United Methodist Leadership / Theological Education

Lay servant ministries
Note: Tracks of study and courses developed at the conference (e.g. synod) level

Certified Lay Servant
Role: “witness to the Christian faith through spoken communication, to lead within a church and community, and to provide a caring ministry.”
Basic education: Lay Servant Ministries courses (ConneXion and one advanced)

Certified Lay Speaker
Role: “to serve the church in pulpit supply”
Basic education: Completed Lay Speaker courses (ConneXion and Lay Speaker retreat which includes topics: leading worship, leading prayer, discovering spiritual gifts, preaching, United Methodist heritage and polity, etc.)

Certified Lay Minister
Role: “to conduct public worship, care for the congregation, assist in program leadership, develop new and existing faith communities, preach the Word, lead small groups, or establish community outreach ministries as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergyperson.”
Basic education: Completed Lay Minister courses (ConneXion, contact Lay Servant Ministries team for other education requirements)

Lay missioner
Role: “to work together as a ministry team with their pastor-mentor, in order to develop and lead faith communities, establish community ministries, develop church school extension programs, and engage in congregational development with and into the local community.”
Basic education: National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry formation sequence modules

Office of deaconess and home missioner
Note: These are offices coordinated by the United Methodist Women at the general church level (e.g. churchwide) and historically related to our General Board of Global Ministries.

Role: “express representatively the love and concern of the believing community for the needs of the world and to enable, through education and involvement, the full ministry and mission of the people of God.”
Basic education: Biblical, theological, and sociological grounding in the prescribed core studies: Old Testament, New Testament, Theology of Mission, History of The United Methodist Church, and Polity and Doctrine of The United Methodist Church. Core studies may be taken at United
Methodist institutions of higher learning or at colleges, universities, and/or seminaries that are approved by the University Senate of The United Methodist Church. Intensive courses (one-to-two-week) and other alternative program options are available.

Licensed local pastors
Note: Course of Study curriculum set at general church level (e.g. churchwide) and implemented at the jurisdictional level (e.g. regions). For more information, see: https://www.gbhem.org/education/licensing-and-course-study/

Full-Time Local Pastors
Role: “appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor”
Basic education: “Course of Study” or “one-third of their work for a Master of Divinity degree at a school of theology listed by the University Senate” OR “complete four courses per year in a Course of Study school” OR “made progress in the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the GBHEM.” A full-time local pastor shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years.

Part-Time Local Pastors
Role: “appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor”
Basic education: “completed the Course of Study or other approved theological education” OR “complete two courses per year in a Course of Study school” OR “made progress in the correspondence curriculum prescribed by the GBHEM” OR “be enrolled as a pre-theological or theological student in a college, university, or school of theology approved by the University Senate.” A part-time local pastor shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within twelve years.

Associate membership
Note: This is a conference relationship for full-time local pastors over the age of forty that includes “the same security of appointment” as ordained elders. It can be an ongoing status or transition status towards ordination as an elder.

Role: “appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor”
Basic education: “completed the 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 online/distance learning courses, or received a Master of Divinity degree that includes the basic graduate theological studies from a school of theology listed by the University Senate” AND “completed a minimum of sixty semester hours toward the Bachelor of Arts or an equivalent degree in a college or university recognized by the University Senate.”

Ministry of the Ordained
Note: In all cases, certain graduate courses must be taken regardless of inclusion within or in addition to a degree: Old Testament, New Testament, theology, church history, mission of the church in the world, evangelism, worship/liturgy, and United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history.
Order of Deacons

**Role:** Ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice, to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two.

**Basic education:** Master's degree from a graduate theological school recognized by the University Senate OR a master's degree in an area of specialized ministry 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.

Order of Elders

**Role:** Ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service.

**Basic education:** graduation with a Master of Divinity degree from a school of theology listed by the University Senate, or its equivalent OR (“completion of Course of Study” AND “completed an Advance Course of Study consisting of thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study offered by a seminary recognized by the University Senate”)