major theme of this Commission's work has been to study the theology of ministry and the nature and theology of ordination in The United Methodist Church. This prompted two major inquiries: (a) the relationship between ordination and the sacraments and (b) the relationship of licensing and ordination to conference membership.

Regarding the first inquiry, United Methodists often describe sacramental leadership as "sacramental authority," stationed in the Order of Elder. This language and its underlying assumptions are misleading. Our theology and practices of ministry in the Wesleyan tradition do not give rise to "sacramental authority," as if we are the givers of God's grace. Rather, the Commission recognizes that sacraments are God's gift to the Church, binding together all laity and clergy in ministry. As gifts, sacraments need to be received and administered so all people may participate with openness to God's Triune presence. The elder's authority "to administer the sacraments" emerges from the Holy Spirit's gift and power. As such, in the Laying on of Hands and Prayer for Elders during the ordination service, the church first invokes the Spirit and then authorizes elders to carry out the work that God empowers.

We have complicated this understanding of ordination and the sacraments by ordering ministry in such a way that regularly *depends upon* non-ordained persons to preside at the celebration of the sacraments. Both licensed local pastors and commissioned ministers in preparation for ordination as elders are authorized and expected to celebrate baptism and Holy Communion, although this responsibility has been reserved to the ordained in most church bodies through Christian history. Under our present system, we have normalized this historical and theological anomaly, and unnecessarily so. While the missional urgency for ministry has extended the responsibility for celebrating the sacraments to local pastors, the exception has increasingly become the rule.

Regarding the relationship of licensing and ordination to conference membership, the Church faithfully deploys its clergy into the world for the sake of Christ's gospel, yet we have created practices of licensing and ordination that are not deeply grounded in a robust theological understanding of Christian ministry and ordination. The theology and practice of commissioning is not fully understood, thus creating a sense of liminality for persons in the roles of commissioned ministers during the time of provisional conference membership. Further, the current attachment of ordination to full conference membership

subordinates the primacy of the Church's mission to the Church's structure. Instead of deploying ordained persons to do the work of the ordained, we delay ordination until the completion of the provisional period; instead of ensuring that the church receives ordained persons to meet urgent missional needs, we emphasize the rights and responsibilities associated with conference membership and postpone ordination.

This Commission focused on the church's vitality and the promise of new leadership to continue building this vitality. We sought to develop a process that is true to our Wesleyan traditions, resonant with the ecumenical church, and open to new clergy seeking ordination and authorization to lead the church's full ministry, even as provisional members. We have proposed a reshaping that is more coherent, clear, and congruent with the larger Christian tradition.

Thus, we propose the following legislative initiatives:

1. **Deepening the theology of ordination:** We have proposed legislation clarifying our ordination theology, especially in the introductory paragraphs of each section. Ministry, in all of its forms, is a gift of the Holy Spirit, exemplified in the language proposed for ¶301.2: "Individuals discern God's call as they relate with God and their communities, and the Church guides and confirms those callings. Calls—and the discernment and confirmation of them—are gifts of the Holy Spirit" (*see ADCA, ¶¶301.1, 301.2, 302, 305, and NEW Section VI Introduction*).
2. **Clarifying the relationship between ordination and the sacraments:** Our exploration led to the following theological convictions, which undergird the proposed legislation and require reflection on all forms of ministry throughout the Church (*see ADCA, ¶¶316, 328, 340*).
 - a. *All ministry, including the ministry of the laity, deacons, elders, and local pastors, is grounded in the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, with baptism as the fundamental initiation into the Body of Christ and call into a life of discipleship.* The baptized are called to follow Jesus Christ and to serve God with their whole lives. Their baptismal call sends them out to participate in God's work in creation. Within the Body of Christ, some are called, equipped, and set apart to lead the Body so the whole may flourish. Those called to the ministry of deacon are called to witness to the Word in their words and actions, and to lead the community's service in the world for the sake of enacting God's compassion and justice. Those called to the ministry of elder are called to preach and teach the Word, administer the sacraments and order the life of the church so it can be faithful. Those called to the ministry of local pastor are called to preach and teach the Word,

preside at the celebration of the sacraments and order the life of the local congregations in which they serve. The ministry of all Christians is to live every day, in every aspect of their lives, as Christ's disciples in the world, and to embody God's call to serve; to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength; and to love their neighbors as themselves. Each of these ministries is vital to Christ's Church and its service in the world.

- b. ***While ministry is borne out of baptism, it is sustained in the Eucharistic meal initiated by Jesus Christ's breaking bread with his disciples, and giving his own ministry and life for the healing of the world.*** This meal is a thanksgiving for God's good gifts, for Jesus' life, and for the continuing work of the Spirit. The meal is a renewing call to the Body of Christ—beckoning the community back to its calling into discipleship and nourishing the body with food to strengthen its commitment and service. Within the Body, the deacon is called to set the table, to receive and serve the bread and cup, and to send the community back into the world to serve—and, with the permission of the bishop, to preside at Holy Communion “for the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the church” (§328). The elder is called to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion, leading the people in the feast of celebration and ensuring that all of God's people have opportunity to receive Holy Communion (§340). The local pastor is called to preside at the celebration of Holy Communion within a particular appointment (§316). All of the gathered community actively receive and participate in God's grace as conveyed in Holy Communion, opening themselves to God's action in their lives and to the transformative power of God's Spirit, then going forth to be God's presence in the world.
- c. ***Administration of the sacraments is an act of receiving God's Spirit to preside at the celebration of God's sacraments.*** The Christian tradition celebrates the origins of all life in God's Spirit. In the beginning, God's Spirit moved over the waters (Gen. 1:1-2) and bestowed the breath of life upon every living being—*nephesh hayah* (1:20, 1:27). All people of God are gifted and sustained by God's Spirit, and the gifts of life and calling of God continue to be poured out irrevocably (Romans 11:29). The language we have for the Spirit's action in baptism, Holy Communion, and ordination is the same: “pour out your Spirit upon [this person], that [this person] may be....” With these words, we seek the Spirit to make us new.

This means that “sacramental authority” is not adequate to describe ministry. “Sacramental authority” suggests a power that certain people hold,

rather than a gift bestowed by God. For example, “take thou authority as an elder,” as spoken in the service of elder ordination, reminds us that elders *receive* that authority, and that they are called to trust the Spirit’s outpouring of life as they administer the sacraments. To administer is to preside and also to give leadership that ensures the offering of baptism and Holy Communion to all of God’s people. Similarly—but in more circumscribed ways—local pastors (§316) and those deacons granted authority by the bishops “to extend the mission and ministry of the church” (§328) are being called to preside at the celebration of the sacraments within their designated settings.

- 3. Reshaping the ordination process:** We propose that the 2016 General Conference reshape the entry process into ordained ministry, such that persons may be ordained and elected to provisional membership after completing all educational requirements, followed by a residency period, then eligibility for election into full membership. The Wesleyan tradition has always emphasized the lifelong process of growing in faith, recognizing God’s movement in young lives through prevenient grace, and continually offered to people as they grow in relationship to God through justification and sanctification. The tradition also emphasizes a life of growing in ministry, initiated at baptism and followed by confirmation and professing church membership. Similarly, ordination is a process, and begins with inquiry, discernment, and several levels of preparation, followed by ordination and ongoing formation under supervision until the person and the church discern a readiness for full membership.

This proposal would authorize the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, to ordain persons and elect them into provisional membership when they have completed all candidacy and educational requirements. Additionally, the Church would reserve full membership to a later action, after the ordained provisional member completes a residency period and after the church further discerns that provisional member’s readiness for full and lifelong responsibility in and for the connection. Ordination is a lifelong relationship with God and the Church, effected by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The *authorization to perform ministerial functions* depends upon conference relationship. This authorization begins with ordination and provisional membership.

The United Methodist Church has already established practices to require the surrender of such authorization by those ordained clergy who exit the ministry or The United Methodist Church (§§359-361). The exit procedures for ordained persons who are not elected into full membership would be parallel. This movement through stages of relationship finds its parallels in ecumenical practice and in other professions, such as medicine. It is also attuned to the traditions of The United

Methodist Church and its antecedent denominations, which have taken different forms over nearly 300 years but have been marked by movements, or stages, in ordained ministry and conference relationships (*see ADCA, NEW Section VI*).

- 4. Increasing flexibility for deacons to preside at the celebration of the sacraments:** We propose that bishops be empowered to authorize deacons to preside at the celebration of the sacraments. This authority is grounded in the Church's mission in a particular context, but need not be limited to the particular place of appointment or to circumstances in which an elder is not present. This proposal, as those offered above, is clearer and more congruent with the larger Christian tradition and bears promise for extending and deepening the ministry of Christ's church in the world (*see ADCA, ¶328*).

