

# Our Professional Ministry: Structure, Support and Renewal

*A Report by the  
Commission on Appraisal*

*Unitarian Universalist Association, Commission on  
25 Beacon Street Appraisal,  
Boston, Massachusetts*

**1992**

FOLIO  
BX  
9850  
.U64  
1992  
COP.1

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
A Vision of Ministry .....	5
Recruitment .....	7
Theological Education .....	12
Fellowship, Disciplinary Action, and the MFC .....	26
Ordination .....	35
Settlement for Community Ministers .....	40
Evaluation and Support .....	47
Continuing Education .....	57
Pre-Retirement and Retirement .....	74
Congregational Relationships .....	81
Summary .....	90
Appendix A: Consultations on Ministry .....	95
Appendix B: Credentialing and Ordaining .....	98
Appendix C: UUMA Mentor Program .....	103
Appendix D: CENTER Program .....	107

The Commission on Appraisal was established under the Constitution and By-Laws of the Unitarian Universalist Association adopted at the time of the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America in 1961.

Article V, Section 5.8 of the current Bylaws states the following:

The Commission on Appraisal shall consist of nine elected members. A member shall not during the term of office serve as an officer or hold a salaried position in the Association. The Commission on Appraisal shall:

- (a) review any function or activity of the Association which in its judgment will benefit from an independent review and report its conclusions to a regular General Assembly;
- (b) study and suggest approaches to issues which may be of concern to the Association; and
- (c) report to a regular General Assembly at least once every four years on the program and accomplishments of the Association.

Previous major reports of the Commission include the following:

- 1968     *Study of District Organization Plan*
- 1970     *Processes, procedures and Programming of the General Assembly*
- 1975     *The Unitarian Universalist Merger, 1961-1975*
- 1977     *The Representative Nature of the General Assembly*
- 1981     *Lay Leadership*
- 1983     *EmPOWERment: One Denomination's Quest for Racial Justice, 1967-1982*
- 1989     *The Quality of Religious Life in Unitarian Universalist Congregations*

# Introduction

It seems there has always been a sense of discontent about religious leaders. The Hebrews in the wilderness murmured that Moses and Aaron were leading them astray. So perhaps this issue has existed as long as there have been public religious leaders. Still, there are particular reasons why the Commission on Appraisal determined to make a study of our Unitarian Universalist ministry at this time.

In 1988 Jack Mendelsohn, then President of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), wrote to the Commission on Appraisal (CoA) and reported that the UUMA Executive Committee unanimously requested a study of the "role, procedures and policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee" (MFC), the Association's credentialing body for ministers. He pointed out that the MFC has not been a subject of study since its creation by the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America some thirty years ago. He also noted that concern about the MFC was being heard by the UUMA from its members.

Independently, lay concern about the quality of ministry surfaced at regional hearings of the CoA. People complained about the poor quality of ministers being recommended for settlement. This was echoed by some interim ministers who saw the results of ministries that ended in crisis.

The 1989 CoA study, *The Quality of Religious Life in Unitarian Universalist Congregations*, recorded a perceived lack of religious depth in many of our ministers that was felt to reflect a poverty of ministerial skills.

Add the recent high number of involuntary resignations from first ministries, and the public discipline of some ministers, and it is easy to understand why some have asked for stricter standards from the MFC and mandatory continuing education requirements for renewal of fellowship.

During 1989, conversations among the CoA, the UUMA, the MFC and the staff of the UUA made it clear that, while the MFC is central, other factors not under their control were also important. Ministerial quality and dependability emerge over a long period, starting before the MFC makes its decisions, and lasting long after. For example, decisions about who prepares for ministry are made before the MFC is involved. Ministerial training clearly affects results, but the school is determined by individual choice and financial realities. The fact that some ministers are ordained without being in fellowship (credentialed) causes confusion among the laity over who exactly is a UU minister. These and more contribute to the question of quality.

The MFC is the decisive point for determining the status of our ministers. However, the other stages, beginning with initial interest and lasting through retirement, all have a bearing on the quality of our professional leadership. A study of the MFC without consideration of these other aspects would do an injustice to the MFC and the ministry it serves.

The Commission on Appraisal, as an elected body of the General Assembly, is charged in the UUA Bylaws to study "any function or activity of the Association which in its judgment will benefit from an independent review." The CoA decided to study all the stages of ministry, from initial interest through retirement. Those stages are the UU structures of management, the skeletal form, on which all ministries grow. After some research it became evident that the matters of competence, quality and dependability applied to both the ministers and the structures. If we want good and dependable ministers, the management structures have to be good and dependable. Individual worthiness cannot be guaranteed by any system; the overall quality of the ministry, however, can be enhanced by improving its management structures, or stages. We identified the stages of our ministry as: Recruitment, Training, Credentialing, Ordination, Settlement, Evaluation, Continuing Education and Retirement.

Each stage receives independent treatment in this study. One exception, Ministerial Settlement, was studied independently by an *ad hoc* Task Force on Ministerial Settlement (the Stephen Committee), whose conclusions the CoA generally shares. Because the UUA has since opened a third track of ministry, Community Ministry, we felt it appropriate to comment on that area of settlement.

Ministry derives its authority and power from the laity. The study ends with a chapter outlining how congregations can take more responsibility and have more effect on the quality of professional religious leadership.

While each section has its own set of conclusions and recommendations, the CoA drew a few general conclusions about the status of our professional religious leadership.

**Our ministry is relatively healthy.** For example, we found:

Formal training sites are of good repute and try to respond to needs heard from congregations as well as students.

The MFC is generally effective in its credentialing and evaluating, and has refined its standards and procedures regularly to improve its performance.

Continuing education has become more than a slogan. The UUMA offers a growing list of services through CENTER (Continuing Education Network for Training, Enrichment and Renewal), and ministers are availing themselves of these and other enrichments.

**Money drives many of the problems.** The cost of education, and the relatively low rate of compensation, create a climate of "adverse selection." Prospective ministers may decline to enter for fear of debt. In-service ministers may feel driven to move from pulpit to pulpit to find higher paying positions. Continuing education is declined not by desire but due to cost. Older ministers may not feel able to retire for fear of poverty. Limited funding for bodies such as CENTER, the MFC and others, limits their abilities to intersect with ministers to address problems and shore up weaknesses.

**The course of ministry is disjointed.** Each of the stages operates more or less independently. There is no system holding them all together. While many of the same people may be

involved in the administration of all stages, they wear different official hats. Ministers on UUA staff deal with settlement and enforce those rules. Ministers on the MFC deal with credentialing and enforce those rules. Ministers with the UUMA enforce its rules. All these people are part of one ministry, and colleagues one with another. Yet the places where they face the issues of quality and support are scattered across several official constituencies. Lay people are involved at every level but without the collegiality of the ministers; sometimes they are led to believe there is some kind of complicity between ministers at the expense of laity.

The CoA is not recommending a unified system with centralized control. That would be inimical to our principles of individual conscience and congregational polity. But all should recognize the inherent incoherence of this system, and the lack of continuity between stages. It appears that one price of polity and individuality is a higher sense of isolation: of the structures from each other, and of the ministers and the laity from those structures.

If these seem obvious conclusions, their consequences are not. There are significant needs that we have found and tried to address. Each section of this report details recommendations for a particular stage, including:

- A more deliberate method of recruiting people into the UU ministry

- Scholarship money to defray the enormous cost of becoming a minister

- A stronger, larger MFC, with the capacity to work as two panels handling its legitimately demanding load

- Ordination as an act reserved for those in fellowship, taking place within an ongoing congregational involvement.

- An improved MFC post-credentialing evaluation process

- A more systematic process of continuing education, including the necessary financial support

- More focus on the potentially rich role of our retired ministers, and on services to assist them

The only way this study could be done is with the cooperation of the many others directly involved with professional ministry. Thus the CoA worked closely with members of the UUA Department of Ministry, the MFC, the UUMA, Unitarian Universalist-related seminaries and seminarians, the Society for the Larger Ministry, retired ministers, religious educators, and many others. We kept in close contact with the Task Force on Settlement, the Theological Education Grants Panel, the Committee on Excellence in the Ministry, and the committees working on ministerial compensation and development of systems for community ministers. In addition to those bodies, we acknowledge the invaluable assistance of David Pohl, Charles Gaines, Ellen Brandenburg and David Hubner of the Department of Ministry; Jack Mendelsohn and Carolyn Owen-Towle of the UUMA; Ken Sawyer, Burton Johnson, and Jean Rickard of the MFC; Stephen Shick of the Society for the Larger Ministry; and Lee Barker, Charles Kast and Tom Chulak who served on other commissions.

Our collaborative style in this study represents a departure from previous CoA procedure, which was to keep deliberations confidential until a report was released. While our charge for "independent study" may sometimes require confidentiality, we realize that collaboration during this study process enhances the results. For example, conversations held over several years have already produced changes, even before our recommendations are published.

Our findings and recommendations are just the beginning. We want everyone to participate in the conversation. These chapters help situate particular issues in larger contexts. Our nature as a congregational association, our vision of ministry, our tradition of lay and professional leadership, are all factors affecting professional ministry. No one program, body, or fund can possibly do enough. Neither, we hasten to add, is there any overall solution. This study of ministry, in addition to making specific recommendations, also suggests that there are several avenues of approach available to any problem. The solutions will lie in using the strengths of our movement, including the variety and creativity inherent in our free church tradition. We seek to leaven the process, to begin it, not complete it.

The Commission invites comments on this report. They can be sent to the Commission on Appraisal, c/o the Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108.

#### **Members of the Commission on Appraisal**

Dianne Arakawa (1991-97)  
Hingham, MA

Helen Backhouse (1983-93)  
Calgary, Alberta

Josiah Bartlett (1981-89)  
Berkeley, CA

Ruth Miles Bruns (1985-89)  
Rockville, MD

Jerry Davidoff (1987-93)  
Westport, CT

Florence Gelo (1989-95)  
Philadelphia, PA

James Hobart (1987-93)  
Denver, Colorado

Charles Howe (1989-95)  
Hyattsville, MD

Amy Kelly (1989-95)  
San Francisco, CA

Mark Morrison-Reed (1983-91)  
Toronto, Ontario

O'Ferrell Nelson (1985-91)  
Memphis, TN

David Sammons (1985-91)  
Walnut Creek, CA

Bonnie Stauffacher (1981-89)  
Milwaukee, WI

Deborah Roberts (1991-97)  
Shreveport, LA

Frederick Wooden (1991-97)  
Austin, TX

# A Vision of Ministry

While this study is concerned with a process designed to enhance the quality of professional ministry within the Unitarian Universalist Association, there is underlying this a guiding vision of ministry in its most basic sense.

"Ministry", it has been said, "is the work of a religious community as it seeks through faith to transform its members lives and the world around it".<sup>1</sup> As Neil Shadle has put it, "Ministry is the vocation of every person of faith, [and] Unitarian Universalism, as a democratic faith, affirms the 'priesthood of all believers'; we are all lay ministers, whether or not we choose to be professional religious leaders".<sup>2</sup> Thus, a professional minister can be regarded as a "minister to ministers", with all the members of the religious community ideally involved in a mutual ministry to each other and to the world.

There are obviously semantic difficulties involved in articulating this vision of ministry. From long-standing practice in our Association, the term "minister" has usually been understood as referring to a professional minister serving a congregation, when, in reality, any member of a congregation, whether professionally trained or not, who has a sense of calling and acts in response to that calling, is engaged in ministry and is hence a minister. David Eaton, Senior Minister of All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington DC, often tells the congregation there that "we are all ministers; a few of us are clergy as well". It is a useful distinction. However, while "clergy" is an adequate term for professional ministers taken collectively, "clergyman", "clergywoman", and "clergyperson" have a clumsy ring to them and are not likely to be widely used. We may well have to wait for new terms to emerge from our collective experience.

In our Association, made up as it is of autonomous churches and fellowships, each congregation can be regarded as ideally ministering to its own members, to the larger community in which it finds itself, and to the world, guided in this by the principles which it has covenanted to affirm and promote. While our congregations have consistently tried, through the UUA Department for Social Justice, the UU Service Committee, and various district and congregational programs, to minister to the larger community and to the world, our congregational polity and the concept of ministry that has gone with it have hindered our efforts.

However, the recent marked increase in the number of men and women who as professional ministers are going into community, rather than parish-based, ministries now offers our congregations an opportunity for a greatly enhanced prophetic ministry to the larger community and to the world. Much of the Commission on Appraisal's time and energy has been devoted to exploring ways in which these community ministries can best relate to the Association and its constituent congregations. Much hard work and experimentation remain to be done, however, and we must, as an Association, remain flexible in our thinking and organization as we enter into this exciting period of change.

But regardless of whether we are considering parish-based ministries or community ministries, the need for well-trained professional ministers with intelligence, commitment and strong interpersonal skills—women and men who will be able to effectively "minister to ministers"—is self-evident. The Commission's recommendations in this report are designed to help meet this

need, in full awareness that a diversity of gifts is called for, that is, a variety of leadership styles, personality types, interests, skills and emphases.

Our vision of ministry, then, is that of a cooperative enterprise, engaging lay ministers and professional ministers together, seeking through faith to transform not only the lives of the members of our congregations, but also the lives of the larger communities in which they exist, and the Life of the world around us.

#### References and Notes

1. Jody Shipley, paper "Please Call Us Clergy," prepared for the annual conference of the Society of the Larger Ministry, San Francisco CA, Nov. 9-11, 1990.
2. Paper, 1990 conference, Society of the Larger Ministry.

# Recruitment

## Introduction and History

The goal of a recruitment program for the Unitarian Universalist ministry is actively to recruit the best qualified candidates for our ministry.

The major recruitment issues before the Unitarian Universalist Association and its member churches include:

How do we find the best qualified candidates, including candidates among those now under-represented in our ministry: people of color/racial minorities, gays/lesbians, physically challenged, etc.?

What institutions and persons are involved in recruitment? What are their responsibilities? What are the relationships among them?

How do we finance a Unitarian Universalist recruitment program?

How do we recruit for and finance the three recognized tracks of ministry: parish, religious education, and community-based?

Historically, a decision to prepare for the Unitarian Universalist ministry has been an individual decision. Potential ministerial students have received informal encouragement from church ministers and lay persons, theological school faculty and staff of the Association. However, there has been no formal recruitment program or strategy for our ministry among Unitarian Universalist institutions: the Unitarian Universalist Association (or its predecessors), its member churches, our theological schools, or the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA).

It was not until 1900 that the American Unitarian Association assumed ministerial settlement as its institutional responsibility. From 1900 to the mid-1930s the President of the Association was responsible for ministerial settlement. The 1936 report of the Commission of Appraisal recommended that the American Unitarian Association establish a Department of Ministry. Among its responsibilities was ministerial settlement. This institutional pattern was adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association when Universalists and Unitarians merged in 1961.

More recently, the Association's Department of Ministry has maintained a staff member to work with Unitarian Universalist students enrolled in theological schools and seminaries.

Today, either by history or development, most of the stages of ministry have an institutional base. **Ordination** is congregational, **educational preparation** is based in the theological schools, **credentials** are established by the Association's Ministerial Fellowship Committee, **settlement** is the province of the UUA's Department of Ministry, **continuing education** standards and programs are established by the UUMA, **retirement services and assistance** are provided by the Department of Ministry.

The recruitment stage remains individual, with no institutional support or standards. The dual result is that outstanding candidates for our ministry often are not actively recruited, and less-qualified candidates enter the process. It is now time to consider a Unitarian Universalist institutional program for ministerial recruitment in order to enhance the quality of our ministry.

## **The Present Situation**

There is no UUA-established structure of responsibility and/or accountability for ministerial recruitment that includes all the major actors with a stake in ministry: the recruit or candidate; local congregations and their ministers; theological schools; the UUA Department of Ministry; the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee and, perhaps, the districts of the UUA and the UUMA.

Congregations have no formal role in recruitment. Ministers have a minimal formal role: typically, theological schools require a recommendation from a candidate's minister. (The UUA Department of Ministry requires a recommendation in the form of a ministerial interview as part of the fellowship process but that comes later than recruitment.) The UUMA has no formal role in recruitment.

Potential ministerial candidates are almost entirely self-selected. Minimal safeguards are built in by the UUA and the theological schools to weed out those who are unfit for ministry. The Department of Ministry and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for the UUA, and the theological schools serve as our evaluators. Over time, this role has shifted more and more from the theological schools towards the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

## **Moving Toward the Ideal**

A recruitment program would encompass the three different ministerial tracks presently recognized: parish, religious education and community-based.

Recruitment would be conceived as a joint venture including (1) the recruit/candidate, (2) the candidate's local congregation and minister, (3) a theological school or seminary, (4) the UUA, and (5) the UUMA.

A recruitment program would expand the criteria and the roles for achieving fellowship status. However, it would protect the right of anyone to pursue theological education. It would protect the right of the theological school to accept anyone it chooses. It would protect the right of the local congregation to call and ordain anyone it chooses.

At the same time, a recruitment plan would develop further the institutionalization of ministerial fellowship within the UUA. It would provide a voice for each of the five actors involved in ministry.

**Ministerial Recruit/Candidate.** A decision to pursue ministerial preparation begins with a strong sense of personal vocation. However, in an institutional setting ministry is not just a personal calling. Once the individual recognizes a personal vocation for ministry, the other actors enter the decision-making process to confirm the individual's qualifications for ministry.

**The Local Congregation and its Minister.** A recruit for the Unitarian Universalist ministry needs experience as a lay member in a local congregation. We propose two years active membership as an appropriate minimum standard. Exceptions could be granted on a case-by-case basis. Typically, a ministerial recruit would be nominated and sponsored by the local congregation's ministerial committee and the minister. This would initiate an on-going congregation relationship of congregational support and supervision following recruitment. The recruit-congregation relationship would continue until the candidate received the Ministerial Fellowship Committee's approval for preliminary ministerial fellowship. The recruit-congregation relationship could include congregational financial support for the candidate's theological education, a schedule of written reports to the congregation's committee on ministry, occasional preaching, teaching and other ministerial duties under ministerial supervision. However, many ministerial students are in schools which are long distances from their home congregations. Some of these congregational responsibilities could be carried out by a church and minister closer to the theological school or seminary.

The local congregation's involvement in ministerial recruitment and supervision serves two major purposes. First, it provides a long-term assessment of the recruit's qualifications and qualities for ministry. Second, it goes beyond evaluation toward shaping and deepening the prospective minister's concept of ministry. Involvement with a local congregation offers the recruit engagement in systematic reflection on ministry based on an ongoing experience in, and relationship with, a congregation's life. At the same time, this relationship increases the congregation's awareness of their ongoing contribution to "their" recruit, and their contribution to our ministry.

If local congregations were structured and charged to include ministerial recruitment, there would likely be a more systematic congregational effort to identify and encourage ministerial recruits. A congregation's recruitment would include sons and daughters of their congregation, but it need not be limited only to congregational members. Congregational recruitment could include the minister and the committee on ministry searching out potential recruits in nearby colleges and universities. Further, congregational recruitment might encourage: sponsorship of campus ministry programs; the parish minister's involvement in professional and personal counseling of potential recruits; formal or informal lectures by the minister on topics relating to liberal religion and the Unitarian and Universalist traditions.

**Theological Schools and Seminaries.** We propose that prior to admission, recruits participate in a recruitment weekend at the school. Such a weekend provides an opportunity for potential students to experience the life of the institution, and to interact with faculty and students. At the same time, it provides faculty and students with an opportunity to access the recruit's potential for theological education and ministry. Through attending classes, interviews with faculty and students, presentations by faculty and students, meeting other potential students, participation in the educational community, prospective students and the school are able to reach a more realistic evaluation of one another. (In the late 1950s, Meadville/Lombard participated in such a program through the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

Prospective M/L students were included in the 4-day weekend program of introduction and evaluation. Each prospect was assigned a student who acted both as a guide and an evaluator.)

**The UUA Department of Ministry and Ministerial Fellowship Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.** We propose that prior to acceptance as a candidate for UUA fellowship status, recruits for the UU ministry attend a prospective minister's program. These could be regional, co-sponsored by the UUA and the UUMA. Ideally, the program would occur before admission to the theological school, but no later than during the first year. This program would serve the dual purpose of preliminary evaluation of the recruit, and orientation to the UU ministry for the recruit. It would focus on providing a professional and vocational understanding of ministry. The cost would be subsidized. (See Appendix A for a model of such a program.)

**Financing.** Adequate financing for a recruitment program is essential. Substantial scholarships are needed to attract the best qualified candidates. This is especially important to attract working class students from ethnic and racial minorities. Scholarships are important to reduce the huge debts many students accumulate during their education for ministry. Longevity and commitment to ministry might be rewarded by providing a subsidy which would tie educational debt repayment assistance to the number of years served in the ministry. A percent of the debt would be underwritten for each year.

Further, while not directly related to recruitment, ministerial salaries and benefits need to be funded at a level which would encourage recruits seriously to consider the ministry as an option among other professions.

## Summary

In summary, this suggested recruitment process:

- institutionalizes the relationship of ministers granted credentials by the UUA;
- recognizes and respects that we are an association of congregations, not a hierarchical denomination;
- serves to identify and encourage recruits with the best potential for ministry;
- protects the interests and expands the responsibilities of all those involved in recruitment.

## Background Material and Resources

### Christian Church (Disciples)

*Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry*, Christian Church (Disciples) Department of Ministry, Division of Homeland Ministries (1985)

*Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry*, Central Rocky Mountain Region, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

### Presbyterian Church (USA)

*Book of Order* (1988-89) Presbyterian Church (USA) published by the Office of the General Assembly (1988), Louisville, KY

*Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, June 1987, published by the Office of Counseling Resources, The Vocation Agency, New York, NY

### United Church of Christ

*Guidelines for Church and Ministry*, Rocky Mountain Conference, United Church of Christ, Denver, CO (1984)

*Manual on Ministry*, United Church of Christ, Office for Church Life and Leadership (1986)

*The Constitution and Bylaws*, United Church of Christ, Executive Council, St. Louis, MO (1984)

### United Methodist

*Handbook for Candidates and Probationers*, Rocky Mountain Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Board of Ordained Ministry, Rocky Mountain Conference, Denver, CO (1988)

# Theological Education

## Historical Background

From the beginning of their settlement in North America, the Puritan forebears of the UU movement were concerned about the quality of their ministers. They established Harvard College to ensure that, among other things, their churches would be served by "learned" clergy.

However, it was recognized that many of the skills of ministry depended on practice, and that a feeling of "call", which had nothing to do with formal education, was essential. So, various forms of apprenticeship and licensing were employed in addition to or instead of formal education. As in law, "reading with" an established mentor was often the path one took into the profession.

Over time, however, both Unitarians and Universalists recognized the need to establish schools to train people for their ministries. The 19th century saw the creation of such schools not only at Harvard, but also at St. Lawrence and Tufts.

Meadville Theological School was founded as a Unitarian seminary in 1844 in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and moved in 1926 to Chicago, where it entered into an association with the Ryder Divinity School of Lombard College, a Universalist school. It is from the formal merger of these two institutions that Meadville/Lombard Theological School was established.

Feeling a need to provide training for the liberal ministry in the West, the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry was founded in 1904 in Oakland and later moved to Berkeley in order to be near the University of California. In 1948 an innovative approach to graduate education was adopted by the school and its name changed to Starr King School for the Ministry in honor of Thomas Starr King.

Meadville/Lombard and Starr King, legally separate from the UUA, have their own boards of trustees and are responsible for their own staffs and policies. They are thought of as denominationally-related schools because they see their primary missions as training people for the UU ministry and because the UUA provides them support through the Theological Education Grants Panel.

Actually more denominationally-related to the UUA is the Independent Study Program, currently a "school-without-walls" training program for people wishing to become accredited as ministers of religious education. The program is directly funded by the UUA. Beginning in January 1992, however, this program will be housed at and cooperatively administered by Meadville/Lombard.

From time to time studies of the way UUs have been providing for theological education have been conducted. Suggestions as radical as merging Meadville/Lombard and Starr King have been made. The Theological Education Grants Panel has also made recommendations to the schools about curriculum, financing and staffing. It is, however, not the intention of this

report to review or comment on any of these suggestions, but to look at the issues in theological training, the questions that revolve around admitting people to programs, observing their tenure and then awarding them degrees.

The Commission on Appraisal's study on *The Quality of Religious Life in UU Congregations* suggests that there are three areas to which our congregations would like to see more attention given. They would like to see improved training programs in preaching, interpersonal skills and administration. All too often our congregants seem to have the perception that students believe their theological education should be about helping them on their own personal, spiritual journeys.

## **The Present Situation**

In order to look at all the issues of training for our ministry, we have to distinguish between those schools and programs which are directly related to the UU movement and those which are not.

### **Our Denominationally-Related Schools**

At the present time, with the exception of the special case of the Independent Study Program, there are two UU denominationally-related schools, Meadville/Lombard and Starr King. Harvard Divinity School, though it has a long history of involvement with Unitarianism and has many UU alumni/ae and students, is not a denominationally-related school. It is an interdenominational divinity school. Its mission reaches far beyond the UU movement.

In the past there have been some who have questioned whether Starr King (especially when called a "School for Religious Leadership") saw its mission as training people for the UU ministry. But in both Starr King's and Meadville/Lombard's mission statements, no doubt seems to be left about the special relationship the schools have towards the UU movement and their commitment to preparing people for the UU ministry.

### **Admission to Programs**

Theological schools have widely different criteria for admitting students, from stiff academic requirements (including taking the Graduate Record Exam) to admitting almost anyone who wants to attend. In recent years there has been increasing pressure on some American seminaries to lower their requirements because of the need for higher enrollments and the tuition income it would produce.

For many years Starr King had the luxury of having more applicants than it had openings as well as a committee that refused to grant admission to applicants who did not look like they would "fit" the school. The overall quality of applicants at Starr King has been relatively high. There have been people with interesting and relevant life experiences and adequate academic backgrounds. A majority have had at least some UU church experience; some have had a lot

of it, and an occasional applicant has been admitted who knew little or nothing about the UU movement and was not associated with any of our congregations.

This lack of a UU connection on the part of some of the students training for our ministry is a concern to many, since congregational life is so central to our movement. Even the most qualified people have sometimes had trouble with the UU parish ministry because they had no feel for it from the lay person's point of view. Many other denominations feel so strongly about this issue that they have "in care" requirements for those who wish to enter their ministries. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee does say in its policies that "in considering candidates for the ministry, attention will be given to the degree of participation which they have had in one or more of our societies" and that "candidates are expected to maintain active participation." Spencer Lavan, Dean of Meadville/Lombard, also believes it is important for students to be involved in UU churches while in school. But he does not believe this should be a criterion before admission to a seminary. He does not believe it necessarily correlates with success in ministry.

