

**Ministerial Education Fund Policy
Board of Ordained Ministry
Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference**

WHY USE THE MEF?

Continuing education for pastoral leaders is a key component for fruitful ministry and for congregational vitality. The Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) provides grants and financial aid for pastoral leaders who pursue educational and growth opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to meet the evolving needs of the leadership and ministry in The United Methodist Church. The quadrennial limit for each pastoral leader is \$3,600. The MEF also provides scholarship support for ministerial candidates in the UMC candidacy process, in addition to other scholarship opportunities specific to Oregon-Idaho.

The Book of Discipline outlines expectations and requirements for all United Methodist clergy to "...engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ." (§350.1) Clergy are encouraged to [read the Discipline paragraph](#) in its entirety when making plans for continuing education and spiritual growth.

The Discipline describes three types of professional formation/spiritual growth leaves:

- Required: at least one week every year ([§350.2](#))
- Recommended: at least one month per quadrennium ([§350.2](#))
- Available for clergy members who have held full-time appointments for at least six years: up to six months ([§350.3](#))

These leaves are not to be considered part of vacation, and none of these leaves requires approval by the Board of Ordained Ministry. However, the Board may approve MEF grants to help support these leaves through one-time event grants for retreats or workshops.

A Sabbatical Leave is also available in certain circumstances; this type of leave requires BOM recommendation, Clergy Session approval, and appointment to sabbatical by the bishop ([§351](#)).

WHAT CAN THE MEF SUPPORT?

The Ministerial Education Fund can support professional development and continuing education through:

- [One-time events](#) such as workshops, conferences, and webinars
- [Ongoing supports](#) such as multi-session trainings and clergy coaching
- Block grants approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry
 - The BOM may approve special "block grants" for certain educational opportunities that seem particularly useful. These grants may be made to the attendees or sponsors/hosts. Grants shall be limited to \$500 per attendee or \$2500 per host/sponsor but may not exceed 50% of total cost.

The Ministerial Education Fund can support spiritual growth and formation through:

- [One-time events](#) such as the Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation, and retreats, including personal retreats

- [Ongoing supports](#) such as spiritual direction and the Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation

Available funding (up to the quadrennial limit of \$3,600) for professional development, continuing education, spiritual growth, and formation:

or one-time events, applicants can apply for:

- Up to \$500 for events that are 1-4 days in duration
- Up to \$750 for educational opportunities that are in session for more than 5 days
- Additionally, \$350 may be given if one-way travel exceeds 300 miles

For ongoing supports, applicants can apply for:

- Up to \$1,500 per year, up to the quadrennial cap of \$3,600.

The Ministerial Education Fund can support theological study through:

- [Full-time coursework](#) at a United Methodist University Senate-approved seminary or university
- [Part-time coursework](#) at a United Methodist University Senate-approved seminary or university
- [Course of Study](#) through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) or through a regional COS school

To qualify for scholarships for full-time or part-time seminary enrollment:

- The student must be a certified candidate for ministry in Oregon-Idaho.
- The student must provide a written recommendation from the student's District Superintendent.
- The student must provide three other recommendations that include:
 - At least one from a higher education faculty member knowledgeable about the student's academic performance
 - At least one from a person knowledgeable about the student's church leadership abilities
- Seminary study MEF recipients must agree to the following:
 - Carry a full-time academic load as defined by the seminary while in a traditional seminary setting
 - Complete no less than three units per year while taking courses in a part-time program
 - Upon completion of the academic training, the recipient shall serve under appointment in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church for a minimum of two years.

If the candidate fails to meet the above conditions, any amount advanced shall be considered a loan, unless repaid within five years. This loan shall be repayable with an interest rate and on such terms as the Board of Ordained Ministry shall determine.

Scholarship grants shall be paid directly to the seminary.

Available funding for MEF scholarships for seminary students is not restricted by the quadrennial limit:

For scholarships for full-time study, applicants can apply for:

- No more than \$1,500 per year, with a maximum eligibility of \$4,500

For scholarships for part-time study, applicants can apply for:

- Up to \$500 per semester unit, with a maximum eligibility of \$3,000

To qualify for scholarships for [Course of Study or Licensing School](#), applicants must:

- Be a certified candidate in OR-ID and recommended for licensing
- Contact the Board of Ordained Ministry Local Pastor Coordinator *before* enrolling in the course
- Submit all receipts and confirmations to the BOM Local Pastor Coordinator
 - Meal receipts must be itemized (showing the food/beverage ordered)

Available funding for MEF scholarships for Course of Study (COS) or Licensing School students:

For COS or Licensing School scholarships, applicants can apply for assistance for tuition, meals, and travel:

- Up to \$1,000 for Licensing School
- Up to \$500 per class for COS, with a maximum eligibility of \$1,500 per year

The Ministerial Education Fund can support post-graduate or intensive graduate work through:

- Pastoral leaders who participate in **intensive coursework equivalent** to or higher than university-level accredited work may receive up to \$500 with the approval of the district superintendent
- Pastoral leaders who engage in **advanced seminary degree work** (beyond a master of divinity degree or equivalent) may receive up to \$1,500 per year if returning to an approved appointment upon completion of the degree.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR MEF MONIES?

- **Provisional and full members** of the Oregon-Idaho Conference
- **Clergy from other denominations** appointed to OR-ID under ¶346.2, in order to complete United Methodist History, Doctrine, and Polity
- **Clergy from other Methodist denominations** appointed to OR-ID under ¶346.1, seeking educational equivalency for membership in OR-ID
- **Certified candidates** attending Licensing School who have been recommended for licensing in OR-ID by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry
- **Licensed Local Pastors** appointed in OR-ID:
 - May apply for scholarship support for Course of Study (COS)
 - May apply for any MEF monies after completion of COS or a master's degree in divinity (MDiv)
- **Laité assigned by the District Superintendent** to a pastoral role may apply for MEF support; the BOM will direct that funds be taken from the interest earned on the funds rather than from the MEF directly.

- Laity working on educational requirements for **Certified Lay Ministry** may apply for MEF support; the BOM will direct that funds be taken from the interest earned on the funds rather than from the MEF directly.

HOW DOES ONE APPLY FOR MEF MONIES?

All MEF grants and scholarships are accessed through a single application form, managed by the MEF Coordinator for the Board of Ordained Ministry. Each application is processed by the Coordinator, who will either approve the request if it meets the guidelines of this MEF policy or pass it on to the BOM or the BOM Executive Committee for action.

- For one-time events, the application must be submitted within 90 days of the conclusion of the event.
- For ongoing supports (such as coaching or spiritual direction), the applicant can apply for funding for one year at a time. Questions can be emailed to bom@umoi.org.

The application can be found on the [BOM's webpage](#), or through this link: [MEF Application](#).

Grant recipients will be required to complete a brief report no later than 90 days following completion of the event for which they have received funding (for ongoing supports, the report should be submitted at the conclusion of the time period which has been funded). A link to the report form will be supplied when the recipient is notified of the grant approval. Subsequent grant requests will not be considered until the report has been submitted.

POLICY CHANGES

The Board of Ordained Ministry is authorized to make annual changes to the dollar amounts in this policy, as the BOM deems necessary to respond to current economic realities, in order to balance the needs of pastoral leaders with the financial health of the Ministerial Education Fund itself. These changes do not require a vote of the annual conference. The updated policy will be published annually in the Conference Journal and on the [BOM's webpage](#).

OTHER ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

A variety of other scholarships outside of the Ministerial Education Fund are also available to theology students. A [list with more information](#) can be found on the conference website.

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