VII. Leadership Support and Development Through Pathways for Thriving in Ordained Ministry

Recommendations in Section VII address points 1, 3, and 5 as outlined above in the Commission's task.

The Commission studied vocation and the development of The United Methodist Church's leadership to address issues of support, accountability, learning and growth opportunities, and security of appointment. The discussions have led our group to affirm the need for the Church to:

- Build relationships that foster effective mentoring during candidacy and provisional periods and focus on leadership formation;
- Require lifelong mentoring, learning, and coaching, and provide a range of models to guide conferences in designing and implementing approaches that best fit their unique needs;
- Promote effectiveness through the use of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's *Effective Ministry Assessment* process;
- Collaborate with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to support annual conference boards and cabinets in their work of holding clergy accountable to effective ministry.

Based on these needs, the Commission brings forward three proposals:

- 1. Strengthen the requirement for lifelong learning and coaching:** Change the word "should" in the first sentence of ¶351.2 to "shall." This ensures that clergy actively engage in lifelong learning and coaching. The revised paragraph would

read: “A clergy member’s continuing education and spiritual growth program *shall* include such leaves at least on week each year and at least one month of one year of every quadrennium” (emphasis added).

Further, the Wesleyan Movement has always emphasized the importance of group mentoring to promote fellowship and accountability in spiritual and educational growth. Thus, this petition would make the new ¶351.2 consistent with ¶351.1 in the 2012 *Book of Discipline*: “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. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities” (emphasis added) (*see ADCA, ¶351.2*).

2. **Covenant groups for clergy:** All candidates and clergy shall participate in covenant groups for mutual support and growth across their lifetime of ministry. The 2012 General Conference enacted the previous Commission’s legislation for ministry candidates to participate in candidacy mentoring groups (¶349.1a). The response has been very positive. We now propose that similar groups be developed and continued throughout the active ministry of every clergyperson:
 - a. ***Add group mentoring during the period between certification of candidacy and provisional membership.*** When candidates are outside of the bounds of the annual conference, such as in seminaries, they shall be assigned to courtesy mentoring groups (*see ADCA, ¶349.1a*).
 - b. ***Add group mentoring for local pastors.*** Assign local pastors to a mentoring group, wherever possible. While there are some challenges to group mentoring (geographical distance, new pastoral appointments, schedules, participants’ resistance, time frame of 5-12 years), the group process nonetheless has proven beneficial. As mentors are identified and groups form, we recommend that Boards of Ordained Ministry train mentors to communicate expectations and provide for consistency among groups. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry will train annual conferences in developing and implementing clergy group mentoring (*see ADCA, ¶349.3*).

- c. **Continue** and strengthen mentoring groups for certified candidates (§349.1a), covenant groups for provisional members (§326), deacons (§328), and elders (§332).
 - d. **Emphasize** the importance of all deacons and elders participating in covenant with members of their respective order and local pastors participating in their fellowship, which may include covenant groups for spiritual growth, ministry coaching, and other forms of spiritual enrichment and training (§§323, 328, 332).
3. **Periodic clergy assessments:** Clergy shall regularly participate in two forms of periodic reviews of their ministries. In order to support clergy and hold them accountable to reflect seriously on the meaning and fruitfulness of their ministries, annual conferences shall organize two kinds of periodic reviews of clergy on a regular rotation.
- a. **Ongoing evaluation:** We propose clearer guidance for ongoing evaluation of full connection members and local pastors. It is essential for each cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry to follow the mandate to develop clear “criteria, processes, and training” that will provide the basis for evaluation (§350.1). The criteria for self-evaluation should include self-assessment and appropriate metrics, and we recommend that cabinets and Boards of Ordained Ministry partner with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to use the agency’s *Effective Ministry Assessment* process.
 - b. **Periodic, more in-depth assessment:** Every eight years, each clergyperson shall engage in an extensive personal and professional assessment and development process. Cabinets and Boards of Ordained Ministry, in consultation with the Chairs of the Orders and Fellowship, will design and implement this process. It shall include both a formal review and an in-depth renewal opportunity comprised of a combination of elements, such as:
 - Time apart for prayer and reflection,
 - Reflection with a covenant group,
 - Meetings with a coach,
 - Celebration of ministry milestones, and
 - Discernment of future ministry challenges and opportunities.

In addition, the review shall include personal and professional self-assessment, objective measures, observations of trends from the previous

eight years, and some form of peer review. Each district superintendent shall receive the initial report of the eighth year effectiveness review. When deemed important to the evaluation process, the cabinet or Board of Ordained Ministry may request psychological assessments. When recommended by the district superintendent, clergy under review may meet with the bishop and members of the cabinet to assess the review and establish next steps (*see ADCA, ¶350.3*).

VIII. Enhance Preparation of and Support for Local Pastors

Recommendations in Section VIII address points 3, 4, and 5 as outlined above in the Commission's task.

1. **Education and training:** While some local pastors will have a Master of Divinity, most continue theological education through Course of Study (¶319.1). The Commission recognizes the desire for an alternative to the traditional five-year (or 20-course) program, and the opportunity to earn a degree at Course of Study's completion.
 - a. ***Create an undergraduate degree program that meets Course of Study requirements:*** Authorize the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to partner with United Methodist-related colleges and universities to develop a degree program that would also meet the requirements of the Course of Study.
 - b. ***Remove the phrase "five-year" everywhere The Book of Discipline references Course of Study to create flexibility for these alternatives.***

These proposed changes would increase educational access and provide well-rounded liberal arts and theological education for local pastors via an undergraduate institution (*see ADCA ¶¶319.4, 322.1(3), 324.6c, 1421.3d*).

2. **Support and accountability:** Local pastors are accountable for ministry through their local churches, district superintendents (¶350), and the district Committees on Ordained Ministry (dCOM). The local pastor meets annually with the dCOM to be recommended for continuance of a license and the opportunity to serve (¶319.2). The dCOM is encouraged to have a robust set of information each year to evaluate the ministry of the local pastor, which may include:
 - Clergy annual assessment/evaluation,

- Educational progress/Course of Study transcripts,
- Mentor report,
- Continuing education report for local pastors who have finished educational requirements, and
- Written materials submitted in advance for review concerning theology, preaching, leadership, and practice of ministry, etc.

Local churches are encouraged to support local pastors as they meet the commitments of ministry and education. This can include supporting the clergy family while the local pastor is away for Course of Study, providing financial support for Course of Study and other training, and communicating to the congregation the expectations and benefits of being part of the United Methodist connection.

Each annual conference has a Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members to provide mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the Church. The fellowships are encouraged to provide regular gatherings for continuing formation; promote study; develop a bond of unity and commitment to the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church and the annual conference; and, to enable relationships that offer mutual support and trust (§323). Annual conferences, Boards of Ordained Ministry, and bishops are responsible for supporting and funding the fellowship.

Local pastors are encouraged to nurture collegial relationships through participation in lectionary groups, covenant peer groups, etc. All 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 (§351.1). It is expected that all annual conferences make available and encourage the use of spiritual guides, life coaches, pastoral counselors, or vocational mentors for all clergy—and that clergy utilize these support systems throughout their careers (§349).

Annual conferences are encouraged to include the blessing and sending forth of newly licensed local pastors during the annual conference session.

- 3. Associate membership:** The Commission discussed the role and status of associate members as a part of conversations related to licensing, education, and ongoing support of local pastors and associate members. At this time, the Commission does not recommend changes to “Section V. Associate Membership,” *The Book of Discipline*.

IX. Leadership For Very Small Congregations

Recommendations in Section IX address point 2 as outlined above in the Commission's task.

The Commission studied the use of certified lay ministers serving in pastoral roles within very small congregations and heard many stories of congregations with 15 or fewer active members. We gratefully give witness to the important role that many such congregations have had historically in their communities. We recognize the reasons for their decline are many and various. Nonetheless, we join with others in the growing concern over the amount of energy and resources spent to deploy clergy and laity to very small, single-generation churches. The need to address these concerns continues to increase.

The Commission strongly encourages conferences to share and adopt best practices that enable congregations to finish their work well and “pass the baton” to other congregations, new church starts, or community ministries where resources might be used most effectively for future disciple-making. This allows a congregation to leave a legacy for the future. Such congregations might continue to meet in the tradition of a Wesleyan Class Meeting, where they can enjoy fellowship, prayer, study, and accountability for the purpose of discipleship without the burdens of local church structure.

After considering legislative options to create new possibilities for churches transitioning toward closing, the Commission determined that conferences could better handle such work in less formal ways. Adding to *The Book of Discipline* would be more complicated than helpful.

X. Clarifying the Status of the Certified Lay Minister

Recommendations in Section X address point 2 as outlined above in the Commission's task.

