

**Instructions for Completing  
Certification and Release for Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender  
and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates  
(revised 6/1/14)**

**North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Board of Ordained Ministry**

The Board of Ordained Ministry requires legal/criminal/sex offender and credit background information for all candidates for ordained ministry by certification or transfer, and for all candidates for local pastor licensing, prior to their being approved by the Board. The Board will use this information in order to evaluate candidates' fitness for ordained and licensed ministry in the North Alabama Conference. The Board's policy states that evidence of criminal/ legal/sex offender activity shall not, in and of itself constitute grounds for denial of transfer or certification of candidacy. The Board's intent in requiring this information is to assure that all legal/criminal/sex offender and credit issues have been resolved by the candidate prior to approval by the Board. The Board's policy is that candidates who have unresolved issues related to legal/criminal/sex offender or credit activity may be unfit for ordained or licensed ministry.

Steps to follow:

1. Review the "Policy for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates", and "Procedures for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates."
2. Complete the "Certification and Release for Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records for Ministry Candidates" ("Certification and Release"). This must be signed in the presence of a notary public and your signature must be acknowledged (notarized) by the notary. **DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM UNTIL YOU HAVE A NOTARY PRESENT.**
3. Complete the information required by our background screening partner, Employment Screening Services (ESS). The information to be completed is on page 1 of the ESS form, particularly the questions within the block identified as "APPLICANT INFORMATION TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT: PLEASE USE BLACK INK."
4. Mail or deliver the completed Certification and Release form and the completed ESS form to the Board of Ordained Ministry at 898 Arkadelphia Road, Birmingham, Alabama 35204.
5. If your Certification and Release or any of the information received from your legal/criminal/sex offender and credit background checks pursuant to your Certification and Release disclose prior criminal, legal, sex offender or questionable credit activity, you may be required to meet with the Legal and Criminal Background Committee of the Board. You will be contacted by the Committee chair if an interview is required.

**Policy for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and  
Credit Records  
Of Ministry Candidates  
(revised 6/1/14)**

**North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Board of Ordained Ministry**

1. Disclosure of legal/criminal/sex offender and credit records to the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be required as part of the application process for candidates for ordained ministry by certification or transfer, and for candidates for licensing as local pastors.
  - a. It shall be the candidate's responsibility to provide all requested information in a timely fashion. The candidate's application will be considered incomplete until the Board of Ordained Ministry has received all information.
  - b. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall adhere to the provisions of this Policy and the provisions of the "Procedures for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates."
2. Confidentiality of legal/criminal/sex offender and credit records shall be maintained by the Board of Ordained Ministry in accordance with the following policy. Legal/criminal/sex offender and credit records received by the Board of Ordained Ministry in connection with candidacy shall be available to the members and staff of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the resident Bishop, and the District Superintendent of the district from which the candidate seeks approval for ordination or licensing. The information may also be disclosed to any other person whom the Board deems necessary or appropriate in connection with a candidate's request for consideration as a candidate, ordained, licensed pastor, or transferee of the North Alabama Conference. Records will also be disclosed to others as required by the then-current edition of the Book of Discipline, by applicable civil and criminal law, or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction.
3. Disclosure or evidence of criminal/legal/sex offender or questionable credit activity shall not, in and of itself, constitute grounds for denying a candidate for certification, transfer, or licensing. In the event a background check reveals any such information:
  - a. The candidate shall be required to show that issues of past or present criminal/legal/sex offender and/or questionable credit activity have been resolved.
  - b. Candidacy shall be immediately discontinued, and transfer shall not be granted, for any candidate who cannot or will not demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Board of Ordained Ministry that issues of criminal/legal/sex offender or questionable credit activity have been resolved.
  - c. Any candidate who has an action pending in civil or criminal court shall not be denied certification or transfer simply because the action is pending. If the candidate can show that issues of past or present criminal/legal/sex offender or questionable credit activity have been resolved, he or she may be granted certification or transfer at the discretion of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

**Procedures for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and  
Credit Records  
Of Ministry Candidates  
(revised 6/1/14)**