### Recruitment

There is a question about the degree to which our schools should be pro-active in recruitment. Starr King, Meadville/Lombard and Harvard all have extensive mailing lists and send out newsletters and other publications, and their presidents, deans and faculty have ample opportunities to speak about the value of theological education and the ministry. All often provide programs and/or booths at the UUA General Assemblies and various other UU gatherings. In addition Meadville/Lombard and Harvard have advertised in journals like *The Christian Century*, though Spencer Lavan does not believe this is effective.

Many non-UU-related schools have found offering weekend seminars for potential students to be an effective element of recruitment. Pacific School of Religion, for example, does this on a regular basis. Meadville/Lombard encourages prospective students to visit the school so they can meet with the faculty and students. Starr King encourages visits so prospective students can have face-to-face interviews with faculty and members of the admissions committee.

One of the things Spencer Lavan of Meadville/Lombard warns about, however, is not having some kind of weekend visit so formalized that it becomes the place where prospective students come to think of themselves as unfit. This can be detrimental due to the amount of personal and professional development that can take place in the special kind of environment of a seminary, especially one of our denominationally-related schools.

Rebecca Parker, President of Starr King, would like to see her school be more intentional about recruitment for the liberal ministry. She believes that recruitment would be more effective if it were done as part of a cooperative effort between the schools, the UUA, the UUMA and congregations. Likewise, Lavan believes there needs to be discussion between these groups and the Theological Education Grants Panel in order to clarify goals for recruitment. He also believes that prospective students should be directed toward our denominationally-related schools and programs, and that more emphasis ought to be placed on recruiting in racial and ethnic minority communities by churches which have relationships with them.

Parker, Lavan and others suggest that many qualified people either drop out of the process of training for the UU ministry or don't pursue it at all because they know that salaries in the ministry are low and benefits inadequate, and that there is inadequate scholarship aid available to help them pay their tuition. Going to seminary is a costly proposition. According to the *Unitarian Universalist Association Ministerial Survey* issued in October 1989 (often called the Sutherland Report), the average educational debt of students leaving seminary had risen to over \$12,000—and it is estimated by Starr King that its students are leaving school, on the average, with almost \$20,000 in overall debt. Realizing this, the schools and the UUA are attempting to raise additional scholarship funds, but little progress has been made.

Aside from the issue of money, our denominationally-related schools are not being given much help in recruitment. Little is being done by the UUA, UUMA or congregations to recruit anyone, let alone a greater diversity of people, into our ministry. There are some ministers, like Jo Bartlett and John Buehrens, who believe that the failure of our seminaries, the UUA, the UUMA and our congregations to have an intentional program for seeking out potentially good ministers is the very reason why the quality of our ministry is not what it could be.

### **Monitoring Students in Training**

Most schools have some kind of advisory system to help students figure out what they should be doing. At Starr King the heart of the process of the on-going evaluation of its students is called the "Don Rag", a periodic meeting each student has with faculty to review the individual's program and to work on what it is the student needs to do to complete it. The Don Rag is an intense personal sharing conducted in an atmosphere of trust that allows for the kind of caring and honest exchange sometimes missing in evaluations.

Meadville/Lombard has don rags as well, after the students' completion of Clinical Pastoral Education and internships. The faculty is also trying to be more intentional about helping the students better clarify their goals as they move through their programs. Both students at Meadville/Lombard and Starr King have faculty advisors, as well as access to their deans and faculty members for consultation as they do in other seminaries. Many students training for our ministry also take advantage of therapists, spiritual directors, vocational counseling services and other sources to increase their personal insight and development. At times a portion of the cost of such work is partly underwritten by the school in which a student is enrolled.

One thing that seems to be missing in discussions with the students, however, is input from people who know them and also have an awareness of the requirements of the fields in which students intend to carry out their ministries, such as parish ministry, ministry of religious education and community ministry. More input is needed.

Students at Starr King have begun meeting to try to figure out how they might better prepare not only for the ministries into which they will be moving, but the sessions they will have with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC). Meadville/Lombard students feel a need to do this as well, and are concerned about becoming better prepared in the areas of preaching, administration and interpersonal skills. In their situation the required core studies don't leave much time to take courses in which they could develop such skills. They would like to see

more flexibility and consideration of previous life experience taken into account in working out their programs. Many Starr King students, though they have more latitude in the courses they can take, say that adequate courses in these areas are not being offered to them either.

Pacific School of Religion is an example of a school that provides something intended to help students integrate what they are doing in school with the demands of the worlds into which they will be moving. It's called a "Middler Review", in which a group that includes faculty members, internship (or field work) supervisors, lay people, fellow students, and denominational representatives is brought together to review with the student his or her program, progress and needs. It's a program rated highly both by students, including the UU students who have participated, and by the other participants.

In an action that relates not only to credentialing but admissions, the MFC is shifting from asking potential candidates for the UU ministry to undergo psychological evaluations before coming before the MFC, to asking them to go through vocational evaluations at centers designed to provide counseling to people interested in the ministry. The MFC is suggesting that this be done before entering into training for the ministry, to help people see whether the ministry is the kind of profession they should be entering. While going through such an evaluation would be expensive (costs are in the range of \$600), the hope is that this will give people a better idea of their aptitude for the ministry, the kind of ministry at which they might best succeed, and a suggestion of the kind of skills they might have to acquire to be able to do what they want in the ministry. Moving to a career counseling, instead of a psychological testing, model seems to be supported by everyone, though it is still unclear at times what is the best determiner of a student's fitness for the ministry.

### Internships

Because of evidence that many seminary graduates were inadequately prepared for the practical side of ministry, the MFC decided a few years ago to require everyone applying for preliminary fellowship to have at least a six-month full time internship under the supervision of an experienced minister in a church (now expanded to other settings for those not intending to go into the parish ministry or ministry of religious education). It is a program that has worked well in those situations in which the ministers were experienced, knew how to supervise interns and liked the work, and where congregations saw themselves as "teaching churches".

In 1978-79, a grant from Plandome was used to bring together a small group of UU interns and supervisors for a pair of instructional weekends, one in the fall and one in the spring. A minister who was an intern taking part in the program claimed it was very helpful, though like a lot of specially-funded programs it was not continued after the experiment. Ellen Brandenburg of the Department of Ministry says that the UUA has recently done another pilot program at Meadville/Lombard bringing together interns, supervising ministers and faculty. She reiterates the value of such an experience.

In addition to the booklet developed by the Department of Ministry, both Meadville/Lombard and Starr King have developed materials on the expectations of ministers and churches providing internships for its students, and Harvard Divinity School has a packet of materials

on its field work program, as do most other schools. There is also the *Handbook for Lay Intern Committees* developed by the Pacific Northwest District, which is quite good.

Still, Spencer Lavan and others have commented on the lack of training of both intern supervisors and the lay committees who work with interns. Boston-area students, at a meeting with the Commission on Appraisal in April 1990, also commented on the unevenness of internship experiences and the lack of adequate matching between students and settings. In the policies of the MFC it says: "the Department [of Ministry] has neither the staff nor the funds to try to match candidates and intern sites [so] students are to work out their own arrangements for internships although the Department of Ministry is available for consultation". This sometimes means that students who are not in denominationally-related schools often have trouble finding good sites for internships and the supervisors and churches with whom they do work are often unprepared for them.

### **Clinical Pastoral Education**

The other non-seminary training element required by the MFC is a ten-week program of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). This is also almost universally required by seminaries. There is some question, though, about whether this provides adequate training for the "pastoral" part of ministry. For most students CPE is a time when they find themselves pushed and tested in terms of their own emotional stamina and integrity, but it should not be thought of as a substitute for seminary-based training in other aspects of pastoral work. Also, there is a question as to whether traditional CPE programs are appropriate for those aiming for community ministries. The MFC has begun to recognize CPEs done outside of hospitals, prisons and mental institutions.

### **Mentors/Advisors Used in the Independent Study Program**

The Independent Study Program (ISP) has set up a candidate/advisor/committee liaison relationship for each of the people in its program. Elizabeth Strong of the Liberal Religious Education Directors Association believes it is one of the major reasons for the success of the program. Rather than being something required only after a person has received preliminary ministerial fellowship, it begins with the person entering the program. The progress of each candidate is monitored by the advisor, the Independent Study Committee Liaison and the full ISP committee. She believes that this collegial style of preparation for the ministry enhances "cooperation, caring, nurturing, nudging and advising" throughout the candidate's period of training. She believes such a structure ought to be considered for all candidates for our ministry, with school faculty being the Committee Liaison and ministers acting as advisors. In the ISP the advisors, though volunteers, are subsidized by the program so that they can attend the educational programs suggested for both them and their advisees.

### **Religious Education**

As a result of discussions with the Independent Study Program, the Envisioning Committee established by the UUA, the CENTER (Continuing Education Network for Training, Enrichment

and Renewal) program of the UUMA, and the Panel on Theological Education, Meadville/Lombard is making plans for an RE track in its M.Div. program, an M.A. in religious education and a doctoral program for those wishing such an advanced degree and wanting to teach in the field of religious education. It may spark additional consideration of how Starr King might enhance its programs in religious education.

Among other issues of importance to our religious educators is that there be adequate courses in religious education required of seminary students as well as additional training for ministerial candidates in interpersonal and collegial skills necessary for multi-staff situations. Strong believes that the process used in multi-staff start-up seminars might be used as a model for the sort of cooperative style needed in such settings.

There is also the question of expanding the Renaissance Program and other opportunities for training religious educators who wish more education, but are either unwilling or unable to enter either the ISP or a seminary. A great deal of thought needs to be given to what can be done in this area.

### **Community Ministry**

Requirements for the training of those headed for the UU parish ministry or ministry of religious education are now well established. Less clear is what should be required for those headed for ministries outside of the parish, although the MFC is now not only credentialing such people, but has asked for the creation of a committee to make recommendations for the guidelines under which candidates on this third track should be considered and the support they should be given. At Meadville/Lombard, help is being sought from the Center for Public Ministry and others in order to define a better image of community ministries.

Although the issue of credentialing people for ministries outside of the parish is not something to be considered here, the special requirements of their training is an appropriate concern. Many of those in our larger ministry worry not only about the lack of support for those who wish to pursue non-parish ministries, but the lack of UUA and seminary staff to help them decide on the kinds of ministries they should be pursuing, the training that will be required and the sorts of internships and other non-seminary programs in which they should be involved. They are also concerned about the lack of help in finding settlements.

After a long struggle, our schools and denominational structures are not only becoming open to new forms of ministry, but realizing how important these community ministries are to both our movement and the larger society.

### **Degrees and Credentialing**

In Judaism—since the rabbinate is responsible both for maintaining seminaries and for ordaining—graduation, credentialing and ordination amount to the same thing. Some have suggested that the same be true for at least those who attend our denominationally-related seminaries. But given the fact that UU-related schools are autonomous institutions, the structure of

our movement is associational, and we have a long history of denominational credentialing and congregational ordination, it is unlikely that such a change would ever become advisable.

Degrees and certificates are given by seminaries to those who successfully meet the seminaries' requirements, whether they will end up being ordained and receiving fellowship or not. This does not mean, however, that our denominationally-related schools should be free to grant degrees to those who want to be UU ministers without regard to what UU congregations, through the Board of the UUA and the MFC, say they want to have included in the training. Spencer Lavan believes the Department of Ministry and MFC need to consult more with the schools before developing criteria such as the grid for the areas of knowledge on which candidates are evaluated. He also believes that it is an oversight not to include educators in groups developing plans for things like the community ministry track. In general, both Lavan and the faculty at Starr King make strong points about the need for increased communication, along with the sharing of wisdom among the bodies whose decisions affect the education of students.

Both Meadville/Lombard and Starr King are well aware of this. They are also both accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and, as such, must meet the lengthy and demanding standards applied to accredited graduate schools for the ministry. If the ATS believes a school has inferior faculty, inadequate library resources, faulty administration, skimpy financing, easy granting of degrees, and so forth, it does not get accredited.

Meadville/Lombard and Starr King are also aware of the need to provide theological and professional training to people besides their regular students. Summer schools, weekends and institutes have long been a part of their programs and both Meadville/Lombard and Starr King are either expanding such programs or considering it—not an easy task with their limited personnel and budgets.

One area where our denominationally-related schools, particularly Starr King, have not done such a good job is providing continuing degree and other training programs for our ministers in the field. Meadville/Lombard seems to be showing more interest in expanding not only opportunities for D.Min. work, but in becoming a center for religious education. Meadville/Lombard also offers people a chance to be ministers-in-residence, a program Starr King would like to be able to provide as well. At Harvard there are the Merrill Fellowships that have been taken advantage of by many UU ministers.

As an aside, Meadville/Lombard and Starr King have also provided training for students from abroad. There are Japanese names, for instance, in the oldest directories of the Pacific Unitarian School for Religion, and Meadville/Lombard has had a long association with the Unitarian movements in Hungary and Transylvania. Til Evans, while she was Acting President of Starr King, began to explore possible relations both with Manchester College, Britain, and the liberal Shinto and Buddhist groups affiliated with the International Association for Religious Freedom in Japan. She believes that this would enrich the life of the current student bodies and strengthen our connections with groups already beginning to have congregations of their own on the West Coast.

From time to time in the past, people have thought we ought to centralize our training for the ministry, putting all of our resources together in a single school with a larger faculty than

possessed by either Meadville/Lombard or Starr King. Experience seems to show that this would be a bad idea. The existence of these two schools, with their different geographic locations and approaches to education, has benefitted the variety and richness of our ministry, as has the continued interest of UUs in training for the ministry at Harvard, as well as a host of other non-denominationally-related seminaries.

The quality of the students in these different settings is impressive, though people at seminaries in such places as Dayton, Dallas, and the Twin Cities are handicapped not only by not having many other UU students with whom to relate, but by having to work out ways on their own to get internships and preparation in UU history, values and traditions. These students need more support.

## **Moving Toward the Ideal**

What follows are some recommendations that might improve the training for the UU ministry.

### **The Role of Schools in Recruitment**

UU-related schools should join with each other, the Department of the Ministry and the UUMA in a program to more actively recruit quality students, with special attention being given to those interested in areas where our movement would benefit from their special skills, such as urban work, academics and extension. More active attention also needs to be given by the schools and others to the recruitment of people from currently under-represented groups in our movement, such as people of color and members of newly-arrived ethnic communities. Ministers in the San Francisco Bay Area have worked with schools in the Graduate Theological Union to identify students of color who might be interested in pursuing the UU ministry, as another way of trying to bring more racial ethnic diversity into our movement. It's a program that ought to be tried in other areas where there are seminaries.

Meadville/Lombard should be applauded for continuing to invite and welcome students from abroad, for having students of color among its student body, for adding an African American adjunct faculty member, and working to identify itself with urban ministries. Starr King has received scholarship aid from Japan recently, and should continue to pursue the possibility of bringing people from the IARF's Shinto and Buddhist movements to the school as students.

Somewhat less clear is the question of whether attention should be given, in both recruitment and enrollment policies, to the decreasing number of men among those preparing for the UU ministry. While nothing should be done that would discourage women from entering our ministry, and qualified women should not be turned away from our programs, it is important to emphasize that ours is an attractive and fulfilling ministry for women and men alike.

As a help in recruitment, not only literature but regularized on-campus programs should be considered for potentially interested students. This would be in addition to the programs of our denominationally-related schools already open to lay people, such as Starr King Saturdays and Summer School and Meadville/Lombard Summer and Winter Institutes. It has also been

suggested that it be made as clear as possible that such programs are open to any who might be interested in the ministry. Information on our ministry, the Independent Study Program and denominationally-related schools should always be available not only at such events, but at other events such as district meetings, youth conferences, summer conferences, and meetings of the Canadian Unitarian Council, as well as General Assemblies. In general, the better known the UU movement and its ministers become, the more qualified the people who may be attracted to our ministry.

### **Participation in Congregational Life**

Though it might restrict admissions too much to require that all those interested in becoming UU ministers should have at least two years of active congregational participation before applying to a seminary, it is important that the MFC continue to have this be one of the criteria for fellowship. Such experience being a lay person is very different from the kind of experience gained in serving as an intern. Candidates for our ministry need to be able to see things from the perspective of a UU lay person, as well as from that of a minister. This is true even for those who will be entering into ministries outside of the parish.

In addition, thought ought to be given to asking the congregations in which a student is involved to develop more covenantal kinds of relationship like "in care" ones of the churches in other denominations. The Commission on Appraisal is concerned about the general lack of depth in the relationships between congregations and people considering training for and entering the UU ministry.

### **Career Evaluations in Preparation for the Ministry**

The MFC was wise in recommending that instead of undergoing psychological evaluations, candidates for our ministry should take part in the kind of vocational evaluations being offered at various centers, such as the Center for Career Development and Ministry in Newton Center, MA, the Center for Ministry in Oakland and other counseling centers for religious leaders located around the country. Though the cost is high, the kind of feedback students get seems of more value than the psychological exams.

Where possible, this might even be done by people before they make their final decision to begin theological training. If a copy of the report were to be included with their application, it would be of some help to those making the decisions about admission.

For those in school who have not gone through such an evaluation, it would be of help if such an evaluation could be undertaken as soon in their program as possible, since it would clarify areas in which students needed to work in developing their skills. At Meadville/Lombard and in the Bay Area, students have been enrolling in evaluation programs as groups, which lowers the cost and seems to add an extra dimension not only to the evaluation experience but to their relationships with each other as they move through their programs.

It should be added that most of the available evaluation programs are expensive, and candidates for our ministry are now being asked to pay the cost out of their own pockets. At least partial subsidy of the cost by the UUA should be seriously considered.

### **Review of Students While in Seminary**

While what Rebecca Parker calls help in vocational "discernment" has always been a part of what our UU-related schools have done with their students, some version of the Pacific School of Religion Middler Review should be considered for all students preparing for our ministry, no matter what their school. If the PSR model were used, it would be a time during the middle of a student's course work, typically during the second year. At PSR, the review is chaired by a faculty person chosen by the student and includes another student of his or her choice, a second faculty person, an internship supervisor, a denominational representative such as the District Executive or a nearby minister, and an "advocate" for the student who takes notes and is there for support. The intention is to look at the student's program not just from the standpoint of school requirements, but of denominational requirements and the reality of what UU churches or community ministries are really like.

Such a review might be arranged through the ministers-to-students, for the UUs at schools that do not have something similar, and through the current faculty at our denominationally-related schools (e.g., at Starr King this might be done as a part of one of the Don Rags, which might be broadened to include an intern supervisor, district field staff person, and so forth).

This would also help answer the complaint that students are unable to meet the MFC until too late in their educational process for them to be able to change their programs. An alternative might be to have regional or specialty sub-groups of the MFC, who would meet with students for a preliminary review no later than midway through their seminary education, leaving final review for something similar to the present MFC.

### **Scholarship Support and Ministerial Salaries**

Our UU-related schools, the UUA Board and Administration, the UUMA and other professional organizations should work not only on developing new sources of scholarship aid for students, but on improving the salaries of ministers. The salaries of ministers, as suggested by the United Church of Christ, ought to be compared with professionals in the community with similar training and responsibilities, such as school administrators, rather than with lower-paid public service employees.

Educating our congregations about this, and about how to raise the money required to pay adequate salaries, might be done through workshops on budgeting, fund raising, and professional leadership offered by UUA staff such as David Hubner and District Executives, at schools, General Assemblies, summer conferences and district meetings. Hubner is doing some of this already.

It has also been suggested that an annual letter be sent to congregational leadership by the schools and the UUA, talking about the implications of inadequate scholarship help and

ministerial salaries. A pilot program on planned giving, for scholarship and other support that links together a school and a congregation, has been discussed at Starr King and is offered by other schools. Schools are also working hard to develop special scholarship funds and to work with congregations to raise money for them. The UUA administration should also continue to solicit money for the Living Tradition Fund and grants from other sources.

### **Improving Internships**

Students, Department of Ministry staff and the MFC have all raised questions about the uneven quality of internships, particularly the lack of skilled supervisors and of congregations that see themselves as teaching churches. MFC policies state that students who do not have the support of faculty in seeking out appropriate internships must take responsibility for finding sites, with whatever help the Department of Ministry can give. While the Department makes every effort to solicit sites and help students find them, not enough is being done to develop the number of internship sites we need. A concerted effort should be made not only to find additional sites, but to help congregations understand the value to them and to the UU movement of becoming teaching churches.

There are good materials available from sources such as the UUA, Meadville/Lombard, Starr King and the Pacific Northwest District on the role of supervisors and internship committees in congregations. The thing that is missing when we rely on printed materials is the chance for those involved to talk among themselves about the issues of internships. Because of this, encouragement should be given to having the interns and supervisors in any given area meet on a regular basis, sometimes together, sometimes alone, to discuss the internship experience.

It would also be desirable for the MFC to require all those wishing to supervise interns who will be seeking fellowship to go through some kind of intern supervisor training program, whether it is one provided by the UUA or some other source, such as theological school. Perhaps the names of good potential supervisors could be solicited from other ministers. In addition to this, the faculty persons working with interns at non-UU-related schools should be encouraged, as is now the case at Starr King and Meadville/Lombard, to meet not only with supervising ministers, but with lay committees to help them understand the unique role they can play in the education of candidates for our ministry.

It has also been suggested that something should be done to give students more experience in small churches, as well as the larger churches which often serve as internship sites. Most graduates are called to small churches for their first ministries and need to have an acquaintance with the unique issues involved in serving such congregations.

### **Internships and CPE Equivalentents for Those Preparing for Community Ministries**

In as congregationally-based a movement as ours, experience in a UU church or fellowship seems an essential part of preparation for ministry. But this does not necessarily mean, as the MFC has concluded, that parish-based internships can provide singular training for people who want to pursue ministries outside of the parish. Adequate internship sites for such

people need to be developed, and appropriate standards established for what should be involved in such internships.

The same should be said for Clinical Pastoral Education. As is true for those who wish to become Ministers of Religious Education, there are times when alternatives may prove to be of more value to candidates for our ministry.

### **Staffing in the Department of Ministry**

Consideration should be given to adding a staff person to the Department of Ministry whose special focus would be helping those who are pursuing a non-parish ministry. This is not the only area in which the department needs additional staff time. Help with transitions is an area that needs additional time as well. But this is one of those areas in which we have an opportunity to expand the breadth and value of our ministry, and if we are going to begin recruiting people from a more diverse spectrum of people, and train people for non-parish based ministries, we are going to have to help them find places to serve as well.

The UUA Board is establishing a special committee to make recommendations in this area. We hope they will agree with our recommendations.

### **The Relation of Ministers to Seminary Students**

Not only should Meadville/Lombard be commended for its Minister-in-Residence program, but Starr King should be applauded for attempting to raise money for a similar program in Berkeley. The presence of experienced ministers at our denominationally-related schools adds an element often missing in the education of students.

This would be particularly helpful since there are people who believe that there are too few faculty with recent experience in the ministry outside of academia, and that students need better preparation in such practical skills of ministry as preaching, interpersonal skills, counseling, group work and administration.

Our denominationally-related schools often make use of people skilled in these areas as adjunct faculty and this could be done even more intentionally. Groups such as UUMA chapters should be drawn upon to help not only students in these schools but students in non-UU related schools to learn both about skills for the ministry and professional ethics as well. Workshops on weddings, memorial services and child dedications are examples of areas in which local ministers would be particularly good resources.

The UUMA CENTER Committee, the Theological Education Grants Panel, the Department of the Ministry, and others have expressed interest in creating centers for continuing education related to Meadville/Lombard, Starr King and perhaps Harvard. This would not only bring more ministers in contact with students, but would make the schools and resources available in such areas as Chicago, Boston and Berkeley more accessible to our ministry.

Another model that might be considered is the one used by the Independent Study Program. The MFC might require that not only those in preliminary fellowship have mentors, but that students interested in receiving fellowship as UU ministers be required to have, in addition to their relationships to the schools in which they are enrolled, mentor/advisors who are ministers in the fields the students wish to enter. This might be thought of as an extension of the UUMA-sponsored mentorship program already being required of those in preliminary fellowship.

### **Seminaries and the MFC**

It is important to remember the difference in roles between the seminaries and the MFC. When a credentialing body begins to set requirements like the number of hours in specific fields a student should take, or where they should do an internship (as opposed to whether they should do one), they are beginning to make educational, as opposed to credentialing, decisions. Perhaps we should look at models like that of the legal profession and have the MFC stop being so concerned about "grids". (The grid, after all, was a tool developed by a student trying to figure out the areas about which the MFC was concerned. It was only later institutionalized by the committee itself.) It might say: "Come to us with an M.Div or its equivalent, an internship, CPE experience and show us you've got what it takes to make it in our ministry".

# Fellowship, Disciplinary Action and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

## Introduction and History

The Commission on Appraisal's inquiry into *The Quality of Religious Life in Unitarian Universalist Congregations*, published in 1989, raised questions about the quality of the Unitarian Universalist ministry as perceived by the laity. Since credentialing of ministers is involved in questions of ministerial quality, an examination of the credentialing function is clearly mandated.

The need for professional religious leadership in Unitarian Universalist congregations is almost unanimously accepted. How ministers, who are expected to provide that leadership, earn and retain professional status is one of the inquiries of this report.

Another inquiry concerns the operations of the agency which grants that status, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC), and includes comment on its disciplinary functions.

In the histories of both the Unitarians and the Universalists the credentialing processes have changed, and each of our two ancestral branches had different, sometimes inconsistent, ways of giving professional recognition to ministers.

In "The Fellowship Committee" in *Unitarians Face a New Age*, 1936, pp. 128-129, Dan Huntington Fenn wrote: "Having once settled a man, the church then requests the Fellowship Committee that the minister be given the final certificate of Fellowship to which **he is entitled by virtue of his office as minister of a Unitarian church.**" [Emphasis supplied.]

Fenn's concern, and the real thrust of his paper, was that there was no control over the quality (professional standards) of ministers. Quality was a matter of concern then as it certainly is now. (See Fenn's paper, pp. 129, 130-131.) There was for Fenn, and there remains for us, the fundamental, often unquestioned, often misunderstood and misapplied, and sometimes embarrassing and controversial, matter of the application of congregational polity.

Conrad Wright tells us that, in its original role, the American Unitarian Association "did not presume to exercise ecclesiastical authority. It was not responsible for credentialing candidates for the ministry; that function was exercised, if at all, by ministerial associations."