Different conferences utilize certified lay ministers (§271) in a variety of ways. The Commission understands that Discipleship Ministries is proposing legislation to clarify the role and purpose of the certified lay minister. We support that effort. In our study, we have concluded that the certified lay minister is not intended to be used as a lay supply pastor and to serve a church in the same way as clergy.

1. **The district Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (§668) should be charged to review certified lay ministry candidates.** The dCOM should not be the body to vet the candidate for certified lay ministry and make a recommendation unless the Board of Laity is unable to do so. This process confuses the nature of the dCOM, which is an extension of the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry relates to clergy, and the dCOM recommends candidates, local pastors, provisional members, and associate members to the Board of Ordained Ministry and clergy session for licensing and ordination. The certified lay minister is a layperson and relates to the Board of Laity. Thus, having the dCOM recommend a certified lay minister is confusing and might lead one to misunderstand the certified lay minister's role (*see ADCA, §666.10 and NEW 668.4*).

XI. **Conclusion**

Focused and sustained study of ministry continues to require attention and responsiveness to cultural needs and church-wide expectations. The 2013-2016 Commission for the Study of Ministry recommends and requests renewal for the 2017-2020 quadrennium. The resolution to renew the Commission for the 2017-2020 quadrennium lists details related to the Commission's structure, the questions to address, and funding (*see ADCA, Ministry and Higher Education/Superintendency – Non-Disciplinary Resolution*).

Works Cited

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Commission for the Study of Ministry - Legislation

Following are petitions submitted by the Commission for the Study of Ministry in paragraph number order. The rationale statements cross-reference to the section of the report that address each petition. The **proposal to reshape the ordination process** includes petitions for many paragraphs, so petitions related to reshaping the ordination process are presented together in a separate section at the end of the legislation packet.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries to Review Certified Lay Ministry Candidates

Discipline Paragraph: 271

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶271.2-5

2. A certified lay servant or a person with equivalent training as defined by his or her district or conference may be certified as a lay minister by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry or the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries after he or she has:

...

e) Made application in writing to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry or the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries.

f) Appeared before the District Committee on Ordained Ministry or the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries for review and approval.

3. The certified lay minister is to apply in writing for recertification biannually to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry or the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries upon:

4. The certified lay minister under assignment is to appear bi-annually before the District Committee on Ordained Ministry or the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries for recertification after:

5. Transfer of Certification by Certified Lay Ministers— A certified lay minister who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's Committee on Ordained Ministry or District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries confirming current certification.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section X – Clarifying the Status of the Certified Lay Minister, Number 1 – The district Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (¶668) should be charged to review certified lay ministry candidates.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Deepening the Theology of Ordination

Discipline Paragraph: 301

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶301

¶301.1. 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 into 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 means of grace. Thus, the 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 callings. Calls—and the discernment and confirmation of them—are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 1 – Deepening the theology of ordination.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Deepening the Theology of Ordination

Discipline Paragraph: 302

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶302

¶302. *Ordination and Apostolic Ministry –*

... 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.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 1 – Deepening the theology of ordination.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Better Alignment of Language

Discipline Paragraph: 304

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶304

¶304. *Qualifications for Ordination and Membership –*

...

4. ...Having been originally recommended by a charge conference or equivalent body (¶310.1e) and by authorization of the ordained members...

5. ~~In all cases where the district committee on ordained ministry, conference boards of ordained ministry or ordained members in full connection in clergy session vote on granting any status~~ In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, ~~it is understood that~~ the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements ~~only~~. Each person is expected to vote....

Rationale: Aligns Disciplinary language with our understanding of the clergy relationship between ordination and membership. Point 4 brings paragraph in line with language passed in 2012. Point 5 is simplified to better state this requirement. Study of Ministry Report – Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Deepening the Theology of Ordination

Discipline Paragraph: 305

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶305

¶305. *Orders in Relation to the Ministry of All Christians –*

...

Within the people of God, some persons are called to the ministry of deacon.... This ministry exemplifies and leads the Church in the servanthood every Christian is called to

live both in the church and the world. ~~The deacon embodies the interrelationship between worship in the gathered community and service to God in 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.~~

Within the people of God, other persons are called to the ministry of elder.... assisted the bishop in leading the gathered community in the celebration of sacraments and the guidance and care of its communal life. ~~The ministry of elder exemplifies and leads the Church in service to God in the world, in remembering and celebrating the gifts of God and living faithfully in response to God's grace. Those called to the ministry of 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.~~

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 1 – Deepening the theology of ordination.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Clarifying the Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments

Discipline Paragraph: 316

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶316.1

¶316.1

...local pastors approved annually by the district committee on ordained ministry may be licensed by the bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor (¶340), including the presiding at celebration of the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion... while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry. Presiding at the celebration of the sacraments involves taking responsibility to lead the gathered community in celebrating baptism and Holy Communion. For the purpose of these paragraphs....

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 2 – Clarifying the Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Recognize the Completion of a Master of Divinity as Education for Local Pastors

Discipline Paragraph: 318

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶318.1(d)

(d) who, when they have completed the Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree from a seminary listed by the University Senate, are involved in continuing education (¶351);

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VIII – Enhance Preparation of and Support for Local Pastors, Number 1 – Education and Training. Recognizes that some local pastors have completed a Master of Divinity degree instead of Course of Study.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Remove “Five-Year” from Course of Study Description

Discipline Paragraphs: 319; 322; 324; 1421

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶319.4; ¶322.1(3); ¶324.6c); ¶1421.3d)

¶319.4. A local pastor may choose to remain in a local relationship with the annual conference upon having completed the ~~five-year~~ Course of Study.

¶322.1(3) completed the ~~five-year~~ Course of Study ~~for ordained ministry~~ in addition to the studies for license....

¶324.6c) completed the ~~five-year~~ Course of Study ~~for ordained ministry~~, of which no more....

¶1421.3d) Prescribe a Course of Study for local pastors that include the studies for license for pastoral ministry and the ~~five-year~~ Course of Study curriculum....

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VIII – Enhance Preparation of and Support for Local Pastors, Number 1b – Remove the phrase “five-year” everywhere the Book of Discipline references Course of Study to create flexibility for these alternatives.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Minimum Age for Local Pastor to Apply for Provisional Membership

Discipline Paragraph: 324

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Delete ¶(324.6a) and renumber following sub-points accordingly

¶ 324.6. Local pastors may fulfil the requirements for provisional membership when they have:

- a) ~~Reached forty years of age; ...~~

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section V – Increasing Flexibility in Leadership Preparation, Number 1 – Remove the minimum age restriction for local pastors to apply for provisional membership.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Clarifying the Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments

Discipline Paragraph: 328

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶328

¶328. *The Ministry of a Deacon*— From among the baptized, deacons are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop. From the earliest days of the church, deacons were called and set apart for the ministry of love, justice, and service and for connecting the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized among the children of God. This ministry grows out of the Wesleyan passion for social holiness and ministry among the poor. It is the deacons, in both person and function, whose distinctive ministry is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry. Deacons fulfill servant ministry in the world and lead the Church in relating the gathered life of Christians to their ministries in the world, interrelating worship in the gathered community with service to God in the world. 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 ~~the Lord's Supper~~ 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, ~~a pastor in charge or district superintendent may request that the bishop~~ may grant local sacramental authority to the deacon to administer preside at the celebration of the sacraments. Presiding at the celebration of the sacraments involves taking responsibility to lead the gathered community in celebrating baptism and Holy Communion. As members of the Order of Deacon, all deacons are in covenant with all other deacons in the annual conference and shall participate in the life of their order. ~~in the absence of an elder, within a deacon's primary appointment. It is the deacons, in both person and function, whose distinctive ministry is to embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry. From the earliest days of the church, deacons were called and set apart for the ministry of love, justice, and service; of connecting the church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized among the children of God. This ministry grows out of the Wesleyan passion for social holiness and ministry among the poor.~~

Deacons lead the congregation in its servant ministry....

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 2 – Clarifying the Relation between ordination and the sacraments and Number 4 – Increasing flexibility for deacons to preside at the celebration of the sacraments.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Clarifying the Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments

Discipline Paragraph: 340

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶340

¶340. *Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors—*

1. General Responsibilities and Duties: The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment, and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders Both 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. They serve in the local

church, in extension ministries, and other settings in witness and service of Christ's love and justice.

a. Authority in ministries of the Word – Elders in provisional membership and licensed pastors are authorized to offer ministries of the Word within the bounds of their appointment. Elders in full connection are authorized to offer ministries of the Word across the worldwide United Methodist connection.

b. Authority to administer and preside at the celebration of the sacraments – Elders are authorized to administer the sacraments (§332.3). Licensed pastors are authorized to preside at the celebration of the sacraments within the context of their appointments.

c. Authority to order the life of the church – Elders are authorized to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry. Licensed pastors are authorized to order the life of the church within the bounds of their appointments and, as the Discipline provides, in roles of servant leadership within the annual conference. Elders in full connection are also authorized to order the life of the church by serving as superintendents or bishops.

