

LAY MINISTRY

CERTIFIED LAY MINISTERS
(CLM) Program*Equipping the saints for the work of ministry — training, certification, and renewal for lay ministers.*

LAST UPDATED	March 2026
ADMINISTERED BY	School of Lay Ministry — Discipleship Team

Purpose

St. Paul says the clergy are called upon to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). This is not restricted to the work of the clergy. The Conference as a whole and every local church also participates in this work. Methodists have long emphasized the importance of “watching over one another in love” and “helping each other on to perfection,” as well as “equipping the saints.”

Most ministry done by the followers of Jesus is necessarily done by laypersons. It is the prayers of the people (Rev. 8:4) and the good works that God has prepared for us to be doing (Eph. 2:10) that constitute the primary work product of the Church.

In helping every disciple to make the fullest use of one’s abilities to serve God, we desire to promote the theological education and development for ministry of our laity through Christian education, accountable discipleship, and training for ministry both in and beyond the local church. The Certified Lay Minister (CLM) program sets a high standard for lay ministry training and through the certification process allows others to place confidence in those who possess the Certificate.

Description of the CLM Program

To achieve the Certified Lay Minister credential, a layperson must complete a Foundational Course consisting of six modules of about twelve contact hours each (see course descriptions at the end of this document).

FOUNDATIONAL MODULES

- F 01** Global Methodist History, Polity, Theology
May be offered as two sub-modules: **F 01A**, Global Methodist Doctrine; **F 01B**, Global Methodist History and Polity
- F 02** Congregational Care and Ethics

- F 03** Mission and Evangelism
- F 04** Understanding the Call, Spiritual Gifts
- F 05** Basic Bible Training

ON "CONTACT HOURS"

"Contact hours" refers to the total time it takes, on average, to complete a module. This includes some independent reading and/or project preparation time. "Contact hours" is not the same as "Classroom hours." These modules are designed so that they can be completed over the course of a full day of instruction, though they do not have to be done in a day. Each Foundation module takes about eight hours of class time and four hours of reading/writing or project work (F 01A & B take about this amount of contact hours together).

In addition, each CLM must complete a Specialty, consisting of one additional module. Specialty modules take a variable amount of hours to complete. The current Specialty modules offered are as follows:

SPECIALTY MODULES

- S 01** Preaching
- S 02** Mission Service
- S 03** Youth and Children's Ministry
- S 04** Worship Planning and Leadership
- S 05** Church Leadership and Administration
- S 06** Scouting Ministries
- S 07** Christian Education

Every three years, a CLM must complete another module – on any subject, including another Specialty – in order to retain one's certification. Additional courses on particular subjects will be developed in the course of time and added to the available courses. Once an additional course has been designed and approved, other persons than the original designer may petition to offer the course as well (see Administration, below).

Additional courses will be designated A 01, A 02, etc. One-off courses — a master class in preaching with a famous preacher, e.g. — which is for one occasion only will be designated A 00 and that number can be repeated as often as desired. Currently, we offer the following additional courses:

ADDITIONAL COURSES

- A 01** Boundaries
- A 02** Accountable Discipleship Practicum

Once a student has completed all seven required modules (six Foundation modules and one Specialty module), application is made to the Board of Ministry on the prescribed form. A background check is conducted and the candidate sits for an interview. Certification is then granted by the BOM.

Administration of the School of Lay Ministry

In the Great Lakes Conference, the School of Lay Ministry that operates the CLM program is housed in the Discipleship team. Discipleship will offer various modules throughout the year, particularly the Foundational courses. Many of these will of necessity be on-line courses, in order to reach the farthest corners of our Conference. Some may be blended courses, with two instructors combining to teach an in-person class with online participation.

Other Conference Committees, Districts and combinations of Districts, Consortia of Local Churches, and individual Local Churches with the resources to do so may also offer the various courses in the catalog. To do this, application is made to the Dean of the School of Lay Ministry (laymin.dean@greatlakesgmc.org), asking for permission to offer a course on a given date and setting forth the qualifications of the designated instructor (see Forms, below).

Minimum qualifications for instructors is a matter of judgment. One need not have a degree in a given field. Practical experience in the doing of that ministry should count. Maturity of the individual – including conscientiousness in meeting standards – also matters. Normally, the Dean would approve instructors proposed by leadership of the district, committee, consortium, or large church, but would reserve the right to ask for background information on new instructors, and in some cases refer the matter to the whole Discipleship team.

