

FAQs for Clergy Credentials when seeking to Withdraw or Discontinue  
Edited 8-9-22

- 1) If I choose to remain a UM clergy person will I have a place to serve? If there isn't a church for me to serve does the Conference have a plan?
  - a) The Cabinet is committed to finding a place for our clergy that wish to remain in the UMC. This includes working with other Bishops and other Annual Conferences.
- 2) What will happen if an elder, or local pastor, wants to remain UMC but the church wants to join the GMC? Will they finish the conference year in that appointment? Will I still have a salary as a LLP?
  - a) The Cabinet is committed to ensuring that clergy have pay and benefits, where applicable, for the entire conference year. The local church accepted the appointed pastor for an entire conference year.
- 3) Can a clergy person be part of both The United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church? Another denomination?
  - a) No. The Judicial Council ruled in 1993 that *The Book of Discipline* has no provision allowing an ordained United Methodist clergy to hold membership simultaneously in another denomination.
- 4) What is the difference between a Certificate of Conference Membership and an Ordination Certificate?
  - a) The Certificate of Membership and Certificate of Ordination are distinct and tangible documents.
  - b) One's ordination and conference membership are two different aspects of a clergyperson's relationship with the UMC. The expressions of those aspects have changes over the years by virtue of action taken by the General Conference.
  - c) Before 1996, clergy were ordained Provisional Deacons and Ordained Elders. Certificates were issued with each status. In 1996 the General Conference made changes to the Orders of Ministry. These changes resulted in clergy being commissioned as Provisional Deacons/Elders, Ordained Deacons/Elders, and Received into Full Connection. Eventually, separate certificates were issued with each status.
  - d) When a clergy person entered into relationship with the Annual Conference will determine what certificates they have and what certificates they need to submit. Those most recently ordained likely have a Certificate of Conference Membership separate from their Ordination Certificate.
  - e) **Clergy withdrawing from the Ministerial Office** must surrender their Certificate of Ordination and their Certificate of Membership to the Conference Secretary. This includes those who are moving to an independent or non-denominational church.
- 5) What do I do if I wasn't issued or can't find my Certificate of Conference Membership, Ordination Certificate or License?
  - a) Submit a completed and notarized Substitute AC Membership and/or Substitute Ordination Certificate form to your District Superintendent along with your Intent to Withdraw forms. [insert link to substitute forms]
- 6) Who has to approve my withdrawal?
  - a) The Intent to Withdraw form and certificates, or substitute forms, are received by the District Superintendent and Conference Secretary and then forwarded to the Office of Ministerial Services. It will then be reported to the Executive Clergy Session of the AWF Conference prior to Annual Conference.
- 7) When will the withdrawal be finalized?
  - a) The effective date of withdrawal is indicated on the Intent to Withdraw form for ordained clergy. If you are a Local Pastor choosing to discontinue, the effective date if discontinuance will be indicated on the form **or** it will be the date that the church disaffiliates, if earlier. If a Local Pastor has not worked with their DS to change their charge conference prior to a church's disaffiliation date, they will automatically become discontinued and no longer a clergyperson at the effective disaffiliation date of the church.
  - b) A retired pastor cannot hold their charge conference in a church that has disaffiliated. It must be held at a United Methodist Church.
- 8) Is there a timeline or deadline before the called or regular Annual Conference that I need to meet?
  - a) There is not an official timeline or deadline. However, the timeline for a church to disaffiliate is longer than the process for a clergyperson to withdraw or discontinue as a local pastor.
- 9) Can I request a copy of my records/files be sent to officials in another denomination?
  - a) Records and files are not shared with other denominations. Upon request of the clergy person, using the Permission to Release Information to Another Denomination form, the Office of Ministerial Services will provide a letter of good standing to officials of other denominations. Clergy in 'good standing' have completed Sexual Ethics Training, are current with their Course of Study requirements, and are not under formal complaint. (The Permission to Release Information form details the information that we are willing to share with other denominations. This is an exhaustive list. [link to release form])
- 10) When a clergy person withdraws, what is their relationship with the church they are presently serving?

- a) The effective date of withdrawal marks an immediate change in the relationship between the clergy and congregation. Those who withdraw can no longer serve as a pastor of a United Methodist congregation nor reside in a United Methodist parsonage.
- 11) What steps do I take if I want to withdraw to go to a non-denominational (independent) church as an ordained clergy person? **Please note that at this time the GMC is not a recognized denomination.**
- a) The 2022 Notification of Intent to Withdraw from Ministerial Office form outlines the steps that need to be taken. This form needs to be sent to your District Superintendent. He or she will then share it with the Conference Secretary and the Office of Ministerial Services. This form needs to be read carefully and initialed in several places. It will then require your signature and the signature of your District Superintendent. This form is not complete unless all of these steps have been completed. [link to 360.2 form]
  - b) You will send your original Certificate of Conference Membership or the Substitute Conference Membership form to your District Superintendent. [link to substitute form]
  - c) You will send your original Certificate of Ordination or the Substitute Ordination Certificate form to your District Superintendent. We are not able to tell you what you will need in order to obtain ordination or credentials in any other church that is not United Methodist. [link to substitute form]
  - d) Any other steps needed by the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer.
- 12) What steps do I take if I want to be discontinued as a Local Pastor?
- a) The 2022 Notification of Intent to Discontinue as a Licensed Local Pastor form outlines the steps that need to be taken. This form needs to be sent to your District Superintendent. He or she will then share it with the Conference Secretary and the Office of Ministerial Services. This form needs to be read carefully and initialed in several places. [link to 320.1 form]
  - b) You will send your License to your District Superintendent.
  - c) Any other steps needed by the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer.
- 13) If I leave the denomination can I continue to participate in AWF activities?
- a) While the relationships we enjoy as colleagues in ministry will continue regardless of denominational affiliations, the AWF conference clergy activities are for the clergy of the Alabama-West Florida Conference.