~~2. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment. Specific Responsibilities and Duties –~~

...

~~b) Sacrament: (1) To administer or preside at the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and ~~the Supper of the Lord~~ Holy Communion according to Christ's ordinance.~~

...

~~b) (e) To work with deacons to select and train ~~deacons and~~ lay members to serve the consecrated communion elements to persons absent from worship when communion is celebrated.~~

~~b) (2) To encourage the private and congregational use of the other means of grace, including but not limited to those specified by the Wesleys in the General Rules: The public worship of God, the ministry of the Word whether read or expounded, family and private prayer, searching the scriptures, and fasting or abstinence.~~

....

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 2 – Clarifying the Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Add group mentoring between certification of candidacy and provisional membership

Discipline Paragraph: 349

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶349.1

¶349.1a) ... with the vocational discernment coordinator (wherever named) and the district superintendent (¶310). ~~Candidacy mentors will work with the candidate until that candidate begins serving in an appointive ministry as a local pastor or a commissioned minister. Candidates will be assigned to a candidacy mentor or mentoring groups to meet with until they begin serving as a local pastor or provisional member.~~

¶349.1b) Clergy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide ongoing oversight and counsel with local pastors and with provisional members ~~pursuing ordained ministry.~~

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VII – Leadership Support and Development Through Pathways for Thriving in Ordained Ministry, Number 2a – Add group mentoring during the period between certification of candidacy and provisional membership.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Add group mentoring for local pastors

Discipline Paragraph: 349

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶349.3 and 4

¶349.3. ~~The conference Board of Ordained Ministry may assign one mentor to work either with one individual or with a group of local pastors and/or provisional members. Local pastors and provisional members will be assigned to a candidacy mentor or mentoring groups to meet with until they begin serving as a local pastor or provisional member.~~ Local pastors and provisional members will be assigned to a clergy mentoring group, wherever possible, or to a clergy mentor by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Persons transferring from other denominations will also be assigned a clergy mentor (¶347.3.b).

4. Clergy mentoring begins when a person receives an appointment as a local pastor or as a ~~commissioned minister entering provisional service~~ provisional member.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VII – Leadership Support and Development Through Pathways for Thriving in Ordained Ministry, Number 2b – Add group mentoring for local pastors.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Periodic Clergy Assessments

Discipline Paragraph: 350

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶350

Section XIV. Evaluation for Continuing Formation for Full Members and Local Pastors

¶ 350. Evaluation— 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 ~~pastors~~ clergy to assess their effectiveness in ministry and to discern God’s call to continue in ordained ministry. 1. For clergy serving local churches, the ~~The~~ district superintendent, in consultation with the pastor-parish relations committee, will evaluate annually ~~the pastors’~~ each clergy’s effectiveness for ministry (¶ ¶ 334.2c, 419, 635.2o, r), using criteria, processes, and training developed by the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry. ~~The~~ pastors ~~clergy~~ in local churches shall participate annually in an evaluation with the committee on pastor-parish relations ~~for use in to~~ enhance an ongoing effective ministry and ~~for to~~ identifying continuing education needs and plans (¶ 258.2g[5]), using criteria, processes, and training developed by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the cabinet. The process of evaluation shall include self-assessment and appropriate metrics, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry will offer models to guide cabinets and Board of Ordained Ministry in the evaluation process.

2. Deacons in appointments beyond the local church and elders and local pastors ~~Clergy~~ ~~servi~~ng in appointments to extension ministries will undergo annual evaluation by their immediate supervisors, engage in annual self-evaluation, and include copies of these evaluations in the annual report submitted to their bishop, district superintendent, and the Board of Ordained Ministry (¶ 344.2a). ~~When possible, they~~ They shall have a an annual conversation with their district superintendent about their ministry.

3. Every clergy person shall also engage in a six-month process of personal and professional assessment and development every eight years. The process will be designed and implemented by the cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry for each annual conference in consultation with the Chairs of the Orders of Deacon and Elders and Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. The process shall include both a

formal review and an in-depth renewal opportunity, such as a retreat or series of coaching and mentoring sessions.

a. The formal review shall include a self-evaluation, metrics appropriate to the ministry settings to which clergy are appointed, observations of trends from the previous eight years, and reviews or interviews with people close to the ministry of the clergy being reviewed.

b. The in-depth renewal opportunity shall be designed by the cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry in a form appropriate to the conference. The renewal opportunities shall include a combination of elements, such as: time apart for prayer and reflection, reflection with a covenant group, meetings with a coach, celebration of ministry milestones, and discernment of future ministry challenges and opportunities. When deemed important to help in the evaluation process, psychological assessments may be requested by the cabinet or Board of Ordained Ministry.

c. The district superintendent shall review the portfolio and provide the initial report of the eighth year review of effectiveness. When recommended by the district superintendent, a meeting with the bishop and members of the cabinet may be held.

d. Each annual conference shall develop and initiate a plan for such assessment by January 1, 2020.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VII – Leadership Support and Development Through Pathways for Thriving in Ordained Ministry, Number 3 – Periodic clergy assessments.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Strengthen the Requirement for Lifelong Learning and Coaching

***Discipline* Paragraph: 351**

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶351.1, 2, 4, and 6

¶351.1. ...This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities. These practices embody the Wesleyan emphasis on lifelong growth in faith, fostered by personal spiritual practices and participation in covenant communities. Each annual conference, through the Chairs of the Clergy Orders and Fellowship or other leaders designated by the bishop, shall provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders, and local pastors.

2. A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program ~~should~~ shall include ~~such~~ professional formation leaves at least one week each year and at least one month during one year of every quadrennium...

3....

4... (e) for others in extension ministries or appointments beyond the local church, with the appropriate persons in their agency.

5....

6. Clergy in extension ministries and appointments beyond the local church shall give evidence

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VII – Leadership Support and Development Through Pathways for Thriving in Ordained Ministry, Number 1 – Strengthen the requirement for lifelong learning and coaching.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries to Review Certified Lay Ministry Candidates

Discipline Paragraph: 666

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶666.10

10. The committee or the district committee on lay servant ministries (¶668.4) shall examine all persons who apply in writing to be certified as lay ministers. When there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God's grace and usefulness, warrant and that they are qualified under ¶ 271, and on recommendation of their charge conference, the committee shall recommend their certification or recertification. The district committee or the district committee on lay servant ministries shall report annually to the annual conference through the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry a roster of all persons certified as lay ministers.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section X – Clarifying the Status of the Certified Lay Minister, Number 1 – The district Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (¶668) should be charged to review certified lay ministry candidates.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries to Review Certified Lay Ministry Candidates

Discipline Paragraph: 668

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Add new sub-paragraph following current ¶668.3 and renumber following ¶¶.

4. The committee or the district committee on ordained ministry (¶666.10) shall examine all persons who apply in writing to be certified as lay ministers. When there is evidence that their gifts, evidence of God’s grace and usefulness, warrant and that they are qualified under ¶ 271, and on recommendation of their charge conference, the committee shall recommend their certification or recertification. The district committee or the district committee on ordained ministry shall report annually to the annual conference through the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry a roster of all persons certified as lay ministers.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section X – Clarifying the Status of the Certified Lay Minister, Number 1 – The district Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (¶668) should be charged to review certified lay ministry candidates.

Reshaping the Ordination Process –

The following section of legislation is for the proposal to reshape the ordination process. The first petition, Section VI, outlines what the process would be. A large number of paragraphs are deleted and replaced with rewritten paragraphs that order the process in such a way as to ordain candidates and elect them to provisional membership at the completion of all educational requirements. While a large number of paragraphs have been deleted and rewritten, the Commission believes that presenting the proposed process in this way provides delegates with a clearer understanding of the requirements that will need to be met and the order in which the process will occur from candidacy to provisional to full membership. Following the rewrite of Section VI, individual petitions are added for paragraphs that are also affected by reshaping the ordination process.

The rationale for this body of legislation is found in the Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping the Ordination Process.

Note: The petition for the new Section VI begins here and ends on p. 54.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process

Discipline Paragraphs: Multiple

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Delete current ¶¶324, 325, 326, 327, 330, 333, 335, 336 and replace with this NEW Section VI.

Section VI. Provisional Membership

~~¶ 324. Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership—A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the annual conference by vote of the clergy session on recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry after meeting the following qualifications.~~

- ~~1. Candidacy Requirement: Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for provisional membership for at least one year and no more than twelve years.~~
- ~~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:
 - a) Candidates for deacon or elder shall have completed one-half of the basic graduate theological studies in the Christian faith. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies must include courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church~~

in the world; evangelism; worship/ liturgy; and United Methodist doctrine, polity and history.

