

## Recommendation of the Certified Lay Minister Position (Par.205.4; 268)

11-10-21

### Purpose

The Arkansas Conference Certified Lay Minister Program exists to equip and support laity who are called by God, committed to filling an ongoing need for congregational leadership and assigned by the Bishop for service.

Currently there are three groups of laity who can be assigned to serve a church as pastor. While Certified Lay Servants are trained to serve primarily in ministry and mission within the local congregation where they are members in good standing, they can at times provide temporary pulpit supply. Certified Lay Speakers are trained for temporary pulpit supply, but many have ended up serving smaller churches as part-time pastors for several years. Lay Supply Pastors, who often have even less training than either of the above, may also be assigned to serve in a church.

The Certified Lay Ministry Program creates a way for all three groups to receive helpful training in administration, pastoral care and other important leadership skills, all without having to commit to the Course of Study. It also provides the support and accountability needed for these laity who are assigned to smaller membership local churches in pastoral roles to thrive in their ministry.

### Disciplinary Paragraphs

*“¶ 205.4 Definition of a Pastoral Charge—*

*4. 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 layperson is accountable to the district superintendent or another ordained or licensed minister appointed to oversee the charge, who will make provision for sacramental ministry. Upon the bishop’s assignment, the layperson will be assigned an additional clergyperson as a guide to provide support in the assignment. If the assignment is to continue longer than one year, within that year the layperson will begin the process of becoming either a certified lay minister\* or a certified candidate, thus coming under the care of the District Committee on Ministry. The layperson assigned is also accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned.”*

*“¶ 268. Certified Lay Minister -*

*1. A certified lay minister is a certified lay servant, certified lay missionary, or equivalent as defined by his or her central conference, who is called and equipped 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. A certified lay minister is assigned by a district superintendent in accordance with ¶ 419.2.*

*2. The certified lay minister serves to enhance the quality of ministry much like a class leader did in early Methodism through service in the local church, circuit or cooperative parish, or by expanding team ministry in other churches and charges. As with lay ministry in early Methodism, the certified lay minister uses his or her spiritual gifts as evidence of God’s grace.*

*3. One may be recognized by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, or equivalent structure, as a certified lay minister after he or she has:*

- a) been certified as a lay servant, lay missionary, or equivalent as defined by his or her central conference;
- b) obtained written recommendation from the pastor and the church council or charge conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership;
- c) completed a track of study for certified lay ministers relevant to the candidate's assignment as defined by the General Board of Discipleship, or the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry in collaboration with the General Board of Discipleship, and the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure;
- d) received a letter of recommendation from his or her district superintendent;
- e) had all requirements for certification, including appropriate screening and assessment as defined by the annual conference, reviewed by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, or equivalent structure, for referral to the district committee on ordained ministry for examination of persons who have applied in writing to be certified lay ministers and to make recommendation for certification (see ¶ 666.11). After the district committee on ordained ministry interviews the candidate, the district committee on ordained ministry will make a recommendation to the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries for final certification by that committee.
4. Recognition as a certified lay minister may be renewed every two years by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, or equivalent structure, after the certified lay minister has:
- a) submitted an annual report to the charge conference or church council where membership is held and to the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, or equivalent structure, giving evidence of satisfactory performance as a certified lay minister;
- b) obtained a ministry review by the committee on pastor-parish relations, church council, or charge conference from the congregation of which he or she is a member, or when under assignment, from the committee on pastor-parish relations, charge conference, or supervisory board of the ministry setting in which he or she is assigned;
- c) completed a Lay Servant Ministries advanced course or approved continuing education event, as defined by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure in the last two years;
- d) obtained recommendation for recertification from the district superintendent;
- e) had all requirements for recertification reviewed by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, or equivalent structure, for referral to the district committee on ordained ministry for examination of persons who have applied in writing to be renewed as certified lay ministers and to make recommendations for recertification (see ¶ 666.11). After the district committee on ordained ministry interviews the certified lay minister, the district committee on ordained ministry will make a recommendation to the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries for final recertification by that committee.
5. A certified lay minister may transfer certification to another district or conference upon receipt of a letter from the previous conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries, or equivalent structure, confirming current certification and the completion date of the most recent advanced course taken. Further renewal is in accordance with ¶ 268.4.
6. A certified lay minister is not eligible for support by equitable compensation funds or pension funds that are provided for clergy. If a certified lay minister is a lay staff member of a church, circuit or cooperative parish, the local congregation is encouraged to provide compensation and withhold taxes appropriate to a layperson."

