

## Lay Supply Pastor and Certified Lay Minister Guidelines

Guidelines developed by the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet

### Rationale

¶205.4 (2008 *Book of Discipline*) states “When a pastoral charge is not able to be served by an ordained or licensed minister, the bishop, upon recommendation of the cabinet, may assign a qualified and trained layperson, lay minister or lay missionary to do the work of ministry in that charge. The lay person is accountable to the district superintendent or another ordained or licensed minister appointed to oversee the charge, who will make provision for sacramental ministry and provide guidance and mentoring to the layperson assigned. The layperson assigned is also accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned.”

¶ 271 (2008 *Book of Discipline*) states “In order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God’s grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism, the certified lay minister is to be recognized and utilized. The certified lay minister shall preach the Word, provide a care ministry to the congregation, assist in program leadership, and be a witness in the community for the growth, missional and connectional thrust of The United Methodist Church as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person.

Thus, the *Discipline* allows laity to be assigned to the role of pastor or as part of a staff team by the bishop and cabinet. These guidelines recognize the need to clarify the selection process, guidelines and responsibilities, training, support and supervision for lay supply pastors and certified lay ministers.

### Selection and requirements of laity who serve as pastors

1. A lay supply pastor must be a certified lay speaker, a certified lay minister, a certified candidate for ministry, or an ordained or licensed clergy from another denomination.
2. The lay supply pastor shall complete a criminal and sex offender background check (instructions available in the district office).
3. A “sacramental elder” is assigned to each church/charge served by a lay supply pastor.
4. “Meet the Pastor” meetings are held prior to the assignment. At this meeting, the district superintendent clarifies the position of the lay supply pastor and importance of continuing education. The “sacramental elder” could be present, if appropriate.
5. Salary is negotiated with the local church and district superintendent. Non-ordained lay supply pastors are treated as lay employees. If the lay supply pastor is ordained in another denomination but not yet credentialed by the Board of Ordained Ministry, they may be considered clergy for tax purposes only.
6. An annual evaluation will be held with the district superintendent.
7. Note that this is not an appointment, per Judicial Council ruling #890. A lay supply pastor is used to fill in gaps when they occur, generally short term. The District Superintendent is ultimately the pastor for that church and is totally responsible.
8. The district superintendent or bishop can remove the lay supply pastor from the position at any time.
9. According to Cabinet Policy, assigned lay supply pastors are encouraged to begin the process toward licensing for pastoral ministry or certified as a lay minister by the end of their first year of assignment.
10. In the list of appointments, the conference code **SY** is used when assigning a lay supply pastor to a church/charge or **LM** if the person is a certified lay minister.

11. According to the VA Conference rules, lay supply pastors and certified lay ministers are members of the District Conference (see Rule VI. C.)
12. Regarding annual conference, lay supply pastors and certified lay ministers have no voice or vote.
13. All laity assigned as pastors participate in an Orientation, which is held on a Friday evening and Saturday in August annually. All expenses, except travel, are paid by the Conference by way of a program proposal from the Board of Ordained Ministry.

#### **Responsibilities of the Lay Supply Pastor or Certified Lay Minister**

1. If assigned as the pastor in charge, the lay supply pastor or certified lay minister assumes some duties of the pastor, including specifically worship leadership, preaching, visitation, hospital visitation, funerals, charge conference reports, and teaching.
2. These persons may not preside at the sacraments of Holy Communion or baptism. An ordained elder (active or retired) shall be present to consecrate the elements and preside for communion and to baptize.
3. These persons may not officiate at weddings, even if authorized by the state to do so. Licensed or ordained clergy must be present for a church wedding as well as premarital counseling.

#### **August Orientation**

This orientation for all lay supply pastors would be held at the United Methodist Assembly Center. The Cabinet will select the leadership. The following components would be included:

- Group building/developing collegiality
- Basic ministry issues, including pastoral ministry do's and don'ts
- Basics about leading worship, funerals, including the membership ritual, etc.
- Role and responsibilities of the "sacramental elder" assigned to their church/charge.
- Guidelines for lay supply pastors, including communion, baptisms, weddings, appropriate title, and issues of authority, boundaries, and accountability.
- Focus on Spiritual Disciplines.
- Resources available
- Information and encouragement to enter/complete the candidacy and licensing process
- Information about required training within the Advanced Lay Speaker Program, annually in the spring (two courses over a three year period).

#### **Funding**

Funding is provided by the Board of Ordained Ministry through a program proposal to the Common Table.