~~b) a candidate for ordination as an elder shall have completed one half of the studies toward a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent, including one half of the basic graduate theological studies from a seminary listed by the University Senate.~~

~~c) a candidate for ordination as a deacon shall have:~~

~~(1) completed one half of the studies of a master's degree from a United Methodist seminary or one listed by the University Senate, or~~

~~(2) received a master's degree in the area of the specialized ministry in which the candidate will serve~~

~~(3) completed one half of the basic graduate theological studies, in a context which will provide formation as a United Methodist deacon in full connection within a cohesive program developed by the seminary and approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, documented by a record of completion from that school. 5. In some instances a candidate who is pursuing ordination to serve as deacon in full connection may fulfill the academic requirements through the following professional certification alternate route:~~

~~a) shall have reached thirty-five years of age at the time to become a certified candidate;~~

~~b) completed a bachelor's degree, received professional certification or license 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;~~

~~c) have completed one half of the minimum of twenty-four semester hours of the basic graduate theological studies of the Christian faith including the areas of: Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/ liturgy; and United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history, in a context which will provide a cohesive program and formation as a United Methodist deacon in full connection within a cohesive program developed by the seminary and approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, documented by a record of completion from that school.~~

~~6. Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership when they have:~~

~~a) reached forty years of age;~~

~~b) satisfied all requirements of Sections 1-3 and 7-14 of this paragraph.~~

~~c) completed the five-year Course of Study for ordained ministry, of which no more than one-half may be taken by correspondence or Internet; up to one-half of Course of Study may be online courses; and~~

~~d) 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 that shall include United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity.~~

7. 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.

8. Each candidate shall present a satisfactory certificate of good health by a physician on the prescribed form. 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.

9. Each candidate shall respond to a written and oral doctrinal examination administered by the conference 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) How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitment as a provisional member and commissioned minister 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 their influence as ministers, 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.

~~10. Each candidate shall have been recommended in writing to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, based on a three-fourths majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry.~~

~~11. Each candidate shall have a personal interview with the conference Board of Ordained Ministry to complete his or her candidacy.~~

~~12. 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.~~

~~13. 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.~~

~~14. Each candidate shall have been recommended in writing to the clergy session based on at least a two-thirds majority vote of the conference 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 licensed for the practice of ministry 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.~~

~~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).~~

~~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 Ministry.~~

~~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) election of delegates to the General and jurisdictional or central conferences
 - c) 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 (see Judicial Council Decision 1181 and ¶ 35, Article IV).~~
- ~~3. Provisional members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the Board of Ordained Ministry (¶ 635.1). 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 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 (§ 362.2) shall be observed and there shall be a review by the administrative review committee under § 636 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 § 635.3d. After discontinuance, provisional members may be classified and approved as local pastors in accordance with the provision of § 316.7. 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.~~

~~§ 330. Requirements for Ordination as Deacon and Admission to Full Connection— 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 the educational requirements for ordination as a deacon specified in .3 below may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference by two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference, upon recommendation by two-thirds vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry, after they have qualified as follows:~~

- ~~1. They shall have served under episcopal appointment in a ministry of service for at least two full annual conference years. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the annual conference may equate less than fulltime or nonsalaried service as meeting this qualification. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors determined by the board. Supervision is to be:
(a) by the district superintendent, and
(b) by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The applicant's service must be evaluated by the Board of Ordained Ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection. Laypersons directly involved in the applicant's servant ministry shall be involved by the board in the annual evaluation.~~
- ~~2. They shall have been previously elected as a provisional member.~~
- ~~3. They shall have met the following educational requirements:~~

(a) graduation with a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree from a college or university listed by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry;

(b) graduation with a Master of Divinity degree or a master's degree from a graduate theological school recognized by the University Senate, or a master's degree in an area of specialized ministry;

(c) or are candidates over the age of 35 with professional certification or license in their area of ministry including a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate academic credit. Educational requirements in every case shall include the basic graduate theological studies of the Christian faith, as outlined in ¶ 324.4(a).

4. They shall have responded to a written or oral doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The candidate shall have

- (1) demonstrated the ability to communicate clearly in both oral and written form;
- (2) satisfied the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health;
- (3) prepared and preached at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry or another act of proclamation of the Word appropriate to the candidate's ministry setting;
- (4) presented a detailed plan and outline for teaching a Bible study;
- (5) presented a project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World." The candidate's reflections and the board's response shall be informed by the insights and guidelines of Part III of the Book of Discipline. The examination shall also focus upon the covenantal relationship of the applicant to God, to the Church, and to the Order of Deacon, as well as the understanding of diakonia, servant leadership, and the interrelatedness of the Church and the world. The applicant shall be able to articulate the call of God to the order of deacon and to relate that call to leadership within the ministry of all Christians, through the setting of their service, the local church, and the annual conference.

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) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? 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 minister, 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?

(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 you 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.

d) Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection and Ordination as Deacon—

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 which 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 perfection in love?
- (5) Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and God's work?
- (6) Do you know the General Rules of our Church?
- (7) Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?
- (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) Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?
- (11) Do you approve our Church government and polity?
- (12) Will you support and maintain them?
- (13) Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?
- (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.

6. A provisional member of the annual conference who has completed the requirements for deacon's orders and admission into full membership shall be eligible for election to full membership and ordination as deacon by a bishop. 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.

7. A deacon shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Deacons (see ¶ 415.6). The bishops 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.

¶ 333. Elders in Full Connection—1. 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. They live with all other ordained ministers in mutual trust and concern and seek with them the sanctification of the fellowship. By entering into the covenant, they accept and subject themselves to the process of clergy discipline, including serving on committees on investigation, trial courts, or appellate committees. Only those shall be elected to full membership who are of unquestionable moral character and genuine piety, sound in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and faithful in the discharge of their duties.~~

~~2. A provisional member of the annual conference who has completed the requirements for Elder's Orders and admission into full membership shall be eligible for election to full membership and ordination as elder by a bishop. 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.~~

~~3. An elder shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Elders (see ¶ 415.6). 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.~~

~~¶ 335. Requirements for Admission to Full Connection and Ordination as Elder—~~

~~Provisional members who are candidates for full connection and ordination as elders and have been provisional members for at least two years may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference and approved for elder's ordination by two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference, upon recommendation by two-thirds vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry, after they have qualified as follows. They shall have:~~

~~(1) served full time under episcopal appointment for at least two full annual conference years following the completion of the educational requirements specified in (3)(b) below. Years of service in any ministry setting requiring the regular proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the short or long-term ordering of the life of the community of faith may count toward the fulfillment of this requirement. Such ministry settings may include campus ministry, college and university chaplaincy, hospital and prison chaplaincy, military chaplaincy, overseas/mission work and other ministries so recognized by the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, an annual conference may equate less than full-time to the requirement of full-time service. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors. Supervision is to be (a)~~

personally assumed or delegated by the district superintendent, and (b) assumed by a mentor assigned by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Their service shall be evaluated by the Board of Ordained Ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection. 16 In rare cases, the Board of Ordained Ministry may, by a two-thirds vote, approve years of service in an autonomous Methodist church as meeting this requirement if adequate supervision has been provided;

- (2) been previously elected as provisional members;
- (3) met the following educational requirements: (a) graduation with a Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree from a college or university listed by the University Senate, or demonstrated competency equivalence through a process designed in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; (b) graduation with a Master of Divinity degree from a school of theology listed by the University Senate, or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; or (c) met the education requirements of ¶ 324.6 for local pastors; (d) educational requirements in every case shall include a minimum of two semester or three quarter hours in each of the fields of United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, provided that a candidate may meet the requirements by undertaking an independent study program provided and administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (see ¶ 1421.3d);
- (4) satisfied the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health;
- (5) prepared and preached at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry;
- (6) presented a detailed plan and outline for teaching a Bible study;
- (7) presented a project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World";
- (8) responded to a written or oral doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The candidate should demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly in both oral and written form. The candidate's reflections and the board's response should be informed by the insights and guidelines of Part III of the Discipline. 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) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? 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 elder?

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

(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 minister, 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 and love of God?

(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 you 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.

ADMISSION AND CONTINUANCE OF FULL MEMBERSHIP IN THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

¶ 336. 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.~~

NEW Section VI. Ordination, Provisional, and Full Membership

NEW ¶324. Ordination is the empowering of the Holy Spirit for the ministry of deacon or elder and the authorization by the Church to carry out these ministries of service and leadership to advance the mission of the church. The United Methodist Church holds ordained deacons and elders accountable through provisional or full conference membership, participation in the work of their orders, and supervision and evaluation. Provisional members engage in a residency period of intentional formation and examination to prepare them for a lifelong commitment embodied in full membership.

