

Requirements for Ministerial Fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome! We are delighted that you are considering fellowship as a Unitarian Universalist minister. As a vocation that seeks to live out a religious vision, ministry involves opportunities to serve others, nurture communities, develop significant relationships and constructively engage with the broader culture. Ministry can be a deeply satisfying call in the midst of its frequent frustrations, and offers a range of experience rarely found in other occupations. For those who pursue this calling, ministry offers an opportunity for a truly meaningful professional life.

Ministerial fellowship within the UU tradition takes on a variety of forms. Within a congregational setting, ministers preach and lead worship, teach religious education, lead social justice, provide pastoral care and often oversee administration. Beyond the walls of a congregation, ministry takes place in hospitals, schools, social service agencies, pastoral counseling centers and other venues. In a variety of settings and pursuing a variety of ends, the ministry is committed to bringing about healing and wholeness for the individuals and communities that UU ministers ably serve.

This material has been prepared to help you understand the process of preparing for ministerial fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association whether you are just beginning theological school, transferring credentials from another denomination, or seeking plural fellowship. The information in this booklet is applicable to aspirants and candidates who reside in the United States and Canada, or if not residing in the United States or Canada, who attend a seminary located in the United States or Canada.

Ministerial fellowship is distinctly different from ordination. By virtue of our congregational polity, only a Unitarian Universalist congregation has the privilege and the authority to ordain a person into the UU ministry. The granting of preliminary fellowship indicates that the UUA formally recognizes a person as a UU minister. Ministers in preliminary fellowship have access to the UUA retirement plan, the search and settlement process, professional development and debt reduction resources and other privileges.

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee is the credentialing body of the UUA and the Committee strongly encourages you to contact the Ministerial Credentialing Office to establish a relationship, and to declare your intentions as early as possible. Why? So the Ministerial Credentialing Office knows who you are! Benefits include reducing the isolation experienced by many new students, learning how to apply for scholarship funds and gaining access to important email lists and deeper connections with the many ways that Unitarian Universalism is manifested.

While the Ministerial Credentialing Office is your primary point of contact for questions, it is your responsibility to be knowledgeable about procedures and policies. Please see: <http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/support/fellowship/rules-policies>. **Important forms are found in the Appendix.**

Please do not hesitate to contact Alicia LeBlanc at aleblanc@uua.org or 617-948-4371, or the Rev. David Pettee at dpettee@uua.org or 617-948-6402.

We urge you to get the assistance you need by communicating directly with local UU clergy, regional field staff, career counseling centers and theological schools, etc. who are (or represent) the many people and/or organizations that are concerned with theological education and ministerial formation. At the same time, we understand that the journey toward ministerial fellowship is different for each person. Please feel free to confer with the Ministerial Credentialing Director about your specific circumstances.

Finally, in order to protect the integrity of the ministry, in rare instances it may be necessary for the UUA to permanently discourage certain persons from pursuing ministerial fellowship.

Therefore, upon the recommendation of the Ministerial Credentialing Director, the Executive Committee of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee may refuse to grant an interview to an individual they deem highly unsuitable for Unitarian Universalist ministry.

OUR ANTI-RACISM, ANTI-OPPRESSION AND MULTICULTURAL IMPERATIVE

The MFC declares and affirms its special responsibility to value all persons without regard to race, color, gender, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family structure, age, ethnicity or national origin in making its credentialing decisions. The UUA has been actively committed to become an anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural institution since 1997. All the ministerial credentialing process materials have been audited by the UUA Journey Towards Wholeness Transformation Committee.

While many aspirants and candidates who identify as a person of color/or from a historically marginalized group have positive experiences preparing for and serving in the UU ministry, for others the experience has been very difficult. Historically, the experience of ministers of color/or from a historically marginalized groups serving UU congregations has been mixed, and in some circumstances, very difficult.

