

The Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members
The United Methodist Church
The South Georgia Area

Dear Colleagues,

I count it a privilege to introduce this handbook to you for 2012-2016. This handbook contains valuable information to assist you in understanding your duties and your responsibilities as a local pastor.

Speaking for all of the Annual Conference we are indebted to you for your valuable service to God and our people. You are inheritors of a great tradition. Men and women before you have served faithfully in a myriad of settings: rural, town, and even extension ministries. You are not the first to be where you are. You are marching in a long line of faithful men and women. You are welcomed in your communities because of the trust level established by your predecessors. You are a part of a great group of servants!

It is my prayer that the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members will be a strong means of support to you in your ministry. May this handbook be of help to you, too.

In Christ,

Bishop James King

This handbook is a guide for the local pastor who is licensed for pastoral ministry. It is to assist in the call of serving God and carrying out the Ministry of Jesus Christ through the local church and ministry setting. In addition, this handbook can assist District Superintendents and District Committees on Ordained Ministry in working with local pastors. It is divided into sections to allow and facilitate updating and improvement. It is not intended to be the final authority on a situation or condition, but to serve as a practical and understandable resource in the ministry of the local pastor.

This is the handiwork of many people over several quadrennia. All references relate to the **2012 Book of Discipline, Paragraphs 310-323.2.**

Licenses for Pastoral Ministry

All persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry may recommend to the executive session of the South Georgia Annual Conference the licensing of **local pastors** who have completed the following:

- An annual review by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (Paragraph 312). The primary purpose of the interview is to determine the candidate's fitness and readiness for pastoral ministry using documentation from candidacy certification (Paragraph 310) the local pastor licensing school and any other source required by the Annual Conference.
- The studies for the license as a local pastor as prescribed and supervised by the Division of Ordained Ministry or one-third of their work for a Master of Divinity Degree at a school of theology listed by the University Senate. The local pastor licensing school is held annually and sponsored by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The District Superintendent mails the completed application for licensing school to the director of the school.

Authority and Duties of the Local Pastor

- The local pastor is approved annually by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and may be appointed by the Bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor, including the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of Marriage, burial, Confirmation, and membership reception while serving a particular charge or extension ministry. (For the purposes of definition, a charge is classified as 'people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served.'
- The local pastor is licensed by the South Georgia Annual Conference to serve only the charge to which he/she is assigned. A license shall not be issued until an appointment to a pastoral charge has been made.

- Those licensed for pastoral Ministry may be appointed to extension Ministry settings when approved by the Bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- The license for pastoral Ministry remains valid only so long as the appointment continues and shall be recertified by the Bishop when assignments change between sessions of the Annual Conference.
- A local pastor may be granted an interim license for pastoral Ministry between sessions of the South Georgia Annual Conference upon the recommendation of the Cabinet, the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, and the Executive Committee of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and may be appointed by the Bishop. (Paragraph 317)
- The District Superintendent supervises the local pastor. The District Superintendent and a pastoral mentor will support the local pastor's work in Course of Study and give counsel on performing pastoral responsibilities.
- The local pastor shall attend each session of the South Georgia Annual Conference and be amenable to the clergy session.
- Membership of full-time and part-time local pastors is held in the South Georgia Annual Conference. They may vote on all matters presented to the Annual Conference, except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to general, jurisdictional or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.
- Local pastors may serve on any board, commission or committee. They may vote except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status and ordination. (Paragraph 318.5)
- They may serve on the District Committee on Ministry if they have completed the Course of Study with voice and vote. Full-time Local Pastors who have completed the Course of Study may serve on the Board of Ordained Ministry with voice and vote. They shall not be eligible to vote on,

or serve, as delegates to the general, jurisdictional, or central conferences.

- Full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study may serve as candidacy mentors and clergy mentors.
- All local pastors shall receive written communication about decisions regarding their relationship with the annual conference.