The following paragraphs outline the processes by which United Methodist certified candidates or United Methodist local pastors are elected to provisional membership and ordained, and how the period of provisional membership may lead to full membership. For those transferring to The United Methodist Church from other Christian denominations, see ¶347.

¶ NEW 325. *Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership and Ordination* – A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the annual conference by vote of the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry after meeting the following qualifications.

1. District Committee on Ordained Ministry Requirements:

a. Candidacy Requirement: Each candidate shall be certified for at least one year and no more than 12 years.

b. Service Requirement: Each candidate shall demonstrate gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the district committee on ordained ministry.

c. District Committee on Ordained Ministry Approval: Each candidate shall be recommended in writing to the Board of Ordained Ministry, upon a three-fourths majority vote of the district committee on ordained ministry.

2. Required Application Forms

a. Each candidate shall file with the Board of Ordained Ministry a written, concise, autobiographical form that includes information regarding age, health, family status, Christian experience, call to ministry, educational record, formative Christian experiences, and plans for service in the Church.

b. 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 check, credit checks, and reports of child abuse.

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

3. Undergraduate Requirement: Each candidate 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 60 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

4. Graduate Requirement:

a. Each candidate for ordination shall have completed the basic graduate theological studies in the Christian faith from a seminary listed by the University Senate. These courses may be included within or in addition to a seminary degree. These basic graduate theological studies shall include a minimum of 27 semester hours of courses in Old Testament; New Testament; theology; church history; mission of the church in the world; evangelism; worship/liturgy; and United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity.

b. Each candidate for ordination as an elder shall also have completed a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent, including the basic graduate theological studies from a seminary listed by the University Senate.

c. Each candidate for ordination as a deacon shall also have:

1) completed a master's degree from a seminary listed by the University Senate, or

2) completed a master's degree in the area of the specialized ministry in which the candidate will serve, and

3) completed the basic graduate theological studies, in a context which will provide formation as a United Methodist deacon within a cohesive program developed by the seminary and approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, documented by a record of completion from that school.

5. In some instances a candidate who is pursuing ordination as a deacon may have fulfilled the academic requirements through the following professional certification alternate route:

a. completed a bachelor's degree, and received professional certification or license in the area of ministry in which the candidate will serve, plus a minimum of eight semester hours of graduate credit or equivalent quarter hours in the area of specialization, and be recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry; and

b. completed the minimum of 27 semester hours of basic graduate theological studies (§324.4a) in a seminary that is listed by the University Senate and provides a cohesive program for formation as a United Methodist deacon. This program must be approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, and documented by a record of completion from that school.

6. Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership when they have:

a. satisfied all the requirements of Sections 1-3, 7-11, and 13 of this paragraph.

b. completed the Course of Study, of which no more than one-half may be taken by correspondence or Internet; up to one-half of Course of Study courses may be online; and

c. completed an Advanced Course of Study consisting of 32 semester hours of graduate theological study offered by a seminary listed by the University Senate or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry that shall include United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity.

7. Each candidate shall provide an official transcript of credits from each school before any of the applicant's educational claims are recognized. The Board of Ordained Ministry may submit a transcript to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for consultation.
8. Each candidate shall respond to a written and oral 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. How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitment as a provisional member and ordained minister 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 their influence as ministers, 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 relationship, 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 candidacy.

10. Each candidate shall be recommended in writing by the Board of Ordained Ministry to the clergy session after a two-thirds majority vote of the board.

11. Each candidate recommend by the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be eligible for election to provisional membership and approval for ordination by a two-thirds majority vote of the clergy session.

12. A deacon shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Deacons (§415.6). 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.

13. An elder shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Elders (§415.6). The bishop shall be assisted by other elders and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in others 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.

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

¶ NEW 326. Residency – When candidates are ordained and elected into provisional membership, they enter a residency period developed by the Board of Ordained Ministry in consultation with the bishop and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Throughout the residency, the church sends person in leadership and service in the name of Jesus Christ. Provisional members are accountable to the bishops and the clergy session for the conduct of their ministry.

During the residency period the clergy session discerns each provisional member's effectiveness in ministry and readiness for full membership. After fulfilling all residency requirements and upon a two-thirds majority recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy session shall vote on the full membership of deacons and elders in provisional membership.

The period of resident ministry is concluded when the provisional members are received as full members of the annual conference by a two-thirds majority vote of the clergy session, or a decision is made not to proceed toward full membership.

¶NEW 327. Service of Provisional Members – All provisional members shall be appointed by a bishop (§425) and serve as a provisional members for a minimum of two years. During the provisional period, arrangements shall be offered by the Board of Ordained

Ministry for all provisional members to be involved in a residency program 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 their 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 to 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. Deacons in provisional membership shall be in ministries of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice in the local church or in an approved appointment beyond the local church.
2. Elders in provisional membership shall be in ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service in the local church or in an approved extension ministry.
3. Provisional members serving in extension ministries or appointments beyond the local church, or enrolled in graduate degree programs shall be accountable to the district superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry of the conference in which their membership resides, and to a district superintendent in the annual conference where they serve, if different. They will be evaluated on the conduct of ministry, and for their effectiveness in the ministry of the order in which they seek full membership. The district superintendent will provide an annual report to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
4. Provisional members seeking to change orders may do so following the provisions of ¶309.2.

¶ NEW 328. Rights of Provisional Membership

1. Provisional members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following:
 - a. constitutional amendments; and
 - b. all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
2. Provisional members may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and jurisdictional or central conference (Judicial Council Decision 1181). They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to General, central, or jurisdictional conferences.
3. Provisional members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the Board of Ordained Ministry or a district committee on ordained ministry.
4. Provisional members shall be assigned a clergy mentor who is a deacon or elder in full connection by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

¶ NEW 329. Discontinuance from Provisional Membership –

1. Provisional members may request discontinuance or may be discontinued by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.
2. Voluntary Discontinuance to Unite with Another Denomination – When provisional members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church, their certificate of provisional membership, and their written request to withdraw shall be deposited with the conference secretary.
3. Voluntary Discontinuance from the Ordained Ministerial Office – Ordained provisional members 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 member’s certificates of ordination and provisional membership and their written request to withdraw shall be given to the district superintendent for deposit with the conference secretary. His or her membership may be transferred to a church which he or she designates, after consultation with the pastor.
4. 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 (§362.2) shall be observed and there shall be a review by the administrative review committee under §636 prior to hearing by the annual conference. When this relationship is discontinued, they shall no longer be permitted to exercise ministerial functions. Involuntarily discontinued provisional members shall surrender both their certificate of provisional membership and their certificate of ordination to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference. Involuntary discontinuance shall be written on the face of the credentials. 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 (§635.3d).
5. No member shall be continued in provisional membership beyond the eighth regular annual conference session following their admission to provisional membership.
6. After discontinuance, provisional membership shall be transferred by the district superintendent to the charge conference the provisional member designates after consultation with the pastor. Provisional members may be classified and approved as local pastors in accordance with the provisions of §316.
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 and provisional elders or provisional deacons may be classified as retired local pastors under the provisions of §320.5.

¶ NEW 330. Requirements for Admission to Full Connection – Provisional members who are applying for admission into full connection and who have been provisional members for at least two years may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference after they have been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and elected by the clergy session. This process shall be informed by guidelines in Part III of *The Book of 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:

1. Membership requirement: Each candidate for full membership shall have been previously elected as a provisional member for at least two years and no more than eight years before election to full membership.
2. Service requirements:
 - a. Deacons – They shall have served under episcopal appointment in a ministry of service for at least two full annual conference years. Upon recommendation of the board of Ordained Ministry, the annual conference may equate less than fulltime or non-salaried service as meeting this qualification. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors determined by the board. Supervision is to be: (a) by the district superintendent, and (b) by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The applicant’s service shall be evaluated by the Board of Ordained Ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection. Laypersons directly involved in the applicant’s servant ministry shall be involved by the board in the annual evaluation.
 - b. Elders – They shall have served full-time under episcopal appointment for at least two full annual conference years. Years of service in any ministry setting requiring the regular proclamation of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the short or long-term ordering of the life of the community of faith may count toward the fulfillment of this requirement. Such ministry settings may include collegiate ministry, college and university chaplaincy, hospital and prison chaplaincy, military chaplaincy, overseas/mission work and other ministries so recognized by the Division of Ordained Ministry. An annual conference may equate less than full-time to the requirement of full-time service. Such equivalence is to be determined in light of the years of service involved, the quality of that service, the maturity of the applicant, and other relevant factors. Supervision is to be (a) by the district superintendent, and (b) by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Their service shall be evaluated by the Board of Ordained Ministry as effective according to written guidelines developed by the board and adopted by the clergy members in full connection (Judicial Council Decision 555 and 719). In rare cases, the Board of Ordained Ministry may, by a two-thirds vote, approve years of service in an autonomous Methodist church as meeting this requirement if adequate supervision has been provided.

