

THE MINISTRY OF THE ELDER
“Responsibilities and Duties of a Pastor”
2012 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE - PARAGRAPHS 337-340

¶ 337. General Provisions

1. All elders in full connection who are in good standing in an annual conference shall be continued under appointment by the bishop unless they are granted a sabbatical leave, a medical leave (¶ 357), family leave, a leave of absence, retirement, or have failed to meet the requirements for continued eligibility (¶ 334.2, .3), provided that if the elder is appointed to serve in an affiliated relationship in a missionary conference (¶ 586.4.b) 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. In addition to ordained elders and persons who have been granted a license for pastoral ministry and who have been approved by vote of the clergy members in full connection may be appointed to local churches as pastors in charge under certain conditions, which are specified in ¶¶ 315-318. All clergy members and licensed local pastors to be appointed shall assume a lifestyle consistent with Christian teaching as set forth in the Social Principles.

¶ 338. The Itinerant System

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

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

2. At the initiative of the bishop and cabinet or at his or her request, an elder, provisional elder, or associate member may receive a less than full-time appointment under the conditions stipulated in this paragraph. Less than full-time service shall mean that a specified amount of time less than full-time agreed upon by the bishop and the cabinet, the clergy member, and the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which the person is appointed by the bishop. At the initiative of the bishop and cabinet or at his or her own initiative, a clergy member may be appointed in one-quarter, one-half, or three-quarter time increments by the bishop to less than full-time service without loss of essential

rights or membership in the annual conference. Division of Ordained Ministry-endorsed appointments beyond the local church may be for less than full-time service. Appointment to less than full-time service is not a guarantee, but may be made by the bishop, provided that the following conditions are met:

a) The ordained elder, provisional elder, or associate member seeking less than full-time service should present a written request to the bishop and the chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry at least 90 days prior to the annual conference session at which the appointment is made. Exceptions to the 90-day deadline shall be approved by the cabinet and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

b) The bishop may appoint an ordained elder, provisional elder, or an associate member to less than full-time service. The clergyperson shall be notified at least 90 days prior to the annual conference at which the appointment shall be made. Special attention shall be given to ensure that the values of open itineracy are preserved.

c) Following appropriate consultation, as established in ¶¶ 338 and 425-429, and upon joint recommendation of the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry, the less than full-time category shall be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference.

d) Reappointment to less than full-time service shall be requested by the ordained elder, provisional elder, or associate member and approved annually by the bishop and cabinet and shall not be granted for more than a total of eight years, except by a three-fourths vote of the clergy members in full connection of the annual conference.

e) Ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members who receive appointment at less than full-time service remain within the itineracy and, as such, remain available, upon consultation with the bishop and cabinet, for appointment to fulltime service. A written request to return to full-time appointment shall be made to the bishop and cabinet at least six months prior to the annual conference session at which the appointment is to be made.

f) The bishop may make *ad interim* appointments at less than fulltime service upon request of the ordained elder, provisional elder, or associate member following consultation as specified in ¶¶ 424-428 and upon recommendation of the cabinet and executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the same to be acted upon by the next regular session of the annual conference.

3. Interim appointments may be made to charges that have special transitional needs.

a) Interim clergy may serve outside the annual conference where membership is held under the provision of ¶ 346.1, with approval and consent of the bishops involved.

b) Interim appointments will be for a specified length of time, established in advance following consultation with the district superintendent, the pastor-parish relations committee, and the interim pastor.

¶ 339. Definition of a Pastor

A pastor is an ordained elder, provisional deacon or licensed person approved by vote of the clergy members in full connection and may be appointed by the bishop to be in charge of a station, circuit, cooperative parish, extension ministry, ecumenical shared ministry, or to a church of another denomination, or on the staff of one such appointment.

¶ 340. Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors

1. The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops.

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

a) Word and ecclesial acts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b) Sacrament:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

c) Order:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) To give an account of their pastoral ministries to the charge and annual conference according to the prescribed forms.

(c) To provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d) Service:

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

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

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

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