

Report of UUA Trustees Ministerial Fellowship Committee April, 2009

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) gathered at the Renaissance Suites Hotel near O'Hare airport from March 24th – 31st, 2009, and the following report highlights the activities of the MFC that may be of particular interest to the UUA Board of Trustees.

Summary of Candidates Seeking Preliminary Fellowship:

We saw a total of 23 candidates (11 men and 12 women) ranging in age from 27 to 60 (with seven candidates under 40, and sixteen 40 and above). There were two return candidates who originally saw the MFC within the previous year. One was discouraged from pursuing further preparation for ministry and the other was entered into preliminary fellowship.

The Committee grants the following Categories:

- I (“good to go!”)
- II (cleared for fellowship providing contingencies are met)
- III (individuals the MFC would like to see again following additional work on ministerial formation)
- IV (discouraging the candidate from further preparation for ministry)
- V (no potential for ministry)

The following table summarizes the MFC decisions at our March 2009 meeting:

SCHOOL	MFC DECISION/ CATEGORY					Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	
Starr King	4	1				5
Meadville Lombard	3	3	1	1		8
Harvard	1	1				2
Andover Newton	--	--	--	--	--	0
Other - non UU	3	2	2	1		8
Total candidates	11	7	3	2	0	23

AR/AO/MC Workshop

The Committee gathered early for a full day workshop with Paula Cole Jones which focused on multi-cultural competence. We reviewed the concepts of racial identity development as well as the stages of institutional change involved in becoming a multi-cultural society. Paula challenged Committee members by asking “Do UU ministers have the capacity to transform this association?” We also discussed the challenges of assessing multi-cultural competence, with Paula suggesting that it be part of early ministerial formation, and then repeated before a candidate’s interview with the MFC. We agreed that as individuals and as institutional leaders, we are on a huge learning curve.

Community Ministry Renewals

The Committee denied a request by the Society for Community Ministry that the rule permitting community ministers to affiliate with a district, the UUA, or a UUA Associate organization be reinstated (this was dropped in the recent major rule revisions.) While there was a recognition of unique situations that may pose obstacles to affiliation, ultimately, the working group decided that the rule should stand as is. Ministers who find themselves in a situation where congregational affiliation is a problem may request a waiver.

Continuing Education in Sexual Health

Debra Haffner, who is currently a member of the MFC, has agreed to lead the Committee in continuing education in the area of sexual health. There will be time set aside at the September 2009 meeting to explore the following ideas: why sexual health needs to be a competency for ministerial fellowship; what a sexually healthy professional looks like; what kind of training would the Committee need to require. A follow-up workshop with Debra will be scheduled for the MFC's December meeting.

Institutional Apology?

In cases of conduct unbecoming a minister, there is often a call for the offending minister to formally apologize to their colleague(s) and/or congregation. The Committee would like the Board to consider a policy regarding the nature and creation of institutional apology in cases of misconduct. In the short term, the MFC will continue to include expressions of regret in their correspondence with complainants.

Budget Report

All non-essential travel has been cut along with staff participation at GA. Ministry & Professional Leadership (MPL) will have two fewer staff present and the rest of the staff will be there for fewer days. For the next couple of years the MFC will hold two of its three meetings in Boston to lower per diem costs. The third meeting will most likely alternate between San Francisco and Chicago. The RSCC budget has also been reduced and there will be fewer meetings. The number of aspirants has decreased by 9% this past year so the decreased schedule should still meet the needs of those seeking an interview.

MFC Response to BOT Motion

The Committee spent considerable time discussing the Board's charge that the MFC coordinate willing partners to address the concerns regarding "ministerial culture, UU growth and the impact of credentialing" as identified at the Excellence in Ministry Summit. **A response proposal from the MFC to the BOT is attached to this report.**

So long, farewell . . .

This was a bittersweet meeting for both of us as it was our last time to represent the Board as Trustee liaisons. Although we will miss the deeply sacred work and the camaraderie of the MFC, we will not miss the extensive preparation and workload of the Committee!

Respectfully submitted by Jackie Shanti and Burton Carley

[Jackie's note] The Committee was especially appreciative of the "inspirations" presented by Burton Carley every morning. What a gift to begin each day with Burton leading us in worship! It was truly a blessing.

**PROPOSAL TO THE UUA BOARD FOR A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE
MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN FOSTERING EXCELLENCE IN
MINISTRY**

March 29, 2009

At its March 2009 Meeting the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) received the charge from the UUA Board passed at its January 2009 meeting to coordinate "willing partners in addressing the theological education priority of 'Ministerial Culture, UU growth, and the Impact of Credentialing' as identified at the Excellence in Ministry Summit. The scope of the questions raised at the Summit has prompted us to recommend that you appoint a Ministerial Fellowship Review Group (MFRG) to undertake a comprehensive review of the UUA's credentialing process and our means for encouraging excellence in our ministers and in our ministry to the multicultural world in which we live.

