



# *Certification*

**in Specialized Ministries in  
The United Methodist Church**

# Older Adult Ministry



## **Educational Requirements**

Individuals seeking professional certification in older adult ministry in The United Methodist Church must meet the standards set by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry. These include successful completion of five (5) certification courses relating to older adult ministry. Persons are certified by their conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) in cooperation with GBHEM.

Courses are designed to provide graduate academic experience for persons to qualify them for certification. Other requirements for certification include personal and church qualifications and experience in the area of older adult ministry as determined by GBHEM.

The five (5) courses include theories and methods of teaching the Bible, exploration of the pedagogical and theological bases for ministries, and equipping persons as disciples for the transformation of the world. Courses also include an understanding of The United Methodist Church, its structure, curriculum, and resources.

Each course must be offered for no less than two (2) semester (or equivalent quarter) hours of graduate academic credit. All certification courses must be taken at a United Methodist seminary or approved graduate schools. Exceptions may be made for other seminaries on the University Senate-approved list in consultation with an annual conference BOM and GBHEM.

Three of the five courses may be taken online.

Candidates may participate in more than one course each year. A maximum of ten (10) years is allowed for the certification studies in ministry careers. Two years' experience working in specialized area is required for certification. Experience is defined as a contractual agreement with supervision, accountability, evaluation, and continuing education in a specialized ministry area. Sufficient experience is approved by the annual conference BOM and may also require pre-approval.

## **Core Competencies expected for certification in Older Adult Ministry:**

1. An understanding of the aging process and biological, psychological, sociological, and theological aspects of aging.
2. An understanding of the myths and realities of an aging society and implications for the church.
3. Knowledge of faith development, generational theory, and the spirituality of older adults.
4. Ability to effectively guide the teaching and learning with older adults.
5. An understanding of models for ministry with older adults and how to plan for and implement these models.
6. Ability to equip older persons to be in ministry and to fulfill their call to serve Christ.



7. Individual experience in older adult ministry by participation in workshops, conferences, study events in related area to older adult ministry: health care, death and dying, care of aging parents; needs of women and ethnic minorities as they age; examination of church facilities for accessibility, etc.

## Required Courses for Older Adult Ministry

1. **THEOLOGY FOR THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY:** An overview of theological issues, basic theological concepts and methods. Understandings of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the church as well as issues of revelation, salvation, and eschatology. This course is designed to provide a theological foundation for the practice of ministry, relating theology to relevant issues of the day, especially to aging and faith development including engaging students in theological reflection relating to tradition and experience and including exploration of a theology of aging.
2. **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MINISTRY:** The nature of the Bible and its role in congregational contexts. Origins, critical methods and theological understandings of the Bible. Includes a survey of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and how the biblical story informs the life of faith and older adult ministry. Explores ways of teaching the Bible and engaging adults in Bible study and critical reflection and biblical implications for aging and the church's response.
3. **PLANNING A COMPREHENSIVE MINISTRY WITH OLDER ADULTS:** A biblical and theological basis for ministry with older adults, exploring models for ministry with older adults such as Stephen's Ministry, Shepherd Centers, senior programs, intergenerational models and others. Examines ways congregations can work creatively and meaningfully with older adults, especially teaching and learning with older adults and developing skills in pastoral care with older adults. Implications for the church of the growing number of older adults and strategies for advocacy and how to use and access resources to assist in an effective ministry with older adults.
4. **UNITED METHODIST STUDIES:** An overview of the history, doctrine and polity of The United Methodist church. Examines the life and thought of John Wesley, early English Methodism and American Methodism to the present. Attention given to the meaning of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition, the beliefs and practices of The United Methodist Church and to the development of United Methodist polity. Helps students interpret the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions*.
5. **A FIFTH COURSE** will be designed by the seminary or theological school offering certification courses in older adult ministry to reflect one or more specific areas of study related to older adults.

**GBHEM may accept** the two (2) courses in Bible, and theology required for other areas of certification as meeting the requirements for older adult ministry certification when these courses have been taken within the past 10 years, and a special assignment related to older adult ministry is completed in consultation with GBHEM.

### Should I seek Professional or Paraprofessional Certification?

**Professional certification** is available to persons with an undergraduate degree and graduate credit courses at a United Methodist seminary, approved graduate school, or students graduating from a United Methodist-related college, where they have completed the required courses in an area of specialization and served two years in a specialized ministry area.

**Paraprofessional certification** is available to persons who may not have a degree and are working in areas of specialized ministry. Paraprofessional certification does not carry academic credit and is designed for persons seeking training in a specialized ministry as a worker or volunteer.



#### General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

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