But by 1880 there was a Fellowship Committee. Charles Howe describes it on pages 1 and 2 of his November 1989 internal working paper for the Commission on Appraisal, "Credentialing and Ordaining" (see Appendix B).

Universalist credentialing practice was not uniform, and, according to Charles Howe's paper, seemed to develop informally. At merger the present scheme was put in place.

Credentialing procedures vary in other religious groups which practice congregational polity. The American Baptist Convention, for example, does not have a central agency which grants fellowship, ordination itself being the essential for professional status.<sup>2</sup>

## The Present Situation

### Bylaws, Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and Budget

The Unitarian Universalist Association bylaws do not define **fellowship**, although Article XI, entitled "Ministry," is about ministerial fellowship. In stating that "fellowship may be for the purposes of parish, religious education and/or community ministry" section 11.1 comes as close as the bylaws do to defining **minister** or **ministry**.<sup>3</sup>

Section C-11.1 of the bylaws begins by providing:

Each member society has the exclusive right to call and ordain its own minister or ministers, **but the Association has the exclusive right to admit ministers to ministerial fellowship with the Association.** (Emphasis supplied.)

Without the emphasized words, bylaw section 11.1 would conform to American Unitarian Association practice prior to the Commission of Appraisal's 1936 report, as described in Dan Huntington Fenn's paper.

Section 11.2 of the bylaws (not a C bylaw) states:

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall have exclusive jurisdiction over ministerial fellowship except as otherwise provided herein.

Section 7.6 of the bylaws provides that there are to be eleven members of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee: Four members who are not ministers; six ministers, one of whom must be a Minister of Religious Education, appointed by the Board of Trustees; and one member appointed by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. (While the UUMA could appoint a non-minister, the possibility seems too remote to be seriously considered.)

The bylaws specify the term of office of MFC members as two years.<sup>4</sup> There is no apparent limit on how many terms a members may serve.<sup>5</sup>

The UUA Board is directed (Section 7.6) to designate a person who is not a member of the MFC as the MFC's Executive Secretary. Most recently this has been the Director of the Department of Ministry at UUA headquarters, and the MFC's files have been kept by that Department's personnel.

The MFC budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1991, is \$39,140. Its actual expenditures for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1990, were \$39,825.<sup>6</sup> Salaries of Department of Ministry personnel are not charged to the MFC when they are either meeting with the MFC or in

preparation for MFC meetings. Photocopying of candidates' materials and phone calls by MFC members are charged to the MFC budget. Staff phone calls and travel expenses for the Director of Ministry and the Ministerial Education Director are charged to Department of Ministry, but travel expenses for the assistant to the Director of Ministry are charged to the MFC budget.

The UUA's Treasurer estimates that MFC-related items charged to other UUA budgets would add \$4,000 to \$5,000 to the cost of the MFC. The budget figure does not include the cost to the UUA of time spent on MFC matters by the secretary to the Department of Ministry's Director, or the time of others, including the Vice President for Program (under whose jurisdiction the Department of Ministry is placed), the Executive Vice President or the President. If other probable costs could be allocated, the actual figure for the cost of the MFC must be closer to \$60,000. In addition, much of the time of the Ministerial Education Director is spent on matters which might be considered as being, or strongly relating to, MFC matters.

Those who serve on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee get high marks for hard, conscientious work. They care. Volunteers, they each give perhaps twenty to twenty-five days, or more, each year to service on the MFC. For most of them, that comes out of precious discretionary time.

The MFC meets in Boston, usually twice a year, and usually once in Chicago and once in Berkeley. Most MFC members also attend General Assembly. They are called upon to judge the fitness for our ministry of some sixty candidates each year. There are other tasks as well, including three reviews of each minister who has been granted preliminary fellowship, reviewing the grid for each candidate, dealing with the necessary but almost never happy questions of disciplining ministers, and the necessary, but seldom gratifying, task of removing ministers from fellowship.

Complaints about ministers already in fellowship, containing allegations of unfitness in one degree or another, come to the MFC. These can be of a most serious nature, involving many additional hours of interviews, arranging for private investigators' reports, and carefully—perhaps painfully—considering the merits of each case. The MFC has been quite conscientious about the added tasks of disciplinary investigations and hearings.

And there is rule making. Sometimes formally, with proposals required to be approved by the UUA Board of Trustees,<sup>7</sup> and sometimes with marginally less formality, but perhaps with equal clout, in documents called MFC policies.

The MFC attempts to meet informally with groups of seminarians, and with ministers seeking transfer of fellowship from other denominations, aside from its formal interviews with them, in an effort to make the MFC appear more human by having social contact, and attempting to allay somewhat the inevitable seminarian apprehension about a body that will judge them.

Disciplinary matters take an increasing amount of the MFC's time. They arise only on specific complaints filed by affected individuals or by member societies. They involve ministers already in fellowship, against whom allegations of unfitness in some degree are made, and can be of the most serious nature. These involve many additional hours of interviews, arranging

for private investigators' reports, and carefully, perhaps painfully, considering the merits of each case.

The MFC may remove a minister from fellowship, but congregational polity precludes the MFC denying a minister from serving a parish, for only a congregation has the power to alter the relationship between minister and congregation.

The UUMA may censure one of its members for violations of its code of conduct, or remove an offending minister from its membership roll. But although any UUMA action may parallel that of the MFC, such action is essentially separate from actions of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

### Issues and Questions

Issues and questions about the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and its processes include these:

While there is no official, or even common, standard used by all MFC members in judging candidates for fellowship, some MFC members tend to refer to a common expectation that successful candidates will have **at least** a basic understanding and competence in the full range of learning and proficiencies expected of the clergy by member societies and others. Reliance on a relatively low basic standard does not allay persistent questions in the minds of those who believe that a higher quality of ministry is needed to undergird Unitarian Universalism in reaching its potential.

The MFC appears able to handle the workload as they presently perceive it, but the MFC has the appearance of coping, "getting by", and appears to lack a shared prospective vision of its work. For example, the committee regularly sees many candidates in a very short time. This is especially true of the added workload of handling disciplinary matters. Importantly, the MFC lacks time for shared reflection, for envisioning what yet may be, and how the MFC's function affects the future of Unitarian Universalism. It appears:

Although the MFC's workload may be manageable now, with any growth in the workload there may not be "elbow room".

Disciplinary matters may be an increasing part of the MFC's tasks, and may demand considerable time.

The MFC needs more time to envision its functions within the context of emerging UUA needs.

The need for ongoing review of excellence could well increase the MFC's workload.

Time may well be needed for the orientation of new members.

There are more ministerial than lay members on the MFC. Should there be a higher proportion of laity, perhaps with a qualification that such lay members be experienced by longevity in congregation(s) or by having been board members in their local congregations?

The MFC meets in at least three places (Boston, Berkeley and Chicago) where the bulk of our seminarians are located. But the scheduling problems and the workload of the MFC produce oddities such as West Coast students being interviewed in Boston, Boston area students arranging interviews in Chicago, etc. Students in non-UU related seminaries often must travel long distances to meet with the MFC.

The MFC is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees, but its Executive Secretary is a member of the administrative staff. MFC files are kept in the Department of Ministry offices, and are serviced by that Department's personnel. A member of that Department in charge of ministerial education and relations with seminarians is, for practical purposes, the administrative face of the MFC as seen by seminarians. During the 1990-1991 fiscal year the Executive Secretary estimates that close to two-thirds of his time has been spent on MFC matters. In other years he estimates that only about one-half of his time has been so employed.

There is continuing anxiety by seminarians about poor communication regarding MFC requirements, and widespread feeling among some seminarians that the Department of Ministry, as agent for the MFC, does not give them sufficient attention.

Long waiting lists for MFC interviews, and interviews held late in the seminary process, mean that sometimes seminarians are told too late in the process that they do not meet MFC standards. Debt has been incurred and years spent; frustrations are great.

## Recommendations

A higher standard for granting fellowship to ministers, and the articulation of such standard, is called for. Rejecting those who have worked long and hard is not easy. It is, however, easier and more loving than servicing and trying to salvage disappointed congregations, and attempting to reclaim the lives of ministers who were not up to the needs of their calling. The MFC should consider the articulation of a standard which better sets forth the expectations and the needs of Unitarian Universalism generally, and of individual congregations in particular. This should be accomplished by discussion within the MFC after:

- consultation with the UUA Board of Trustees;

- consultation with the UUMA;

- consultation with the faculties at UU theological schools and at those other seminaries which graduate a significant number of candidates for fellowship;

- and by open hearings at one or more General Assemblies and, if possible, at district meetings.

Similarly, we urge, in support of the highest possible quality of ministry, and due process for all ministers, wider use of MFC Rule 23, which permits the Executive Secretary to present to the MFC situations of any minister whose overall record indicates that such minister should not be further recommended for placement.

Responses to the three issues of MFC workload, composition and meeting places overlap; they deal with the number of MFC members, who they are, and how they are deployed in fulfilling the MFC's functions. What is clearly true is that any MFC members who feel overburdened are justified. It is arduous and important work. There ought to be more MFC members to share the work, and more of them should be from the laity. Opportunities for seminarians to schedule appointments with the MFC should be increased, with shorter waiting time between requests for appointments and the appointments. To accomplish these possibilities we recommend:

MFC to have fourteen members, seven lay, seven clergy, with clergy and lay members to be appointed as is now provided.

MFC authorized to sit in two panels of seven members each with rotating memberships, so that no panel is the same for more than two successive meetings (of three or four days each) and no panel will become so institutionalized within its own processes as to have a recognized, or presumed recognizable, bias or personality; Chair to preside over one panel, vice chair over the other. Diversity in the membership of panels should be stressed. At some meetings each year, as the MFC felt the need, the committee would meet in its entirety. The Executive Secretary would sit with either or both panels but would not necessarily attend all meetings of each panel. A student would sit with each panel, as is current practice.

The UUA Board of Trustees to give most serious consideration to increasing the Department of Ministry Staff if and when the MFC offers a plan to reorganize that Department.

We recommend the amendment of UUA bylaw Section 7.6 as follows: (New matter underlined; deleted matter shown by ~~strike-throughs~~.)

#### Section 7.6 Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall consist of ~~eleven~~ fourteen members as follows:

- (a) ~~four~~ seven members who are not ministers to be appointed by the Board;
- (b) six members who are ministers in full and final fellowship with the Association, one of whom must be a Minister of Religious Education, and one of whom must be a community minister, appointed by the Board; and
- (c) one member to be appointed by the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association.

(d) The committee may act through a panel of its members, to which panel not less than seven members shall be appointed. The action of a majority of the members of such a panel shall be the action of the committee, provided that at least six members of that panel are present. On any such panel at least three members shall be ministers in full and final fellowship and at least three members shall be persons who are not ministers.

Two members of the committee, and only two, shall be trustees. The committee shall have jurisdiction over ministerial fellowship with the Association as provided in Article XI hercof. The Board of Trustees shall designate a person who is not a member of the committee to be its Executive Secretary and keep its records.

Presently at MFC meetings perhaps twenty candidates are interviewed, and other work done. The present schedule of four day meetings is something like this, annually:

1	2	3	4
<i>Boston</i>	<i>Chicago</i>	<i>Boston</i>	<i>Berkeley</i>

With the possibility of two panels sitting some of the time, the annual schedule might look like this:

1	2	3	4
<i>Boston</i>	<i>Chicago</i>	<i>Boston</i>	<i>Berkeley</i>
2 panels; time for reflective work	entire committee or 2 panels	entire committee or 2 panels	1 panel  <i>Metro New York</i> 1 panel

Another possible model might be to overlap two panels so that no MFC member would have to give up eight days for a meeting, but eight days' work could be accomplished by the MFC:

<i>Panel 1</i> -----	<i>Panel 2</i> -----
Candidates Sunday-Tuesday	Business Wednesday-Thursday
	Candidates Friday-Sunday

(It should be noted that the Commission on Appraisal spent considerable time reviewing the possibility of regional ministerial fellowship committees, a device used one way or another in both Universalist and in Unitarian history, and by larger denominations. The Commission determined that the use of panels would be a better way to distribute the MFC workload, and would tend to keep a consistent response to candidates. The regional approach would be necessary for a much larger denomination.)

The use of a second panel permits the workload of the MFC to be spread over its enlarged membership. It permits the possibility of increasing the number of MFC meetings available to seminarians from four to six, or possibly even seven, each year, with the problems of geographical scheduling thus being considerably reduced. It might even be possible for one

panel to meet in other than the usual Boston-Chicago-Berkeley locales, such as the metropolitan New York or Washington DC areas and other places, every few years, if that seemed appropriate.

The use of two panels would give the MFC much-needed time for unhurried reflective discussions on its mission, and ways to serve the demands of excellence in ministry.

Disciplinary functioning would be aided because the additional panel would serve to make disciplinary hearings less burdensome, as one panel could undertake a hearing without the entire MFC necessarily having to be so utilized. The deployment of human resources would be well served. (Further, a permissible option for the MFC is the use of a Board of Inquiry, to consist of three members, who need not be members of the MFC, which Board is to report back to the MFC. Although provided for in the MFC's rules,<sup>8</sup> the appointment of such a Board has never been made. If the MFC feels overburdened by disciplinary matters, this available option should be seriously considered by the MFC.)

The Commission reviewed the possibility of using an entirely separate body for disciplinary matters. Its apparent advantages would be that it could meet when needed, and such a separate body would release MFC members from disciplinary duties, with concomitant release of concentration and possible emotional drain involved in disciplinary matters. The disadvantages would be a body called together spasmodically, with less cohesive working relationships, and less focused on what ministry ought to be and ought to demand. On balance the Commission believes that disciplinary functions should stay within the MFC's duties.

In recent Unitarian Universalist practice, appeal would continue to be to an elected body, the Ministerial Fellowship Board of Review,<sup>9</sup> certainly appropriate in an Association concerned with due process and democratic method.

For a significant period of time the influence of the Rev. Dr. David Pohl, the incumbent Executive Secretary of the MFC, has been great, and much respected. During his tenure changes have occurred, and he has often been an agent of those changes. His retirement will likely come in a few years. The MFC should plan now for what it will demand of its next Executive Secretary, and carefully assess personnel requirements in the Department of Ministry after David Pohl's retirement.

The MFC appears to be concerned about seminarians' perception of communication from the MFC. More material, including all rules and policies, has been published. The Department of Ministry appears to be reaching out to seminarians. The apprehension with which the examined view the examiners is inevitable, but it must be remembered that the examined are expected to be exemplars of love, care and understanding to their future congregants. The examined will learn, in part, from the love, care and understanding with which they are treated in their time of apprehension, but future ministers must also know how to read requirements and instructions.

The pressing problem of seminarians sometimes being told that they cannot meet MFC standards after having spent three or more years in preparation and probably incurring sizable debts caused a change: in 1991 the MFC began using career assessment counseling early in a seminarian's school years. It is not sufficient.

The Commission on Appraisal recommends that the MFC make a conscientious effort to identify ministerial students who appear to be marginally qualified or unqualified—through the career counseling assessment reports and from input by the Department of Ministry and by the seminaries—and, having identified them, provide counseling through an MFC subcommittee or other means, not later than the end of their second year of seminary. The use of career assessment counseling seems useful and preferable to the former psychological testing. Time is needed to see how well it works. But no matter how well it may work, a monitoring process by the Department of Ministry and the seminaries is also called for, with MFC-directed follow-up counseling when appropriate.

While there can be no sure prophylaxis against disappointment, the MFC seems mindful of the problem and is attempting to deal with it sensitively. Yet, the MFC cannot be held to account for all of this. Indeed, the theology schools, their admission policies, and their monitoring of student progress towards ministry do, and should, bear some of the burden.

### References and Notes

1. Conrad Wright, *Unitarian Universalist Denominational Structure*, page 8 of that paper, delivered at the Unitarian Universalist Advance conference, September 1986; also page 81 of Wright's book *Walking Together*, which reprints that paper.
2. An excellent digest of credentialing procedures in religious denominations the polity of which is congregational can be found at pages 11 through 17 of *The Report of The Unitarian Universalist Association Task Force on Ministerial Settlement*, April 1990.
3. An amendment to that bylaw, adding "community ministry" as a third category, was passed by the 1990 and 1991 General Assemblies. The bylaw amendment had to pass at two General Assemblies, as it is part of a C-bylaw.
4. Bylaw Section 7.2 specifies two year terms for all members of standing committees of the Board of Trustees, of which the MFC is one.
5. An informal (unwritten) rule of the UUA Board of Trustees Committee on Committees purports to limit service on any appointed UUA committee to eight years.
6. The figures and facts in this paragraph are from a letter dated January 2, 1991, from David Provost, Vice President Finance and Treasurer of the UUA.
7. Bylaw Section 11.2.
8. MFC Rule 25, "Procedures for Termination of Fellowship".
9. Bylaw Section 5.11.

# Ordination

## The Present Situation

Ordination is the act by which a person is vested by a religious body with special ministerial authority: a rite of passage, a setting apart, a placing under orders as a minister. Peter Raible has called it, "the act of consecrating a minister".<sup>1</sup> Ordination has been part of our Unitarian and Universalist traditions almost from the beginning, a practice which has continued in our merged movement until the present day.<sup>2</sup>

In the Unitarian Universalist Association the right to ordain has been specifically reserved to local congregations, while the Association as a whole, through its Ministerial Fellowship Committee, has had the responsibility for credentialing, that is, for passing judgement on an individual's fitness for professional ministry in the Association.<sup>3</sup> The two functions, while obviously interrelated, are nevertheless separate and distinct from each other. Fellowship has to do with professional competence—a form of Associational quality control; ordination has to do with religious commitment and empowerment, with a sacred relationship entered into and responsibility conferred and accepted. While fellowship may currently be regarded as the more important of the two in practical terms, that is, as the more formidable hurdle for would-be ministers to clear, ordination is nevertheless, under our system of congregational polity, by far the more basic of the two as the act by which one is "set apart," "placed under orders," "consecrated" as a minister.

Unfortunately, while there is a general sense of the importance of ordination within the Association, particularly among professional ministers, there is often no clear understanding of its significance. For many, particularly lay people, the distinction between fellowship and ordination is unclear, and there is likewise considerable confusion over the use of such terms as "minister" and "Reverend".

As a general rule in our Association, the ordaining body has been the home church, i.e., the one from which the ordinand entered seminary, or the first congregation to which the person has been called. There have been numerous exceptions to this, however, particularly with individuals entering non-parish ministries where any willing congregation is apt to be called on, and with those wishing to be ordained by congregations in which they served their internships.

Some congregations have chosen to ordain individuals who have no intention of following a ministerial career, simply as a way of bestowing them with honor and prestige: a lay leader who has been carrying out some of the usual ministerial functions, for example, or a lay religious educator who has worked long and hard directing the church school, or a talented but underpaid organist who is made the congregation's "Minister of Music." For a variety of reasons, our collective understanding of ordination has become largely ceremonial, simply a public confirmation of decisions already made by seminary and Fellowship Committee. The ordination service has become in most cases a **clerical** rather than a **congregational** event, planned mainly or exclusively by the ordinand.<sup>4</sup> There is a danger that ordination will come

to be regarded by many people as a perfunctory exercise, a hangover from our past—pleasant, but with no real meaning.

Given the uncertainties and variety of opinions surrounding the subject, and given the dramatic increase in the number of community ministries where the matter of ordination raises additional questions, the Commission on Appraisal believes that a fresh look at ordination is called for. Should the practice be continued? After all, the British Unitarians have gotten along without it almost from the start. And if continued, how might the meaning of ordination be clarified and its significance enhanced?

## Moving Toward the Ideal

Ordination, for Unitarian Universalists, needs to be seen in a unique light. As Conrad Wright has pointed out,

The minister in a liberal church is not there to hold the keys to the Kingdom of heaven by admitting to the Lord's Table only those found worthy, as in churches that seriously accept a sacramental theology. Nor is he or she there to instruct the people in truths that the ordained clergy are peculiarly competent to expound, as in many confessional churches. He or she is there to live, and learn, and grow with the congregation. By virtue of special training and experience, the minister's word and example carry weight and earn the right to exercise leadership.<sup>5</sup>

This view of the ordained ministry is consistent with the Reformation principle of the priesthood of all believers and with the contemporary understanding, widely held among us, of the ordained minister being a minister to ministers, empowered to act in such a leadership position by the congregation which the minister has been called to serve. "For us", declares Wright, "ordination by the local church is a reminder that it is responsible for choosing its own leadership, and ... it is in the ceremony of ordination that the essential meaning of congregational polity is expressed."<sup>6</sup> Thus, Unitarian Universalist congregations have a heavy responsibility to ordain only those men and women whose special training and experience qualify them for such leadership and who, moreover, are recognized as having the capacity to live, learn and grow spiritually with a congregation.

It follows from this that the ordaining body should preferably be the congregation from which the ordinand has received and accepted the first call. The service of ordination thus becomes a recognition of the establishment of the sacred relationship which lies at the heart of ministry—this through a covenant between minister and congregation which recognizes the relational view of ordination inherited from our Puritan forebears.<sup>7</sup> While the practice of ordination by one's "home church" or by the church one has served as a ministerial intern is common in our Association, it should be recognized that such ordinations do not celebrate the kind of relationship just described, nor do they promote the bonding that strengthens such a relationship.

In addition, ordination should be reserved for those who have a sense of **calling** to the ministry and who recognize it as a vocation centered on relationships, not only to the ordin-

ing co  
comm  
only  
clearly  
by vir  
and e  
serve  
Indivi  
ordin

While  
minis  
ordai  
of th  
casua

The i  
as far  
ty mi  
cong  
exper

First  
comr  
relati  
relati  
impo  
ordir  
than

For  
then  
tent  
local  
from  
up o  
the c  
same  
paris

In th  
Univ  
cour  
the c

ing congregation, but also to the larger community and to whatever transcendent reality commitment is given, however named. Thus ordination should be seen as a recognition not only of competence and potential, but also of calling and commitment, and it should be clearly recognized that, in our tradition, it is through the congregation's act of ordaining, not by virtue of receiving fellowship, that a woman or man is set apart into a special, sacred office and entitled to be referred to as "Reverend."<sup>8</sup> Since most professional ministers these days serve a number of congregations during their careers, a congregation should consider the individual's ability to serve in the Association as a whole in making decisions with respect to ordination.<sup>9</sup>

While it is probable that in most cases congregations will ordain those who have received ministerial fellowship, it should be clearly understood that a congregation has the power to ordain whomever it considers worthy. The basic responsibility is that of the congregation, not of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. This responsibility should never be exercised casually, given its great importance, but always with great care.

### Community Ministers

The increasing number of community ministers in our movement raises additional questions as far as ordination is concerned. Foremost among these is the question, "How can community ministers be part of an Association made up of autonomous congregations without violating congregational polity?" What follows is a preliminary attempt at an answer. With time and experience, a more satisfactory and detailed answer may be possible.

First of all, those seeking ordination to community ministries should give evidence of a strong commitment to serve within the context of the Association and to maintain a significant relationship with one or more Unitarian Universalist congregations. In such ministries, the relational nature of minister to congregation (or, in some cases, to congregations) remains important. Where the call to a first community ministry comes from a group of congregations, ordination could appropriately be conferred by those congregations acting together rather than by one alone.

For example, if a community ministry were to be sponsored by an area council or district, then all its member congregations could jointly ordain their minister. This could be consistent with the right to ordain being reserved to local congregations; in this case they would, as local congregations, simply be acting in concert. There is, in fact, precedent for this practice from our recent history.<sup>10</sup> In such cases, an ordination council could be established, made up of lay people chosen from the ordaining congregations to consider the appropriateness of the ordination, and, if acting favorably, to plan the ordination service with the ordinand. The same general criteria for fitness for ordination should apply to community ministry as to parish-based ministry.<sup>11</sup>

In those instances where the ordinand will be accountable not only to one or more Unitarian Universalist congregations but also to some other organization (as, for example, a hospital, counseling center or university), it would be important for that organization to participate in the ordination service, affirming its approval and support of that community ministry.

As in the case of parish-based ministers, there will undoubtedly be cases in which community ministers will receive ordination from their home church even if such ordinations do not adequately celebrate the relationships being entered into or help establish the kind of bonding that is desirable.

In the ordination of community ministers we are, as an Association, entering a largely unexplored area where much thoughtful experimentation will be necessary. There is a possibility that in the long run congregational polity will have to be compromised in order to make ordination to some types of community ministry meaningful. This would, of course, result in a basic change in the nature of our Association and should be undertaken only if other approaches are judged to be unsatisfactory.

### Recommendations

The Commission on Appraisal believes that it is indeed possible to clarify our understanding of ordination and to enhance its significance within our Association. It therefore, fully reaffirming the local congregation's right to ordain, makes the following recommendations:

1. An educational process should be promoted whereby lay people, ministers and seminarians can work toward a clearer understanding of the meaning of ordination. Seminaries, leadership schools, minister's groups, workshops, adult education classes, sermons and articles can all play a part in this education process. Initially, at least, ministers and seminaries should take the lead in this effort.
2. Congregations should be encouraged to reclaim their central role and responsibility with respect to ordination, making judgements as to who is qualified, and playing a major part in the planning and execution of the ordination service. To this end, each congregation should formulate a policy with regard to ordination in advance of requests for ordination. The *Congregational Handbook* should include a section giving guidance on this.
3. Practices should be developed, distinct from ordination, for bestowing honor and status on deserving lay people.<sup>12</sup>
4. An ongoing discussion should be held regarding the best way or ways for ordaining community ministers consistent with the congregational polity.

### References and Notes

1. Peter Raible, "The Meaning of Ministry Among Present Day Liberals," *Unitarian Universalist Advance*, No. 47, 1987, p. 3.
2. For the historical background see Appendix C, "The Credentialing and Ordaining of Ministers in the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions."