The Ministerial Credentialing Office, the UUA Multicultural Growth and Witness Staff Group, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and the Diversity of Ministry Team work in partnership to continually improve the formative experience of all those who identify as a person of color/or from a historically marginalized group and seek to be accountable to other organizations engaged in this work.

MINISTRIES AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT STAFF GROUP

The Ministries and Faith Development (MFD) Staff Group assists seminarians, UU ministers, religious educators, congregational administrators and music directors from discernment through retirement and beyond. MFD includes the staff who formerly served in Ministry and Professional Leadership and Lifespan Faith Development.

Directors and office staff within MFD:

- provide credentialing and settlement services;
- offer lifespan resources for education, worship, advocacy, and social action that nurture Unitarian Universalist identity, spiritual growth, a transforming faith, and vital communities of justice and love;
- offer counsel in career development, congregational relations, worship and music resources, and financial planning;
- work to maintain collaborative relationships with our constituents' professional organizations, strengthen collegial relations among professional leaders, and, in collaboration with other UUA Staff Groups, strive to deliver excellent services to our congregations.

The offices and staff within MFD that are of primary interest for those who are seeking ministerial fellowship are included below.

Director of Ministries and Faith Development: Rev. Sarah Lammert

Assistant to the Director: Julie Shaw

The Director of Ministries and Faith Development oversees the work of the Staff Group, is the Executive Secretary of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) and the Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC), serves on the UUA Leadership Council, the Panel on Theological Education, the Diversity of Ministry Team, Large Congregations, and MFD's Review team, and strives to maintain positive partnerships with our congregations and the religious professionals we serve.

The Director of MFD is the officially recognized endorser for ministers serving as health care chaplains and UU applicants for Military Chaplain Candidate Programs, Active Duty Military Chaplains, National Guard/Reserve Chaplains, Civil Air Patrol Chaplains, Merchant Marines and other federally recognized military/government branches and agencies.

Ministerial Credentialing Director: Rev. David Pettee

Ministerial Credentialing Administrator: Alicia LeBlanc

Ministerial Fellowship Committee Coordinator: Marion Bell

The Ministerial Credentialing Director is responsible for relating to all aspirants and candidates seeking to become Unitarian Universalist ministers through the Ministerial Credentialing Office (MCO). The MCO Director is also the liaison with the two UU identity seminaries, Starr King School for the Ministry and Meadville Lombard Theological School, convenes the UUA Scholarship Committee, and provides staff support to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC).

The MCO Director also serves as the Executive Secretary of the Panel on Theological Education and is a member of the Diversity of Ministry Team.

Transitions Director: Rev. Keith Kron

Transitions Administrator: Margaret Montore

The Transitions Office advises congregations seeking ministers and ministers seeking positions. The Transitions Office supports ministerial search committees and recommends ministers for their consideration and oversees the training and placement of interim ministers.

Office of Church Staff Finance Director: Rev. Richard Nugent

Retirement Plans Coordinator: Linda Rose

Insurance Plans Director: Jim Sargent

Insurance Plans Manager: Patti Angelina

Insurance Plans Coordinator: Rachael Brennan

Compensation and Staffing Practices Manager: Jan Gartner

Office of Church Staff Finance Administrator: Charissa Benak

Retirement Plans Assistant: Joshua Craft

Aid Funds: Rev. Richard Nugent

The Office of Church Staff Finances provides information, services, programs and counsel to congregations and religious professionals regarding [compensation and benefits, coordinates the UUA health and insurance programs and the UUA retirement plan, administers funds](#) to aid ministers and religious educators, and staff the Council on Church Staff Finances, the Compensation, Pension and Benefits Committee and the Employee Benefits Trust.

Professional Development Director: Rev. Alicia Forde

Professional Development Assistant: Robert Kipp

The Ministerial Development Office provides [career advice](#) to ministers, maintains information on [continuing education opportunities](#) and sabbatical planning, leads workshops and events for the development of skills and insights for effective ministry, makes continuing education grants, and, in collaboration with others, develops processes, instruments, and models for shared ministry, conflict management, and professional evaluation. The Professional Development staff support new ministers to address the requirements for Preliminary Fellowship.