3. Educational Requirements: Prior to ordination and election to provisional membership, deacons and elders shall have already completed the educational requirements listed in ¶324.3-5. Local pastor candidates for ordination as elder and provisional membership shall have completed the requirements of ¶324.6. The educational requirements for election to full membership shall also include the successful completion of the residency formation requirements of the conference.

4. Effectiveness Requirements: The provisional member shall

a. demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly in both oral and written forms;

b. satisfy the board regarding physical, mental, and emotional health;

c. prepare and preach at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry or another act of proclamation of the Word appropriate to the candidate's ministry setting;

d. present a detailed plan and outline for teaching a Bible study.

5. Doctrinal Examination: Each provisional member, in preparation for election to full membership, shall respond to a written or oral doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry. 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) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? 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: How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained deacon or ordained elder?

c. The Practice of Ministry

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

2) Elders: How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

3) 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?

4) 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 minister, 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 relationship, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God? (Judicial Council Decision 542)

5) 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.

6) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

7) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

6. A provisional member who has completed the requirements for admission into full membership and been recommended by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry may be elected into membership in full connection by a two-thirds majority vote of the clergy session. Following election, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference.

¶ NEW 331. *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.

(Footnote: 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.)

Rationale: Study of Ministry, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process. Note: The large number of paragraphs have been struck and reordered because showing amended text would be too confusing. Showing the text in full provides a clearer explanation of the proposed provisional, full membership process.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Deacons in Provisional Connection

Discipline Paragraph: 329

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶329

¶ 329. Ministry, Authority, and Responsibilities of Deacons –

1....

2.....

~~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.~~

3. The deacon in provisional connection shall have the rights of provisional membership as described in ¶327.

Rationale: Study of Ministry, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process. Clarifies the membership rights for ordained deacons in provisional connection.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process - Deacons

Discipline Paragraph: 331

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶331.

Delete the heading for Section VIII. Appointments of Deacons and Provisional Deacons to Various Ministries and move ¶331 to Section VII. The Ordained Deacon. Delete the phrase “provisional deacon” wherever it appears.

~~Section VIII. Appointments of Deacons and Provisional Deacons to Various Ministries~~

~~¶ 331. 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 may be appointed to attend school.~~

3. Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ shall be appointed to settings that allow fulfillment of their call
4. Deacons ~~and Provisional Deacons~~ Appointed Beyond the Local Church.
 - a) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ may be appointed to settings not connected b) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ are amenable to the annual conference When deacons ~~or provisional deacons~~ are appointed to a setting beyond the local church
 - c) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ appointed to settings beyond the local church shall submit annually.... Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ appointed to settings outside the annual conference in which they hold membership
 - d)
5. When deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ serve in an agency or setting beyond the local church, the bishop, after consultation with the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ and the pastor in charge, shall appoint the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ to a local congregation In this ministry the deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ shall be accountable
6. The appointment of deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ shall be made by the bishop. a) It may be initiated by the bishop or the district superintendent, the individual deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~, or the agency requesting the service of the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~.
 - b) It shall be clarified ... the work for which deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ are appropriately prepared and authorized.
 - c) In such event, the bishop shall consult with the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ and the Board of Ordained Ministry. The deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ shall then seek another appointment,
 - d) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ at their own request or with their consent may be appointed to a nonsalaried position. In such cases, the bishop will carefully review plans for expressing this appointed ministry and will consult with the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ about the well-being
7. At the request of the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ and with the consent of the bishop and cabinet where conference membership is held, the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ may receive a less than full-time appointment under the following conditions:
 - a) The deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ shall present a written request
 - b) Reappointment to less than full-time service shall be requested annually of the bishop by the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~.
 - c) The bishop may make an interim appointment to less than full-time service upon request of a deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~,
8. Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~, with the approval
9. Charge Conference Membership of Deacons ~~and Provisional Deacons~~.
 - a) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ who are appointed

b) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ who are appointed to settings beyond the local church shall, Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ serving in appointments outside the conference in which they hold membership shall,

10. Support for deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ appointed by a bishop.

a) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ shall receive their support

b) Deacons who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish,

~~Provisional deacons~~ Deacons in provisional membership who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish shall receive a salary from the local church, charge, or cooperative parish (§ 625.2, .4) not less than the minimum established for ~~provisional elders in provisional membership~~. When deacons ~~or provisional deacons~~ are appointed to less than full-time ministry in a local congregation, charge or cooperative parish they shall receive a salary that is no less than the minimum salary for elders or ~~provisional elders in provisional membership~~, prorated in one-quarter time increments (see ¶ 331.6d).

c) Deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ shall participate

d) The above (§ 10 [a-c]) does not apply to a deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ appointed by a bishop to a nonsalaried position (§ 6 [d]).

e) Since deacons ~~and provisional deacons~~ are not guaranteed a place of employment in the Church, Deacons ~~or provisional deacons~~ shall not be dismissed from a local church appointment without prior consultation between the deacon ~~or provisional deacon~~ and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee,

Rationale: Study of Ministry, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process. Clarifies that provisional and full membership deacons are all deacons and are afforded the same rights and responsibilities regarding appointments.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process –Elders

Discipline Paragraph: 332

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶332

Section IX. The Ordained Elder ~~in Full Connection~~

¶ 332. *Ministry of an Elder—*

1. Elders are ordained ministers who, by God’s grace, have completed their formal preparation and have been ~~commissioned and served as a provisional member, have been~~ found by the Church to be of sound learning, ~~of~~ and Christian character, possessing the

necessary gifts and evidence of God's grace, ~~and whose call by God to ordination has been confirmed by the Church. Elders are ordained to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. for offering themselves in a ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve, after consultation, as the appointive authority may determine.~~

2. By the authority given in their ordination and election to provisional membership, elders, they are authorized to preach and teach the Word of God, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the Church for service in mission and ministry within the bounds of their appointment. After completing the residency period and being elected into full membership, they are authorized to offer these ministries throughout the worldwide United Methodist connection. Elders in full connection also undertake and subject themselves to the process of clergy discipline, including serving on committees on investigation, trial courts, or appellate committees.

3. The sacramental leadership of the elder is to administer the sacraments. The sacraments and their administration are gifts of God's spirit. Administering the sacraments includes presiding and preparing the community for full participation in the sacraments, both ritually and in their daily live. Administering the sacraments also includes the responsibility to ensure the availability of the sacraments to all people.

4. The servant leadership of the elder, in both parish and extension ministries, is expressed by leading the people of God in worship and prayer, by leading persons to faith in Jesus Christ, by exercising pastoral supervision, and by ordering the Church in mission in the world.

5. As members of the Order of Elder, all elders are in covenant with all other elders in the annual conference and shall participate in the life of their order.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping the Ordination Process. This petition outlines the ministry of an elder – whether that person is in provisional or full connection to the annual conference and clarifies the definition of administering the sacraments.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Authority of Elders

Discipline Paragraph: 334

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶334

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

1. Elders in full connection shall have the rights of voice and to vote on all matters in the annual conference where membership is held except in the election of lay delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences (¶ 602.1a). Elders and deacons ~~and shall share with deacons~~ in full connection share 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.

2. Elders in full connection ~~They~~ shall be eligible to hold office in the annual conference and to be elected delegates to the general and jurisdictional or central conferences under the provision of the Constitution (¶ 35, Article IV).

3. Every effective elder in full connection who is in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop provided that if the elder is appointed to serve in an affiliated relationship in a missionary conference (¶ 586) and that appointment is terminated by the bishop who presides in the missionary conference, then the responsibility for meeting this obligation rests with the bishop of the conference of which the elder is a member.

~~2 4. There are professional responsibilities (¶ 340) 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. These shall include:~~ Elders shall fulfill the following professional responsibilities (¶340) as a fundamental part of their accountability and a primary basis of their continued eligibility for good standing in the annual conference, and therefore, for annual appointment.

a) Continuing availability for appointment.

b) Annual participation in a process of evaluation with committees on pastor-parish relations or comparable authority as well as annual participation in a process of evaluation with the district superintendent or comparable authority.

c) Evidence of continuing effectiveness reflected in annual evaluations by the pastor-parish relations committee and by the district superintendent or comparable authorities

d) Growth in professional competence and effectiveness through continuing education and formation. The Board of Ordained Ministry may set the minimum standards and specific guidelines for continuing education and formation for conference members;

e) Willingness to assume supervisory and mentoring responsibilities within the connection.

