

## 2023 Elder in Full Connection Membership Examination

### Western North Carolina Conference Board of Ordained Ministry

You have arrived at a pivotal moment in your journey to Full Connection in Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church. After the provisional examination about your knowledge and understanding of vocation, theology, and proclamation, you have now served in a specific ministry setting. You have participated in the Residency in Ordained Ministry as a commissioned, provisional elder. As you complete Full Connection requirements, your primary task is to integrate your understanding of vocation, theology, and proclamation into the practice of ministry. We encourage you to read the document [Whom Shall I Send?](#) Answer the following questions thoughtfully and carefully. The interview discernment team will use your answers as a starting point in the conversations with you. We encourage you to share ministry stories as you weave together your academic training, ministry experience, and your growth as a fruitful leader. Scripture is the primary source for our reflection and growth as disciples and ministers of the Gospel. Throughout your written work, you are expected to incorporate Scripture in your responses. Review previous educational work and readings. Read *The 2016 United Methodist Discipline* thoroughly (especially The Ministry of the Ordained, ¶1301ff and ¶¶332-336).

#### Written Papers:

Your entire written submission will be one large file (Word or PDF) submitted electronically to the Chair of the Discernment Team to which you will be assigned in the fall.

Include:

- A general cover page for all your work stating your name, address, contact phone number, email address, date and include “Candidate for Elder in Full Connection – 2023.”
- Number all your pages - either consecutively throughout the document or each section can be numbered individually. The page count for each section does not include the cover page for each section.
- Add a footer on each page that includes your name and “Elder in Full Connection.”
- Create individual cover pages for each section: Vocation, Disciplined Life, Theology, Proclamation. Instructions for each section are included within this document.
- A bibliography which is not included in any of the page counts.
- Throughout your paper, restate the entire question before providing your answer.
- Acceptable font types are 12-point Times New Roman or 12-point Cambria with 1-inch margins.
- Double space all your written work except for your footnotes.
- Footnotes (endnotes are not accepted) should be in a clear style that clearly identifies your sources.
- **Candidates submitting late or incomplete papers will not be granted a full connection interview.**

If you are returning to the board, you should do the assignments indicated in your follow-up letter. If you have any questions, contact Kim Ingram or Joy Allen ([jallen@wnccumc.org](mailto:jallen@wnccumc.org)) in the Office of Ministerial Services.

Assignments are due by **Tuesday, January 3, 2023**. You will be notified in the fall to whom you should send your materials. The interviews will be held in Gastonia, NC, on February 7-9, 2023.

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## Vocation and Leadership

For this section, your total answers should be at least 20 but no more than 25 pages. Create one document for this “Vocation and Leadership” section with consecutive page numbers. Create a cover page for this section stating your name, address, contact phone number, email address, date and “Candidate for Elder in Full Connection – 2023 – Vocation and Leadership.”