**North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Board of Ordained Ministry**

1. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall supply the District Superintendents with copies of the “Certification and Release for Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records for Ministry Candidates” (the “Certification and Release”), the “Disclosure and Acknowledgement” form supplied by Employment Screening Services (the “ESS Form”), the “Instructions for Completing Certification and Release for Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates,” the “Policy for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates,” and the “procedures for Evaluating the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender and Credit Records of Ministry Candidates” (collectively, the “Certification and Release Documents”).
2. Persons seeking status of Certified Candidate: When a person moves from Inquiring Candidate to Exploring Candidate, the District Superintendent involved shall inform the candidate of the Annual Conference’s policy which requires disclosure of criminal, legal and credit background information. The District Superintendent and the District Candidacy Coordinator shall supply each Exploring Candidate with a set of the Certification and Release Documents when the candidate is registered with the Division of Ordained Ministry.
3. Persons applying for transfer: When a person seeks to transfer into the annual conference from another annual conference, another Methodist denomination, or another Christian denomination, the District Superintendent shall inform the candidate of the North Alabama Annual Conference’s policy concerning disclosure of criminal, legal and credit background information. The District Superintendent or his/her designee shall supply each transfer applicant with a set of the Certification and Release Documents, together with the paperwork required by the transfer process. (Said documents are available through the Office of Ordained Ministry).
4. Each candidate for ordained or licensed ministry and each transfer applicant shall provide all information requested in the Certification and Release and the ESS Form, sign the Certification and Release and the ESS Form. The Certification and Release must be signed in the presence of a notary public and it must be acknowledged (“notarized”) by the notary public. Once completed, the candidate or transfer applicant should return the Certification and Release and the ESS Form to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
5. Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender Background and Credit records shall be received and kept in confidence by the staff of the Board of Ordained Ministry in accordance with the Policy for Evaluating the Criminal and Legal Records of Ministry Candidates.
6. The Presiding Bishop and Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry or their designees shall review the Certification and Release, the ESS Form, and any legal/criminal/sex offender or credit records received in response thereto, with respect to each candidate, and shall make a summary report to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
7. Persons seeking status of Certified Candidate: The Legal Background Screening Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall review the legal background and credit information from each ministry candidate, after having received his or her Certification and Release, ESS Form, and any criminal/legal/sex offender and/or credit records received in response thereto, in order to make an initial determination with regard to the candidate’s criminal /legal/sex offender and credit background. The reviewers may recommend continuing candidacy, the imposition of additional requirements, or immediate discontinuance of candidacy. The Legal Background Screening Committee may choose at its discretion not to

interview candidates whose criminal/legal/sex offender or credit history background information shows no issues of criminal or credit activity that would require resolution.

8. Persons applying for transfer: The Legal Background Screening Committee shall review each transfer application after examining his or her Certification and Release, ESS Form and any criminal/legal/sex offender and/or credit records received in response thereto, in order to make an initial determination with regard to the applicant's criminal/ legal/sex offender and credit background. The reviewers may recommend transfer, the imposition of additional requirements, or denial of transfer. The Legal Background Screening Committee may choose at its discretion not to interview transfer applicants whose criminal/legal/sex offender background or credit history information shows no issues of criminal or credit activity that would require resolution.
9. If additional requirements are recommended for the candidate on the grounds of legal/criminal/sex offender or credit background information, a summary of the pertinent information shall be presented to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
10. If a recommendation of immediate discontinuance or denial on the grounds of legal/criminal/sex offender or credit background is made for a particular candidate, a summary of the pertinent information shall be presented to the Board of Ordained Ministry prior to its vote on the issue.
11. If more information is needed in order to make a decision, then, by majority vote of the members of the Legal Background Screening Committee present and voting, the contents of the file shall be disclosed to the members of the Board of Ordained Ministry.
12. Persons seeking status of Certified Candidate: The decisions of the Board of Ordained Ministry with regard to criminal/legal/sex offender and credit background shall be given promptly to the candidate, to the Candidacy Mentor, to the District Candidacy Coordinator and to the District Superintendent involved.
13. Persons applying for transfer: The decisions of the Board of Ordained Ministry with regard to criminal/legal/sex offender and credit background shall be given promptly to the candidate and to the Presiding Bishop.
14. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall maintain a permanent record of any written evidence that any candidate submits to demonstrate that issues of criminal/legal/sex offender or adverse credit activity have been resolved.

**RELEASE FORM**

**For Criminal, Legal and Sex Offender Records and Credit Report  
of Candidates For Ordained Ministry**

**North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church  
Board of Ordained Ministry**

**AFTER COMPLETING THIS FORM IT SHOULD BE MAILED TO:  
THE OFFICE OF ORDAINED MINISTRY**

**898 Arkadelphia Road, Birmingham, AL 35204**

**Please send a personal check payable to North Alabama Conference in the amount of**

**\$20.00**

SS# \_\_\_\_\_

Full Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home #: \_\_\_\_\_ Work#: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's License # \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

District Candidacy Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Candidacy Goal (Circle appropriate one; if uncertain, circle all that apply): Elder Deacon Local Pastor

If you have had your name legally changed, list all former legal names(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List all names you have used or by which you have been known, including any nicknames and aliases you have used:

\_\_\_\_\_

Beginning with your current address, list all addresses where you have lived in the past 10 years:

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

(Attach additional page, if necessary.)