3. U.U.A. Bylaws, Article XI, Section C-11.1. (This represents a continuation of the ordination practice of the American Unitarian Association prior to merger; ordination in the Universalist Church of America was by State Conventions or the U.C.A. itself, not by local congregations.)
4. Raible, *op.cit.*, p. 4
5. Conrad Wright, *Walking Together* (Boston: U.U.A. [Skinner House Books], 1989), p. 17.
6. Wright, Letter to Commission on Appraisal, October 22, 1990.
7. Earl K. Holt III, "The Traditions and Meanings of Congregational Ordination in America," *Unitarian Universalist Advance*. No. 48, 1987 pp. 12-14; Wright, *Walking Together*, pp. 16 ff. Congregations ordaining an individual in a first settlement should design the service of ordination and installation so that the two acts are separate and distinct, with the act of ordination occurring first. The service should take place as soon after the beginning of the settlement as possible.
8. Wright, *Walking Together*, p. 19; Holt, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-11.
9. Such consideration was not a factor in the congregationalism practiced by the New England churches of the Standing Order in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, since most ministers served for life the churches by which they were ordained.
10. For example, the Reverend Benjamin Bortin was ordained cooperatively by the two UU societies in Syracuse, New York, in 1977, having served as Campus Chaplain Intern at Syracuse University for two years under the sponsorship of the two societies. The U.U.A. Department of Ministry was consulted in advance as to the propriety and validity of such an ordination, and assurance was given that such a co-ordination was perfectly permissible.
11. Apparently, in the nineteenth century the Benevolent Fraternity of Unitarian Churches in the Boston area ordained at least one minister. According to annual reports, this was accomplished by soliciting affirmation from all the member societies of the Fraternity and ordaining through one of its existing chapels. Organizationally, the call came from the member societies. (Letter, Elizabeth Ellis-Hagler to Commission on Appraisal, October 25, 1990.) On May 19, 1991, with the affirmation and participation of 21 member churches of the Fraternity, Peter W. Thoms and Cheng Imm Tan were ordained as community ministers at the First Church in Roxbury, which had merged into the Benevolent Fraternity in 1976. Ordination was in the name of and by the member churches of the Fraternity. (Letter, Ellis-Hagler to Commission, October 10, 1991.)
12. In this connection, the Ohio-Meadville, Pacific Northwest and Prairie Star Districts have introduced and explored "commissioned lay leadership programs", and the U.U.A. Board has established a Religious Education Leadership Committee which will make recommendations concerning the creation of new categories, with appropriate titles, of leadership achievement in religious education. In addition, the MFC, under U.U.A. Bylaws (X, 11.4) has the power, not yet exercised, to grant licenses to lay preachers.

# Settlement for Community Ministers

Historically, several roles of the clergy have been identified: the pastor/priest, teacher, administrator, and prophet. It is assumed that these roles correspond to the types of community that will be created to form relationship to the world. For example, the local parish minister relies heavily upon the pastoral/priestly and governance roles in order to sustain a community of faith or congregation. On the other hand, it is very difficult for the same parish minister to maintain a prophetic stance, which can be divisive to a congregation. Congregational polity further inhibits the enactment of the prophetic since the congregation is at liberty to discharge the minister from service at any time.

In traditional Judeo-Christian thought, prophecy is human utterance inspired by God. God speaks to the prophet, who then speaks to the community. The community can ignore what the prophet has said, or, if it gives authority to the prophet, the community can incorporate the message within its system. The principles and purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association contain a prophetic imperative, that is to say, an imperative to seek justice.

While it is true that the prophetic in ministry can be operative in the local parish setting, it is not the central focus of ministry as it is in certain community ministries. Often, the prophetic is the impetus for the creation of the ministry itself as was an AIDS ministry, for example. This is the model for community ministry. Community ministry is "something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts."<sup>1</sup>

## History

The history of the Society for the Larger Ministry (SLM) began in 1981. At the General Assembly in Philadelphia, Robert Rafford invited all interested chaplains, pastoral counselors and other ministers to a gathering. About 20 people gathered, and agreed that a ministerial organization for those not necessarily serving the traditional parish ministry was greatly needed.

At the 1983 General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, Extra-Parochial Clergy was formed. A Steering Committee was selected and meetings took place at General Assemblies thereafter.

In the Fall of 1986, representatives of Extra-Parochial Clergy met with UUA Department of Ministry personnel including David Pohl and Charles Gaines.

The Steering Committee for Extra-Parochial Clergy submitted a grant request written by Spencer Lavan. This provided for a pre-General Assembly conference to be held at Little Rock in 1987. The Grants Panel awarded a grant, and the conference was a huge success. Its focus was "What Is Ministry?" and featured presenters were Bill Jones, Betty Ellis-Hagler, Florence Gelo and Jim Zacharias.

Meanwhile, another group with similar ideals was being formed: Community Focused Ministers. The 1987 conference was planned by steering committees from both groups, with one person who was a member of both committees. At Little Rock, the Extra-Parochial Clergy became the Society for the Larger Ministry, and soon after the Steering Committee of Community Focused Ministers voted to merge with SLM.

Since 1987, SLM has met each year at General Assembly and held a conference each Veterans Day weekend. In 1989 SLM formed a Task Force on Ministerial Fellowship, focused on developing a positive relationship with the UUMA and promoting dialogue about community ministry among UUA leadership (the MFC, UUMA, and UUA Department of Ministry).

### **The Present Situation**

The UUA currently recognizes three categories of professional ministry: parish ministry, the ministry of religious education, and community ministry. Approximately 140 SLM members are involved in lay and ordained community ministries, including academic, administrative, pastoral counseling, hospital chaplaincy, prison and military chaplaincy, social justice, religious education, young adult community focused, UUA staff, and others.

One historical concern is that the UUA is primarily an association of churches and therefore has uncertain authority with regard to community ministers. Community ministers serve those who are not necessarily part of our congregations and, therefore, work outside of the congregational polity structure.

There have been community or extra-parochial ministers recognized by the UUA and granted final fellowship. The issue of congregational polity is unlikely to have been addressed with these individuals since their ministry is clearly apart from the congregational base of the UUA, and have utilized resources outside the UUA to procure employment. These individuals were or are employed in hospitals, prisons and institutions of higher learning as educators, administrators, chaplains or campus ministers. Salaries are paid by the institution, and the governing body of the institution forms the basis of accountability. A local Board or supervisor responsible to a Board of Directors provides ongoing supervision and evaluation of professional competency and growth, without the ability or jurisdiction to evaluate ongoing relationship with the UUA.

In other words, even if these individuals have been granted final fellowship and serve a ministry outside the traditional structure of our Association (the congregations) and have a means for ongoing evaluation, there has not been a uniform structure of accountability or policy regarding a community minister's relationship with the Association. The assumption has been that the minister will be a member of the UUMA and attend district meetings and district activities as well as the General Assembly. However, community ministers have not always been able to participate in these activities. One obstacle has been that the times and agendas have not fit the daily schedules and professional needs of community ministers.

## Moving Toward the Ideal

There is a clear need to address the philosophical underpinnings of congregational polity as they affect understanding and spiritual ownership of community ministry. In addition, since community ministries vary, the variety of support services needed should be examined.

David Pohl writes, "I believe we can honor congregational polity and, at the same time, be supportive of forms of ministry that take us beyond the local parish. Unitarian Universalism is a faith, not a philosophy, and as such it has both a vision and a mission. The historic affirmations of the Association, including our Purposes and Principles, help inform that vision and mission, and lend support to the need for community ministry."

There is a need for additional staff and resources at the UUA to provide settlement services to all clergy in community ministry. The traditional settlement services provided for those seeking ministry in the parish are not sufficient for those seeking ministry in the community. Community ministers need supportive services in the area of development. By development is meant the establishment of ecumenical or interfaith relationships that will increase UUA community ministers' visibility and opportunities. Development includes networking with organizations promoting peace and justice, as well as those whose focus is ministry addressing social problems.

The UUA can offer technical assistance, providing training for community ministers in setting up their own ministry, in fund raising and grant writing. The UUA can identify consultants who can assist in specific technical needs for those interested in developing a ministry in the community.

The UUA can provide a staff person who would relate to SLM in the development of supportive services. Regular meetings can be scheduled to discuss issues such as the MFC grant, grandparenting of clergy already involved in community ministry but not yet recognized through fellowship or ordination, internship placements, community ministers who desire transition to parish ministry, etc.

Other SLM membership suggestions have been made, for example:

The Society for the Larger Ministry might act in a supportive role networking through the newsletter, for example, to share information about new job opportunities.

The UUMA can assist through its local chapters and newsletter, and include a community minister on the UUMA Executive Committee.

The UUA can establish relationships with ecumenical organizations involved in specialized ministries, for example, national professional organizations for ministry to higher education or hospital chaplaincy.

The Department of Ministry can maintain a list of openings for hospital and other recognized chaplaincies in higher educations, prisons and the military.

The Department of Ministry can identify places where UU congregations are considering community ministry positions. For example, in Minnesota a congregation created a community ministry position. The Department needs to be aware of these ministries and announce them.

The Departments of Ministry and Extension can provide training seminars for community ministers that will teach how to organize a ministry, how to link the ministry to a congregation or other UU institution so that the ministry will continue after the minister is gone—in short, how to institutionalize a ministry.

The Department of Ministry needs to be aware of and publicize internships for community ministry.

The Departments of Ministry and Extension can educate congregations to think in terms of creating specific community ministry positions in their congregations, educate congregations for team ministry, and locate models in which community ministers participate as part of a team.

The Department of Ministry can survey situations that could turn out to be permanent possibilities for community ministers in congregations.

Metro areas, area councils, clusters and districts can develop relationships with, and give financial support to, for example, United Ministry in Higher Education. All UMHE campus ministry positions are open only to clergy from "supporting denominations."

Recommendations have been made by the *Report of the UUA Task Force on Ministerial Settlement*, April 1990.

Recommendation I, a Department of Ministry Advisory Committee. This could be helpful, especially if one of its members was a community minister.

Recommendation II, Computerized Profile System. If an improved system is recommended and put in place, this could be a big help regarding settlement.

Recommendation XIII, a Transitions Director. This could be helpful to all ministers in transition. However, the appointment of a Transition Director may postpone the appointment of a staff person to handle the needs of community ministers.

Recommendation XV, Settlement for Community Based Ministers. Determine how SLM and the Commission on Appraisal can best cooperate with the Department of Ministry in implementing this recommendation.

Recommendations have been made to examine other models of ministry. David Pohl stated in his address to the Conference of SLM in November 1991, "Community ministries develop, for the most part, independent of local congregations. While this may be necessarily so for hospital chaplaincies and agency ministries, local congregations may someday, themselves, have both resources and the will to establish their own outreach ministries. Many others will

find it more realistic to join with sister congregations in funding efforts like the Urban Ministry of Boston or Ecumenical Ministries of Chicago. However we do it, our congregations and communities need a more service-and-change-oriented model of ministry than the all-too-prevailing one of institutional caretaker and social conformist."

The American Baptist Churches (ABC) offers a model of ministry worthy of exploration. ABC is basically an association of churches, and has congregational polity. ABC may be appropriate to examine in envisioning structures for the UUA, since it offers a model of independent church coming together to provide mission work at home and abroad.

For example, the National Ministries of the American Baptist Association Committee on Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors, for the endorsement of military chaplains, institutional chaplains and pastoral counselors, may provide a working model for envisioning UUA structures.

Any American Baptist minister can write to the Committee on Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors and request an application for endorsement. The function of the Committee is endorsement, to affirm the fitness of these persons to function as American Baptist clergy in specialized settings. These ministries require adherence to ethical standards established by the ABC for all clergy, demonstrated and continuing involvement in denominational life, adequate academic and clinical preparation, and a "pastoral identity well-tempered in local church ministry experience".<sup>2</sup>

In addition to endorsement, the candidate must complete a grid, application form and covenant. Also, the candidate must sign a statement of corporate goals affirming the ABC belief that endorsed persons are considered missionaries on loan to the various special settings. This ownership of ministry beyond the parish is what we need to struggle with and articulate.

ABC publishes a newsletter that announces employment opportunities, which any minister can subscribe to for \$15/year. ABC publishes a journal, *Dialogue*, for ABC chaplains and pastoral counselors. Possibly the UUA Department of Ministry can develop a similar newsletter for community ministers.

Another model worth consideration is community ministry as extension from the local congregation. There are UU congregations that have been identified as providing ministry to the community. We may want to examine the resources and structures within the church that are used to provide these ministries to the community. We might then imagine ways to expand them or share them with other interested congregations. However, it is important to educate congregations about the theological differences between community and parish ministry. Otherwise, congregations may provide extension into the community only to achieve goals directly related to the needs of the congregation rather than considering needs in the community context.

Community ministry was a long-time part of our tradition before the third track of ministry was validated by the General Assembly and the MFC. Ownership of community ministry is based within our faith tradition, represented by the personal convictions of our professional

leadership and by the UUA. We must retrieve these histories of ministry to the community, and create ways to make these ministries part of the structure of our present day Association.

## Conclusion

The community minister is one whose "call" is in the world. The community minister may envision and create a ministry not yet realized, or serve a community ministry already established. However, the community minister, in the more radical sense, finds a place in the world within which to minister; this place may be on the margin. In all cases, says David Pohl, "Community ministers might consider it a charge to make visible the invisible, to give names to the faces that are an indictment of our society's abuse and neglect, to galvanize us into acts of compassion and justice that will make a difference, if not the difference, in our time."

The community minister cannot rely on the local parish to supply legitimacy for community or specialized ministry. The local parish must recognize that the call to ministry is grounded in personal faith. Yet, in partnership, a broader vision of ministry can emerge that recognizes the theological and ethical demand of meeting the needs of different communities within their own context. Community ministry recognizes special needs and challenges in the world that can only be addressed by someone committed to working within their midst.

Supporting community and specialized ministry is not a question of resources, as most discussions would lead one to believe. Rather, it is a question of mission. In the traditional sense, mission was the sending forth of one charged to preach and teach and heal. Community and specialized ministry can provide a vehicle for our Association to reach out into the world, to minister to those who are not UUs, to preach liberal religion in the world by actualizing our faith in the various contexts we profess as vital areas of living. The church then would not be limited to the local parish. The parish would become a supportive structure to those it authorizes and empowers to minister to others not in our congregation. In this way, the local parish and the community minister work together in liberal faith. This radical act of mutual cooperation in ministry can confront the dominance of parish ministry that has limited our vision of what ministry can be, and must be, for our UU faith tradition to remain a vital spiritual force in today's world.

One of the limitations in broadening our understanding of ministry is the self-definition of a dominant group which often, if not always, is unable to incorporate an understanding of itself as being capable of enrichment by the less dominant. While we have voted to recognize community ministry as a legitimate form of professional religious leadership, we remain reluctant to understand ourselves in this way. We have not yet move toward ownership of this ministry. We have not yet imagined the ways in which the incorporation of community ministry into our Association will strengthen the quality of ministry we offer in all its forms. Specifically, congregations and parish ministers may not be able to see the ways in which community or specialized ministries can enrich and keep vital the life of our Association.

Community and specialized ministries are a necessary and vital part of the UUA as it provides direct contact with the world at large. Community ministry takes place in arenas where the

Association as a whole can experience the world context and respond to ever new and pressing spiritual needs. Community ministry contains within it individuals who will keep the Association informed by bringing issues and needs to its awareness. Community ministry will keep the Association relevant and growing and active in the world. In this way Unitarian Universalism will remain a *living* tradition, a faith in practice.

### References

1. Alfred North Whitehead, paraphrased by David Pohl.
2. Committee on Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors, American Baptist Churches in the USA, *Ecclesiastical Endorsement Standards for Military Chaplains, Institutional Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors*, effective November 7, 1989.

M

Th

sta

the

are

ev

wi

Fe

In

co

tal

Ur

Th

of

Th

nit

ad

Th

pa

me

ev

of

ev

be

re

Th

of

th

Be

st:

fo

sa

sk

co

# Evaluation and Support

## Ministerial Evaluation: The Present Situation

The tradition of a scholarly ministry, and its implications for intellectual growth, is long standing in our religious movement. Today, however, there is a new emphasis that looks at the development of ministry more broadly. Because of this, current discussions of ministry are emphasizing the importance of a minister's ongoing involvement in some form of evaluation. Some ministers have voluntarily sought out a mentor, or entered into covenants with colleagues or with their congregations, but the evaluation of a UU minister in Final Fellowship, except when disciplinary action is required, is strictly informal.

In reviewing the evaluation procedures that are presently in place, the issues that will be considered are: Why is evaluation important? Should it be required? What forms could it take? And what would be the roles of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC), the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), and the UUA Department of Ministry?

The section of this report titled "Settlement for Community Ministers" directly addresses some of the specific needs and challenges of that segment of our ministry.

## The Ministerial Fellowship Committee

There are proposed rules changes now before the UUA Board of Trustees addressing community ministries. The changes are intended to validate that form of ministry and they attempt to address questions of accountability and denominational connections.

**The Renewal Process.** The only mandated evaluation process in which a UU minister must participate is the three renewal evaluations (first, second and final) that the MFC requires in moving from Preliminary to Final Fellowship. This evaluation process involves filling out evaluation forms that the MFC provides. While the accompanying letter from the Department of Ministry encourages the minister and the reviewing bodies to share the results of the evaluation, and there is a space on the form in which the date on which this happened is to be noted, no other guidance is given. Beyond this, a subcommittee of the MFC quickly reviews the forms looking for major problems; these are referred to the MFC for action.

There are separate forms for Parish Ministry, Ministers of Religious Education (MRE), Teachers of Religion, UUA Staff, and Community Ministers. The first and final evaluations require that the candidate be self-rated and rated by others appropriate to that particular ministry, e.g., Board, Committee on Ministry, Supervisor, Religious Education Committee. The forms for staff, teachers and community ministers outline specifically what each rating means, while the forms for parish ministers and MRE's do not. The second renewal, which is filled out by the same people, requires essay-styled answers. The major difference in the forms is not in what skills the form reviews, but simply in how they are ordered on the form. Thus preaching comes first for parish minister, religious education for MRE's, administration for staff, etc.

There is no more in-depth questioning in one's area of expertise. (Copies of these forms are available from the UUA.)

A sub-committee of the MFC then gives these renewal forms a review, looking for warning signs which would indicate a need for closer examination. The MFC guidelines state that "no person in Preliminary Fellowship shall remain in any one renewal period for more than three years".

**Mentoring.** In addition to the renewal process, the MFC has mandated participation in a Mentor Program. This emerged from discussions between the MFC, the Department of Ministry and the UUMA about the reality that a large number of the negotiated resignations in recent years have involved entry level ministers. The program's aim is to provide an opportunity for interaction, reflection and counsel between a new minister and a more experienced colleague. For more information on the Mentor Program, see Appendix C.

### **Interim Ministry**

Accredited Interim Ministers (AIM), Accredited Interim Ministers-In-Training (AIMIT), and Ministers in Transition (MIT) are evaluated every year. During the first week of January, forms are sent to both the minister and the church board. Dialogue about the evaluation is encouraged. If the evaluation is not positive, the Department of Ministry will not recommend the minister to another congregation.

### **Self and/or Congregational Evaluation**

Upon request, the UUA Department of Ministry will mail to a minister or congregation a packet of evaluation instruments with a cover letter which outlines some basic guidelines (i.e., the process should not only focus on the minister but on the whole organization), that the individuals involved need to be consulted during the creation of the process, how the evaluation might be shared, and that the motivation be the strengthening of the ministry.

The Continuing Education Network for Training, Enrichment, and Renewal (CENTER) Committee of the UUMA encourages ministers to participate in a process of self-evaluation using what they call the Tom Brown Instrument; this is primarily a way of forming a minister's continuing education goals. The instrument is distributed through the UUMA chapter's Continuing Education Representatives. It is done with a group of one's colleagues, and has been done in about half of the UUMA chapters. CENTER is also sponsoring the "Re-Imaging Your Ministry" workshop. This however is a two-time endeavor which is funded by a grant; it may well offer no ongoing usefulness in terms of ministerial evaluation unless a way is devised to bring this experience to local UUMA chapters.

### **Peer Review**

Peer review is a process that was used effectively by ministers in the Pacific Northwest District. During the early 1980s, between 12 and 15 ministers participated. It was used briefly in the

Southwest and is currently being successfully utilized in the St. Lawrence District by three teams (12 ministers). This is a flexible process that has been experimented with and adapted to individual needs. It often includes the sharing of tapes of worship services, annual reports, an on-site visit and interviews. The problem with peer review seems to rest not in the process itself, but in the coordination and maintenance of the groups.

## **Moving Toward the Ideal**

### **The Ministerial Fellowship Committee**

**The Renewal Process.** The MFC should continue to revise and update the forms it uses for the renewal process.

A more pressing question, however, is how to make the renewal a more significant and less perfunctory exercise. The process of renewal is seen and treated as an obligation more than an opportunity: a responsibility to the UUA bureaucracy mandated by the policies and procedures of the MFC. Instead, it could set a tone for the relationship between minister and congregation or other body, and should articulate an expectation that the evaluation will be reciprocal, open and honest.

The form needs to be reworked to allow those filling it out to evaluate the strengths and needs of the institution the minister is working in as well. It is difficult to see how one can fairly evaluate the minister apart from an evaluation of the institution. A poor evaluation may reveal not an inadequate minister but rather a poor match, thus congregational self-evaluation needs to become a necessary part of this process.

Whatever letter the UUA Department of Ministry sends accompanying the forms should be sent to the Board of Trustees, the Committee on Ministry and the minister. It needs to lay out guidelines for interaction, the kind of educational outcome which is anticipated given that this is still a minister in formation, the congregation's responsibilities, the expectation that the process will continue beyond the granting of fellowship, and a list of resources.

The letter that announces the renewal should include comments from the evaluator. The MFC needs to consider how to encapsulate some helpful feedback.

Presently, it is as if one sent the evaluation into a black hole; no light escapes. It also does not model an appropriately interactive and respectful relationship. To affirm the open and essential constructive intent of the process, copies of the renewal letter should go to the congregation's Board, Committee on Ministry, and Mentor.

**Mentoring.** The mentorship program needs to develop materials which do the following: help the mentee in preliminary fellowship to know what the purpose of the relationship is and have some ideas about how that can best be achieved; what to look for in a mentor and who is available; a set of guidelines so the Mentor will know what is expected; and finally, the

candidate and the Mentor should develop a covenant between themselves which outlines their mutual understanding of the nature of their relationship.

The Independent Study Program (ISP) needs to be considered as a model from which to work, e.g., the candidate and the advisor exchange visits to each other's congregation. Furthermore, a training program for Mentors needs to be developed and the entire program needs to be publicized among the laity so they can better understand the formation of a ministry.

### **Interim Ministry**

AIMs and AIMITs are routinely evaluated and regularly supervised and trained. Minister in Transition, however, is an area that could use more attention. MITs are often hurting, questioning their vocation or having real personal or competence problems and need both additional support and supervision, but creating the staff position of "Transition Director" in the Department of Ministry could present conflicts.

Ministers and congregations in transition need separate advocates to promote their interest. To expect one person to address the often incompatible needs of hurting, scared and scarred ministers and congregations is to place them in an untenable situation. Better to have a strong advocate for congregations and another for ministers and let a process be worked out between two honest brokers rather than within one bedeviled soul.

### **Self and/or Congregational Evaluation**

The CENTER committee, in collaboration with the Department of Ministry, needs to review all the ministerial evaluation tools that have been developed by the Alban Institute and other organizations, publicize them regularly, and continue to make them available to both ministers and congregations. These instruments should include a well-developed Peer Review process, as well as instruments that are appropriate for use between minister and congregation. The Department of Ministry needs to continue to emphasize that these evaluations should be used prescriptively rather than judgmentally.

The greater challenge is not in providing the tools, but in creating a situation in which this sort of evaluation becomes commonplace. The reality that ministry is collegial and collaborative needs to be highlighted—that decisions about professional development should arise from the relationship of minister and congregation, and reflect a sense of reciprocity between the two. Thus a minister's continuing education or professional development decisions should be a matter of negotiation with the congregation. Similarly, tools for congregations to evaluate themselves in this context would be appropriate and important, and should lead to action on the congregation's part.

Such an approach addresses the important issues of power, trust and accountability. It recognizes the reality that we are a covenantal people. Therefore, the power rests not in legislating, that is mandating evaluations, nor in bureaucratizing the process, but rather in forming a relationship that has the potential to transform the individuals involved. this is a

potential antidote to the rampant individualism—minister as entrepreneur—that disparages accountability and belies the reality of our essential connectedness.

### **Peer Review**

All ministers should be encouraged to participate in the process of Peer Review. The UUMA Executive Committee has asked CENTER to study and suggest a design for peer review. They might also discuss whether calling the process a consultation rather than a review would set a more supportive, less critical, tone. Individuals with experience in Peer Review need to be identified and asked to lead workshops at GA and at the chapter meetings. Mechanisms need to be developed at the chapter level to assist in forming new review teams as the membership in a chapter changes. This could be regarded as one of the chapter's Continuing Education Representatives' responsibilities. Ministers who have been involved need to speak out about how it benefitted their ministries.

Hopefully, Peer Review will become normative among our ministers, even something one looks forward to being involved in. It could easily be thought of in the context of the Mentor Program as the next step, from Mentee to Colleague.

The UUA, especially through the MFC and Department of Ministry, is attempting to formalize its relationship to ministers based in the community rather than in the parish. It will take time and experimentation to find the best solutions, as there are some questions of accountability that do not easily fit within our congregational polity model. One suggestion might be to include community ministers in the "Minister Associated" category, pairing ministers with congregations, Districts or clusters without requiring an employment relationship.

### **Should Continuing Education Be Required?**

Some professions require ongoing evaluations and the earning of continuing education credits, and some do not. In the context of the ministry, should our evaluation and educational processes be voluntary? The issue in ministry following preliminary fellowship should be one of quality rather than competence, sought through covenant rather than requirements. The question is how best to nurture the ministry of a congregation so that both develop and flourish. The suspicion exists that the ministers who most need to participate will avoid it. But given this reality, those who cannot honestly participate in the kind of professional development process outlined above will manipulate the system to their own ends anyway.

In its research, CENTER looked into denominations which required continuing education units and found that anything resembling re-credentialing does not work. The best way to handle ministers' reluctance is to educate our congregations and make the expectation of an ongoing process of review standard throughout the UUA.

The voluntary nature of the evaluation process is crucial. The covenants it requires can only be made in freedom. It could prove self-perpetuating because the covenants work, that is, they nurture and help individual ministers develop to their fullest. Ideally, these processes of evaluation will become normative. Colleagues and congregations will expect our ministers to

participate in this sort of ongoing process of education and growth. We then model what we speak about when we say the church offers life span religious education.

## **Ministerial Support: The Present Situation**

Ministerial Support is a catchall phrase which refers to the way ministers get and are given support. While there is no single or even primary provider of support, the effectiveness of our ministry hinges upon its availability. The question to keep in mind is this: Is the support that our movement offers its ministers adequate given what is expected of them?