1. Describe how your experience as a Provisional Member has shaped and informed your call to ministry. How has the practice of ministry strengthened, challenged, or changed your call?
2. Building relationships are key to effective spiritual leadership. How are you growing in your capacity for listening, understanding, and honoring people where they are? How are you building trustworthy relationships that make change and growth possible?
3. In what ways did your Fruitful Leadership in Ministry experience draw upon your strengths for leadership? How did your Fruitful Leadership in Ministry experience aid you in understanding more about your leadership style and the ministry of all baptized Christians?
4. A fruitful leader recognizes that conflict is inevitable and can lead through it. Discuss how you have experienced conflict in your ministry setting and what you learned about yourself as a leader. Describe the expected and unexpected outcomes of the situation.
5. How is the Holy Spirit at work in reshaping, renewing, and perfecting you? Discuss your personal habits and disciplines to fulfill these highest ideals. Include:
  - Physical health (exercise, diet, physical exams)
  - Intellectual, emotional, and mental health (reading, continuing education, counseling)
  - Social justice
  - Spiritual disciplines and means of grace
  - Integrity in pastoral and personal relationships
    - (Confidentiality, boundaries, celibacy, fidelity)
6. How can you prepare people in your ministry setting to receive your successor in healthy and hospitable ways?
7. Discuss how you have taught financial stewardship and generous giving in your ministry setting. Tell us how your own financial health is shaped by your teaching on stewardship. Describe how you participate in the budgeting process in your ministry setting. What are ways you encourage connectional and apportioned giving? How are you learning to incorporate your administrative leadership with the vision of your ministry setting? What challenges have you faced in your administrative leadership of the ministry setting you serve, and how have you dealt with these challenges?
8. What is the vision of your ministry setting? How did people arrive at this vision? What is the process you are using for vision alignment? Describe how you are partnering with laity to accomplish this vision. How are you leading through change within your ministry setting? How is your ministry contributing to accomplishing this vision? Describe your personal vision or mission statement.
9. Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry. How do you relate to, serve, receive and be with all persons, developing a level of trust that makes change and growth possible? In your ministry leadership experiences, how are you teaching, modeling, and encouraging others to be welcoming and inclusive of all people?

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10. Tell us about a time in your ministry that you failed, what you did about it, and what you learned from it. Describe the experience. How did you respond and what did you learn from this experience? How are you helping people in your ministry setting learn and grow from failures?

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### Theological Understanding and Leadership

For this section, your answers should be of sufficient length to state your position clearly and represent your best theological thinking. Your answers should reflect your academic studies in historical and systematic theology and in scripture. Your answers should reflect your familiarity with United Methodist theology with particular attention paid to ¶105 of *The Book of Discipline* as well as your own perspectives. Again, the emphasis should be on your experience in your ministry setting.

Please limit your answers to no less than 20 and no more than 25, double spaced pages utilizing footnotes appropriately. Create a cover page for this section stating your name, address, contact phone number, email address, date, and “Candidate for Elder in Full Connection – 2023 – Theological Understanding and Leadership.”

1. How are you leading the congregation/ministry you serve in deepening their theological understanding? What core doctrines and theological concepts are most shaping your life and ministry now?
2. What are the implications of belief in a Triune God for the Church and for individual believers?
3. How has the practice of ministry shaped your understanding of the following traditional evangelical doctrines?
  - Nature of Evil
  - Repentance
  - Justification
  - Regeneration
  - Sanctification
  - Marks of the Christian Life
4. What specific Scriptures inform your understanding of the nature of the Church? How does the nature of the Church give rise to the mission of the Church?
5. How is God present in the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion? Why do United Methodists baptize infants? Why are all people welcome to the table to receive Holy Communion?
6. Why is it important that Christians believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?
7. Where have you experienced the Reign of God? How do you see the Reign of God at work in the world today?
8. How is the Christian faith good news for those who do not believe it?
9. What are you wrestling with theologically? What theological resources are you currently engaging? Use the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to examine one of the theological concepts that you might be wrestling.
10. How have you led someone to faith in Jesus Christ?

## 2023 Elder in Full Connection Membership Examination Leadership in Proclamation

There are many “Practices” that you are expected to master as a set-apart leader in ministry. The following three requirements are specified in *The United Methodist Book of Discipline – 2016*:

- Proclamation
- Bible Study
- Fruitful Leader in Ministry

Prepare a sermon and worship service. Plan, design, lead, evaluate, and video record one entire service of worship in your ministry setting. This service should be preached in the usual setting in which you proclaim the Word and should be preached within the time frame of July 1, 2022-January 1, 2023.

For this section, your total answers should be at least 10 but no more than 12 pages (not including your sermon). Create a cover page for this section stating your name, address, contact phone number, email address, date, and “Candidate for Elder in Full Connection – 2023 – Leadership in Proclamation.” Include the link to the YouTube video and the password on the cover page. Send the worship bulletin as part of the attachment. The video recorded worship service will be submitted using a YouTube account.