Credentialing and Professional Development Specialist: (Open)

The Professional Development Associate for Religious Education and Music Leaders strives to help sustain robust, transformative faith communities by ensuring that our professional religious educators and musicians are well-equipped and theologically grounded by providing advice and resources to congregations and professionals on matters relating to professional religious education leadership and music.

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS

The general qualifications for ministerial fellowship are stated in MFC Rule 11:

“All candidates must have satisfactorily completed all educational and skill training programs and demonstrates the qualities, skills and aptitude required for Unitarian Universalist ministry as determined by the MFC. Those qualifications and requirements include, but are not limited to, the following: satisfactory completion of an approved clinical pastoral education (CPE) program and an internship (as described in MFC Rule 12), or the equivalent; have completed the required reading; have undergone an approved career assessment program; be able to demonstrate an understanding of and experience with UU congregational life based on at least two years active involvement or equivalent; must demonstrate a strong motivation for our ministry; must be sponsored by a member society; and must demonstrate a balanced and healthy personality, a capacity for self-understanding, a concern for others, and ministerial leadership skills. The Committee will further require that the candidate be well informed on the history and development of Unitarianism and Universalism, familiar with the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and fully committed to the purpose, objectives and guidelines of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association. A candidate for the ministry shall also have a Master of Divinity degree or its’ equivalent from a theological school approved by the Committee, or have had an equivalent educational experience. Any exceptions to these qualifications must be approved by the MFC.”

Please be aware that MFC Policy 3, C.5, states that the candidate has “signed the Application for Candidacy form, which stipulates agreement to abide by the Rules and Policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and to defer accepting any UUA congregationally-based position other than internships and student ministries unless approved by the Ministerial Credentialing Director. Violation of this policy shall render the candidate ineligible for an interview with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee or Ministerial Fellowship for four years from the commencement of the position.”

As an aspirant or candidate for the Unitarian Universalist ministry, you are expected to maintain active participation in a Unitarian Universalist congregation. The MFC expects candidates to be able to demonstrate an understanding of and experience with Unitarian

Universalist congregational life based upon at least two years active involvement. If you are seeking transfer or plural standing and UU congregational membership may impact your current ministerial setting or denominational standing, please be in the contact with the Ministerial Credentialing Director to discuss alternatives.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

The process to become fellowshipped as a Unitarian Universalist minister involves a sustained commitment of time, and money and a willingness to grow professionally and personally. There are three stages within the fellowship process: applicant, aspirant and candidate status. People who contact the Ministerial Credentialing Office are considered in **applicant** status. Applicants who successfully complete the required paperwork gain **aspirant** status. Aspirants who complete their career assessment, have completed at least one year of theological school and have completed a field education or CPE/CPSP experience are eligible to receive **candidate** status.

ASPIRANT STATUS

A person gains aspirant status after having submitted the following materials to the Ministerial Credentialing Office. Aspirant status is good for seven years. All forms are in the Appendix. **We strongly encourage you to retain a copy of every document that is sent to the Ministerial Credentialing Office. In our ongoing efforts to go paperless, we welcome all documents to be submitted online, whenever possible.**

