

# On Methodism

---

## *FROM LICENSED LOCAL PASTOR TO ELDER:*

### *WHAT IT MEANS*

In answer to so many people's questions about Eric's recent ordination as an elder in the United Methodist Church, here is a brief overview of the difference between a licensed local pastor, which Eric was, and an elder, which Eric now is.

Essentially, a licensed local pastor serves in a local congregation, where he proclaims the Word of God, leads in worship and liturgy, performing the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, the services of marriage, burial, confirmation, and membership reception. His authority as a pastor is only within the setting and during the time of the appointment. He is not guaranteed an appointment. Although he attends the Annual Conference, he does not have a vote on any essential issues. A licensed local pastor is essentially an elder in training or on probation. He must have completed at least 1/3 of the educational requirements for an elder in church history, doctrine and theology. Most local licensed pastors also have a college degree, but it is not required.

Becoming an elder involves completion of one's formal education (Master of Divinity; most also have a bachelor's degree of some kind), having been commissioned and served as a provisional member (for at least 2 years) and found by the Church to be of sound learning, of Christian character, possessing the necessary gifts and evidence of God's grace, and whose call to ordination has been confirmed by the Church. Elder Eric now has the right to vote on Church constitutional amendments, election of delegates to all conferences, and on matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy. He is also assured of a lifetime of appointments.

There were questions about deacons, too, which are also ordained in the United Methodist Church. But deacons are not guaranteed appointments, only assist in the administration of the sacraments, and concentrate on leading in service and equipping others for the church's ministry through teaching, proclamation, and worship. Deacons find their own jobs, either in a local church or in a ministry connected to a church or a nonaffiliated Christian ministry.

For more thorough information, please see the Book of Discipline under the Ministry of the Ordained. Other resources used included UMC Web sites.

If you feel that you are being called to some type of ordained ministry, the following two websites may be helpful: [www.IsGodCallingYou.org](http://www.IsGodCallingYou.org) or [www.ExploreCalling.org](http://www.ExploreCalling.org).

—Cindy Sears