### **Professional Development**

There is a significant degree of overlap between continuing education and ministerial support in the area of professional development. In the past, professional development most often happened in the context of a UUMA chapter meeting, one of the ministerial study groups like the Greenfield Group, or an institute like the Meadville/Lombard Midwinter Institute. However, over the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in programs aimed at the many facets of ministry. Within our Association the prime mover has been the UUMA CENTER Committee. Similarly, the newly mandated Mentor Program should make a significant contribution to the professional development of our ministries. The Department of Ministry also works in this area. It is currently experimenting in eight districts with on-site new ministry start-ups. It sponsors an annual conference on multi-staff start-ups, and is responsible for training of interim and extension ministers. Community ministers generally rely on resources outside our association.

### **Emotional/Spiritual Support**

This is difficult to differentiate from other forms of support, but clearly the local UUMA chapters, sub-chapters, affinity groups and other collegial relationships, both inside and outside of our religious movement, are an important source of day-to-day support. A major source of support appears to be affinity groups. These may be geographic, as are the local ministers groups and the UUMA chapters, or the groups may coalesce around some other concern that plays a significant role in an individual's ministry. Among these affinity groups are: the Ministerial Sisterhood (MSUU), Liberal Religious Education Directors Association (LREDA), Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC), Society for the Larger Ministry (SLM), Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship (UUCF), African American Unitarian Universalist Ministries (AAUUM), and Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers Association (URMA).

Besides these groups, the UUA Department of Ministry annually sends a representative to all UUMA chapter meetings. Another less obvious way that the Department supports ministry is by working with the Equal Opportunity Task Force and the Affirmative Action Task Force which operate out of the Department of the Ministry and jointly sponsor the "Beyond Categorical Thinking" workshops. Sixty ministers and laity have been trained to help UU

congregations to explore their feelings about and to consider the possibility of calling a minister who may be lesbian, black, disabled, etc. For MREs and Parish Ministers, another source of support is the Committee on Ministry which the Department of Ministry encourages congregation and ministers to establish.

### Financial Support

From its limited funds the Department of Ministry does provide some scholarship assistance to seminarians. There is also a small fund from which the Department draws to help newly graduated ministers whose indebtedness is over \$10,000 and who are settled in A (below \$19,000) and B (\$19,000-\$26,000) level congregations. There are sustenance funds that can be drawn on to help ministers who cannot afford health care, scholarships for ministers' children, and retirement funds. But all in all, the financial resources that are available are inadequate.

The Office of Church Staff Finances supports ministers by overseeing the UUA Pension Plan, the Service Gratuity (small, and its enrollment was closed in 1982) and health, disability and term life insurance plans. It also provides individual counseling on financial planning. The Council on Church Staff Finances is developing seminars on financial planning that will be offered in each district. The Department of Ministry works with congregations in suggesting what the salary scale should be, and clarifying for a congregation what financial obligation it is making. But it should be noted that beyond its contribution to the Office of Church Staff Finances, the UUA makes no monetary contributions out of its operating funds. It serves a managerial function, not a funding one.

### Crisis Support

Crisis support comes primarily from two sources. While the individual bears primary responsibility for seeking help, the UUMA through its local Good Offices person endeavors to support colleagues in distress. This is a voluntary exchange, and the degree to which it is used is uneven. Ministers are reluctant to ask for help. The Good Offices person has no standing with a congregation; rather, the UUA through the District Executive and the Department of Ministry staff bears the major responsibility. The Department in some cases refers congregations to consultants who work with conflict management; it may refer ministers to therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.; it will also pay one-third of the expense for career counseling for any minister, and it will assist in a negotiated resignation.

The role of the Department of Ministry in crisis management and negotiated resignations needs to be carefully examined. Among the problems are these: How can ministers be honest and open with the Department when they are troubled, defensive and vulnerable, since these are the very people who will later be responsible for their placement? Can congregations trust the Department of Ministry to be forthright in the names they submit and the evaluations they give ministers? Whose best interest will they look to while trying to minister to colleagues in trouble, with financial problems added to whatever other problems may have precipitated the resignation? *The Report of the UUA Task Force on Ministerial Settlement*

further exacerbates this problem by asking for the creation of a Transitions Director in the Department of Ministry.

### **Support for Society for the Larger Ministry**

There is little institutionalized support for ministers who are not in the parish setting, neither from the Department, the UUMA (except in spirit), nor local colleagues. The Department of Ministry does not presently assist in the settlement of non-parish ministers, nor is the pension plan available since it works through congregations. Scheduled gatherings are made to be convenient for parish ministers, but that is not necessarily convenient for non-parish ministers. Similarly, the topics UUMA chapter meetings explore don't generally take community ministry into account. SLM ministers find their support largely from other professional colleagues.

### **Moving Toward the Ideal**

In the areas of professional development and emotional support for the ministry and its institutions we do a credible job, if community ministry is not included. See the earlier discussion under "Self and/or Congregational Evaluation", on the importance of developing a collaborative relationship with one's Committee on Ministry, and a collegial relationship with one's colleagues.

### **Financial Support**

There are three important factors in buying a house: location, location, location. Something similar might be said of support for the ministry. The most important things are: money, money, money. Students start out with large indebtedness, and end up in churches that pay inadequate salaries. The predicament can be intensified by the shortness of the overall length of time one will serve congregations if ministry is a second or third career. The situation of MREs for similar reasons, second level salary and shorter tenure, is bleak. This forces impossible choices upon them. Does one pay off one's loans, have health insurance or build a pension that will produce an adequate retirement income? And in this context, how could a minister direct any resources toward professional development? The repercussions from our low wage scale are wide-ranging and significant.

Similarly, more support services from the UUA would mean more staff and would cost more. The expectations we have of the Department of Ministry cannot possibly be met. There is only one place where this money is going to come from: congregations. The challenge seems to be to convince congregations that ministry is worth paying for. Is it possible that an increase in financial support could be precipitated by an increase in involvement and understanding of ministry on the part of UU congregations?

One approach that needs to be pursued is to regularly provide congregational leaders with a newsletter like *Prospectus*, circulated by the Office for Church Staff Finances, which would give them needed information about students' debt loads, salary, comparisons with other religious bodies, health care cost, pension accumulation, etc. This Office should also continue to plan to have an American Association of Retired People trained representative in each

UUMA chapter to help ministers develop personal financial plans. We also need to have high expectations in terms of ministerial compensation, but that may well be the end rather than the means. Which is to say if we **self-consciously** involve congregations in the recruiting, developing, and supporting of ministers they will have a greater ownership of, and thus be more inclined to pay for, ministry.

### **Crisis Support**

Too little attention has been given to the reality that the Department serves two constituencies whose needs are sometimes contradictory. The area of ministerial and congregational transitions is one of these. This responsibility should not be combined under a Transitions Director.

The Mentor Program may be helpful in the area of crisis management. Since the majority of negotiated terminations occur in first settlements, a mentor could potentially be helpful in identifying problems early and helping the new minister to deal with them. Peer Review would function in a similar manner for established ministers. A stronger sense of collegiality may make the most difference, and while some individuals will remain difficult to help, the UUMA's Good Offices program needs to be continued and strengthened.

But ultimately, while our various institutions can offer services and a supportive environment, caring is enacted between individuals. We can create a context and little more. A conversation all ministers need to engage in is, how can we be present for each other?

### **Support for Society for the Larger Ministry**

The Department of Ministry needs to establish procedures to assist more fully in the settlement and support of community ministers.

SLM could have an enormous impact upon our congregational life, our visibility in the larger community, and our sense of mission, but much more thought needs to be given to how to foster the relationship between community ministers and our congregations. Apart from an observed and felt connection between our congregations and our community ministers, financial and emotional support will not be forthcoming.

The UUMA needs to continue its efforts to include community ministers as true colleagues. Its scheduling and programming needs to be implemented with SLM in mind. And a dialogue that endeavors to identify mutual areas of concern between parish and community ministers needs to be promoted.

### **Recommendations**

The renewal process needs to include some evaluation of the institution, and give feedback to the minister being evaluated.

The Independent Study Program should be studied as a model for the mentorship program. A training program for mentors should be developed, and the entire mentoring program given wide publicity.

A new standard for voluntary ministerial continuing education should be encouraged, so that continuing education is an expected part of ministry.

An increase in financial support for ministers by congregations should also be encouraged, perhaps by increased congregational involvement in and understanding of ministry.

The Department of Ministry and the UUMA should establish procedures to assist in settling and supporting community ministers.

t  
t  
t  
s  
a  
s  
r  
m  
e  
th  
Co  
is  
mi  
The  
Edu  
and  
Peop  
UUM  
men  
Mini  
Mini  
Juris

# Continuing Education

## Introduction

In any professional endeavor, one continues to learn while practicing one's profession. In some professions, for example medicine, law, accounting and teaching, continuing education has been formalized and institutionalized. The major purpose of such continuing education is to acquaint professionals with new information, practices, regulations that have arisen since their formal education. In other professions, participation in formalized continuing education has been left to the individual. But in no profession is continuing education more necessary than in the ministry. The liberal minister in particular is integrally involved in the changing social, economic, political and natural worlds. Furthermore, as a minister matures, new skills as well as new knowledge become relevant, needed or desired. As ministers move from smaller churches to larger more complex institutions, between urban, suburban and more rural settings, into and out of parish ministries, academic settings or denominational management roles, and as new waves of consciousness enter our theological dialogue, continuing education can give ministers an opportunity to catch up, catch on, catch their breath, or all of the above.

Continuing education for professional ministry, beyond the initial theological (M.Div.) degree, is both an old practice and a newly energized movement within Unitarian Universalist ministry. Present primary goals of continuing education include:

yearly educational programs and experiences, typically lasting from 1 or 2 days to a month;

sabbatical activities, lasting from 3 months to 1 year and occurring approximately every 7 years;

professional academic training leading to advanced degrees, 1-4 years or more in duration and undertaken by a minority of ministers for individual professional purposes.

The bulk of available information relates to the first of these, referred to as Yearly Continuing Education. This clearly involves the most people, and is also the area of most recent interest and growth.

People and resources consulted in connection with this chapter include: former and current UUMA CENTER committee members and District-level CERs; faculty and administration members of Harvard Divinity School, Meadville/Lombard and Starr King School for the Ministry; the Alban Institute, Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry (SACEM); and the UUA Committee on Ministerial Excellence, which began its work during the CoA's preparation of this material.

## Yearly Continuing Education: The Present Situation

Ministers have for many years used their free time in the summer (or other vacation time) for their own purposes: to rest, reflect, read, prepare for the next year, be with their families, travel. Much of this can be considered educational, but it is for the most part not intentionally planned or based on detailed evaluation of skills, knowledge or professional development needs and goals. There have also been a variety of informal ministerial networks, local and continental, that allow for sharing of needs and concerns, resources and ideas for professional development and renewal, and which can provide encouragement to take advantage of existing educational resources and programs. Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) meetings and social contacts at General Assemblies and district chapter events in particular provide a collegial community, for celebrating passages, recognizing outstanding achievements and leadership, and presenting specific programming.

As Spencer Lavan, President of Meadville/Lombard Theological School (M/L), put it, however, the question is how to get ministers away from things they are most interested in and/or have done the most in, to focus on new topics, especially ones that are perceived as less interesting or more difficult. He cited the Sutherland Report findings that ministers in their early years of ministry often lack preparation and skills in management, financial organizing and dispute resolution. M/L is giving a course in the latter for their M.Div. students.

Rev. Marilyn Sewell, 1988-90 Pacific Central District Continuing Education Network for Training, Enrichment and Renewal (CENTER) representative, said the purpose of yearly continuing education as she sees it is to "do what is needed to make oneself a better and more effective minister". That translates in her experience into focusing on things theological schools don't teach: music, administration, church finances and fund raising, self care and time management—especially setting limits—and the dynamics of church politics, including conflict resolution and dealing with difficult people.

### Existing Programs and Resources

Existing opportunities for meeting some of these needs are provided by a number of sources within the Unitarian Universalist movement as well as by outside institutions.

**Center for UU Advance.** UU Advance is an association of UU clergy and lay people whose purpose is to hold conferences and publish papers on issues of importance to the future of the Unitarian Universalist movement. UU Advance publications are a rich source of thinking on such questions as UU theology and values, institutions and institution-building.

The center for UU Advance is currently based at Meadville/Lombard Theological School. Recently sponsored conferences include two co-sponsored with the UUA Urban Coalition: one on Youth, in Indianapolis in October 1990, and a second four-day seminar entitled "Science and Religion: Honoring Ralph Burhoe and his Work" in Orlando, Florida, in January 1991.

**COLLEGIUM.** Collegium: An Association for Liberal Religious Studies is a scholarly organization whose concern is research, discussion and publication in the field of liberal religion. Established in 1974, Collegium has had study sections for a number of years in ethics, history

and theology, and in 1991 added a section in feminist studies. Collegium holds annual conferences for the purpose of reading and critiquing papers in preparation for publication. Membership is open to anyone interested in liberal religion, and is largely but not entirely Unitarian Universalist.

**First Days Record.** First Days Record is an independent non-profit religious corporation based in Delaware. A group of ministers are chosen to comment monthly for a period of time on topics of importance, reflection, or concern to them. Initially a publication by and for clergy, it is now advertised in the *UU World* for general consumption.

**Independent Ministerial Networks.** Various study groups, regular meetings of clergy interested in reading, writing, study and scholarship, are in existence and their number is increasing. Examples include the Prairie Group, the Ohio Valley Group, the Harpers Ferry Group, the Greenfield Group and the Smoky Mountain Seminar. Membership in some of these groups is by invitation; others are open. Most of them are independent of other UU institutions, including the UUMA and its chapters. UUMA chapters also hold retreats and other regular events for a variety of purposes. The Pacific Southwest and Pacific Central District UUMA chapters, for example, cooperate on an annual five-day retreat, called Refugio, which serves educational as well as renewal and support functions.

**The UUMA CENTER Program.** The UUMA has been interested in yearly continuing education for more than a decade, and now plays a leadership role via the CENTER program in creating and publicizing opportunities for, and the value of, continuing education. In 1979, a UUMA commission chaired by Brad Mitchell issued a report on continuing education that focused on what individual ministers might do to further their own education and professional development. In 1983, the UUMA Executive Committee took on the question of continuing education as a two-year major focus. A Commission on Continuing Education was charged with figuring out how institutions (the UUMA and the Department of Ministry, to name two) might help to further ministerial continuing education. This Commission in 1985 recommended the establishment of an ongoing program under the direction of a new standing committee of the UUMA, to be known as Continuing Education Network for Training, Enrichment, and Renewal (CENTER). The part of their report dealing with the establishment of CENTER is attached as Appendix D. Since 1985 the CENTER program has grown dramatically, and has managed to at least begin to address each of the six points contained in their charge.

CENTER is at present a seven-person committee appointed by the UUMA Executive Committee to staggered five-year terms. CENTER reports to the UUMA Exec., and has a UUA staff person from the Department of Ministry.

Each District UUMA chapter elects a Continuing Education Representative (CER) who serves the needs of the chapter members and is liaison to the continental CENTER committee, reporting to one of its members. CER terms are for two years.

The CER's job is to encourage UUMA members to participate in continuing education. Their tasks include:

Assessing what ministers are currently doing by way of continuing education, and feeding that information to the CENTER committee so a general database can be developed.

Gathering and maintaining a file of local resources for continuing education: classes, weekend workshops, spiritual retreat centers, interdenominational events, and tracking other resources such as CENTERS programs, pre-GA Ministers Day events, M/L programs, and sending for literature from other organizations like the Alban Institute and SACEM that have programs of interest to UU members. The CENTER committee has a list of such organizations.

Receiving training in administering Tom Brown's Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment instruments, and using them with ministers in the chapter, to help them decide on personal continuing education programs that would best fit their needs.

Publicizing all this within the UUMA chapters, holding discussion groups on continuing education, and encouraging ministers to make use of resources, including the Self-Assessment tool.

This is a big job as outlined, especially on top of a full time settlement, and in practice does not function as smoothly or as fully as desired. Rev. Junella Hansen, who served on the UUA Commission on Continuing Education and also on the initial CENTER Committee, pointed out that CERs do not have the status they should. They tend to be younger and/or newer ministers, and don't have the clout within their chapters to do the job justice.

Several CERs mentioned additional obstacles. Rev. Jeremy Brigham, CER for Prairie Star District, said that CERs can function only as well as colleagues will let them: by responding to requests for information, coming to meetings and following through on continuing education plans. In addition, CERs do not have sufficient budget, and cannot ask their churches to bear all the costs to pay for extensive followup phone calls, mail and travel in larger districts.

The CENTER committee itself has diverse responsibilities, among them:

Organizing one or two major continental continuing education programs a year. An example is the five-day program held in February 1990 in Maryland and repeated on the West Coast in 1991, led by Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute on "Re-Imaging Your Ministry". In the words of one attendee, the program focused on "what kind of ministry you do, and where you need to shore it up and/or change it".

Promoting and coordinating expansion of the ministers' pre-GA days to include a full day on continuing education, and sponsoring programs concerning congregational-ministerial matters during GA.

Coordinating an annual "Presenters" program, which includes recruiting about a dozen leading ministers to do programs for UUMA chapters on a variety of subjects and publicizing their availability. CENTER underwrites part of the expense in-

TI  
pr  
sh  
rel  
  
Ba  
mc  
ab  
the  
ab  
  
The  
me  
me  
CEI  
cha  
may  
not  
mer  
  
The  
mat  
men  
men  
com

volved in hosting a Presenter to enable more chapters to take advantage of this opportunity.

Preparing and distributing handbooks and resource materials. A recent example is the Sabbatical Handbook, listing ideas and resources, and advice and directions for how to work with a congregation so that the sabbatical is seen as a collaborative effort, rather than a personal leave-taking by the minister. A multi-staff handbook, under preparation in 1991, will focus on collegiality among ministers serving in multi-staff situations.

Meeting annually with the Department of Ministry to discuss what each sees as major needs and ways to collaborate in filling them. For example, CENTER will collaborate on the ministerial start-up seminars coordinated by the Department. Seven District Executives are presently doing these programs in eight Districts, and have found them successful in fostering collegial, cooperative relations between ministers and congregations.

Preparing CENTER pages for the UUMA Newsletter publicizing CENTER programs and listing other resources for personal use.

**The Mentor Program.** In 1989, the MFC adopted a rule requiring all settled ministers in preliminary fellowship to enter into a mentoring relationship with a minister in final fellowship. This was done partially in response to the Sutherland report which documented a relatively high dropout rate during the first five years of settled ministry.

Basic requirements are that the mentee meet with the mentor a minimum of a half hour per month to discuss matters of professional concern and to receive collegial support and counsel about the practice of ministry. Mentors must certify annually to the Department of Ministry the existence of the relationship, but may not be called on for evaluation or other information about the mentee. No specific training of mentors is called for in the MFC rules.

The UUMA, in support of this program and in recognition of the need for guidance of mentors as well as mentees, has recommended that UUMA chapters maintain lists of available mentors. Such lists would be given to newly settled ministers in preliminary fellowship, and CERs would coordinate support programs for the mentor-mentee relationships within their chapter. (Although mentees may choose any minister in final fellowship, and this requirement may be waived as necessary in the case of community ministers, both the MFC and the UUMA note the benefit of person-to-person contact and encourage mentees to choose nearby mentors.)

The UUMA CENTER committee has also undertaken to provide definition, advice and training materials for mentors in order to foster the collegiality, mutuality and flexibility needed in mentoring relationships. It is likely that the weight of responsibility for ensuring satisfactory mentoring experiences will fall to the UUMA chapters, with the support of the CENTER committee for training as needed.

## Theological Schools

**Meadville/Lombard Theological School** has taken a lively interest in continuing education, and currently holds its own programs and co-sponsors a number of others with the Central Midwest District, First Church in Chicago, and with other educational institutions. Some of their programs are for ministers, students and lay people. Others are for ministers and students only.

M/L's ongoing and recent programs include:

A four-day preaching seminar led by senior ministers from the district, conducted as part of M/L Summer Institute.

A second Summer Institute program open to lay people as well as clergy and students, which in 1990 was entitled "Theologies of the Liberal Churches", and given by Marvin Shaw, Philosophy Professor at Montana State University, Spencer Lavan, M/L President, and Dianne Arakawa.

A five-day seminar at Wesley Theological School (Methodist) in Washington D.C. on "Liberal Religious Ethics".

Co-sponsorship of a 1991 Conference on Religious Toleration given by Hungarian ministers from Transylvania, Romania, in Toledo, Ohio.

**Harvard Divinity School** houses, but is not an official sponsor of, a highly-respected theological education program for lay people and area ministers as well as students: the Theological Opportunities Program, currently directed by Elizabeth Dodson Gray, author and member of the Club of Rome. This program sponsors weekly seminars each fall and spring. In addition, clergy engaged in full-time ministry may register for credit in Divinity School classes at half the normal rate, and may also audit courses.

**Starr King School** co-sponsors with the Pacific Central District a monthly series of day-long Saturday Programs on a variety of theological, spiritual and church-related matters. These are attended mostly by lay people, although they were intended for students and area clergy as well as for the laity. Til Evans, Interim President of Starr King, said ministers claim that Saturdays are wedding days, and also sermon-writing days, but that privately they also find it difficult to learn along with lay people, when such learning includes questions indicating ignorance, weakness, and other "undesirable" traits. She said Starr King sees this as an area needing work, that it indicates ministers tend to see security in their role rather than having inner personal strength and solid integration.

Beyond these programs, neither Harvard nor Starr King appear to be actively engaged in yearly continuing education activities. Til Evans said that Starr King until recently had the view that offering particular continuing education programs seems rather manipulative, and that ministers should be responsible for taking the initiative when they have identified a need for further education.

Rebecca Parker, President of Starr King, has an abiding interest in continuing education, and sees the need for programs related to all stages of ministerial careers. Especially critical at present, however, is the need for programming directed at the first 1-to-5 year period, focusing on skill-building. She noted that basic skills for parish ministry, for example preaching, financial matters including budgets, canvass and endowment management, and related skills including conflict resolution, are learned during the first five years of ministry and used as a base for development of other skills in later years.

Plans underway at Starr King include revitalizing the summer school, with curricula for renewal and spiritual growth, and developing short courses on parish skills to be given during the January academic break. Rebecca is also in dialogue with Spencer Lavan at Meadville/Lombard about how to cooperate in meeting continuing education needs for liberal religious ministers.

**Committee on Ministerial Excellence.** In 1990 the UUA Board of Trustees, in response to a proposal from the Theological Education Grants Panel, established a committee to recommend ways that ministers in final fellowship could be "encouraged to maintain a continuing education program and be subject to an equitable procedure of review." The committee, known as the Committee on Ministerial Excellence (CME), has been operating in parallel with the CoA study, and their work is not yet complete.

Their major aim is to establish a "climate of excellence in ministry." And, although their work focusses on the professional ministry, they see excellence in ministry as a joint responsibility of clergy and laity in both parish and community settings.

A difficult issue is whether to require continuing education, how to monitor it, and what benefits/consequences should be tied to participation. While many other professions require a certain number of continuing education (CE) credits per time period (usually several years) these programs differ in several important ways from continuing education for ministers. First, the purpose of continuing education in most other professions is to impart new knowledge, new decisions, regulations, techniques. Second, disinterest in such programs leads to widespread minimal participation, or cheating. Creating a situation which encourages minimal participation and/or cheating is antithetical to a profession in which one's behavior is open to public scrutiny and modeling of ethical behavior is expected both by laity and by peers.

It is noteworthy that the CME found no denominations in the United States which require continuing education at present. Several strongly encourage it, and devote significant funding to both individual participation and the development of materials and programs.

Furthermore, SACEM has spent years extensively studying the question of requiring CE, and has found no evidence that required CE led to a qualitative difference in ministerial performance. Far more important, they found, are other factors, including adequate funding, availability of good programs and access to information about them, and a positive attitude toward continuing education by congregations and other clergy.

This last point is critical to the success of any program. Junella Hansen emphasized in critiquing the CENTER program that "continuing education has a way to go to be seen by both

ministers and congregations (as well as theological schools and the Department of Ministry) as the integral part of all ministers' yearly plans that it should be. It continues to have a "name." She also noted that all people the CENTER committee interviewed while designing their programs strongly favored the carrot versus the stick as promotional method of choice.

The CME's proposal, which is currently out for review by various bodies, recommends that ministers covenant to engage in a ministerial development process every five years, and that congregations covenant to assist ministers in doing this. This process is conceived as a cooperative effort involving ministers, their congregations or covenanting communities, their colleagues and the UUA in an in-depth assessment, review, goals-setting and planning for the next five years. A report summarizing all this will be filed with the Department of Ministry.

The CME proposes an additional staff position in the Department of Ministry to coordinate an Office of Ministerial Development and Leadership. The role of this Office would be as a resource to ministers and congregations, to keep files of ministers' plans, and to monitor participation in this program on ministerial records.

It is difficult to predict how this will work, and in particular whether it will achieve the desired ends and be worth the time and additional staffing (and therefore funds) required. And given the fact that ministers in preliminary fellowship have at times slipped through cracks and remained thus for more than the allowed number of years, the enormity of the task of accurate record keeping for all clergy looms large.

The competition for funds is tight as well. The quantity as well as quality of CENTER and other programs is directly related to funding. Ministers need funds to take advantage of more expensive educational opportunities. CENTER is proposing to the Theological Education Grants Panel that grants to individuals be made for yearly continuing education programs and sabbaticals as well as for academic studies leading to a doctoral degree. The choice to put money into UUA staff versus concentrating directly on the development of high quality programming and on scholarship funding to allow clergy to avail themselves of continuing education on a regular basis is a tough one.

Finally, success of a program such as that proposed by the CME will require substantial education and changes in long-standing attitudes of laity as well as clergy. If this promotional education does not precede the institutionalization of record keeping, the entire program could get off on the wrong foot. And the stakes are high indeed. Actual in-depth assessment, career planning and goal setting could be invigorating for clergy and bonding for their congregations or community groups.

### **Moving Toward the Ideal**

It is clear that abundant, diverse and high quality continuing education programs and opportunities, adequate availability of information about them, and adequate funds to enable ministers to take part in them, are essential elements of any successful ministerial continuing education program.

Programs that foster lay leadership in partnership with professional ministry for ministerial excellence are an essential next step.

The attitudinal change necessary for continuing education to be perceived as critically important and integral to a ministerial career is bound to take time. It is also part of a larger issue having to do with the value placed on education in our churches and in society at large. Ideally, education will attain full partnership with celebration and witness as the cornerstones of our ministry, practiced and participated in by laity and clergy in partnership. In recent decades education too often has been seen as marginal, and funded as such. This is slowly changing, and ideally the change will continue to fruition.