## **Process**

### **Persons seeking to become Certified Lay Ministers must:**

- Be a Certified Lay Servant who has completed the Basic and Spiritual Gifts courses.
- Submit an application to the Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries.
- Obtain a written recommendation from his/her pastor.
- Complete 4 additional Certified Lay Minister training modules (10 class hours each).
  - Call & Covenant for Ministry - Understanding the call for ministry, exploring spiritual gifts, and developing a ministry covenant.
  - The Practice of Ministry - Leading Worship, Preaching/Sharing Faith, Discipleship Ministries, and Caring for a Congregation.

- Organization for Ministry - The leader's task of organizing a congregation for mission & ministry.
- Connection for Ministry - United Methodist theology, practice and polity.
- Obtain a written recommendation from her/his District Superintendent.
- Complete satisfactorily background and evaluation requirements as established by the Arkansas Conference Appointive Cabinet and administered through his/her District Superintendent.
- Interview with, and be recommended by, the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
- Receive final certification from the Conference Lay Speaker Ministry Committee (LSM).
- Be recertified every 2 years as required by ¶1268.4 of *The Book of Discipline*.
- Be accountable to, and supported by, the Local Church PPR Committee, Circuit Elder, District Superintendent, District Committee on Ministry, and the Conference Lay Servant Ministries Committee.

#### **Upon Certification and assignment, the Certified Lay Minister will:**

- Be assigned a Circuit Elder by the District Superintendent to provide support and guidance.
- Work with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, or upon approval of the PPRC with a "Mutual Ministry Team as described in the Certified Lay Ministry Guidelines, to create and regularly review a ministry plan.

#### **Responsibilities and Accountability**

- The **Certified Lay Ministry candidate** is responsible for:
  - Initiating the process of certification by meeting with either the Certified Lay Ministry Director or District Superintendent.
  - Fulfilling all training requirements.
- The **District Superintendent** is responsible for:
  - Conducting a background check and evaluation
  - Assigning a Circuit Elder once the candidate is certified and assigned a church.
- The **Conference Lay Speaker Ministry Committee** is responsible for:
  - Arranging the time, location, clergy leaders and logistics for all required training.
  - Reporting to the Appointive Cabinet the status of the CLM candidates and their progress in meeting education requirements.
  - Developing and maintaining an online database tracking the training, certification and recertification records of each Certified Lay Minister or candidate. The database will be accessible to the Bishop, Appointive Cabinet and District Administrators.
  - Training and resourcing dCOMs to effectively conduct required examinations and recommendations of Certified Lay Ministers and candidates.
  - Submitting regular reports to the Arkansas Conference Board of Laity, the District Superintendents and Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
- The **District Committee on Ordained Ministry** is responsible for:
  - Conducting an initial examination of all persons who have applied in writing to be certified lay ministers (see ¶ 666.11)
  - Making the recommendation to the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries whether to certify the Certified Lay Ministry applicant.
  - Conducting recertification interviews every two years and forwarding its recommendation to the Conference Lay Speaker Ministry Committee.

## Recommendations for Implementation

- The Cabinet and Board of Laity will approve the Certified Lay Minister as a recognized category of Lay Servant Ministries in the Arkansas Conference, effective January 1, 2022.
- The Cabinet, Board of Laity, and Conference Lay Speaker Ministry Committee will approve the Four Lay Minister Training Modules.
- Each Lay Supply Pastor assigned as of December 31, 2021, will be granted Certified Lay Minister status provided he/she:
  - Has the recommendation of their District Superintendent.
  - Meets all background and evaluation requirements set by the Arkansas Conference.
  - Completes an approved course for recertification (10 contact hours), as approved by the Conference Lay Speaker Ministry Committee prior to July 1, 2023.
  - Is recertified every two (2) years as required by ¶268.4 of *The Book of Discipline*.
- While not required, each Lay Supply Pastors assigned as of December 31, 2021, will be encouraged to fully participate in the four approved Lay Minister training modules.
- Beginning January 1, 2022, all new potential Lay Supply Pastors will be notified of *The Book of Discipline* requirement contained in ¶ 205.4: ***"If the assignment is to continue longer than one year, within that year the layperson will begin the process of becoming either a certified lay minister or a certified candidate, thus coming under the care of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. The layperson assigned is also accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned."***
  - The Appointive Cabinet will maintain a list of all assigned Lay Supply Pastors, the churches and districts to which they are assigned, and relevant contact information and will make it available to the Conference Lay Speaking Ministry Committee. They will also inform the committee when any new Lay Supply Pastor is assigned.
  - All requirements of the Certified Lay Minister will be completed within five years of the individual's initial assignment date.
    - Attend the Basic and Spiritual Gifts courses: 10 contact hours each; books \$10-15 each; print or pdf choice of format.
    - Attend all four Certified Lay Minister Modules courses: 10 contact hours each; Modules \$25 each (pdf download only) or \$75 for a 1-time handout binder with all 4 modules coursework.
    - Fulfill other requirements included on the Certified Lay Minister Checklist
  - If requested, funding may be available through the local church or from the District or Conference Lay Servant Ministries. Candidates should contact:
    - Their Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee regarding availability of funds for ongoing education expenses.
    - The Arkansas Annual Conference office for the Conference Director of Lay Speaker Ministry contact information if local church funds are unavailable.