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The information provided in this Release, and any information that may be gathered by the Board of Ordained Ministry pursuant to this Release, will be available to members of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the District Superintendent of the District from which you seek approval for candidacy or ordination, and the Presiding Bishop of the North Alabama Conference. The information may also be disclosed to any other person whom the Board deems necessary or appropriate in connection with your request for consideration as a candidate, ordained, or transferee of the North Alabama Conference. If you answer “YES” to any of the questions below, or if the background check conducted or requested by the Board of Ordained Ministry indicates that you should have answered “YES,” you will be asked to meet with the Board of Ordained Ministry’s Legal and Criminal Background Committee. **Please be extremely careful in completing this form and do not omit any pertinent information.** If you have any questions concerning how to complete this form, contact the Office of Ordained Ministry at the Conference Center – 1-800-239-7950 (in state) or 205-226-7968 or 7970.

1. Have you ever been accused in writing, investigated, arrested, indicted, or convicted for a crime? This includes any criminal offense, whether a felony or a misdemeanor, and regardless of your age at the time of the incident and regardless of the reason for the incident and how it was ultimately resolved, including cases that were completely dismissed. You should, for example, answer this question with a “Yes” if you have ever been arrested for a DUI or DWI (driving while under the influence of alcohol or any drug or medicine), were arrested as a juvenile, or have been arrested in connection with any domestic, family, business, or financial dispute. This does not include traffic violations that resulted only in a ticket that was paid without your being taken to court or charged with any criminal offense.

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If YES, attach additional page(s) providing details of each accusation, investigation, arrest, indictment, and conviction. If any issues of past or present criminal activity have not been resolved, so indicate. For instance, if you are still serving a period of probation or supervised release, or are on parole, or if you owe a fine or restitution to any victim, you must provide this information. Attach copies of any court records or judgments showing resolution of any criminal issues, if available.

2. Have you ever been accused in writing, investigated, arrested, indicted, or convicted for any incident involving sexual misconduct or child abuse or molestation, or child neglect?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If YES, attach additional page(s) providing details of each written accusation, investigation, arrest, indictment, and conviction. If any issues relating to such events have not been resolved, so indicate. For instance, if you are still serving a period of probation or supervised release, or are on parole, or if you owe a fine or restitution to any victim, you must provide this information. Attach copies of any written accusation, court records, and judgments showing resolution of any criminal issues, if available.

3. Have you ever been involved in a lawsuit or legal claim as a plaintiff or defendant? This includes domestic or family cases, such as divorce and child custody matters, as well as financial and other civil and criminal cases, such as bankruptcy, debtor’s court, and cases in which your insurer provides you with legal representation and/or a defense. This does not include civil class actions in which you were only a member of the class described in the lawsuit and did not appear in court, testify by deposition, or agree to be listed as a named plaintiff or named defendant.

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If YES, attach additional page(s) explaining each lawsuit and/or legal claim and showing that issues of past or present lawsuits have been resolved and should not be an impediment to your certification or transfer.

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS CERTIFICATION MUST BE SIGNED IN THE PRESENCE OF A NOTARY PUBLIC AND MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED (“NOTARIZED”) BY THE NOTARY**

**CERTIFICATION AND RELEASE**

I hereby certify that the information provided on and with this form is accurate. I hereby grant permission to the Board of Ordained Ministry to verify all information disclosed on this form and all information provided by me in connection with this form or as a part of the Board of Ordained Ministry’s Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender Background and Credit Check. Additionally, I hereby grant permission to the Board of Ordained Ministry to share with whomever the Board deems necessary or appropriate the information on this form, all information provided by me in connection with this form, and all information that the Board of Ordained Ministry may gather in connection with the Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender Background and Credit Check. For myself, my heirs, executors, and administrators, I do hereby release and forever discharge the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church, the Board of Ordained Ministry of the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church, and each of their respective members, officers, and agents from any and all claims, actions, and causes of action which may arise as a consequence of the disclosure of any information gained in the course of the Board of Ordained Ministry’s Legal/Criminal/Sex Offender Background and Credit Check.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Sworn to and subscribed before me on this, the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public  
My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_