**Targeted continuing education programming.** One factor in an ideal continuing education repertoire is programming specifically designed for different career stages. As Rebecca Parker has noted, continuing educational needs tend to vary with the different stages of ministry. The following list of continuing education needs is a compilation of recommendations from the Sutherland Report, interviews, and input from individual ministers and lay people.

**Years 1 to 5 of parish/MRE service:**

- Administration, buildings and grounds management
- UU history, including institutional history
- Regional UU history
- Financial matters, canvass, budgets, endowments, capital campaigns, management of accounts
- "People" skills - relational matters, conflict resolution
- Preaching skills
- Priorities and personal care, healing and preventative care and support
- Religious education life span programs

**Mid-career years:**

- Larger church organization
- Diverse ministerial roles
- Multiple ministry and staff issues
- Ethnic diversity
- Urban churches
- Spiritual and theological diversity
- Longer-term ministries in single parish
- Extension and covenanting roles of churches
- Renewal of personal call, theological, spiritual perspectives and scholarship
- Denominational issues and organization
- Training for mentor and intern management roles
- Personal support, midlife "stretches", healing and well-being

**Later years:**

- Financial issues, pre-retirement
- Elder statespersonship
- New ministerial roles and options: interim, extension ministries, denominational roles, writing, teaching
- The emeritus role, dos and don'ts

Existing programs, notably UU Advance, COLLEGIUM and ministerial study groups, have tended to focus on scholarship, knowledge and theology, and institutional matters. Recently both the UUMA CENTER program and the theological school continuing education offerings have redirected their attention to skill-building and other needs identified in the Sutherland Report as important in the early years of professional ministry.

Various UUA departments also conduct training for interim and extension ministries, for ministerial startups and multi-staff ministries, and for religious education via the Renaissance program. Much of this programming is appropriate for middle and later years of ministry.

It is clear that more and diverse programming, targeted to different career needs and stages, is needed if we are to meet the challenge of lifespan professional continuing education.

Once again, laity as well as clergy will need help to understand the advantages, accept and support the regular participation of parish clergy in continuing education programs, and the policies, financial resources and planning that will be needed for ministers to avail themselves of the right programs at the right times in their careers.

**The CENTER Program.** The CENTER program has achieved much since 1985, and appears to be institutionally placed within our UU circles to be the coordinating body for study, planning and production of continuing education programs to meet the variety of needs of ministers throughout their careers. Junella Hansen, a founding member of the CENTER Committee, has clear ideas for the future, and concurs with the priority that must be given to funding the creation, distribution and presentation of high quality programming and to making money available to enable ministers to take advantage of expensive programs.

With more funds, for example, she said, more opportunities, such as five or six continental programs instead of one or two per year, could be organized by the CENTER committee.

Another important resource she noted would be a continental ministerial retreat center where ministers can go on spiritual retreat, for renewal, and when they are having trouble and need private space and/or help.

CENTER programs could also appeal to clergy from other denominations, and the CENTER program could become a renowned resource for liberal ministerial continuing education comparable to the Beacon Press in publishing circles.

**Theological Schools.** Meadville/Lombard is developing an important continuing education program that extends beyond its borders, amplifying its own resources creatively. Other theological schools need to be encouraged to follow this example and develop specific continuing education programs for ministers. The theological schools have resources, including faculty, libraries and space, to contribute greatly in this area. They need help in seeing this as a priority and developing the resources needed to expand their programs.

**General Considerations.** Much more education of congregations as well as ministers is needed about the importance and value to them of yearly continuing education experiences, and understanding how to work together on decisions about what, when and funding.

Very little attention appears to be paid to non-parish ministry as a subject for continuing education by the CENTER committee or anyone else. As a non-parish fellowship track is now a reality, continuing education for ministers serving in various non-parish settings is a more visible need, and must be addressed.

Although cooperation clearly exists between the CENTER Committee and the Department of Ministry and the Theological Grants Panel, the Department could plan a more active partnership role by helping with publicity, resource collection and evaluation, and developing programs for more specialized ministries, such as large church ministries, urban ministries, crisis church and troubled congregations ministries, and multi-staff ministries including community-outreach ministries.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend substantially increased funding for the CENTER program.

We recommend that the UUA Board either extend the work of the Committee on Ministerial Excellence or establish a new committee charged with making a comprehensive study of continuing education needs at all stages of professional ministry, and preparation of a strategic plan for strengthening and coordination of continuing education providers, for funding, and for a promotional campaign directed at clergy and laity, so as to enable the pathways to excellence of our professional ministry.

We recommend that the theological schools be encouraged to develop more specific programs for continuing education, and to give CE a higher priority when planning their programs and prioritizing their resources. We also recommend that they be more intentional in preparing M.Div. students for ongoing participation in continuing education, assessment, review and career planning. This might well include preparation of a preliminary plan for the first five years to take to the first settlement.

We recommend that congregations be encouraged to include continuing education time and funding in contracts with ministers, and in their annual budgets. We also recognize that substantial additional sources of funding will be required for all ministers to be enabled to take advantage of continuing education programs.

Finally, we recommend that a coordinating body for dissemination of scholarship and other continuing education funds be established. Membership in this body would include but not be limited to, the Theological Education Grants Panel, the Department of Ministry, the CENTER Committee and at-large members, and a balance of lay people, appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees.

## **Sabbatical Opportunities: The Present Situation**

Ministers' sabbatical time varies from a few months to a year, with most averaging six months (half of a church year plus summer vacation). Many sabbaticals involve similar activities to

## **Professional Advanced Degrees: The Present Situation**

Advanced study leading to a professional degree beyond the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) is possible at or in association with most accredited theological schools that provide training for liberal ministry, including Harvard Divinity School, Meadville/Lombard Theological School and the Starr King School for the Ministry. The programs, time requirements and degrees granted vary among institutions. Programs are reflective of the range of options available.

**Harvard Divinity School (HDS)** offers two advanced theology degrees beyond the M.Div. (Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology), and is closely associated with two Ph.D. programs administered by the Harvard College Arts and Sciences faculty (Ph.D. in the Study of Religion and Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations).

**Meadville/Lombard Theological School.** Meadville/Lombard (M/L) offers in addition to the M.Div. a Doctor of Ministry degree which takes a minimum of one additional year of study. The program is "designed for those who desire to pursue an advanced professional program for ministry by including within their work a concentration on a particular area of ministry or study". It can be completed along with the M.Div. by adding a year at that time, or can be done following some years of ministry. An advantage of the latter is the opportunity, in addition to focusing on a specialized thesis topic, for ministers to "review their work in ministry and develop an appropriate plan for strengthening their own ministerial practice".<sup>1</sup>

The number of students in this program has typically been very small (1-3), and Spencer Lavan, President of M/L, says that administration of the D.Min. program is currently under discussion. Some students are requesting that they be allowed to take their course work and do their theses elsewhere, and get the D.Min. from M/L. M/L is interested in such cooperative efforts, but quality control and administration would appear to be complex.

Meadville/Lombard has an arrangement with the Divinity School of the University of Chicago wherein all M/L students are admitted to the University as graduate students with all the rights and privileges including library access, recreational facilities and student health services.

The Divinity School at the University of Chicago also offers a Ph.D. program in various academic disciplines of religious studies. Students interested in pursuing the Ph.D. typically take the Master of Arts in Divinity (M.A.Div.) from the University in parallel with the M.Div. at M/L, rather than electing the D.Min. program. In 1988, for example, three of the six M.Div. recipients received concurrent M.A.Div. degrees from the University of Chicago. Two students received the D.Min.

**Starr King School for the Ministry.** Starr King School (SKS) does not itself offer any earned degree other than the M.Div. However, like Meadville/Lombard, it participates in a consortium of nine theological schools and 11 centers and programs, the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). And, unlike ACTS, the GTU offers graduate-level theological instruction and grants degrees in its own name as well as acting as a consortium of schools for purposes of coordinating cross-registration, joint library facilities and a variety of special programs and services. Originally formed by four Protestant seminaries in 1962 as a common vehicle for

## **Professional Advanced Degrees: The Present Situation**

Advanced study leading to a professional degree beyond the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) is possible at or in association with most accredited theological schools that provide training for liberal ministry, including Harvard Divinity School, Meadville/Lombard Theological School and the Starr King School for the Ministry. The programs, time requirements and degrees granted vary among institutions. Programs are reflective of the range of options available.

**Harvard Divinity School (HDS)** offers two advanced theology degrees beyond the M.Div. (Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology), and is closely associated with two Ph.D. programs administered by the Harvard College Arts and Sciences faculty (Ph.D. in the Study of Religion and Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations).

**Meadville/Lombard Theological School.** Meadville/Lombard (M/L) offers in addition to the M.Div. a Doctor of Ministry degree which takes a minimum of one additional year of study. The program is "designed for those who desire to pursue an advanced professional program for ministry by including within their work a concentration on a particular area of ministry or study". It can be completed along with the M.Div. by adding a year at that time, or can be done following some years of ministry. An advantage of the latter is the opportunity, in addition to focusing on a specialized thesis topic, for ministers to "review their work in ministry and develop an appropriate plan for strengthening their own ministerial practice".<sup>1</sup>

The number of students in this program has typically been very small (1-3), and Spencer Lavan, President of M/L, says that administration of the D.Min. program is currently under discussion. Some students are requesting that they be allowed to take their course work and do their theses elsewhere, and get the D.Min. from M/L. M/L is interested in such cooperative efforts, but quality control and administration would appear to be complex.

Meadville/Lombard has an arrangement with the Divinity School of the University of Chicago wherein all M/L students are admitted to the University as graduate students with all the rights and privileges including library access, recreational facilities and student health services.

The Divinity School at the University of Chicago also offers a Ph.D. program in various academic disciplines of religious studies. Students interested in pursuing the Ph.D. typically take the Master of Arts in Divinity (M.A.Div.) from the University in parallel with the M.Div. at M/L, rather than electing the D.Min. program. In 1988, for example, three of the six M.Div. recipients received concurrent M.A.Div. degrees from the University of Chicago. Two students received the D.Min.

**Starr King School for the Ministry.** Starr King School (SKS) does not itself offer any earned degree other than the M.Div. However, like Meadville/Lombard, it participates in a consortium of nine theological schools and 11 centers and programs, the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). And, unlike ACTS, the GTU offers graduate-level theological instruction and grants degrees in its own name as well as acting as a consortium of schools for purposes of coordinating cross-registration, joint library facilities and a variety of special programs and services. Originally formed by four Protestant seminaries in 1962 as a common vehicle for

doctoral programs, it now includes Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Unitarian Universalist and Buddhist schools and centers, and grants three academic degrees, the M.A., Ph.D. and Th.D.

The Ph.D. programs focus on academic-oriented theological studies and are conducted in association with the Graduate Division of the University of California at Berkeley (UCB). Ph.D. candidates must apply to both the GTU and the UCB Graduate Division, and the committees that oversee their program formulation, comprehensive examination and thesis preparation are comprised of faculty from both institutions. Much of the work for the Ph.D. is normally done at UCB. The degree, however, is granted by the GTU except for a special Ph.D. in Near Eastern Religions program for which degrees are granted jointly by GTU and UCB.

In general, students have more responsibility, in concert with faculty committees, for deciding what preparation is needed and defining comprehensive examination parameters, than is the case with the other doctoral programs described.

### Moving Toward the Ideal

The overview of the advanced degrees available at Harvard Divinity School, Starr King School for the Ministry (via GTU) and Meadville-Lombard Theological School provides a representative view of what is currently available. Several points can be made regarding where we are in this area, and what is needed for the future.

A listing of these and other similar programs, together with an evaluation of them, and sources of available financial resources, needs to be kept current and be available to ministers to help them plan for future career development. The UUA Department of Ministry and the UUMA CENTER program are two logical repositories-coordinators-publicists.

It would be useful to know how many UU ministers currently hold earned advanced degrees, and what these degrees have enabled them to do or achieve:

- Better ministry
- Better pay
- More rapid movement to larger more complex "important" churches
- More leadership in Association circles
- Advanced scholarship, publications, writing, research
- Academic positions

The Department of Ministry could collect this data.

Recent D.Min. thesis topics at Meadville-Lombard tend to be in the areas of spiritual counseling and church administration, areas in which, according to the Sutherland Report, newer ministers tend to feel weak. This would indicate that a current primary motivation for further study is the first point above: better ministry.

M.Div. students at Starr King School have expressed a lively interest in the CoA's *Quality of Religious Life* study, and say it has helped them focus their study programs. More conscious

attention to this study at the theological schools and by the UUMA CENTER's reps as they work with ministers on continuing education plans would appear to add an important different dimension to the minister's own perceptions of what is needed.

Although financial and collegial support is stronger for continuing education leading to advanced degrees than for yearly continuing education, more scholarship funds are needed to enable more ministers to take the necessary time to complete these advanced educational programs.

Starr King School needs to be encouraged to develop a one-year post-M.Div. program involving a thesis, comparable to the D.Min. program at M/L and the Th.M. at Harvard Divinity School.

## Conclusion

The status quo for continuing education, including identification and assessment of available programs and resources, funding requirements, and methods for identification of personal needs and goals for professional growth, are summarized in Figure 1. Recommendations are summarized in Figure 2. In both figures, presentation of current status and future needs is organized around the various involved entities listed along the left margin in Figure 1.

There seems to be widespread general support for education leading to advanced degrees, including a thesis. It is less clear how many people choose to do this, what benefits they hope for, and what they in fact gain by doing so. There is less general support for and understanding of the parallel, more accessible, opportunities inherent in yearly continuing education.

While a variety of resources are currently available for yearly continuing education, too often they seem to be "business as usual" rather than part of an intentional program of assessment, review and planning.

There is a feeling, backed up by recent studies including the Sutherland Report, *The Quality of Religious Life in Unitarian Universalist Congregations* and information gathered by the CENTER Committee, that higher quality professional ministry is needed and desired, and that quality relates both to nuts-and-bolts church-related skills and to spiritual depth, theological insight and scholarship. Yearly continuing education is the obvious tool for developing these skills, coupled with periodic intentional career assessment, review and goal setting.

This information needs to be collated in a comprehensive report that can energize and focus the general support which higher education now receives and yearly continuing education needs. Such a report would be useful to congregations and districts, UUMA chapters, theological school boards and administrations, the Theological Grants Panel, and other educational funding sources. Specific proposals could be made on the basis of it to, for example, the Theological Grants Panel for increased funding of schools and individual scholarships for study, or the CENTER program for development of more programming and increased availability of existing programming.

Figure 1. Continuing Education for Ministers — Present

	What's Needed	Allocation Time/Resources	Identification; What/Where	Provides	Oversight/Quality Control
Ministers	CE: skills, passages, interests, spec. congr. needs, scholarship, perspective		colleagues; personal knowledge/search	teach with CENTERS	
Congregations	*Agree on topics with ministers	*Arrange time w/ministers, provide \$			
Dept. of Ministry				consultants & training re some specialties e.g. interim, extension	
UUA			GA workshops, re programs, logistics for congregations, ministers		
UUMA	CENTERS helps identify	CENTERS *provide scholarships	CENTERS reps keep resource lists, publicize	CENTERS programs	quality oversight, breadth/balance via reps
Theological Schools		*provide housing, access to libraries, facilities, other academic resources		provide yearly CE**, non-degree study opportunities, advanced degrees	
Other				other Universities, Alban Inst., etc.	

Figure 2. Continuing Education for Ministers — Future/Ideal

	What's Needed	Allocation Time/Resources	Identification; What/Where	Provides	Oversight/Quality Control
Ministers	CE: skills, passages, interests, spec. congr. needs.		personal knowledge/ search, colleagues	get from/ serve as mentors, teach with CENTERS	one:one via mentors, colleagues
Congregations	Agree on topics with ministers	Arrange time w/ministers. provide \$	resource for these		could evaluate results?
Dept. of Ministry			list of opportunities & evaluation, esp. advanced degree programs	consultants & training re more specialties e.g. crisis train mentors?	tracking if req'd? e.g. 1st 5 years; quality control? breadth/balance? oversee mentors?
UUA		scholarships? establish continental retreat center for UU clergy	GA workshops, re programs, logistics for congregations, ministers		
UUMA	CENTERS helps identify	CENTERS provide scholarship \$	CENTERS reps keep resource lists, publicize	CENTERS programs, train mentors	quality control? breadth/ balance via reps, mentors, coordinate mentors
Theological Schools		provide housing, access to libraries, facilities, other academic resources	plan first 5 yrs CE with M.Div. before graduation	provide yearly CE, non-degree study opportunities, advanced degrees	
Other		Veatch scholarships		other universities, Alban Inst., etc.	

### Notes and References

1. *Meadville/Lombard Theological School Announcements*, 1989-1991, p. 18.

# Pre-Retirement and Retirement

Historically, priests and those "of the cloth" have carried out their duties until they were no longer of service or until death. They were paid in kind, by alms or probably at best by being a part of a monastic institution which undertook to care for them for life, in return for their services.

With the Protestant reformation, some things changed for those who chose to break away: there was no longer a monastic house to fall back on when they became old or ill. In many instances, the Protestant ministry evolved into an entrepreneurial mode, which became that of many UU ministers and congregations.

This entrepreneurial mode has meant that congregations have tried to get the best minister possible for the least amount of money, while ministers have tried to get the best possible congregation at the best possible salary. As can be appreciated, this situation can be fraught with difficulties for both the minister and congregation. These difficulties can and do have far-reaching consequences. There are of course exceptions to this mode of operation, both in the past and currently, where ministers have served and do serve in areas where the pay is low but the need for ministry is great.

What are the issues of importance today and tomorrow for our ministers with regard to pre-retirement? Surely we must look at the whole spectrum of educational debts, salaries, medical and disability expenses, pension plans, and support networks, including moral, social and spiritual needs.

We must also look at the issues which affect the congregations and the UUA, such as salaries, medical and disability expenses, pension plans, support networks and the interconnectedness of all the participants.

## Education Debts

Referring to the Sutherland Report of October 1989, education debt is "rising steadily though not sharply".<sup>1</sup> The effect of this indebtedness will show up when we look at some of the other major areas of concern in the pre-retirement and retirement picture.

There are various ways in place of helping students and new ministers to minimize this debt load, such as the UUA Financial Aid Grants and the New Ministers Assistance Program.

Major indebtedness caused by gaining a theological education should not jeopardize the health and welfare of the family or the minister, either currently or in their future.

The high cost of theological education deters some able people from pursuing this course of study, to the detriment of the Association and its congregations.

Those who are in the Independent Study Program for Minister of Religious Education do not usually incur such a heavy debt load, due to the fact that most continue to be employed as Directors of Religious Education and stay in their local communities.

### Recommendation

We propose that congregations be assessed yearly, on a per capita basis, a stipulated amount of money to increase the funds available to needy theological students and those carrying post-theological educational debts.

Using statistics from the 1989 UUA Directory,<sup>2</sup> 140,788 adult members assessed at a minimum of 25 cents would put \$35,197.00 into a fund such as the UUA Financial Aid Grants. Obviously the higher the assessment, the more money would be available.

### Salaries/Compensations

To quote from the Sutherland study again: "The overwhelming majority (94.9%) of the ministers in this study receive salaries of \$32,000 or less."<sup>3</sup>

Nationally, a recent survey of ministerial compensation (salary and housing) by the Church Pensions Conference, an association of 45 congregations in North America, gave this indication of how our clergy are doing relative to other groups:

1. Jewish Reformed	\$50,000
2. Jewish Conservative	34,479
3. Christian Reformed	34,426
4. Reformed Church	33,820
5. Episcopal Church	32,479
6. Unitarian Universalist	32,395 <sup>4</sup>

One must compare these figures with the annual income of the congregants the ministers serve. In the *Quality of Religious Life in Unitarian Universalist Congregations*, Commission on Appraisal 1989, 46.5% of the congregants earn more than \$30,000 with 31% earning \$40,000 or more.

Some of the questions that must be considered:

Can a new minister carrying a debt load of \$20,000 to \$30,000<sup>5</sup> and earning \$32,000 ever pay off the debt?

Is it possible for someone entering the ministry in mid-life and earning \$32,000 to retire with an adequate income?

Does our salary scale help us to attract and keep the kind of people we need in the ministry?

Does the generally lower salary scale of MRE's as compared to Parish Ministers become an issue in the choice of which ministry to follow?

When we talk of compensation we switch from talking of salaries only to a much more complicated and less defined area. That area can include such things as health, disability and life insurance, pension, housing, professional expenses, vacation, sabbatical leave and other legitimate considerations.

The UUA has periodically produced a set of compensation guidelines estimating what might be appropriate. The Department of Ministry has set a minimum level of compensation below which it will not provide settlement services.

The Council on Church Staff Finances has formulated the following mission statement: "To design and coordinate programs to meet the financial needs of congregations, professional leadership, and staff of the congregations and member organizations of the UUA through education, advocacy, research, policy recommendation and coordination, to ensure their financial well-being, including salaries, benefits, health, retirement, and emergency assistance, and to encourage our congregations and member organizations to become leaders as socially responsible employers."<sup>6</sup>

### **Recommendations**

We propose that we as an association study how other denominations treat these matters of salary and compensation.

We propose that congregations work to upgrade the present salary and compensation packages and if necessary bring them into line with local standards.

We propose that congregations who are seeking new ministerial staff be given more explicit guidance on how to structure a ministerial salary and compensation package, and financial planning guidelines.

We propose that the UU Council and Office on Church Staff Finances give training on financial planning to all current ministers and extend this service to prospective ministers.

### **Insurance - Medical, Disability and Life**

The UU Council and Office on Church Staff Finances has as part of their area of concern medical, disability and life insurance coverage, as stated in their mission statement.

According to the Sutherland study, "That new ministers feel financially restrained is indicated by the fact that fully 1/3 of them feel that they cannot afford to participate in a pension plan or a life and disability insurance plan. Nine of the ministers in the lowest salary range do not feel that they can afford health insurance."<sup>7</sup>

Both the United States and Canadian federal governments have tax laws which govern the way in which such insurance is paid for and how reimbursements are handled. Federal laws also cover portability of this insurance. State and Provincial laws also have a bearing on eligibility, among other considerations. The whole of this subject is extremely complex, an interwoven tangle of financial, tax and legal intricacies.

That we have ministers and families inadequately covered for these health costs must have an adverse effect on the minister's performance. When a crisis strikes, the lack of insurance for the minister is going to affect the congregation as well as the minister and will add guilt to the emotions of both parties.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that all ministers' compensation packages include adequate insurance coverage and that congregations and ministers both be urged by the Ministerial Settlement office to see that it is included.

### **Pensions**

The adequacy of pensions for ministers has been an ongoing problem and was addressed in *Unitarians Face a New Age*<sup>8</sup> (which was published in 1936!) and currently in the Sutherland study<sup>9</sup> with many other studies and recommendations in the intervening period.

Quoting again from the Sutherland study, "That new ministers feel financially restrained is indicated by the fact that fully 1/3 of them feel they cannot afford to participate in a pension plan ..." A decade ago a survey of conditions of retired UU ministers and surviving spouses indicated a significant number were found to be truly living in marginal and sub-marginal conditions.<sup>10</sup>

Currently, the Doran Grant, funded by Plandome, provides a guarantee of assistance to assure a poverty level income (\$10,990 a year) to any ministers, spouses, or religious educators who are in fellowship and have served our movement for 20 years. There is question as to the meaning of religious educators: does this mean DREs accredited by the UUA? All MREs are ministers and should fall into that category. What happens to late entry ministers who do not have 20 years of service?

At this time there are 37 participants in the Doran plan. The UU Council and Office on Church Staff Finances feel they are missing a number of the most needy.

There are UU ministers who are opting out of the Social Security system stating religious objections, but in reality mainly for financial reasons.

There are ministers who have reached retirement age after long and good ministries, living in parsonages and ending up with less than \$10,000 in their pension fund and no home of their own.

There are a few ministers past retirement age in the Interim Ministry Program or taking part-time positions for financial reasons alone.

At this time, if you are a UU minister working outside the parish you are unable to be a participant in the UUA pension plan or medical plan and by the nature of your larger ministry job, will usually be ineligible for any other pension or insurance plan.

**Recommendations**

We propose that all ministers' compensation packages include a mandatory and adequate pension plan.

We propose that ministers be given good financial training at the onset of their career and throughout the course of their career.

We propose that congregations be informed clearly about their role in a pension plan and be strongly encouraged to be responsible employers.

We propose that the Council and Office on Church Staff Finances consult with other denominations to find out how they set up their pension plans.

We propose that serious consideration be given to setting up a "defined benefit" program with information being given to both ministers and congregations.

We propose that the Council and Office on Church Staff Finances explore the idea of seeking grants to provide matching funds so they can encourage smaller congregations to enroll in the pension plan.

**Recommendations**

We propose that during the transition period, until adequate pensions are available to all ministers, sufficient supplementary funding be made available so that all retired ministers and their partners can live in dignity.

We propose that congregations be informed clearly about the need for this supplementary funding, and that it will be needed for some time into the future.

We propose that the UUA Budget and Finance Committee take an active role in also trying to make funds available to met this supplementary funding demand.

**Moral, Social, and Spiritual Support**

There is the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers' Association who purpose is "to serve the Association and to enhance the well-being of retired Unitarian Universalist ministers, ministers

of religious education, their spouses and their widows and widowers and to provide such programs and activities as may be feasible for their benefit".<sup>11</sup>

Some UUMA districts and some societies are pro-active in seeking out and including retired ministers in their activities, some are not.

Some retired ministers feel that they still have much to offer and are willing and able to make such offers. There are others who simply wish to be left alone and want no demands on either their time or energy.

### Recommendations

That retired ministers who feel they would still like to be involved take it upon themselves to seek out situations where their expertise can be of value, either at the congregational, district or continental level. The UU Retired Ministers' Association could act as a resource by promoting this program and by identifying situations in which retired ministers could serve.

We propose that congregational, district and continental committees be open to and actively seek out these retired ministers.

We propose that retired ministers be encouraged to join the UUA Retired Ministers' Association. It would seem to be the only existing voice that has special regard for the needs of the retired.

We propose the UUMA chapters actively open their memberships to include those retirees who might wish to join them for study, fellowship and support.

We propose that the UUA Department of Ministry strengthen pre-retirement planning programs for ministers and their partners. These programs to start 5 years prior to expected retirement, and that the programs cover much more than finances.

