

## Chapter 2

### MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

#### A. Priority of Ministerial Education

**3150.** The importance of the training of the Christian minister has been evident ever since Christ gave the name of “disciples” or “learners” to His first preachers, and ever since the aging Paul provided for successive classes of ministerial students by admonishing Timothy, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Such training becomes even more urgent in an age when the thirst for knowledge is almost universal, when human knowledge is multiplying, and when formal education on the highest level is becoming the normal pattern for a large segment of society. The Wesleyan Church gives priority in its organization and its educational institutions to the training of its youth for the Christian ministry and related fields of labor (cf. 2358:1). The Church expects each person who answers the call to preach to prepare thoroughly for this ministry and to continue this ministry devoted to being an able dispenser of divine wisdom.

#### B. Administration of Ministerial Education

**3160.** The administration of ministerial education in The Wesleyan Church involves both general and district bodies, officers and agencies. The General Conference adopts the overall framework for ministerial training and establishes the various agencies and schools responsible to carry out the work (1590:4, 9, 13; 2362). The General Board provides the frame work for adopting the basic courses of study and coordinating the total program (1655:21, 26; 3200-3210). The General Director of Education and the Ministry promotes the enlistment and preparation of candidates for the ministry, and directs the Ministerial Study Course Agency, which maintains records on all ministerial students in The Wesleyan Church and administers the correspondence courses (2341; 2385-2388). The various colleges and the Wesleyan Seminary Foundation adapt the basic study courses to their use, and enroll candidates for the ministry in classroom preparation. The district board of ministerial development has a part in recognizing potential ministers, in encouraging and guiding them in their training, and in

administering the oral examination to a candidate prior to recommendation for ordination or commission (1390:1; 3059:1c; 3070:4).

### C. Types of Ministerial Education

#### 1. Programs of Study

**3170.** The following programs of study are open to the candidates in meeting the educational requirements for becoming an ordained minister in The Wesleyan Church.

(1) **Seminary.** It consists of graduation from a four-year course of study at one of the institutions of higher education of The Wesleyan Church, plus graduation from a three-year divinity course under the Wesleyan Seminary Foundation (cf. 3170:4). This is recommended as the most adequate academic preparation for the Wesleyan minister. Graduation from a three-year divinity course at an approved seminary reduces the period of service required before ordination (cf. 3070:2). One-year and two-year master's degrees in ministerial preparation are not as adequate as the standard three-year divinity course, but may be combined with undergraduate courses to meet academic requirements for ordination.

(2) **College/University.** It consists of graduation from one of the institutions of higher education of The Wesleyan Church, involving the completion of a minimum of four years' work and covering the authorized ministerial study courses (3200; 3210:1-3). This is recommended as the minimum academic preparation for becoming an ordained minister in The Wesleyan Church.

(3) **Correspondence.** It is recognized that some individuals are converted late in life, and hear God's call to the ministry after the normal time for education has passed and family responsibilities make attendance at an institution of higher education extremely difficult. In such cases, a district board of ministerial development may grant special permission to a candidate for the ministry to secure part of the training through correspondence courses administered by the Ministerial Study Course Agency. These courses will of necessity concentrate on the specialized subjects needed for the ministry, and the district board of ministerial development shall encourage such candidates to secure training in the more general educational subjects in formal class settings (cf. 3210:1). (Cf. 1390:2.)

(4) **Training Outside The Wesleyan Church.** Some candidates for the ministry will have secured some or all of their higher education outside

the institutions and agencies of The Wesleyan Church. In such a case, the district board of ministerial development shall forward copies of transcripts or other records of study to the Ministerial Study Course Agency so that it can carefully evaluate such work in terms of its equivalence to the ministerial courses of study of The Wesleyan Church, giving particular attention to the candidate's qualifications in the areas of Wesleyan doctrine, history and polity (2388:4; 3033:3; 3059:1b; 3070:3; 3104:2). Subsequent to each evaluation and the report of the Ministerial Study Course Agency, the district board of ministerial development shall have the right to require additional work until it and the Agency are fully satisfied that all requirements for the Wesleyan ministry have been met. (Cf. 1390:2.)

## 2. Courses of Study

**3200.** The General Director of Education and the Ministry shall develop (2341) courses of study for pre-ordination, specialized ministries, commissioned ministers and special lay ministries. Each course of study shall be composed of a number of courses, each course being implemented by a college or seminary course of two or more hours, or by a correspondence course involving the use of a study guide issued by the Ministerial Study Course Agency, the intensive study of one or more textbooks plus collateral reading, and other pertinent study assigned by the Agency, and an examination prepared by the Ministerial Study Course Agency and taken in the presence of an ordained minister. No credit shall be given for any correspondence course in which the final grade is less than passing.

**3210.** The following courses of study shall be provided:

(1) **Pre-ordination Course of Study.** It shall require as a prerequisite a high school diploma or its equivalent. It shall consist of four years of college and/or seminary-level work, and shall cover necessary general education courses as well as the full range of ministerial training subjects—biblical, historical, theological and practical, including courses in Wesleyan doctrine, history and polity.

(2) **Courses of Study for Specialized Ministries.** These shall consist of special adaptations of the pre-ordination study course (3210:1) for those who are called to the work of minister of music, minister of Christian education or others as deemed necessary.

(3) **Commissioned Minister's Course of Study.** It shall consist of two years of college-level work, and shall incorporate biblical, historical, theological and practical courses, including courses in Wesleyan doctrine, history and polity.

(4) **Lay Minister's Course of Study.** It shall consist of one year of college-level work, and shall include courses in Wesleyan doctrine, the history of The Wesleyan Church, the polity of The Wesleyan Church, including a study of *The Discipline* and other basic ministerial subjects.

(5) **Special Workers' Courses of Study.** These shall be designed to prepare lay members for special fields of service, such as director of music, director of Christian education, evangelistic singer, chalk artist, children's worker, spouse in ministry, lay evangelist and social worker. Such study courses shall consist of two years of college-level work, and shall include courses in Wesleyan doctrine, history and polity, and such other subjects as are pertinent.

### 3. Continuing Education

**3240.** The General Director of Education and the Ministry shall adopt within structure provided by the General Board varying programs of continuing education for the ordained ministers, ordained ministers' spouses, commissioned ministers and spouses and commissioned special workers of The Wesleyan Church (2341).