- 1.) Initial Inquiry Form;
- 2.) Interview Form- from a fellowshipped UU minister;
- 3.) Transfer/Plural Standing Forms, if applicable. The requirements for clergy seeking transfer or plural standing with the Unitarian Universalist Association are essentially the same as for all other aspirants. Please note that the Ministerial Fellowship Committee seeks evidence of a clear demonstration of motivation and commitment to Unitarian Universalism. Clergy seeking transfer or plural standing must:
 - a. Sign a consent form allowing for the release of information to certify status of standing in current or prior denomination;
 - b. Submit a letter of standing from current or prior denomination;
 - c. Submit a letter of reference from a ministerial colleague in good standing from current or prior denomination;
- 4.) Evidence of acceptance to a theological school or another approved program, or graduation from theological school with submission of all official transcripts from prior graduate level academic preparation;
- 5.) Signed Application for Candidacy form, which stipulates agreement to abide by the Rules and Policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and to defer accepting any UUA congregationally-based position other than internships and student ministries unless approved by the Ministerial Credentialing Director. Violation of this policy shall render the candidate ineligible for an interview with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee or Ministerial Fellowship for four years from the commencement of the position.
- 6.) Signed Criminal Offense Disclosure Form/False Representation Statement;
- 7.) Congregational sponsorship obtained and Statement of Congregational Sponsorship has been submitted on behalf of the aspirant. (Clergy seeking dual or transfer standing or active UUA regional staff may have

this requirement waived. Please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Director for further information.)

After gaining aspirant status, **please subscribe to the UUMINS2B**. This is a closed and un-moderated email list managed by the Ministerial Credentialing Office. It is a network for all those pursuing fellowship and an excellent way to make contact with others preparing for fellowship. The Ministerial Credentialing Office occasionally sends out emails from people and institutions of interest to those in the credentialing process.

To subscribe, please send an email to: <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/uumins2b>. The message should include only the following: subscribe UUMINS2B.

Aspirants who have had their candidacy status *postponed* by a previous RSCC interview may achieve candidacy status by submitting field education, CPE/CPSP and/or internship evaluations to the Ministerial Credentialing Office.

Aspirants who have had their candidacy status *denied* by a previous RSCC interview may submit a request to the Executive Committee of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. Please consult with the Ministerial Credentialing Director for further information.

CANDIDATE STATUS

In addition to 1 through 7 above, a Candidate has also:

- 8.) Completed a career assessment with an approved program and the written report has been received by the Ministerial Credentialing Office. (Aspirants with financial need may request a \$1000 Program Assistance Grant from the Ministerial Credentialing Office to offset the costs related to the career assessment. Please contact the MCO when an assessment has been scheduled so that the MCO can arrange to send the grant directly to the career center);
- 9.) Completed at least one year of theological education;
- 10.) Submitted final evaluations from a field education unit, a CPE/CPSP basic unit or an internship.

After gaining Candidate status but **before** requesting an MFC interview, a Candidate must have:

- 11.) Completed a CPE/CPSP unit or an internship, and have sent evaluations to the Ministerial Credentialing Office;
- 12.) Completed the MFC Appointment Form and sent in a \$250 application fee at the time the MFC interview is scheduled. (This fee will be used to build a fund to help offset travel equalization costs. This fee may be waived under extenuating circumstances. Please consult with the Ministerial Credentialing Director for further information.)

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee affirms that the granting of candidacy status permits the Ministerial Credentialing Office to share this information with those institutions and people who are engaged in your ministerial formation.

TRANSFER/PLURAL STANDING

The MCO is frequently contacted by clergy who hold standing in another denomination. Unfortunately, the UUA does not have any explicit agreements with any other faith

tradition to accept immediate transfer/dual standing. All people preparing for ministerial fellowship with the UUA are expected to be accountable to the same requirements as those beginning the fellowshiping process, although those holding standing elsewhere are encouraged to be in conversation with the Ministerial Credentialing Director about potential waivers of some requirements.

INTERNATIONAL QUERIES

Persons with interest in seeking ministerial fellowship who reside outside the United States and Canada (excepting those who are enrolled in a seminary in the United States or Canada but are residing outside the United States and Canada) are encouraged to be in contact with the Rev. Eric Cherry, UUA Director of International Office, for information.

ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT

The granting of preliminary fellowship by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee authorizes the Director of Ministries and Faith Development to be able to officially endorse chaplains for service as American Association of Pastoral Counselors and the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, as well as UU applicants for Military Chaplain Candidate Programs, Active Duty Military Chaplains, National Guard/Reserve Chaplains, Civil Air Patrol Chaplains, Merchant Marines and other federally recognized military/government branches and agencies.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OFFERING THE MASTERS OF DIVINITY DEGREE

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee encourages you to contact seminaries to obtain the latest materials on entrance requirements, programs of study, degree requirements, field education and internship opportunities, and financial aid. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee will accept a Master of Divinity degree from any seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada. ATS can be contacted at www.ats.edu.

Aspirants or candidates attending theological schools that are not accredited by the Association of Theological Schools must seek an M. Div. Equivalency from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. Please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Director for further information.

Only Starr King School for the Ministry, www.sksm.edu and Meadville Lombard Theological School, www.meadville.edu are affiliated with the UUA. The UUA has a historic relationship and maintains close ties with Harvard Divinity School at www.hds.harvard.edu. While it is not required that you attend a UU identity seminary, by doing so, you will have greater access to UU history, polity, religious education and arts of ministry courses that may not be available at multi-denominational seminaries.

Students associated with UU identity seminaries are also able to develop and enjoy a sense of community, and rich opportunities for academic discourse from a liberal religious perspective. The Ministerial Credentialing Director visits the UU identity schools annually and is available for consultation concerning the requirements for ministerial fellowship.

Other multi-denominational schools that currently have a UU student presence include: Andover Newton Theological School, Iliff School of Theology, Union Theological Seminary in New York, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Wesley

Theological Seminary; Eden Seminary; Earlham School of Theology and Claremont School of Theology. The Ministerial Credentialing Director visits these seminaries as needed and meets with aspirants and candidates at General Assembly.

CAREER ASSESSMENT

A career assessment—which in actuality is a more comprehensive personal, emotional, and psychological evaluation than the name implies -- is required for all aspirants at centers accredited by the Ministry Development Council. www.ministrydevelopment.org. *The Ministerial Credentialing Office strongly recommends that aspirants complete a career assessment as early in the process as possible.* Aspirants will be asked to provide personal and biographical information and take a series of standardized tests. Individual programs usually take approximately two days. Group programs can take a bit longer. In either type of program, you can expect a minimum of four hours of career counseling plus a one hour consultation with a psychologist. Both options cover the same materials in a slightly different format.

Most centers also offer the option of a couple's interview and welcome the participation of a spouse or partner. While not required, this option offers an important opportunity for a spousal pair to examine together what one partner's pursuit of a ministry career portends for both people. Whether through a group, individual or couples program, we hope you will benefit from the opportunity for extensive evaluation of personal strengths, motivation, areas of needed growth, and potential for success in the ministry by staff members who are experienced in working with aspirants, candidates and clergy. The career assessment program is more than evaluative -- it is educational and it is developmental. We encourage you to talk with the career center staff or the Ministerial Credentialing Director to gain a thorough understanding of what is involved.

Some people feel caught off-guard by the amount of preparation required and the degree of self-disclosure expected in these programs. Others feel caught off-guard by the lead-time required. The center may need several months' lead-time, plus an additional month to produce its written summary report. The results are confidential. A written report will be released to the Ministerial Credentialing Office and the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and mailed to the Ministerial Credentialing Office *only upon your written release.*

If you have questions about your unreleased report, you may request a confidential consultation with the Ministerial Credentialing Director. If you think the report is inaccurate, follow up with the counselor who wrote your report *before you sign the report.* Typically, counselors are only willing to make factual corrections. If you have released the report, the Ministerial Credentialing Director may call the counselors for clarification or additional consultation. MDC centers adhere to the highest standards of professional practice when dealing with issues of confidentiality.