### References and Notes

1. The Rev. Arline Conan Sutherland and Jeffrey V. Sutherland, Ph.D., *Unitarian Universalist Association Ministerial Survey*, October 1989. 1.0 page 1, 4.8 page 7, 5.8 page 15.
2. *Unitarian Universalist Association 1989 Directory*. Statistical summary 6-30-88, page 37.
3. *Unitarian Universalist Association Ministerial Survey*, October 1989. 1.0 page 1, 4.5 page 6, 5.5 page 14, 5.7 page 14.
4. *Prospectus*, The Newsletter of the UU Office of Church Finances, Winter-April 1990, "Compensation Matters."
5. Notes for the UU Commission on Appraisal, prepared by David Hubner, Church Staff Finances Director, April 1990. "Compensation Levels and Patterns," page 9.

6. Notes for the UU Commission on Appraisal, UU Council on Church Staff Finances, "Mission Statement."
7. *Unitarian Universalist Association Ministerial Survey*, 1.0 page 1, 4.13 page 9, 4.14 page 9.
8. *Unitarians Face A New Age*, the Report of the Commission of Appraisal to the American Unitarian Association, 1936. Pages 30, 139.
9. *Unitarian Universalist Association Ministerial Survey*, 1.0 page 1, 4.12 page 8.
10. This fact, and points noted in the subsequent four paragraphs, were drawn from Notes for the Commission on Appraisal, UU Council on Church Staff Finances, "Inadequate Retirement Plans," page 4.
11. *Unitarian Universalist Association 1989 Directory*, page 361.

T  
m  
w  
th  
pl  
ar  
ar  
  
R  
  
H  
at  
th  
U  
d  
n  
r  
  
I  
t  
a  
  
E  
v  
a  
t  
i  
o  
n  
i

# Congregational Relationships to Professional Ministry

The ministry does not exist apart from the people it serves. More than other professions, ministry involves partnership. Partnerships imply mutual responsibilities. The laity and others with whom professional ministers have covenantal relationships do have responsibilities for the well-being, health and professional performance of the current ministers and for the profession at large. This chapter considers specifically the relationships between lay groups and the professional ministry, following the career path identified in the previous chapters and beginning with the decision to enter ministry.

## **Recruitment: The Present Situation**

Historically, a decision to prepare for the Unitarian Universalist ministry has been an individual decision. Potential ministerial students have received informal encouragement, however, there has been no formal recruitment program or strategy for our ministry among Unitarian Universalist institutions, and no means by which lay people's input to recruitment (other than directly to prospective candidates) could be utilized. For most lay people, the professional ministry is simply a given, and the relationship between future ministerial excellence and recruitment, and their own power to affect the process, is unrecognized.

In considering a Unitarian Universalist institutional program for ministerial recruitment, with the goal of recruiting the best qualified candidates, congregational input and support must be an integral part of the process, for three reasons.

First, congregational leaders and other involved members have knowledge and experience with prospective candidates who are fellow congregants, and often have pretty clear ideas about whether a person would make a good minister. This may be limited to "I would love this person as my minister", or "I am not thrilled by the prospect of this person being my minister", but such gut-level feelings are important as a complement to a prospective candidate's academic record or leadership positions held. There is at present no vehicle for such information to reach any UU institution.

Second, lay people tend to be in touch with what kind of ministry is desired by them, by their friends, and in the general culture. Persons engaged in professional ministry tend to be focused on ministry as they learned it, have practiced it, and as their colleagues view it, as well as on what their constituents desire. Of course, a great diversity of experience, interest and direction exists among congregants. Further, a collective sense of ministry desired is obscured by lack of discussion, and by the status quo: the current ministry. Discussion of unmet ministerial needs is seen as a threat to that status quo by lay people as well as the clergy. One illustration will support this point.

A well-recognized cultural shift has taken place in the last ten years or so, expressed in many ways but illustrating a yearning for spirituality, for grounding, connection, love and peace.

While new-age movements and eastern spiritual traditions have filled some of this yearning, many people, UUs included, desire a rejuvenation within their own religious tradition. Many of them also express some frustration with the lack of resources within their churches, and augment their UU congregational life with other religious experience (e.g., Buddhist retreats, CUUPS, 12-step programs, women's circles).

Some lay people can articulate this need and have creative ideas about "how to get there from here". More have not thought through the issue, but if asked about a given prospective candidate from their number, would base their judgment on whether the candidate would minister effectively in this new direction. UU institutions (*any* institutions) have difficulty making this kind of future-looking judgment. Selection criteria, rules, grids, curricula and such invariably lag behind cultural change.

Finally, involvement of congregations as integral partners with institutional bodies in a recruitment process would facilitate increased congregational involvement with later steps in professional ministry, with "in care" relationships, financial support of students, support for continuing education, and even financial support of clergy: better pay!

### **Moving Toward the Ideal**

Prospective candidates for the ministry could be nominated and sponsored by their local congregation: by the ministerial committee, worship committee, religious education committee, or other relevant group through the Board of Trustees, as well as by the parish minister. This would initiate an ongoing relationship of congregational support and supervision following recruitment. The relationship would continue until the candidate received preliminary fellowship from the MFC.

The recruit-congregation relationship could include letters of recommendation to theological schools, congregational financial support for theological school education, a schedule of written reports from the recruit to the congregation's committee on ministry, occasional preaching, teaching and other ministerial duties under ministerial supervision.

Given that theological school training may take place at some distance from the candidate's home church, some of this support will fall to a church nearby which the candidate joins and participates in while in school. Ongoing participation in a congregation during theological education helps in shaping and deepening the prospective minister's concept of ministry. It provides for systematic reflection on ministry based on the reality of a congregation's life.

In either case, such ongoing relationships with theological students are bound to increase the congregations' awareness of their contribution to our ministry.

Training programs are needed for congregations to help them get started with the process of envisioning themselves as active participants in recruiting candidates for the ministry and supporting them through theological school. Discussion programs and curricula on ministry could focus on professional ministerial needs and standards, what constitutes good quality ministry, and what kinds of people are good prospects for fulfilling this vision.

As a congregation began to engage with the process of identifying and encouraging ministerial recruits, sons and daughters of members, as well as adult members, would be primary initial prospects. Students at nearby universities would be another potential source. Congregational recruitment could include the minister and/or committee on ministry reaching out to these institutions, and the congregation may be encouraged to establish campus ministry programs, support the development of campus YRUU or UUYAN groups, or foster formal or informal lectures by the minister on topics relating to liberal religion and the Unitarian and Universalist traditions.

### **Ministerial Training: The Present Situation**

Theological training usually takes place at some distance from a student's home church. Given the lack of connection via intentional recruitment, recommendation and nomination procedures, or ways of maintaining an ongoing relationship, most students are lost sight of by their home congregation. Support devolves to congregations in the vicinity of the theological schools.

This has the drawbacks that students are new to these congregations, and are there a relatively brief period of time, a time furthermore when their relationship to congregational life is undergoing a radical shift, from lay person to professional leader.

These nearby congregations also are home to numerous students, and opportunities for preaching and other ministerial experience under supervision are limited. Such churches are often teaching churches, and have interns, which further limits opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience. Finally, not all nearby churches may be amenable to such "in care" arrangements.

### **Moving Toward the Ideal**

Congregations should be encouraged and helped to establish an ongoing relationship with students from their community. This could include, as noted above, financial support for their training. One early expense is the career evaluation that students undergo during their first year. The cost for this is over \$600 which might well be shared equally by the student, the sponsoring church and the UUA. Preaching, teaching or other hands-on experience could take place at vacation time or during summer months if the student is away during school terms. Regular communication between the student and a lay committee (committee on ministry or religious education) is also to be encouraged. Publicity about the student's progress in congregational newsletters, etc., is another way of fostering a sense of connection and responsibility.

Congregations should also be encouraged to donate directly to scholarship funds at the theological schools, to help support theological education and reduce the debt incurred by theological students.

Congregations located in or close to the Boston, Chicago and San Francisco Bay areas have special responsibilities vis-a-vis helping students integrate what they are doing in school with the demands of the world into which they'll be moving. In addition to providing training opportunities within their institutions, congregation members can involve themselves with the schools, with educational opportunities open to lay people and ministers, and on support committees for special events such as graduations, fund raisers, etc. Such activity tends to bring together the training and educational possibilities afforded by the academic environment and the reality of churches and church people.

One example of well-integrated involvement with students is the Middler Review at Pacific School of Religion. A group that includes faculty members, internship (or field work) supervisors, lay people, fellow students and denominational representatives is brought together to review the student's program, progress and needs. The program is rated highly by those who take part in it, both students and evaluators.

Special mention should be made of the teaching role of congregations with intern ministers. Presently, internships are arranged between the minister and the candidate. While congregational committees on ministry do meet with the intern, they are rarely involved with selection. The relationship between the intern and the minister as primary mentor is important, but to involve lay committees in the selection process would promote a sense of community ownership and responsibility. This will help the committee and the congregation as a whole work with the intern to provide the widest and best possible training and preparation for ministry.

Congregation leaders as well as ministers in teaching churches need training in how to provide such a quality training experience. Districts can often arrange for training opportunities for members of several churches who may be hosting an intern, or considering doing so.

## **Credentialing**

Credentialing is a function currently reserved for the Association via the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. Input from congregations to this process per se is limited. The MFC receives input from the committee on ministry of the church at which the candidate interns, or the supervisory committee if the internship is done in a non-parish community setting.

It would be helpful for the MFC to receive input similarly from the nominating or home congregation, and/or from the congregation with which the candidate is involved during theological training. This would broaden the base of input, providing a longitudinal picture of the candidate as seen by the constituents who, as noted above, have several unique and important perspectives.

## **Ordination**

As credentialing is a function of the Association, ordination is uniquely a function of congregations. Charles Howe, in his paper on ordination (Appendix B), eloquently describes the need

for rejuvenation of congregational interest, understanding of its role, and ownership of its special responsibility in this process.

Once again, education of congregational leaders and involved members is the key. Materials for workshops and training are needed, and ministers need to prepare their congregations, in advance of a request to ordain, about the intentionality with which this should be approached.

While it is generally accepted that the fundamental basis for ordination is the candidate's responsible relationship to a congregation, and the congregation's judgment that they be a credit to the ministry wherever they may go, the concept of *congregation* in some cases has been broadened to mean two or a few congregations (up to a whole district is conceivable), or a community served by the minister which overlaps with a congregation but is not synonymous with it. This is particularly the case with community ministries, and will require further examination as such ministries multiply and flourish in the future.

### **Settlement: The Present Situation**

Our congregational polity dictates that settlement is also a unique function of the congregation, in that congregations have the final say in who serves them in a professional capacity, and may call anyone to this position they wish.

The process of obtaining a minister, of course, leans heavily on associational resources. This relationship was the subject of the recent UUA Task Force on Ministerial Settlement. Several points raised by the Task Force and in discussion of their report (called the Stephen Report) bear mentioning.

### **Moving Toward the Ideal**

The Stephen Report addressed the need for increased congregational self-study, and for materials to aid in this effort. Materials of many sorts are needed for this, beyond the congregational survey tools.

Lucy Hitchcock and Deane Starr, for example, have done numerous workshops with congregations to help them "tell their story", complete with cast of characters: the rogues, the pillars, the pets, skeletons in the closets, etc. They speak of congregational temperaments, styles, and personalities, and their results are compellingly real. Something like a congregational Myers-Briggs test would aid in matching working styles of congregations and professional staff.

Finally, just as some ministers are or become dysfunctional, there are dysfunctional congregations. Some sort of congregations-in-transition program, involving therapy, self study, and evaluation by an outside team would greatly reduce the emotional stress on both ministers and congregations of repeated failures by congregations to accept and work effectively with a called minister. This sort of transition program could operate much as the Welcoming Congregation program does, as a prelude to receiving a list of candidates from the Department of Ministry.

**Settlement of Community Ministers.** Settlement of ministers in other-than-parish settings, such as college or military chaplains, theological school faculty, leaders of religiously-focused social change organizations, or in private practice as pastoral counselors, has largely been up to the individual minister. Discussion is beginning in many quarters as to how this might be changed to give ministers more support in pursuing these larger ministries.

Some congregations have a history of supporting ministry in the community. The Benevolent Fraternity in Boston, founded and supported by a number of local churches acting in concert, is our best-known example, but not the only one. Such existing programs could be studied and publicized as examples to other congregations, most of whom have no current understanding of the role(s) they might play in supporting community ministry.

Possible roles would include fiscal sponsorship of a minister to work with a particular community (e.g., an AIDS ministry or street ministry.) Such a ministry could operate under the nonprofit umbrella of a local congregation, and/or receive some funding from the congregation as a whole or individuals and groups within it. Groups of congregations, or district bodies, could also decide to foster such a ministry in their region.

It will be important for congregations contemplating such arrangements to understand the theological differences between community and parish ministries. Otherwise, congregations may provide extension into the community only, or primarily, to achieve goals directly related to the needs of the congregation, such as new members. Any outreach into the community will increase awareness of and knowledge about the local UU church which is almost guaranteed to generate new members, but such should not be the purpose of the outreach.

Congregations could also work with local colleges and universities to establish and/or financially support a campus ministry, or with hospitals, clinics, prisons, and other institutions to support UU chaplaincies.

Individuals in congregations are a potentially rich source of employment possibilities and ideas. A means to tap this resource, and to coordinate the dissemination of such information, needs to be developed. A starting point is to educate congregation members as to this need and opportunity. This could be done by parish ministers, via articles or advertisement in the *UU World*, workshops at district meetings, perhaps led by local Society for Larger Ministry members. Districts and/or a UUA- or SLM- based clearing house for listings can then be set up. A computer network bulletin board is an ideal way to collect and disseminate such listings!

### **Continuing Education, Support and Evaluation: The Present Situation**

Training for the ministry, based as the profession is in the ever-evolving, ever-changing social, cultural and community milieu of its constituents, is never finished. Similarly, the relatively unique isolation of most ministers from daily contact with professional colleagues, and the complexity of relationships between a minister and multiple constituents, increases the importance of creating intentional support and evaluation tools and mechanisms.

Heretofore, planning for and identifying resources and funding continuing education has largely been up to the individual minister, while collegial support and evaluation have required initiative on the part of the ministers, UUMA chapters, and/or congregations. Upon request, for example, the Department of Ministry will supply a minister or a congregation with a packet of evaluation instruments along with some basic guidelines recommending that any evaluation be of the whole church community, not just of the ministry.

### **Moving Toward the Ideal**

Continuing education for settled ministers is a subject of much recent and current interest. The UUMA established a CENTER committee in 1985 to create and promote continuing education programs for ministers, and to promote participation in these and other programs via district UUMA chapter-based CENTER representatives (CERs). A UUA Board-appointed Committee on Ministerial Excellence is currently looking into ways to empower ministers to plan for and avail themselves of an intentional program of continuing education.

Participation in such programs requires time and money, both of which the congregation needs to be integrally involved with planning for and/or providing. Ideally, congregations will work with ministers to design continuing education programs that fulfill both the congregation's and the minister's recognized priorities and needs. This could be a regular task of a committee on ministry, for example.

District CERs could hold training for such committees to apprise them of CENTER and other resources, and/or conduct workshops at district events. These would also help committee members from different churches share ideas, working processes and strategies for increasing congregational support for funding and allowing time for continuing education programs, and for fostering a sense of partnership and reciprocity between ministers and congregations in designing the programs.

This report notes the importance of including the church organization and congregation as well as the minister in evaluation, and the challenge of creating an atmosphere where evaluation is commonplace, and based on a relationship between minister and congregation that is reciprocal, where decisions are a matter of negotiation not prescription, and where the aim is the growth and transformation of all individuals involved.

The first evaluations are usually those for ministers in preliminary fellowship. Congregations are asked to describe the minister's progress, but not to evaluate their own role in the developing relationship. Not only is this important information for the MFC, it would help the congregation to better see its responsibility in the development of a ministry. The evaluation forms sent by the Department of Ministry need to be redone to gather this information.

Later evaluations after final fellowship, on some regular basis, need to become more normative, and expected, throughout the UUA. This will reduce the perceived threat, and allow for development of reciprocal relationships focused on growth, and quality ministry of both congregation and professional leaders. For this to happen, evaluation resources and tools need to be made available and publicized to both congregations and ministers. Congregations

in particular need to be educated to promote and use these materials prescriptively rather than judgmentally, and for the joint health and growth of the congregation and its minister.

Evaluations can then be coupled to both congregational institutional transformation and planning for ministerial continuing education, both arrived at through discussion and negotiation.

The UUMA is in the process of instituting a mentoring program, in which ministers in the early (first five or so) years of their ministry will be paired with a more senior colleague. The CENTER Committee is also promoting a career review process, and has been asked to research and design a peer review process that could be implemented at the UUMA chapter level.

While congregations play no direct role in any of these, it is important that they know about the programs, so they can be better acquainted with the multiplicity of resources and ways in which a ministry is formed.

### **Finances, Pre-Retirement and Retirement: The Present Situation**

One of the most critical needs for the development of congregation leaders' understanding of their role in relation to professional ministry is a clear overall understanding of ministerial finances. This needs to include:

- theological education costs, and debt carried forward into later years;
- the differences between ministry and other professions re health benefits, taxes including social security, housing finances and pensions;
- ministerial packages and what they include besides salary;
- professional expenses of ministry;
- the availability (or lack of same) of group health plans and group pension plans;
- the availability of resources to help ministers financially, especially in retirement, when other support is not available.

Not only are UU ministers in general substantially underpaid compared both with their counterparts in other faiths and with those in professions of comparable responsibility in the wider community, but the weak financial picture keeps some highly qualified and desirable candidates out of ministry. A sign on a certain small business wall reads: "We have no quarrel with our competitors' prices. They know better than we do what their product is worth". People contemplating ministry, especially those contemplating it as a second career or in mid-life could certainly conclude that their current employers' competitors (congregations) do not value their ministry highly!

## Moving Toward the Ideal

A UUA Council on Church Staff Finances has recently formed to coordinate education, advocacy and research programs to meet the financial needs of congregations, and ministers and staff of congregations and of the UUA and affiliated organizations, in short, to help congregations and other member organizations to become leaders as socially responsible employers, i.e., to model our message.

A priority is the development of information packages to help search committees structure an equitable salary and compensation package for newly-called ministers.

Local societies also need information that will help them research the salary base in their own community and assess whether the present package their minister is receiving is equitable. And, they need to be encouraged to make use of such material!

## Conclusion

While there are many specific ways in which the relationship of congregations to the professional ministry can be improved, they appear often to focus on money, money and money. And it is true that UU institutions and programs, including those pertaining to professional ministry, get along with less money than those in other Judeo-Christian religious movements. And this is despite the well-known fact that the per capita earning of UUs is higher than that of any other mainstream denomination.

A key to altering this is widespread education of lay people about ministry as a career, the varied natures and forms of ministry, and the needs of people who are in the ministry that congregations can help with or fulfill along the way. Such education would serve to humanize the ministry in lay people's eyes, and at the same time increase its perceived value. For ministry, uniquely among the major professions, serves the whole person, not just health, finances, legal needs, etc. And wholeness is what we are about as a religious movement.

Finally, ministers and lay people alike need help to envision their life together as co-ministry, that we may make this liberal religious movement truly a ministry of *all* believers.

## Summary

As stated in the Introduction, the original impetus for this study came from two almost opposing concerns about the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. One concern was that the Committee was too legalistic. The other was that it was not being demanding enough. Both concerns were framed inside the larger issue of the welfare of the ministry.

The MFC is only one of several stages through which a minister passes. The other stages also have deep impact on the quality of the minister. The larger issues impelling concern about the MFC can only be addressed by considering all the stages.

In our free church tradition we do not and should not have a unified system under central control. However, the desire for a quality ministry is as legitimate as protection of the right of minister and congregation. The CoA has determined that the structures now in place are both viable and appropriate. These structures should be strengthened and refined, not replaced.

Overall, our ministry is relatively strong and dependable. But needs are changing. Congregations are demanding higher levels of skill and acumen, commensurate with the expectations of other professions. Ministers are demanding higher levels of compensation and consideration, with similar expectations. A question latent in this study is whether the ministry ought to be considered a profession or a vocation. How we view the ministry shapes expectations and needs, not only for the minister but for our congregations. That question, which edges close to theology, is beyond the scope of our study. It will have to be taken up at another time.

### Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations have been made throughout this study. Below is a list of these recommendations. For fuller descriptions and rationale, please see particular chapters.

#### Recruitment

That more intentional covenantal relationships be developed and expected between potential ministers and their congregations. Each person considering the ministry should seek and obtain the sponsorship of a congregation.

That those seeking to enter the UU ministry should ordinarily have at least two years of lay experience in a Unitarian Universalist church.

That theological schools and the UUA with the UUMA offer weekend recruitment programs, to attract potential candidates and to make a preliminary assessment of those interested.

That significant efforts be undertaken to make entering the ministry financially manageable, from providing such recruitment seminars at moderate charge, to educational debt relief tied to length of service.

### **Theological Education**

That there be more active and cooperative recruitment of UU ministerial candidates by UU-related theological schools, the Department of Ministry, the UUMA and congregations. Special attention should be given to people of color and newly arrived ethnic groups through on-campus college programs and weekend retreats at theological schools.

That there be earlier and more systematic use of vocational evaluations of ministerial candidates by theological schools and the MFC, with attendant financial support.

That there be "Middler Reviews" of the progress of ministerial candidates by panels of faculty, intern supervisors, denominational representatives and student advocates.

That there be increased education of congregations about, and solicitation for, scholarships for ministerial candidates.

That the pool of qualified and trained internship supervisors and teaching churches be enlarged, along with means for monitoring and supporting them by the theological schools, the UUA, the UUMA and the congregations themselves.

### **Credentialing**

That the MFC be enlarged from 11 members (seven clergy and four laity) to 14 members (seven each clergy and laity), with one of the clergy being a community minister. The MFC should then have the option of acting through two panels (in addition to acting as a whole), allowing it to: prepare for and see candidates longer, handle internal matters without having to put off candidates, begin disciplinary discussions and investigations, do internal reviews and recommendations, etc.

That there be a clearer and higher standard for fellowship status, setting forth the needs and expectations of Unitarian Universalism and its societies, articulated in consultation with the UUA Board, the UUMA, theological schools, and hearings at General Assemblies.

That there be broader use of MFC Rule 23, by which the MFC reviews the situation of ministers whose overall record indicates that they should not be further recommended for placement.

## **Ordination**

That an educational process be initiated to promote a clearer understanding of ordination within our movement, with congregations encouraged to reclaim their central role.

That ordination should be in relationship with a congregation the minister presently serves, or will continue to serve in some capacity.

That ordination signify a calling to service yet to come, not a reward for service rendered.

That in general only those in fellowship with the UUA be ordained.

## **Settlement for Community Ministers**

That the Society for the Larger Ministry cultivate networks for community ministers seeking settlement opportunities.

That at least one community minister be a member of the MFC and the UUMA Executive Committee.

That the UUA provide staff and resources for settlement services for community ministers. These would include relationships with ecumenical and interfaith organizations involved in specialized ministries.

That the Department of Ministry maintain a list of openings for specialized ministry; conduct training seminars on the development and funding of such ministry; identify and publicize internships in specialized ministry settings; and educate congregations in the various ways to include community ministry in congregational life.

That district clusters, area councils and metro areas explore ways to support community ministry through their structures.

That recommendations I-III of the UUA Task Force on Ministerial Settlement be implemented: (I) creating a Department of Ministry Advisory Committee including a community minister; (II) improving the Computerized Profile System; and (III) appointing a Transition Director whose services will be available to community ministers.

## **Evaluation and Support**

That evaluation of ministers in Preliminary Fellowship also provide for evaluation of the ministry site, and that evaluation also model expectations that should be cultivated between all ministers and communities of service.

That the Mentor program be instituted, and its expectations made more clear. It might be adapted to include features in the current Independent Study Program.

That evaluations by congregations, clergy peers and self reviews be designed and promoted as instruments of growth and renewal, not of judgement.

### **Continuing Education**

That both clergy and laity need to be educated about the mutual advantages of continuing education so that ministers and their communities of services both plan for it.

That there be more variety in meeting continuing educational needs of ministers through CENTER, theological schools, and other agencies, and that resources be allocated to make this possible.

That a more deliberate process of preparing for and returning from sabbaticals be developed, perhaps through CENTER.

That up-to-date advanced degree options be available for those considering them, through the UUA or CENTER.

That Starr King should develop a post-M.Div. program comparable to the Meadville/Lombard D.Min. and the Harvard Th.M.

### **Retirement**

That preparation for retirement begin in early stages of a ministerial career.

That congregations be assessed annually, per capita, to provide funds for seminar students and those with post-graduate debt.

That congregations be given clear information and guidance about compensation and benefits, including recommended levels and how to structure salary and benefits as part of a church budget.

That the Council and Office of Church Staff Finances give training in financial planning to all current and preparing ministers.

That congregations, districts and UUA committees, affiliates and others seek out retired ministers as sources of expertise, advice and assistance.

That the UUA provide pre-retirement planning for ministers and their families five years prior to expected retirement.

## Congregations

That congregations see themselves as preparatory schools for the ministry, and encourage those with potential.

That they see themselves as sponsors and teachers of the ministry, recommending people to theological school, providing personal and financial support, and becoming a home to interns and field students.

That congregations reclaim their central role in ordination and respect it as:

A sign of calling and covenant

A challenge, not a reward

Extended to someone serving them both now and later

To those in fellowship with the UUA

That they realize their potential interest in community ministry, and consider closer links with sites for community ministries.

That they encourage regular evaluation of their ministers and of the church by its ministers, and act upon areas needful of change.

That they become expert in the matter of clergy compensation, and realize that quality and dependability in the ministry require regular attention to salary and benefits offered to the minister.

That they encourage a state of partnership with the professional ministry, seeing that the responsibility for religious well-being rests equally on lay and professional shoulders.