~~3~~ 5. When an elder's effectiveness the effectiveness of an elder in full connection is in question, the bishop shall complete the following procedure:

a) Identify the concerns. These can include an elder's failed professional responsibilities or vocational ineffectiveness.

b) Hold supervisory conversations with the elder in full connection to that identifies identify the concerns, and collaboratively designs collaboratively —with the elder—a corrective plan of action including benchmarks and timelines for evaluation.

c) Upon evaluation, determine that the plan of action has not been carried out or produced fruit that gives a realistic expectation of future effectiveness.

~~4.~~ d) If an elder fails to demonstrate vocational competence or effectiveness (§ 340) as defined by the annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry and cabinet, then the bishop may begin the administrative location process as outlined in § 360.

~~5~~ 6. Clergy Elders in full connection who are retired, on medical leave, or on sabbatical leave may at their own initiative apply to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry for affiliate membership in the annual conference where they reside. By a two-thirds vote of the executive session, such ~~clergy elders~~ clergy elders may be received with rights and privileges, including service on conference boards, agencies, task forces, and committees, with voice but without vote. Voting membership shall be retained in the ~~clergy member's~~ elder's home annual conference for the duration of affiliate member relationship. Such persons may serve on the board, agency, task force or committee of only one annual conference at any one time.

7. The elder in provisional connection shall have the rights of provisional membership as described in §327.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process. This petition focuses on the rights and responsibilities of elders in full connection.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Support for Elders

Discipline Paragraphs: 342

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶342

¶ 342. *Support for Elders in Full Connection Appointed to Pastoral Charges*— ~~To strengthen the effectiveness of the connectional system, assumption of the obligations of the itinerant ministry required upon admission to the traveling connection places upon the Church a counter obligation to provide adequate support for the entire ministry of the Church~~ The Church has an obligation to support the itinerant ministry as a means of strengthening the effectiveness of our connectional system (¶ 620). The Church shall provide, and the ordained minister is entitled to receive, not less than the equitable compensation established by the annual conference for clergy members according to provisions of ¶ 625.3.

1. *Support for Elders in Full Connection Appointed to Pastoral Charges Who Render Full-Time Service*— Each elder ~~in full connection of an annual conference~~ who is in good standing and who is appointed to full-time service under the provision of ¶ 338.1 shall have a claim upon the conference Equitable Compensation Fund and a right to receive not less than base compensation established by the annual conference for persons in full-time service.

2. *Support for ~~Ordained~~ Elders Appointed to Pastoral Charges Who Render Less than Full-Time Service*— Each elder ~~in full connection~~ who is in good standing and who is appointed by the bishop to less than full-time service under the provisions of ¶ 338.2 shall have a claim upon the conference Equitable Compensation Fund in one-quarter increments according to the guidelines established by the annual conference commission on equitable compensation.

3. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, the benefits provided to ~~ordained ministers~~ elders, in addition to the cash compensation, under the benefit programs administered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits may be different for ~~ordained ministers~~ elders serving full-time as pastors to local charges and for ~~ordained ministers~~ elders serving other types of appointments.

4. No pastor shall be entitled to any claim for unpaid base compensation against any church or charge served after pastoral connection with the church or charge has ceased.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process. This petition focuses on the support for elders.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Appointments in Retirement

Discipline Paragraph: 358

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶358.6

6. ~~Appointment of Retired Ordained Ministers~~ Deacon or Elder in Full Connection— ~~A retired ordained minister~~ deacons or elders in full connection shall be eligible to receive an appointment when requested by the bishop and cabinet. ~~A retired ordained minister~~ When appointed to a pastoral charge they shall have neither a claim upon minimum compensation from the Commission on Equitable Compensation or similar conference agency, nor further pension credit....

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process. This petition focuses on appointments in retirement.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Honorable Location

Discipline Paragraph: 359

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶359.3

3. ~~Ordained ministers~~ Those on honorable location may request the annual conference to grant them the status of honorable location-retired....

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Administrative Location

Discipline Paragraphs: 360

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶360.4

4. ~~Ordained ministers~~ Those on administrative location may request the annual conference to grant them the status of administrative location-retired.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Withdrawal of Members in Full Connection

Discipline Paragraph: 361

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶361

¶ 361. *Withdrawal—*

1. *Withdrawal to Unite with Another Denomination—* When ordained members in good standing who are in full connection withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination,

2. *Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office—* ~~Ordained m~~Members in full connection of an annual conference who are in good standing ~~who and~~ 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 ~~ordained minister's~~ member's certifications of ordination and conference membership, and their written request to withdraw,

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process – Readmission to Provisional Membership

Discipline Paragraph: 365

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶365

¶ 365. *Readmission to Provisional Membership*— Persons who have been discontinued as provisional members under the provisions of ¶ 327.6 from an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors may be readmitted by the annual conference in which they held previously such membership.... When reinstated by vote of the clergy members in full connection, their provisional membership in the conference shall be restored, they shall serve a minimum of two years of provisional membership according to ¶ 326 prior to ordination, and they shall be authorized by licensing and/or commissioning to perform those ministerial functions for which they are qualified being received as members in full connection.

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping Ordination Process.

Suggested Title: Study of Ministry – Reshaping Ordination Process - Deacons

Discipline Paragraph: Section VII

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Amend Section VII title

Section VII. The Ordained Deacon ~~in Full Connection~~

Rationale: See Study of Ministry Report, Section VI – Leadership and the Nature of Ordination, Number 3 – Reshaping the Ordination Process. Removes the differences related to the ministries and responsibilities of ordained deacons in full connection or provisional connection.

Suggested Title: Create 2017-2020 Study of Ministry Commission

Non-Disciplinary

General Church Budget Implications: Yes

Global Implications: Yes

General Conference has endorsed a Study of Ministry Commission most quadrennia since the creation of The United Methodist Church in 1968. The Church needs focused study and recommendations on the nature and structure of ministry in the ever-changing context of our world that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. We propose that the Church continue its concentrated study on ministry for the worldwide Church during the 2017-2020 quadrennium.

We recommend a team of 15-18 members. The new Commission should be broadly representative in ethnicity, age, geographic area, ministry orders, laity, and theological perspective, and its members should have specific experience and skill sets related to ministry (e.g. Boards of Ordained Ministry, Cabinets, theological education, agencies, and local churches). At least one-fourth—but no more than one-third—of the 2017-2020 Commission will be members from the 2013-2016 Study of Ministry Commission. There shall also be at least one Central Conference member from Africa, one from Europe, and one from the Philippines. We advocate especially for the representation and inclusion of younger clergy. The Council of Bishops, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, will select the Commission's members and leadership. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and Discipleship Ministries will assign staff from their agencies to resource and carry out the Commission's work. These agencies will provide funding for their staff's participation.

The 2016 General Conference will appropriate funds sufficient for the Study of Ministry Commission to meet eight times during 2017-2020, with funding administered through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The Commission's work will respond to the Church's needs, and will partner with key entities, such as the Council of Bishops, the Committee on Faith and Order, United Methodist seminaries, and Boards of Ordained Ministry. The Commission should engage in

deep reflection on the nature of ministry, explore innovations that further our Church's mission and project possibilities of our future with a probing curiosity.

Given the uncertainty of legislation at General Conference, we propose that the Commission have some flexibility to sort through changes made or not made at the 2016 General Conference in order to respond with clarity and coherence to the needs of the Church. This includes considering questions related to the authority of licensed and ordained clergy to determine for whom they will perform marriage services, as well as the ordination of persons in committed same-sex relationships or marriages.

We propose the following issues for continued exploration, grounded in the reports of this and previous commissions:

1. Articulate a theology of ordained ministry for The United Methodist Church in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order;
2. Explore and clarify the relationship between the ministry structures in the 2016 *Book of Discipline* and a possible *General Book of Discipline*. The Commission for the Study of Ministry should provide guidance and language in the development of text for the *General Book of Discipline*, Chapter Two—"The Ministry of the Ordained"—and Chapter Three—"The Superintendency." Members of the Commission for the Study of the Ministry shall be on the writing committee for the *General Book of Discipline*;
3. Further examine the formation and education of clergy, working toward a systemic model that embraces both Master of Divinity and Course of Study work, and continues into provisional membership and the early years of ministry. The Commission should also reflect on the possibility of allowing annual conference Boards of Ordained Ministry to consider persons for ordination who have completed advanced degrees (beyond the bachelor's degree) in fields relevant to ministry when those degrees are integrated with basic graduate theological studies at an approved seminary;
4. Examine funding sources and patterns for theological and ministry education and formation;
5. Explore student debt for accumulated by United Methodist seminary graduates and ways to reduce costs.