

**Pastor-Parish Relations  
Discernment Tool  
for Those Sensing a Calling to Vocational Ministry**  
June 2024 revision

Name of Ministry Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Church or Ministry Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Discussion with Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

*The Board of Ministry (BOM) of the Trinity Conference encourages every congregation to be on the lookout for potential ministers, to preach about being called into ministry, and to lead individuals through a discernment process of identifying, clarifying, and understanding his or her calling for ministry, whether in the general ministry of the church, certified lay ministry, or ordained ministry. Because this is such a weighty matter, the pastor and the congregation's leaders must know the individual well enough to recognize his/her potential and fitness for ministry so they can recommend him/her, or not, and, further, to give the person opportunities to try different ministry settings in the local church where their giftedness can be evidenced and refined.*

*We recognize that all Christians are called by God to be in transformational ministry in the world as they are gifted. Ordination and certified lay ministry are particular callings by God recognized by the Church's conferring of authority. When a member of your congregation is seeking validation of a perceived calling, the congregation's leaders are encouraged to spend time in prayer, reading *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, and using this Discernment Tool to help them clarify their ministry calling.*

*These questions are to be completed in a conversation or series of conversations with the candidate. Please answer all the questions as completely as you can. This will require a significant investment of time, but you are making a weighty decision. Please do not be in a hurry to complete the questions; be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit through these questions. You are encouraged to use this as a springboard to further conversations.*

*A signed copy must be submitted to the BOM.*

**FAITH JOURNEY**

*A pastor is first a disciple, one whose life is being transformed through faith in Jesus. Church leaders must be able to articulate their own journey with Jesus, with particular attention to their conversion.*

How did this person come to faith in Jesus?

Who was most influential in this person's faith and why?

Can this person clearly profess his/her faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and acknowledge the Bible as God's Word?

Why does this person feel drawn to the Global Methodist Church?

Other comments:

**DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

*Spiritual maturity refers to more than what an individual knows or does; spiritual maturity is the imitation of Christ evidenced in the character, mindset, and actions of an individual. Leaders in the Church are expected to have grown and continue to grow in the love and knowledge of Christ.*

How does this person exhibit spiritual maturity?

What are examples you have witnessed that this person upholds the highest ideals and behavior of a follower of Christ?

Does this person participate in a band or class? If so, how has it been transformative for him/her? If not, why not?

Who does this person consider his/her spiritual mentor? Why?

How would you describe this individual's theological depth?

Does this person express any misgivings about the Global Methodist Church doctrines and disciplines, particularly Part One—Doctrine and Part Two—Social Witness?

Other comments:

### **CALLING**

*A calling into representative ministry is understood as the initiative of God's grace to choose certain persons to lead the church. Those in representative ministry may serve as ordained elders or deacons or certified lay ministers. Ministry settings may include the local church, chaplaincy, higher education, or other settings. All are committed to share in the ministry of Word, sacrament, order, and service in some way.*

*Your responsibility as a local church leader is to help the individual understand his/her internal sense of calling, specifying how his/her ministry is to be expressed. At the same time, there is to be an external calling—a confirmation by the Church that clarifies whether they are being called to representative ministry, or not.*

How did this person recognize God's prompting to explore ministry opportunities?

What type of ministry setting does this individual sense God is calling him/her to?

Does this person understand the requirements and authority of the various expressions of ministry in the Global Methodist Church?

Ordained Ministry as a Deacon—¶ 403

*The words deacon, deaconess, and diaconate all spring from a common Greek root—diakonos, or “servant,” and diakonia, or “service.” The ministry of deacon is a ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. Deacons are to witness to the Word in their words and actions, and to embody and lead the community’s service in the world for the sake of enacting God’s compassion and justice. Within and beyond a local church, deacons may, among other ministries, lead in worship, preach and teach, conduct marriages, bury the dead, care for the sick and needy, and interpret the needs of the world to the church. Deacons may also consecrate or assist with the Sacraments.*

Ordained Ministry as an Elder—¶ 403

*From among those ordained as deacons, some are called to the work of the presbyteros or elder: Word, Sacrament, and Order. Elders proclaim God’s Word fearlessly, teach God’s people faithfully, administer the sacraments, and order the life of the church to be both faithful and fruitful.*

Certified Lay Minister—¶ 402

*A certified lay minister is a professing member of a local congregation who has received special training in Wesleyan doctrine and our denominational polity, and endorsement by the church in order to serve the church as laity. Certified lay ministers may work in any area of the church’s ministry, including leading, teaching, proclaiming/preaching, evangelizing, worship, and caring ministry. As laity, a certified lay minister is not subject to the approval or appointment of the bishop or presiding elder, although they may request the lay minister serve in a ministry capacity outside his or her own local church.*

Supply Pastor—¶ 402

*Upon recommendation of the board of ministry and affirmation by the clergy session of the annual conference, a bishop may appoint a person to serve as a supply pastor under the immediate supervision of an elder who can provide mentoring to the supply pastor and preside at the sacramental ministry of the congregation. A supply pastor must be a candidate for ordained ministry and must be ordained as deacon within three years of being appointed to serve as a supply pastor.*

Can this person be fulfilled through leadership as a lay person?

Can this person describe an occasion when he/she has witnessed to someone and been used to bring them to saving faith?

What mission experiences has this person participated in?

Other comments:

**ATTRIBUTES AND GIFTEDNESS**

*Ministry is Christ-centered within a community of faith. Therefore, those in ministry must be comfortable in social settings and relational in both public and private occasions.*

What social and relational skills have you seen this person exhibit that will be necessary for ministry?

How does this person evidence emotional stability in his/her life?

How does this person demonstrate communication skills (interpersonal and public speaking) necessary for ministry?

Other comments:

**EXPERIENCE**

*Every individual is shaped by past experiences. Take time to reflect on how experiences evidence potential for ministry, as well as equip him/her for ministry.*

How has this person effectively led or participated in your congregational?

Administration

Pastoral Care

Spiritual Formation

Worship

Describe a ministry this person has initiated.

How has this person experienced stability and success in previous employment?

How will this person's previous vocational experiences contribute to his/her ministry?

Other comments:

**INVESTMENT**

*Because of the spiritual, emotional, and time stresses, ordained ministry can put a strain on the individual and family dynamics—more than most imagine until they have entered full-time ministry.*

Has this person considered the lifestyle changes to be a pastor and on the pastor's family?

*The bishop asks those about to be ordained a series of historic questions, including: Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work? This question takes on significance in the realization that education requirements come at a cost. Certified lay ministers have less weighty financial obligations, but costs nonetheless. All of this should factor in the discussion.*

What is this person's educational background?

Does this person understand and articulate what further education will be necessary?

How long does he/she anticipate this taking?

If this person is considering ordination, how is he/she prepared to meet the financial demands of further education?

If this person is not in full-time ministry, how will he/she balance a bi-vocational life?

Other comments:

**LEADERS' DECISION**

When have you prayed for and about this individual's call?

Why do you believe this individual is called by God to vocational ministry?

Can you envision this person serving as your pastor? Why or why not?

What type of ministry or ministry setting would best suit the individual?

On \_\_\_\_\_(date) the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Church recommends this candidate (by 2/3 vote or higher) to the Charge/Church Conference for Local Church Approved Candidate Status.

Church Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lay Leader Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lay Leader Signed / Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor Signed / Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
PPR Chair Printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
PPR Chair Signed / Date