Categories of Local Pastor

In recommending to the South Georgia Annual Conference those who have met the requirements to serve as local pastors for the ensuing year, the Board of Ordained Ministry shall classify them in two categories under which one may serve:

Full-time Local Pastor

- Serves under appointment to a charge on a full-time basis.
- Is paid at least the minimum salary and benefits as established by the South Georgia Annual Conference.
- Has completed or is in the process of completing the Course of Study by taking four courses per year.
- Following completion of the Course of Study, maintains a continuing education program as directed by the Annual Conference.
- May not be a full-time student in any school, university or seminary.

Part-Time Local Pastor

- Is not subject to minimum salary and benefits as established by the South Georgia Annual Conference for full-time local pastors.

- Does not devote his/her entire time to ministry in the local church.
- Has met the requirements for licensing.
- Shall complete two courses per year in a Course of Study School or the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, until the completion of the Course of Study.
- May be appointed to small membership churches that are grouped together in a charge.

TO CONTINUE SERVING AS A LOCAL PASTOR

It is the responsibility of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to annually review and recommend for continuance all persons who are licensed local pastors. The following guidelines will be used:

- Persons licensed as local pastors who are not provisional members shall continue in college, in a program of theological education at an approved seminary, or in the Course of Study.
- Upon completion of each year's educational and other qualifications, a local pastor who is not a provisional member may be recommended for continuance by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
- The clergy members in full connection of the South Georgia Annual Conference may approve continuance of a local pastor after reference to and recommendation by its Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Full-time local pastors shall complete the five-year Course of Study curriculum within eight years (part-time local pastors shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within twelve years), unless family or other circumstances preclude the local pastor's ability to meet these requirements. An extension beyond the prescribed limit may be granted annually by a three-fourths vote of the District Committee on Ministry, recommendation of the South Georgia Annual Conference Board of

Ordained Ministry, and the vote of the executive session of the Annual Conference.

- A local pastor may choose to remain in a local relationship with the South Georgia Annual Conference upon having completed the Course of Study.
- Full-time Local Pastors who have completed the educational requirements are required to receive a minimum of 2.5 CEU's per year. Part-time Local Pastors are encouraged to do continuing education.

DISCONTINUANCE OF THE LOCAL PASTOR

When a local pastor retires or the Bishop and/or the District Committee on Ordained Ministry does not recommend continuation of license, license and credentials are surrendered to the District Superintendent for deposit with the Secretary of the Conference. After consultation with the pastor, the former Local Pastor shall designate the local church in which membership is to be held. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the Bishop a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of the local pastor as required in Paragraph 635.3d.

REINSTATEMENT OF THE LOCAL PASTOR (Paragraph 320.4)

Reinstatement takes place only upon recommendation by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry from which their license was discontinued, and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet. Persons seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist Church for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement. A recommendation from the charge conference where membership is held is required in addition to other documents determined by the District Committee and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

RETIREMENT OF THE LOCAL PASTOR (Paragraph 320.5)

Local pastors who have made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study process (as outlined in Paragraph 318.1 or.2) may be recognized as a retired local pastor. Retirement provisions shall be the same as those for clergy members. Retired local pastors may attend annual conference sessions with voice but no vote. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the Bishop to a charge and licensed upon recommendation by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Associate members of the Annual Conference are in the itinerant ministry of the church and are available on a continuing basis for appointment by the Bishop. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve as their superiors in office shall direct.

They shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry and shall be granted the same security of appointment as probationary members and members in full connection.

Associate members shall:

- * Have a right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to the general and jurisdictional conferences, all matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy.
- * Serve on any board, commission, or committee of an annual conference.
- * Not be eligible for election as delegates to the general, jurisdictional, or central conferences.
- * Be subject to the provisions governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension.

- * May retire under the provisions of the 2012 Book of Discipline, Paragraph 358.
- * May retain the license for pastoral ministry in the local church and maintain a relationship as retired clergy members of the Annual Conference.
- * May be received as provisional members of the Conference under conditions as set forth in the 2012 Book of Discipline, Paragraph 324.6 upon receiving a three-fourths majority vote of the executive session members, present and voting.

