

**NORTH TEXAS CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
2007-2008 PROBATIONARY RESIDENCY PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

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Purpose

The purpose of the North Texas Conference Probationary Residency Program is:

1. To help probationary members make a successful transition from seminary or ministry in another denomination into full-time ministry, membership in an order and life in the connection of the United Methodist Church.
2. To enable probationary members to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and in ministry effectiveness.
3. To provide the Divisions of Preparation and Qualification for Deacons and Elders as complete a picture as possible over the course of three years of those moving toward ordination as deacons or elders and to provide feedback from these divisions to those participation in the Probationary Residency Program.
4. To model for the entire North Texas Conference what it means to live in covenant together.

Participation

All commissioned ministers who are probationary members of the North Texas Conference shall participate in the Probationary Residency Program while under full-time appointment for a minimum of three consecutive years.

When deemed appropriate and initiated by the Cabinet for mission reasons, persons may participate in the Probationary Residency Program under less than full-time appointment. For purposes of Residency, less than full-time appointments will be a minimum of thirty hours a week. These individuals will fulfill all requirements of the program during the first three years of the program, and then participate in a minimum of one additional year of Residency.

Completion

The Committee on Probationary Residency will determine whether Residents have successfully completed the Probationary Residency Program or need additional time in the program. Successful completion of the program is a requirement for ordination and full membership in the North Texas Conference.

Program Design

The design of the Probationary Residency Program assumes that those participating will be serving local congregations within the North Texas Conference. Individuals appointed to extension ministries or to ministries within another conference will work with the Committee on Probationary Residency to design appropriate modifications to the program.

Program Components

1) The Covenant Group. This component is designed to provide dialogue, support, and spiritual formation under the guidance of an effective facilitator. The covenant group models Christian community while also focusing on important issues of ministry and spiritual growth. The covenant group offers a place for further biblical and theological reflection and for its integration into the practice of ministry. It also provides the possibility of forming positive relationships that may offer support throughout the years of ministry.

2) Mentor Relationship. The mentor/probationer relationship is an essential part of the Residency program. It is not simply a peer relationship since the mentor has supervisory responsibilities and the advantage of many years of experience in ministry. However, the relationship is to be marked by mutual respect. Both the mentor and the probationer should expect to learn from each other. While the focus is primarily on the ministry of the probationer, the mentor should be equally willing to share his or her own struggles and weaknesses. The mentor relationship is to explore together the nuts and bolts of ministry while engaging in a dialogue in matters of theology and the role of the Church. The relationship must be based on mutual trust, openness and respect. It is hoped that the mentor/probationer relationship may be on-going following the completion of the program and that its helpfulness will encourage the formation of many other supportive relationships which are so essential for ministerial health and effectiveness.

The Covenant Group Facilitator, in consultation with the Committee on Probationary Residency, will assign mentors to Residents.

3) Lay Ministry Committee. This component offers opportunities for learning for both the probationer and members of the probationer's ministry setting. Regular sessions are essential in order to give consistency in feedback and support while allowing time for the exploration of the many required areas of discussion. It is important that the laity understand the complexities and

demands of ministry and probationers understand and accept the ways in which laity can teach them.

4) Continuing Education.

Ministry Forum. Residents will participate in a required Ministry Forum presented in September of each year by the Probationary Residency Committee. This event is designed to help Residents explore issues related to ministry and to grow in their ministry effectiveness.

Sexual Misconduct Seminar. A mandatory day long Covenant Group meeting focusing on “Clergy Sexual Misconduct Training” will be held in February in lieu of the regularly scheduled meeting for all first year Residents.

5) Reports. Third year Residents and their respective Mentor Pastors, Chairs of Lay Ministry Committees, Supervising Pastors/Administrators, and the Covenant Group Facilitator will fill out and turn in forms reviewing the Resident's growth by December 1, 2007.

First and Second year Residents and their respective Mentor Pastors, Chairs of Lay Ministry Committees, Supervising Pastors/Administrators, and the Covenant Group Facilitator will fill out and turn in forms reviewing the Resident's growth by February 1, 2008.

All residents will fill out and turn in a program evaluation form by May 1, 2008.

All forms are provided by the Committee on Probationary Residency in hard copy at the orientation/initial meeting and electronically communicated following the meeting. All forms are turned into the Chair of the Committee.

6) Successful Completion of the Program. The Committee on Probationary Residency will review the participation and work of the Residents and pass along recommendations to the respective divisions of Preparations and Qualifications. Those seeking ordination and full membership in the North Texas Conference must first successfully complete the Probationary Residency Program.

7) Time Line. The Probationary Residency Program begins with a mandatory orientation meeting for First Year Residents immediately following Annual Conference and continues up until Annual conference of the third year unless residency is otherwise extended.