

The Course of Study for Licensed Local Pastors

Cheryl George
Local Pastor Registrar
102 N Main Street
Petersburg, WV 26847
lpregistrar@wvumc.org
304.851.7672

The **Course of Study** (COS) is a designated pathway of theological education for licensed local pastors. Prescribed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), the **Basic Five-Year Course of Study** is a year-round experiential and classroom learning process. The COS consists of 20 courses, all of which are offered at each Course of Study School.

The Local Pastor Registrar (LPR) supports and guides licensed local pastors as they make their way through the Course of Study. The LPR is a resource for questions, registration, interpretation, and oversees matters related to the Course of Study, serving as a member of the Board of Ordained Ministry and regional COS boards. All COS registration forms must be signed by the Local Pastor Registrar.

Full-time licensed pastors must attend one of the approved [Regional Course of Study Schools](#). Pastors are encouraged to explore the various formats and schedules offered, particularly at MTSO, Duke, and Wesley. All regional schools are options.

Licensed Pastors appointed on a part-time basis have the option of attending an Extension School. Where numbers make it sustainable, the Division of Ordained Ministry authorizes a Regional School to have an extension site, often making courses more accessible to bi-vocational pastors. Click [here](#) to view a list of COS regional and extension schools.

For part-time licensed local pastors in the WV Conference, the [Course of Study School of Ohio](#) (an extension of MTSO), located at Spring Heights Camp, is a popular option. **Only part-time licensed local pastors may attend a COS Extension School. However, those serving part-time have the choice of attending any COS school that best fits their needs, whether regional or extension.**

A limited number of the Basic Course of Study classes are available in an [online format through GBHEM](#). According to the Book of Discipline, no more than one-half of the classes may be taken in this format.

Curriculum

The Basic Course of Study seeks to meet the needs of both the full-time and part-time local pastors. Normally, courses are to be taken in the sequence prescribed by the curriculum. At a minimum, students are expected to take first year courses in the first year of study and fifth year courses in the final year of study. In addition to these basic curriculum courses, the school may provide a communication skills program for students. You'll find an overview of the COS curriculum overview here:

<https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/licensing-course-of-study/>.

West Virginia Conference Financial Support

Our apportionment dollars help fund the Course of Study program through the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) and through Conference budget support of students.

WV Conference Scholarship Support of Course of Study Students:

— *Regional Schools:*

- \$250/course
- \$100 additional upon successful course completion.
To receive the \$100 additional, you must submit a copy of your grade report and [this request](#) to the Local Pastor Registrar.

— *Extension Schools:*

- \$200/course

— *Online COS courses:*

- \$200/course

The WV Conference pays the student grant to the COSSO Extension School directly for its students. Some regional schools require payment in advance, while others will bill the Conference after successful completion. The Conference Local Pastor Registrar will have information on each school's method of tuition payment for this Conference.

Note: The Conference does not pay for a grade of "F" or a class withdrawal. In those cases, the student must pay for the next completed and passed course before being eligible for financial aid once again.

Time Frame for Completing Course of Study Work

Full-time Local Pastors must complete the Course of Study within eight (8) years and part-time Local Pastors must complete the Course of Study within twelve (12) years of being licensed, unless a family situation or other circumstance limits the Local Pastor's ability to meet the above requirements. Extensions to this time require a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the DCOM, recommendation by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM), and the vote of clergy members in full connection (**¶319.3, 2016 Book of Discipline**).

Annual Progress Expected

Local Pastors must make progress in the Course of Study every year. According to ¶318.1 in the *2016 Book of Discipline*, full-time Local Pastors "shall complete four courses per year in the Course of Study." Part-time Local Pastors "shall complete two courses per year" according to ¶318.2.

The Local Pastor Registrar is ready to assist you. However, students are responsible for their Course of Study progress and documentation. Please keep a copy of all your Course of Study records, including all your coursework.

Helpful websites referenced above:

<https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/licensing-course-of-study/>

<https://www.gbhem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Regional-Course-of-Study-Schools-1.pdf>

<https://www.gbhem.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Extension-COS-Schools-042920.pdf>

<https://www.wvumc.org/spiritual-leaders/>

<https://www.wvumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/COS-Grant-Req-Form-Sept2022.pdf>

<https://coswv.org/>