Records of courses approved and the results thereof will be kept by the Registrar of the School of Lay Ministry (laymin.registrar@greatlakesgmc.org) as a backup to students' own records. Once certification has been achieved, a record will be entered on the Conference database. Subsequent re-certifications will be noted on that database.

Approval of new modules to be offered is done by the Discipleship Team upon receipt of an Application to Approve New Course.

Responsibility for the Parts of the CLM Process

The various parts of the CLM process (and the groups responsible for them) can be diagrammed like this:

STEP	RESPONSIBLE BODY
Promotion	Conference Staff & Discipleship Team
Explanations, guidance	Discipleship Team
Logging local church actions	Conference Staff
Offering classes	Discipleship Team
Background checks	Board of Ministry
Interviews, certification	Board of Ministry
Reminder to recertify	Conference Staff

Each student should receive an e-certificate from the Registrar (or Instructor) upon completion of each class, “signed” by the Instructor and the Dean.

BOM should issue new, dated certificate upon recert. Background checks are repeated at time of recert, along with updated certificate. CLMs must be approved by Charge Conference every year to continue in the program.

To recertify, the CLM must take an additional course every three years. This could be one of the Foundations or Specialties, but also an Additional course designed and offered by us. OR, it could be another lay training course of at least 12 contact hours, upon approval by the Dean; a paper on what was learned must also be submitted by the student.

UNDER REVIEW

The following policy will be re-examined after we see what changes are made at GC '26:

The BDD mandates that we accept for transfer UM credentials. If those credentials have expired, then we will accept for transfer certifications no older than six years (date of certificate), providing that the applicant must take F 01, GM History, Polity, Theology (both A and B) at the first opportunity. Applicants with credentials older than six years must start the GMC CLM process over from the beginning.

We strongly recommend that one of the six courses taken for initial certification be taken **in person**. We think that students should take no more than two classes per semester (three maximum, with Dean’s permission). All six required courses must be completed within six years of starting classes.

Costs

Reasonable costs for a course, particularly one offered in-person, for meals and materials, can be recovered by those offering the course. Budget for the course designating how much will be charged is included in the application (see Forms).

The Certified Lay Minister Qualifications

- _____ Professing Member of a local Global Methodist Church (or its predecessor) for at least two years.
- _____ Satisfactory completion of a course in lay ministry, approved by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry, covering the church’s doctrine, history, polity, and basic Bible knowledge.
- _____ Satisfactory completion of at least one advanced course in lay ministry, approved by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry, on an area of ministry (e.g., preaching, worship, leading, caring ministry, etc.). Coursework or training in other settings may be counted to meet this requirement at the discretion of the board of ministry.
- _____ National background check.

- _____ Written recommendation by the pastor and endorsement by majority vote of the pastor-parish relations committee and the charge conference.
- _____ Interview and approval by the annual conference board of ministry. A public service of commitment recognizing the certification is recommended.

Renewal of Certification

Certification for Lay Ministry may be renewed every three years by the annual conference board of ministry based on the following:

- _____ An annual report to the charge conference and annual conference board of ministry outlining what ministry had been done during the year and giving evidence of satisfactory performance.
- _____ Endorsement by majority vote of the charge conference annually.
- _____ Written recommendation for renewal by the pastor.
- _____ Completion of an additional national background check every three years.
- _____ Satisfactory completion of at least one additional advanced course in lay ministry, approved by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry, in the last three years.

Description of Modules

Course outlines and recommended resources are found in the *Certified Lay Ministry Training Guidelines*, published by GMC. The Discipleship Team is currently working on achieving accreditation by the General Commission on Higher Education and Ministry.

Forms

The following forms are to be found on the Great Lakes Conference website (www.greatlakesgmc.org):

Application to Offer Course(s)

Sent to the Dean of the School of Lay Ministry to secure permission to offer a course. Specifies the course(s), date(s), instructor(s) and any costs to be recovered. Must be sent every time to offer a course.

Training Attendance and Course Completion Form

Sent by the Instructor(s) after the class to the Registrar. Lists everyone who enrolled in a given course and those who have successfully completed it.

Course Evaluation by Student

Given to the students by the Registrar or downloaded from the Conference website. Sent to the Dean, who will review them with other members of the Discipleship team.

Application and Release for Certified Lay Minister Status

Downloaded by the candidate and sent to the Board of Ministry.

AVAILABLE ONLY FROM THE BOARD OF MINISTRY (BOM)

Certificate of Completion (or Recertification)

Awarded by the Board of Ministry upon successful completion of all requirements for Certified Lay Minister status.

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