The MFC had already been discussing the need for a review of our competencies. We are ever mindful that in our ministry there are a wide range of competencies, a wide range of needs in our congregations, and that excellence in ministry is recognized differently in different settings. Since the Excellence in Ministry Summit we have moved to the view that a more comprehensive evaluation of the credentialing process is warranted at this time of change and challenge in the Association, rather than just an internal review of the competencies we require. There was also recognition of the burden and the unconscious deficiencies the MFC might bring to doing this internally. The MFC recognizes that resources are tight and discussed whether a review group could undertake this task without the need for much travel for face to face meetings. We believe that this is possible and will be a necessary limitation on any such review processes in the future anyway. Our Chair Rev. Wayne Arnason will be seeking consultation with the Moderator about an appropriate time frame within which the Board might discuss this proposal and act upon it. This process may involve two to three years.

Below are some preliminary questions and proposal discussed at the open business meeting of the MFC held March 29, 2009.

1. We need to start out with a needs assessment. What is the problem we are trying to solve? What do we think congregations and ministers are missing? What can previous studies of ministry and the MFC tell us? How can other faith traditions' credentialing processes inform our process? How does the current process enhance or hinder the attractiveness of ministerial preparation and credentialing for the kinds of ministers we want to attract, in particular under-represented groups in our ministry, including people of color and young adults?
2. Should we create a stage of congregational leadership credentialing separate from or concurrent with entering into the ministerial fellowship process, e.g. a credentialed lay leader process?
3. Is ministerial formation, like faith development, a life long task and should the MFC have a role in encouraging and recognizing the later stages of ministerial formation as well as the early ones?
4. What are the competencies that we should require of entering ministers? Do these competencies change or expand at later stages of a minister's career?
5. How does dominant group privilege influence the architecture of the MFC's current process and the content of our competencies and interviews?

6. What is the difference between entry level competence and excellence in the competencies? How is excellence recognized and rewarded?
7. What can we learn from other institutions that conduct group interview processes for credentialing or hiring? How do we value consistency and how do we value creativity in the interview process? We currently have two interviews in the ministerial formation process. Should there be an interview process at the time a person is up for final fellowship?
8. Is "final fellowship" a meaningful concept any more?
9. How can we be more mindful of the economic realities involved in this process and address the class issues the process involves?

What Might a Ministerial Fellowship Review Group Look Like?

We encourage the Board to create a review group that is intentionally multicultural and to consider how the review group might avoid being dominated by UU's whose lives have been shaped by the dominant culture paradigm. Our Process Working Group had these suggestions for what such a group might include but there may be other possibilities:

"Two members of the MFC; four ministers representing excellence, one of whom is working in the community, one of whom is working in Religious Education; two people from our two Unitarian Universalist seminaries; two lay persons who have experience in some part of our formation process, with experience on search committees or Committees on Ministry. That would be ten people."

At an AR-AO-M training we undertook with Paula Cole Jones during our meeting another idea that was floated was that a review group could be conceived in size and representation by "quarters." One quarter could be people of color who have been through the MFC process successfully. One quarter could be lay people from historically marginalized groups. One quarter could be people who have previous service on the MFC or an RSCC. One quarter could be people who bring a defined expertise we would like to draw upon. Some members might fulfill more than one of these categories. Depending on how this recruitment process goes, the group might be eight to twelve people.

Some Suggestions for expertise or history that could be represented among the members of the MFRG:

- People with Committee on Ministry or Search Committee or Internship Committee experience who have experienced evaluating ministers.
- Ministers or laity with significant Human Resources and/or organizational development experience in corporate settings.
- A person with skills that could assist in researching other denominations.
- Members of other historically marginalized groups.
- Former staff and MFC members like David Huebner or Ken Reeves or UU consultants like Dan Hotchkiss or Larry Peers.
- Theological Seminary leaders.
- Ministers who recently completed final fellowship.

A Possible Timetable

We could imagine a group like this being charged by the Board in January 2010 and reporting back to the Board in March of 2011, with action in response to their recommendations unfolding over the next two years. We would hope to see the entire process completed and recommendations implemented by June of 2013.

UUMA Involvement

As a courtesy and to encourage Board and MFC conversations about what role the UU Ministers Association might play in this process, this memo is being copied to the President of the UUMA.