We recommend you make use of the career center reports by sharing the results with advisors, mentors, CPE and internship supervisors, and anyone else who is in a position to give you additional feedback about the suitability of your vocational goals. It is in your best interest to check out possible areas of concern or "growing edges" by engaging in honest conversation with people who know you well.

Fees vary from center to center. It is your responsibility to make appointments and pay all fees. Please be very careful that you thoroughly understand the center's cancellation policy. In most cases, if you cancel after the deadline, you will be responsible for paying

for the program anyway. The MFC realizes that the fees for career assessments are high, but feels the value outweighs the expense. *A Program Assistance Grant of \$1,000 is available to those with financial need to offset the costs of the career assessment process.* Please contact the MCO for more information and consider approaching your congregation for financial assistance to further offset career center fees.

FINANCIAL REALITIES OF PURSUING MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP

The costs associated with preparation for ministerial fellowship can be considerable. The UUA has a limited amount of financial aid available. There is only one scholarship available for first year entering students: The Chuck and Nancy Thomas Scholarship. <https://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/becoming/scholarships/thomas>

The source of these funds include the St. Lawrence Foundation for Theological Education, the Living Tradition Fund, capital campaign funds and various UUA scholarship trust funds, some of which are designated for aspirants and candidates of color/from historically marginalized groups.

Unless otherwise specified, information and applications for financial aid can be obtained by contacting the Ministerial Credentialing Office. The application deadline is **April 15th each year** for the upcoming academic year. The UUA Scholarship Committee reviews applications and decisions are made on the basis of merit and need. Aspirants and candidates who are attending seminary at least half-time are eligible to apply. Please note that some scholarships have been restricted to those in candidate status by the donor. **Interns are eligible to apply, even if not currently in seminary.** In addition, there are a number of scholarships and awards independent of the Ministerial Credentialing Office for which students are eligible to apply.

Please go to <http://www.uua.org/giving/awards/scholarships> for more information and please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Office if you have any questions.

Staff people in the Office of Church Staff Finance are available to aspirants and candidates who have questions regarding the financial aspects of a career in the Unitarian Universalist ministry. In addition, the Director of this office is available to groups of students for consultation and workshops on ministerial finances.

Unfortunately, those seeking transfer or plural standing are not eligible for financial aid from the UUA other than the Program Assistance Grant. Full-time aspirants and candidates are eligible for reduced registration rates for the UUA General Assembly.

INCENTIVE GRANTS

Incentive grants are available to aspirants of color/those from historically marginalized communities in their first year of theological school by directly contacting the Ministerial Credentialing Office. In addition, there are funds available to aspirants and candidates of color/those from historically marginalized communities to offset the costs of attending General Assembly.

PANEL ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (POTE)

The POTE offers fellowship grants each academic year to UU scholars who are committed to strengthening the UU movement through research and publication, and excellence in teaching and educational leadership.

Applicants must have a documented commitment to Unitarian Universalism and be enrolled in a Ph.D. or Th.D. program. The purpose of the program is to help scholars train for seminary teaching in subjects pertaining especially to UU traditions and interests. Grants can range from \$6,000 to \$25,000.

There is a one-year Dissertation Year grant available to a highly qualified individual who has completed the doctoral examinations or equivalent and is working on an approved dissertation. Please contact the Executive Secretary of the Panel on Theological Education, dpettee@uua.org, 617-948-6402 for further information.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTERS ASSOCIATION (UUMA)

Once candidate status has been granted, the MFC strongly encourages all candidates to become members of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and to commit themselves to the Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry.

The UUMA is the continental organization of ministers serving the Unitarian Universalist movement. All candidates are expected to be familiar with the Guidelines and use them as a guide for professional behavior. www.uuma.org/guidelines

The UUMA assists to help foster improved capabilities and skills of ministers, aids members through chapters and support groups, offers a sense of commitment to one another and a concern for high standards of professional conduct, and supports and promotes the Unitarian Universalist tradition of freedom and responsibility in all congregational, societal and ministerial relations.