Local pastors may be elected to associate membership (Paragraph 322) by vote of the clergy members in full connection, upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, when they have met the following conditions:

- * Reached age forty.
- * Served four years as full-time local pastors.
- * Completed the five-year Course of Study in addition to the studies for license as a local pastor, up to one-half of which may be taken by correspondence or on-line/distance learning courses.
- * Complete a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or an equivalent degree in a college or university listed by the University Senate.
- * Been recommended by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- * Declared their willingness to accept continuing full-time appointment.
- * Satisfied the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry in regards to their physical, mental, and emotional health (the annual conference shall require

psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks, and reports of sexual misconduct and/or child abuse to provide additional information on the candidate's fitness for the ministry).

- * Be willing to make a complete dedication to the highest ideals of the Christian life.
- * Prepare at least one written sermon on a biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry and give satisfactory answers in a written doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry.
- * Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the annual conference may equate part-time service to the requirement for full-time service.

LOCAL PASTORS PREPARING FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP & ELDER'S ORDERS (Paragraph 324.6)

Local pastors may fulfill the requirements for provisional membership and commissioning when they have:

- * Reached age 40.
- * Completed the five-year Course of Study.
- * Completed an Advanced Course of Study consisting of thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study or its equivalent, as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.
- * A Bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a college or university recognized by the University Senate.
- * Satisfy all other requirements as required for provisional membership as set forth in the *South Georgia Board of Ordained Ministry Handbook* and the *2012 Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 324.6.

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOLS

A local pastor must make satisfactory progress in the Course of Study School each year. Courses of Study are held in various schools of theology. The most convenient for South Georgia local pastors is at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Information can be obtained by mail addressed to D. Michelle Levan, Assistant Director Course of Study School, Emory University, 1531 Dickey Drive, Atlanta, GA 30322 or email addressed to michelle.levan@emory.edu. Phone is 404-727-4587. Fax is 404-727-2494.

Each summer, during a four-week period of in-resident study, the full-time local pastor must complete one year in the five-year Course of Study. The part-time pastor must complete one-half year of study during a two-week in-resident period in the Course of Study School. Correspondence and extension sites are options for part-time local pastors. Look for new opportunities for all Local Pastors being available online. Registration forms are available on line with each school of theology. They must be approved by the District Superintendent and submitted through the Registrar for Local Pastors, Rev. Rickey Rushing or the Director of Ministerial Services. Scholarships to assist with expenses are available for every attendee. Contact the Director of Ministerial Services, Chair of Ministerial Education Funds, for the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

COURSE OF STUDY CORRESPONDENCE CURRICULUM

Students in the Course of Study may do their work in correspondence with the Division of Ordained Ministry when circumstances prevent them from attending a regional school in the extension program for part-time local pastors.

The Board of Ordained Ministry must approve enrollment in the correspondence courses. Forms may be obtained from the Board of Ordained Ministry or from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

ADVANCED COURSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the Advanced Course of Study for Ordained Ministry is to provide a curriculum that will enable a local pastor to meet the educational requirements for provisional membership.

- * The courses chosen will not duplicate those included in the basic five-year Course of Study.
- * Each student shall have courses approved and recorded by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, working through the Office of Ministerial Services.
- * Advanced Course of Study Courses are offered during the same time period as the regular Course of Study Schools.

FELLOWSHIP OF LOCAL PASTORS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

A Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members has been organized to provide mutual support for its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. Rev. Eddie Morrison is presently Chair of the Fellowship. The function of the fellowship is to:

- * Provide regular gatherings of members.
- * Encourage local pastors to continue study beyond the Course of Study.
- * Develop a bond of unity and common commitment among the members.
- * Enable the creation of relationships that allow mutual support and trust.
- * Each year at the Annual Conference, a lunch gathering is scheduled.