**Consultations on Ministry  
for persons considering the Unitarian Universalist ministry**

**A draft proposal by the Rev. John A. Buehrens, Co-Minister  
The Unitarian Church of All Souls, New York City**

In many other denominations it has long been the practice to offer people seriously interested in ministry, including those already enrolled in seminary or contemplating transfer from another religious body, an invitation to a regional weekend retreat. The purpose is consultative. In the Episcopal Church, for example, the so-called Bishops' Consultations on Ministry (BCOM) weekends are inter-diocesan (regional) in character. They are staffed by five or six interviewers, some of whom also do brief presentations. The purpose is at least five-fold:

to provide potential ministers with early practical information about ministry, the standards used to guide professional formation, and process of gaining denominational approval;

to provide a candidate, his/her seminary (if any), and others involved with his/her professional formation a multi-perspectival view of how that person's background, aspirations, and strengths may fit with the demands of professional ministry, and what weaknesses and issues may need particular attention if that professional formation is to be optimal;

without making a final determination of a candidate's ultimate fitness for ministry, to provide a report (not unlike a CPE or internship report) to those who must eventually make that decision, thus relieving them of at least some of the pressure that goes with seeing candidates only late in seminary, when much effort and money has already been expended;

to help recruit and encourage the best possible candidates and to discourage (or guide into forms of lay ministry) those least suited;

to help conserve scarce denominational scholarship resources, only making grants to those who have "passed" a consultation weekend.

Adapted to the UUA, such weekends would be sponsored most appropriately by the Department of Ministry and the Committee on Ministerial Fellowship. Three to five regional weekends held yearly might involve roughly 20 candidates each. Participants would be required to pay a fee covering at least a substantial portion of their expenses and to submit some materials in advance; a biographical sheet, an essay, and academic transcripts.

(I might note that in the Episcopal Church, candidates are asked to bring their spouses/partners, if any -- which is how I experienced such a weekend. My wife is ordained in that

church. For a variety of reasons, including economics and logistics, that may be difficult for us, at least initially. I would propose, however, that we attempt to move in that direction if experience warrants it.)

The staffing for us might consist of six people: the Director of Ministerial Education; a UU theological educator (preferably from another region); a member of the MFC; and three other experienced discerning interviewers -- a parish minister, a lay person, and a religious educator or district executive. (These categories are not meant to be strict, but to indicate an appropriate range of perspectives to be sought.)

Strong emphasis would be placed on affirmative action in recruitment, perhaps with special funds available to subsidize minority prospects for ministry at such weekends.

A typical weekend would begin Friday evening, with a social hour, dinner, an opening service, a presentation by the Director, introductions, and further social time. Saturday would begin with round-robin sharing on some planned themes, a brief presentation by the MFC members, and morning and afternoon rounds of individual interviews, plus some free time. The evening might be devoted to an open meeting, responding to various questions and issues raised by participants. On Sunday, after an early service, interviews would continue before lunch, with a wrap-up following. That afternoon and evening the staff would devote to comparing notes and assigning the drafting of reports.

Reports would go to the candidate and to 25 Beacon. The candidate would be free to share his/her feedback report with anyone -- ministers, seminary teachers, or others -- and to file a response.

Reports from the weekend would not pre-determine anything, but merely replace the present interview report by an individual minister as the basic way of getting "registered" with the Department of Ministry. They would, however, be more useful, multi-perspectival, and objective. Therefore denominational scholarship funds would normally be awarded only to those who have successfully completed one year of seminary **and** who have been encouraged by such a consultation to pursue professional ministry. Those who have been **discouraged** would still be free to see the MFC, but appointments with the MFC would normally go only to those who have been through such a weekend.

In the course of such weekends, it would be made clear that each candidate before the MFC is expected to be an active member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation, normally for at least a year; that students and other applicants are encouraged to have a UU minister in fellowship who actively sponsors their candidacy; and that they are urged to apply to be student members of the UUMA and to participate in area ministerial gatherings.

This approach will thus provide some of the advantages of an "in care" system without any real change or disruption to our established procedures and cherished traditions. The MFC, I believe, will be aided -- not further burdened -- in this rather awesome task. There should be fewer instances of someone being surprised at being turned down, or (worse) reluctantly accepted only because three or four years of time and money have already been expended. There will be a place for ministers to send the good prospect to be encouraged and the unlikely or weak prospect to get a dose of reality, without alone having to take the rap for

encouraging or discouraging a parishioner or other applicant. The Director of Ministerial Education will have a more structured way of meeting, personally, nearly every student and applicant. The rights of the seminaries will be protected and their important responsibilities assisted. They will be free to continue to make their own decisions about admission and curriculum, and to see their mission of theological education broadly. (God knows we will continue to need theologically educated lay people, plus others trained for innovative ministries that may never fit supervisable requirements for preliminary fellowship under our polity.) Seminaries will be assisted, at least for those students who *are* seeking fellowship, with some outside support in pointing out to a student the need to attend to this or that issue of personal development or professional formation. The rights of individuals to study, and to discern the true shape of their vocation, and of congregations to call and to ordain, regardless of consultative encouragement or discouragement, will also be protected.

"Consultations on Ministry" are also fully compatible with another reform that I understand the MFC is contemplating, and which I wholeheartedly support -- namely requiring that each person accepted for preliminary ministerial fellowship designate a "mentor" in final fellowship, who will submit a report annually (along with the minister's board chair and committee on ministry chair) related to the novice minister's progress and advancement toward final fellowship.

The present rate of failure in the first five years of ministry is, in my observation, far too high. It is expensive to our churches institutionally and to our new ministers personally. We must do a better job and more realistic job of recruiting the able, screening out the unsuited, guiding training, counselling placement, and of supporting those whom we do place. Before I launch into an essay on continuing education, however, let me say simply that your support for this proposal, and your comments, pro or con, will be welcomed by

The Rev. John A. Buchrens  
The Unitarian Church of All Souls  
1157 Lexington Ave.  
New York, NY 10021  
(212) 535-5530

The Credentialing and Ordaining of Ministers  
in the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions:  
The Historical Background

Charles A. Howe  
Commission on Appraisal  
November, 1989

When the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America merged in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association, the merger brought together two quite different traditions with respect to the credentialing and ordination of ministers. Whereas Unitarianism emerged from the standing order of New England Congregational churches and hence continued existing practices, Universalism originated as a grass roots movement that had to evolve its own practices. When William Ellery Channing entered the ministry in 1803 after completing the divinity course at Harvard, he was ordained by the Federal Street Church in Boston in a service that followed a well-established pattern that included sermon, prayer of consecration, charge, and the giving of the right hand of fellowship. Previously he had appeared before the Cambridge Association of ministers, presented a sermon, and received a license to preach.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, when the largely self-educated Hosea Ballou attended the General Convention of Universalists at Oxford, Massachusetts in 1794 (one of the earliest of such meetings), he found himself unexpectedly ordained in a quite different way. Elhanan Winchester, on reaching the climax of his sermon, suddenly pressed a Bible against the surprised Ballou's chest and ordered him to be charged on the spot.<sup>2</sup> Later, in 1803, to make sure that the legality of the weddings at which he officiated would not be challenged, Ballou was re-ordained by the General Convention in a more formal manner.<sup>3</sup> Earlier, John Murray had had his right to perform marriage ceremonies challenged in the courts on the grounds that he had never been ordained. Murray successfully argued that his election as minister of the Universalist congregation in Gloucester had in effect constituted ordination and thus legitimized his standing, but to be on the safe side the Gloucester congregation renewed his election and ordination in a ceremony in 1788, eighteen full years after he had begun his preaching activities in America.<sup>4</sup>

In the Unitarian tradition, recognition of the local church as having the sole authority for ordaining remained unchanged. Credentialing, though not invariably practiced, remained for many years the function of local ministerial associations.<sup>5</sup> In 1880, however, the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches established a Committee on Fellowship, responsible for ruling on the fitness of persons to serve as Unitarian ministers.<sup>6</sup> When, in the 1920s, the General Conference (successor to the National Conference) was integrated into the American Unitarian Association, the Committee continued under the auspices of the A.U.A., with a probationary period instituted before full fellowship was authorized.<sup>7</sup> Dan Fenn, writing in 1934 for the Commission of Appraisal's report, "Unitarians Face a New Age", described the function of the Fellowship Committee as follows:

[T]he Committee has three separate but allied functions:

1) The admission of men to the Fellowship of Unitarian ministers; 2) The removal of men from our Fellowship for any of the following reasons: a) death, b) voluntary withdrawal, c) accepting pastorates in other denominations, d) men whose whereabouts have been lost for two years, e) acceptance of positions in secular pursuits, f) those dismissed from any of our churches on moral grounds; 3) The investigation of societies before accepting their contributions as a basis of membership in the American Unitarian Association.<sup>8</sup>

Evidently the process of fellowship for the Unitarian ministry was far less rigorous prior to merger than it is today. Graduation from a Unitarian-related seminary was virtually all that was required, with the review almost entirely restricted to those seeking to transfer in from other denominations. The Committee stayed in touch with seminaries to make sure that the students took the necessary courses and did appropriate fieldwork, trusting the judgement of the seminaries as to the fitness of their students for the ministry. The seminaries, for their part, seldom let students continue beyond the second year if they thought them lacking in potential.<sup>9</sup>

Like John Murray, the early Universalist ministers were not concerned with ecclesiastical formalities like ordination, and it was only after legal questions were raised about their status that they recognized the need to be ordained. As in Hosea Ballou's case, and in contrast to Unitarian practice, their ordination was generally bestowed not by local churches, but rather by regional or state conventions and area associations. While local Universalist societies, like the one in Gloucester, originally claimed and sometimes exercised the power of ordination,<sup>10</sup> they soon relinquished this function to the associations and conventions. This transfer of authority was prompted largely by the need for legitimization, with the larger bodies seen as having greater status in the eyes of the courts.

In addition to ordaining ministers, the conventions and associations also granted fellowship to lay people, giving them licenses to preach and conduct religious services, but without the right to administer the two ordinances recognized by most Universalists: baptism and communion.<sup>11</sup> In some instances such licenses also granted the right to officiate at marriage ceremonies.<sup>12</sup>

When, in an attempt to bring more coherence to the growing Universalist movement, the General Convention was organized in 1833, it too, claimed the authority to ordain and grant fellowship, but it soon relinquished this right, leaving these functions to the state conventions and their member associations.<sup>13</sup>

Credentialing, licensing and ordaining were very closely linked in the Universalist tradition. A candidate for license as a lay preacher or ordination as a minister would appear before a committee of the convention or association and be examined for fitness. If the candidate was approved, the committee would then authorize the convention or association to proceed with licensing or ordaining. Such committees also had the authority to recommend disciplinary action or removal from fellowship.

The credentialing process was never centralized for the Universalists as it was for the Unitarians. In time, with the gradual loss of influence of the associations, the credentialing authority

was vested in the state conventions, each of which had its own fellowship committee. If a minister or lay preacher moved from one state convention to another, jurisdiction over his or her fellowship was transferred. If the move was to a location where no state convention existed, fellowship was transferred to the Central Fellowship Committee, which also oversaw the fellowship of ministers serving as denominational officers or military chaplains. By 1961, when the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America (successor to the General Convention) was finally effected, the Universalist fellowship committees were carrying out the following functions:

Authorizing ordinations (generally conferred by the appropriate superintendent); granting a variety of licenses (probationary licenses, lay licenses to preach, and licenses looking forward to ordination, sometimes with permission to perform the Christian ordinances); granting reciprocal fellowship with other denominations (usually with the A.U.A.); and removing from fellowship in cases of resignation, inactivity or (rarely) moral misconduct.<sup>14</sup>

As with the Unitarian process, Universalist credentialing prior to merger was far less rigorous than it is at present. Most of the candidates were well known in the state conventions in which they sought fellowship, many having grown up in a local church with which they continued to be connected. With a fellowship committee's responsibility confined to its convention, there was seldom any heavy press of work. Examination of candidates was for the most part informal and non-threatening.<sup>15</sup>

In summary, there was a clear distinction between Unitarian and Universalist practices with respect to ordination prior to merger. For Unitarians, this was a function of local societies; for Universalists, a function of state conventions (and, earlier, area associations). With respect to credentialing there were also important differences, the Unitarian system being more centralized, the Universalist more closely linked to ordination (and licensing). Nevertheless, they shared a common characteristic: both were quite informal and relied largely on personal knowledge of the candidates, whether that of the committee members themselves or of others whose judgement they trusted.

At the time of merger the Unitarian practices with respect to ordination and credentialing were by and large adopted for the new denomination. The Constitution and Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association, ratified in 1961, affirmed "that member churches alone have the right to call and ordain ministers" and that "the Association alone shall have the right to grant Ministerial Fellowship with the Association".<sup>16</sup> Consistent with the latter, a single ministerial fellowship committee was established.<sup>17</sup>

In the twenty-eight years of its existence, the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee has adopted increasingly rigorous requirements: in-person psychological interviews, clinical pastoral education, supervised internships, a "grid" of required areas of competence, and a ten minute sermon delivered to the committee (shades of the Cambridge Association of 1803!). Over the years the committee has struggled with the question of whether to grant fellowship for categories other than the parish ministry. In the late 1960s, and early 1970s, the committee experimented with fellowship for specialized ministries such as counseling, teaching and "troubadoring". Eventually the experiment was discontinued, the committee concluding that it lacked criteria for making the necessary judgements. In 1980, as the result of increasing

pressure from those following professional careers as religious educators, the committee began granting fellowship to ministers of religious education (as distinct from parish ministers).<sup>18</sup> At present, an increasing number of community ministers, most of them members of the recently-organized Society of the Larger Ministry, are urging that fellowship procedures be established for them, as well.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, the number of candidates for fellowship as parish ministers and ministers of religious education has increased dramatically, resulting in long waiting periods for the candidates and an extremely heavy work load for the committee. This, coupled with the increasing pressure to admit community ministers to fellowship, has made it clear that a thorough re-evaluation of the denomination's credentialing process is now necessary.<sup>20</sup>

### Notes and References

1. Madeline Hooke Rice, *Federal Street Pastor: The Life of William Ellery Channing* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961), pp. 44-46.
2. Ernest Cassara, *Hosea Ballou: The Challenge to Orthodoxy* (Boston Universalist Historical Society and Beacon Press, 1961), p. 20.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
4. Russell E. Miller, *The Larger Hope: The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979), pp. 27-28.
5. Conrad Wright, *Walking Together: Polity and Participation in Unitarian Universalist Churches* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1989), p. 81.
6. Virgil Murdock, "The Institutional History of the American Unitarian Association" (Minns Lectures, 1975-1976), Lecture III. Rules of the Unitarian Fellowship Committee revised and adopted at the National Conference at San Francisco, Cal., August, 1915 called for six regional sub-committees and included a strong warning to churches against settling a minister who had not received the approval of the Fellowship Committee.
7. Rules of the Unitarian Fellowship Committee, American Unitarian Association, [1924]. *Ad hoc* local committees were provided for, established, if necessary "for geographic or other reasons" to examine candidates and make recommendations to the Fellowship Committee.
8. Quoted in Murdock, *op. cit.*
9. Arnold Crompton, "Reflections on Fellowshiping" (from an interview with David Sammons, Chair, Commission on Appraisal, May 9, 1989).
10. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

12. The licensing of lay preachers was prompted by the large number of lay preachers in the nineteenth century who identified themselves as Universalists but had no denominational affiliation. Through licensing, the conventions and associations were able to legitimize those that were considered worthy. Similarly, for a short period after merger, the Ohio-Meadville District of the UUA sponsored a program whereby it trained and accredited lay leaders to conduct worship services and preach.
13. Miller, op. cit., p. 147.
14. See issues of the *Universalist Leader*, 1958-1961. In the years just prior to and in anticipation of a merger, the fellowshiping functions of four state conventions were turned over to the Central Fellowship Committee (Miller, *The Larger Hope: The Second Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1870-1970* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1985), p. 660.
15. Letter, Gordon McKeeman to Sammons, May 1, 1989.
16. Quoted in Miller, op. cit., in reference 14, p. 749.
17. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee consists of eleven members plus a non-voting Executive Secretary. Four members are lay persons; two are UUA Board members. Of the seven ministers who are members, one must be a minister of religious education. Except for one minister appointed by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, the members are appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees (Bylaw VII: 7.6). While in the early years of both movements credentialing was done by bodies of ministers, the practice of having lay members on fellowship committees was well established in both denominations prior to merger. At one time the committee was assisted by regional sub-committees in the mid-West and on the Pacific coast. Final authority rested with the main committee.
18. Prior to 1980, directors of religious education had been credentialed by the UUA through a certification committee.
19. A new category of community ministry was established in 1991, after this article was written, and fellowship procedures have been established.
20. Much of the information in the concluding two paragraphs was taken from letters to Sammons from Robert Doss, Leon Hopper, Joyce Smith and Roberta Nelson, all former members of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, in response to a request for information in the spring of 1989.

## **The UUMA Mentor Program**

The UUMA Exec had been considering for several years the possibility of developing a mentoring program, and when David Pohl told us last year that there was an alarmingly high casualty rate among ministers in their first churches, the project took on a note of urgency. At our April meeting we voted for the program outlined here.

### **The First Steps**

The Mentor Program will be administered for the UUMA by CENTER. The Continuing Education Officer in each chapter will serve as its Mentor Coordinator (MC). The MC will first ask each chapter member to nominate 3 colleagues in the chapter for mentor positions. Self-nominations OK.

### **Selecting Mentors**

A Mentor Selection Committee (MSC) chaired by the MC, with the Chapter President and the District Executive as additional members, will then draw on the list of nominees to appoint a panel of 3 to 7 mentors for their chapter.

A name for the panel: "The Mentor Bench".

The number of mentors on the Bench in each chapter will vary, depending upon how many new ministers there are in it. As of April, 1990, there were 162 ministers in Preliminary Fellowship.

In the 23 UUA Districts, the range was 1 through 17. (CMW-17; MB-15; JP-12; PS-11; 10 each in PNW, PC, PSW.)

Mentors chosen (with their consent) will agree to make themselves available for consultation. They will be asked to serve for a period of three years, and may be reappointed.

### **Naming New Mentors**

Replacement (or additional) mentors may at any time be chosen by the MSC in each chapter, drawing on the list of nominees. This list may be updated at any time by having the MC invite further nominations from all of the chapter's members.

### **The Mentoring Relationship**

Ministers granted Preliminary Fellowship by the UUA will have as a condition of their fellowship making contact once a month during the period of their Preliminary Fellowship with any member of the Mentor Bench in their chapter.



# A MENTORING BRIEF FROM THE U.U.M.A. CENTER COMMITTEE

June 1991

## Questions About the New Mentor Policy

### Who must have a mentor?

All settled ministers in preliminary fellowship as of November 1990 are required by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee to have a mentor.

### Who can be a mentor?

The only requirement to be a mentor is that the minister be in final fellowship--although in the case of community-based ministers, this requirement may be waived.

### Who selects a mentor?

The choice of the mentor is entirely up to the person in preliminary fellowship or the protege. He or she is free to pick any minister in final fellowship.

### What are the minimum requirements for a mentor relationship?

- The mentor and protege must discuss matters of professional concern at least once a month for a half hour.
- When at all practical, the mentor and protege should meet in person.
- The protege must share with the mentor all completed forms for renewal of preliminary fellowship.

### Must the mentor and protege be in the same district or chapter?

No. The Fellowship Committee merely recommends that the mentor or protege be in the same geographic area, since personal contact rather than telephone conversations is preferred.

### What happens if the mentor relationship proves unsatisfactory to either the protege or mentor?

The mentor and the protege are not required to maintain the relationship. The protege may make arrangements for another mentor.

### Can the mentor be called upon by the Fellowship Committee to share information about the protege?

No. The mentor relationship is private and confidential.

*"I used to think I could teach young people the whole of life, but I know better now, and all my teaching has come down to this: beware of muddle....Though life is very glorious, it is difficult....We pick up the use of our functions as we go along."*

E.M. Forster

*A Room With a View*, adapted

## What is a Mentor?

A mentor is an advisor. A mentor is a person of greater experience who provides guidance and support in a variety of ways by being a role model, a teacher, a coach, a sponsor, and a confidante.

A mentor relationship is often hard to define, but easy to recognize. Mentoring can involve deep personal interest in another person, or a more strictly professional interest.

Whatever form mentoring takes, research in the fields of business, nursing, and teaching indicates that those professionals who had a mentor during their career were more successful than their counterparts who did not. It stands to reason that the same would be true in the ministry.

The term "mentor" comes from Greek mythology. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Ulysses entrusted the care of his son, Telemachus, to his friend, Mentor, while he traveled the world during a ten-year odyssey. It is interesting to note that Mentor was actually a guise for Athena, the goddess of war and wisdom. Athena, in the form of Mentor, became Telemachus' trusted counselor and guide who prepared him for the adult world. Mentor was a combination of parent, teacher, and friend to Telemachus.

The etymological meaning of the term "mentor" comes from the root "men" which means to remember, think, and counsel. Examples of mentor relationships abound in literature and history. In the Bible, there are Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha. We think of the medieval guild system with its apprentices, journeymen, and masters--ranks which led to expertise. In religious history, Gregory Buenzil was mentor to Ulrich Zwingli, and Cordier was to Calvin.

For additional information and catalogue, contact TMI, The Mentoring Institute, 675 Inglewood Avenue, West Vancouver, BC, Canada V7T 1X4, (604) 925-1124. See also the *International Journal of Mentoring* published by TMI.

## The Mentoring Relationship

Mentor relationships involve varying degrees of mutuality. For example, there is the traditional mentor or "elder," as well as the step-ahead mentor or "older sib." Whatever the model of mentoring, the relationship should be mutually beneficial, and should contribute to the growth, competence, and effectiveness of both ministers.

Mentoring can be extremely rewarding for both the mentor and the protege, but there are some negative consequences. It is time consuming, and can involve a high degree of emotional involvement. In addition, the relationship may not work. There may be feelings of competition between the mentor and the protege. The mentor may become threatened by the protege's successes, and be unable to tolerate the development of the protege into a colleague.

Studies show that effective mentors are experienced colleagues who are secure, confident individuals willing to share both their successes and their failures. If you are looking for a mentor, notice whom among your colleagues you admire, whom you would care to be like, and who has expressed an interest in you. Also consider who will push you in your own growth.

A mentor relationship is just that—a relationship. It is not merely a transfer of information, instructions, or advice. In a strong mentor relationship, the mentor comes to have a personal stake in the protege, and takes pride in the protege's progress. The mentor also provides moral support, especially in times of stress.

### Suggestions for Mentors and Proteges

- Establish clear expectations. Develop a contract as to when you will meet, where, and for how long.
- Exchange pulpits, newsletters, copies of sermons, annual reports, materials you are working on.
- Share information about books, periodicals, conferences, continuing educational opportunities.
- When the time comes, establish closure. Discuss the value of the relationship, how it has changed, and how it will be different without a formal mentor-protege description.

Ideally, a protege sees oneself as both a wide-eyed beginner and as a potential equal. To strike this tricky balance, the protege shouldn't be afraid to ask questions, no matter how ignorant those questions may seem. Proteges should also ask themselves, "What can I give this person? What could she or he need that I have?" A protege might recommend readings on a particular topic, or even a source for children's stories to use in worship.

Ideally, the mentor sees this relationship as a form of ministry in which he or she cares for and assists another professional in their journey, and, in the process, is also changed. Effective mentors avoid being instructional, and know that they are transitional figures for the protege.

### Mentoring in Business

Mentors in the business world help proteges learn the values, customs, resources, and people in the organization. With this knowledge, the protege learns the subtleties of the organization beyond the policy and procedural manual.

Similarly, the minister as mentor can point out the traditions within chapters, the idiosyncracies of church life, and the dynamics of the denomination.

#### The Business Mentor Model

- Step One** Find out where the protege is starting from. Explore the protege's experience and perception of his or her own needs.
- Step Two** Together, determine what the protege needs to know. Discuss what skills are strong, where the gaps are, and what skills need to be developed.
- Step Three** Discuss strategies for self-improvement. The mentor's job is then to hold the protege accountable to his or her best learning interests.

The CENTER Program

The heart of our Commission's report is the establishment of an ongoing program for Continuing Education in the UUMA.

We propose that the UUMA By-laws be amended to establish a new standing committee on Continuing Education, to be known as the "CENTER" Committee (for "Continuing Education Network for Training, Enrichment and Renewal").

\* We see the CENTER Program organized around six major functions as the Association increases its commitment to this vital area of professional life:

- 1) Identifying and articulating the role and function of Continuing Education in our ministerial life. In part, this is an honoring of our Unitarian Universalist tradition of the "learned ministry", though we are clear that Continuing Education, by definition, includes much more than formal scholarship. We understand our tradition as a fundamental commitment to the highest standards of ministerial practice, with an implicit dedication to life-long learning. One primary function of the CENTER Program, therefore, is to keep before us and our congregations the importance of an intentional commitment to Continuing Education. Because our Association is relatively late in coming to emphasize this aspect of professionalism, we feel there is much "consciousness-raising" to be done, among ourselves and among the churches we serve, as to what quality Continuing Education does and does not properly include.
- 2) Strengthening collegiality in a changing profession. The expectations and realities of professional ministry are more fluid today than ever. Moving our profession toward a more interdependent style, with greater emphasis on self-care and mutual support, is definitely one goal of our proposed Continuing Education network.
- 3) Assisting and encouraging ministers to take responsibility for their own personal Continuing Education programs. Through the training and establishment of Continuing Education representatives in every UUMA chapter, the CENTER network will assist individual ministers in designing Continuing Education programs to fit their needs. Individual needs vary. Not only will CENTER serve parish ministers and Ministers of Religious Education, but also students about to enter the profession, retired ministers with their special concerns and those in non-parish ministry.
- 4) Serving as a "Resource Center/Clearing House" for Continuing Education in ministry. There is a vast amount of materials and interdenominational resources on Continuing

Education in ministry. Making these resources (and evaluation of them) known and available to our membership, networking with Continuing Education efforts in other denominations and with multi-denominational sources such as Alban Institute, SACEM, etc. will be an important function of the CENTER Program. Encouraging our own denominational resources and addressing those Continuing Educational needs that are special to Unitarian Universalist ministry is also CENTER's concern.

- 5) Designing and implementing Continuing Education programs. In dialogue with our UUA Department of Ministry and our theological schools and with all other pertinent sources, CENTER will work to develop models of Continuing Education programs across a range of ministerial career stages and styles. The Continuing Education representatives will carry on in-depth and on-going needs assessments in their chapters on the basis of which these programs will be designed.
  
- 6) Seeking funding resources for Continuing Education programs and projects. CENTER will be active in seeking grants and other funding resources for Continuing Educational efforts for members of the Association. There are already before the UUA Grants Panel two proposals from the Commission for pilot Continuing Education programs. CENTER will develop some guidelines for provision for Continuing Education funds in ministerial contracts. In general, responsibility for Continuing Education efforts, including funding, lies with the individual, but where programs can be facilitated or subsidized by additional resources, CENTER will seek such funding.

6-4/85