As a candidate member of the UUMA you will:

- receive UUMA News providing tidings, perspectives and concerns of colleague;
- receive access to the members' only resources on the UUMA website;
- have the opportunity to participate in UUMA's continental gatherings including an business meeting and worship service and CENTER Institutes for Excellence in Ministry;
- enjoy access to the UUMA Board of Trustees and to all programs of your local UUMA Chapter, including Good Offices and Continuing Education;
- join in promoting high standards of rights and responsibilities in the UU ministry.

Beginning in FY 2017, the UUMA, in partnership with the Ministerial Credentialing Office and Congregational Life, will be pilot-testing the Ministry Formation Network (MFN) to offer discernment, collegiality and education/training to aspirants and candidates. The full rollout of the MFN is planned for FY 2018.

For current information about candidate membership in the UUMA and/or application for membership, visit www.uuma.org or contact the UUMA Director of Administration, Ms. Janette Lallier at administrator@uuma.org.

CONGREGATIONAL SPONSORSHIP

To become an aspirant requires sponsorship by a UU congregation.

What is the purpose of this requirement?

The purpose of this requirement is to ensure familiarity on the part of aspiring ministers with UU congregational life, and to encourage congregations to take a responsible role in the recruitment, preparation and assessment of our future ministers. Our congregations, our ministries and our religious movement all stand to gain if we can work together creatively to identify and support potential leaders.

When does sponsorship occur?

Applicants are encouraged to seek congregational sponsorship early in their formation to establish their interest in becoming a minister in the eyes of the congregation. Any concerns about seeking sponsorship can be directed to the Ministerial Credentialing Director.

Who should decide who is or isn't sponsored?

Sponsorship is determined by the congregation's representative body, such as the Board of Trustees. A congregational vote is not required. If the congregation has a minister, he or she may have a recommendation, but it is not the minister's role to make the final decision.

Is some kind of documentation required?

Yes. Documentation of congregational sponsorship should be provided using the form at <https://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/becoming/statement-congregational-sponsorship> which can be found in the Appendix.

What happens if a congregation chooses not to sponsor an applicant?

The Ministerial Credentialing Office would appreciate being contacted in the event a congregation chooses not to sponsor an applicant so appropriate steps can be taken to address the concerns regarding why this decision was made.

What is being said with the decision to sponsor a candidate?

At the most basic level, congregational sponsorship indicates confidence in the applicant's potential and suitability for UU ministry. The MFC regards sponsorship as evidence that an applicant is actively committed to the Purposes and Principles of the UUA and the institutions which uphold them. A congregation is not indicating that the applicant is presently ready for ministry when the congregation commits to sponsorship. The final decision to grant fellowship to a candidate is made by the MFC after careful consideration of written materials, evaluations and a personal interview.

What are the other requirements for UU ministry?

The general qualifications, as stated by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, are these:

“All candidates must have satisfactorily completed all educational and skill training programs and must demonstrate the qualities, skills and aptitude required for Unitarian Universalist ministry as determined by the MFC. Those qualifications and requirements include, but are not limited to, the following: satisfactory completion of an approved clinical pastoral education (CPE) program and an internship (as described in Rule 12), or the equivalent; have completed the required reading; have undergone an approved

career assessment program; be able to demonstrate an understanding of and experience with UU congregational life based on at least two years active involvement or equivalent; must demonstrate a strong motivation for our ministry; must be sponsored by a member society; and must demonstrate a balanced and healthy personality, a capacity for self-understanding, a concern for others, and ministerial leadership skills. The Committee will further require that the candidate be well informed on the history and development of Unitarianism and Universalism, familiar with the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and fully committed to the purpose, objectives and guidelines of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association. A candidate for the ministry shall also have a Master of Divinity degree or its' equivalent from a theological school approved by the Committee or have had an equivalent educational experience. Any exceptions to these qualifications must be approved by the MFC."