- Choose one Scripture text as your sermon focus. Include a copy of the scripture text.
  - Work with at least one layperson (other than the musicians) in planning and implementing your worship service.
  - As appropriate, work with-musician(s) to plan the music.
1. What is the historical context and function of the text and how does it transcend time and space for your current context?
  2. How are you working at improving your proclamation? How are you exercising leadership through proclamation and how does that connect with the vision of your ministry setting?
  3. State and explain the central emphasis of the text. How and why did you choose this text?
  4. Describe the context of your service, the nature of the gathered community and why you chose the primary theme addressed.
  5. In one sentence, what is the message you seek to convey in this sermon?
  6. Plan, record, and submit the worship service. Select and/or write the liturgy: readings, responses, prayers, hymns, and songs. You are encouraged to utilize your creativity and to use multi- sensory materials. The Board of Ordained Ministry intends to evaluate your worship planning and leadership. It is essential that you plan the worship and preach the service that you record. Include a copy of the worship order/bulletin in the pdf. Record the entire worship service.
  7. Prepare a 15-30 minute sermon to be delivered and video recorded in your planned worship service. Do not submit a funeral eulogy or communion meditation or short homily for a special day. Share a ‘regular’ Sunday sermon or proclamation act and order of worship. Include a manuscript OR transcript of your sermon. The manuscript/transcript does not count in the total pagination for this section, but must be 12-point font, doublespaced.
  8. Preach. There is no one sermon model. If you preach from a manuscript, include it. If you do not use a full manuscript, include a transcript of what you preached. You may preach behind the pulpit, or down

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among the people, with or without manuscript, as long as it is among a gathered community in your context. Deliver the sermon in the way that you normally would.

9. After the service, evaluate the worship service (2 pages), providing congregation members a way to give feedback. Reflect on planning, designing, and leading the service; how the theme and goals of the sermon and worship were or were not realized; the experience of the other leaders and participants; and how effectively your worship helped to shape the members of the congregation.

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### Leadership in Bible Study

Teach an original Bible Study to give evidence of your training to research biblical books and passages and your ability as a teacher of scripture. The focus of the study is the Bible. Create, plan, design, lead, evaluate, and video record a Bible Study in your ministry setting. Evidence of exegesis is expected.

For this section, your total answers should be at least 8 but no more than 10 pages. As possible, scan and include any handouts and other materials. Create a cover page for this section stating your name, address, contact phone number, email address, date, and "Candidate for Elder in Full Connection – 2023 – Bible Study." Include the link to the You Tube account and the password on the cover page.

1. Why is Bible study important in the life and leadership of your ministry setting? (1/2 page)
2. Create a Bible study that demonstrates your ability to teach effectively.
3. Describe the setting such as the nature of the congregation and why you chose the primary theme addressed (1 page). If the study is part of a series of lessons, describe the series.
4. In one sentence, what is the understanding you seek to convey in this study?
5. Discuss the various Bible study methods you considered and why you chose a particular method in your teaching. The Bible study must essentially be your own original work (1 page).

Prepare the Bible study to be taught and video recorded. We encourage creativity and use of multi-sensory materials. Work with at least one lay person in planning and implementing your Bible study. Include copies of any handouts distributed (not included in the number of pages allowed).

6. Lesson Plan. Include lesson goals, material list, activities, suggested questions, and handouts. If the lesson is part of a series, only include the written lesson plan that coincides with the video recorded lesson (2 pages).
7. Teach. There is no one teaching model to follow. Video record the class. Submit 30 minutes of video including 5 minutes at the beginning, 5 minutes at the end, and 20 consecutive minutes during the study. Submit notes or outline you use (not included in the number of pages allowed).
8. After the Bible study, evaluate the class. Reflect on planning, designing, and leading; how the theme and goals of the study were or were not realized; the experience of other leaders and participants; and how effectively your study helped to shape the members of your congregation or ministry setting (2 pages).