It is essential that Lay Leadership be empowered and given the necessary tools that will enable him or her to serve the congregations and mission fields of the Arkansas Annual Conference. Therefore, beginning January 1, 2022 the Appointive Cabinet will guide any Lay Supply Pastor into either the Certified Lay Ministry or Certified Candidate tracks if the church to which she/he is assigned has a membership of more than 15 or is not her/his home church.

## Proposed Timeline

Lay Servant Ministries statewide will provide a training program as follows for Certified Lay Servants or Current Lay Supply entering the Certified Lay Minister track. This program allows them to become a Certified Lay Minister by winter 2023, but does allow for later quarters, if needed.

### Spring 2022

Offer the Basic Lay Servant Ministries course - Book \$11.00

Offer the Lay Servant Spiritual Gifts course – Book \$14.00

### Summer 2022

Offer Module I – each module is \$25.00

Number of module offerings will depend on the interest of those who have completed the Basic and Spiritual Gifts Courses.

### Fall 2022

Offer Basic Lay Servant Ministries course

Offer Spiritual Gifts Course

Offer Module I

Offer Module II – only for those who completed Module I

### Spring 2023

Offer Basic Lay Servant Ministries course

Offer Spiritual Gifts Course

Offer Module I

Offer Module II – only for those who completed Module I

Offer Module III – only for those who completed Module II

### Summer 2023

Offer Basic Lay Servant Ministries course

Offer Spiritual Gifts Course

Offer Module I

Offer Module II – only for those who completed Module I

Offer Module III – only for those who completed Module II

Offer Module IV – only for those who completed Module III

### Fall-Winter 2023

dCOM interview and make recommendations on first group to complete Track  
dCOM recommendations can influence training.

### Spring 2024

Offer Basic Lay Servant Ministries course

Offer Spiritual Gifts Course

Offer Module I

Offer Module II – only for those who completed Module I

Offer Module III – only for those who completed Module II

Offer Module IV – only for those who completed Module III

#### Spring-Summer 2024

dCOM interview and make recommendations on second group to complete Track

#### Spring-Summer 2024

Lay Servant Ministries Conference Committee/Board of Laity will evaluate the need moving forward of how often to offer the modules, to be no less than 1 per semester.

Lay Servant Ministries Conference Committee will review and evaluate the needs for continuing education. Recertification courses must be 10 contact hours every 2 years (at least). Recommendations from dCOM and the Cabinet are welcome.

Lay Servant Ministries Conference Committee consider any suggestions or recommendations from the Conference Board of Laity.

#### Summer 2024

Offer Basic Lay Servant Ministries course

Offer Spiritual Gifts Course

Offer Module I

Offer Module II – only for those who completed Module I

Offer Module III – only for those who completed Module II

Offer Module IV – only for those who completed Module III

#### Summer-Fall 2024

dCOM interview and make recommendations on third group to complete Track

#### Fall 2024

Offer Basic Lay Servant Ministries course

Offer Spiritual Gifts Course

Offer Module I

Offer Module II – only for those who completed Module I

Offer Module III – only for those who completed Module II

Offer Module IV – only for those who completed Module III

#### Fall-Winter 2024

dCOM interview and make recommendations on fourth group to complete Track

#### Spring-Summer 2025

Lay Servant Ministries Conference Committee/Board of Laity will evaluate the need moving forward of how often to offer the modules, to be no less than 1 per semester.