Doesn't this requirement have the potential for creating an uncomfortable situation in the congregation if the congregation is not enthusiastic about sponsoring an applicant, especially if the applicant is a long-term member, big contributor, etc.?

Yes. This is an important concern which needs to be dealt with carefully. It is especially important, however, not to back away from the challenge of providing the person with honest feedback. Chances are if a congregation has severe reservations about a person's potential for ministry, the applicant will not be well-served in the long run if falsely encouraged.

The MFC does not recommend that a congregation risk conflict over sponsorship. In expressing reservations to an applicant, it is important to try to stress concern for an applicant's well-being and success in employing their unique gifts, which might not necessarily be for ministry. If a congregation comes to an impasse or doesn't know what to do, please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Director.

In many instances, a congregation will be asked for sponsorship by a person who is away at school or simply moved away for other reasons. If the person is reasonably well known within the congregation, it is certainly appropriate to consider sponsorship. A congregation may want to recognize an applicant's aspirations through, for example, newsletter articles, announcements, and invitations to participate in congregational activities when the aspirant is in the area. A congregation could invite an aspirant to write a newsletter article sharing with the congregation some of the excitement of their journey.

If the congregation has a minister, their relationship with the aspirant is important. The minister may be a mentor, role model, teacher and spiritual guide of considerable influence. The minister may also have mixed feelings about the aspirant or the role that person is playing within the congregation. In any case, it is important to be sensitive to the possibilities and pitfalls inherent in the relationship and include the minister when developing policies regarding congregational response to aspirants.

Who is supposed to be providing all this support?

Congregations will respond to this opportunity in a variety of ways. Some will be able to offer little support at all and will simply deal with requests for sponsorship at the board level on a case by case basis. If this is apt to be the scenario in your congregation, it is still important to have a policy in place which will guide your response to possible inquiries.

For example: Who decides? What criteria are important? Will you want to interview the applicant? What happens if someone tries to block sponsorship? What if the board and the minister disagree?

If there is more interest and energy within a congregation for working with aspirants, the board might, for example, recruit a subcommittee to develop policies, explore possibilities and relate to aspirants and their needs for support.

In what ways might a congregation support an aspirant?

Depending on their interests, resources, and the needs of the aspirant, congregations will choose to support the people they sponsor in a variety of ways. Nothing in particular is required.

One of the major concerns for theological school students is their high level of debt; financial assistance can sometimes make the critical difference between staying in school and dropping out. A congregation and aspirant may want to work together to raise money in any number of ways, including special fund-raisers and help with locating grant money or with direct backing from generous parishioners.

People who are looking for opportunities to donate money tend to believe that contributing to the education of our future leaders is a good and worthwhile investment. Some congregations contribute to the cost of the career assessment program. It is important for persons aspiring to the ministry to do this as early as possible in their preparation. Congregational support and encouragement to do career assessment will benefit the individual and our ministry as a whole. The cost of the program can be considerable.

Valuable support can be offered in less tangible ways as well. Aspirants may benefit from opportunities to preach or lead other forms of worship. They may need experience working with committees and the financial aspects of running a church. They might be asked to be leaders in the religious education program, or to organize a social action project.

Aspirants could be encouraged (and supported financially) to participate in UUA regional and continental events. A particularly worthwhile opportunity, especially for people who are relatively new to Unitarian Universalism and/or concerns of the larger Association, is attendance at the UUA General Assembly. Consider having the aspirant seek delegate status from your congregation.

With a seminary nearby, congregations are liable to be deluged by requests for sponsorship. What should a congregation do when the applicant is not well known?

If a congregation is near a theological school attended by many UU students, it will be particularly important to develop policies regarding sponsorship as soon as possible. Most congregations in this circumstance already have developed certain understandings about how to welcome, integrate and support ministerial students and value their presence. The challenge may simply be to become more intentional about a sponsoring relationship.

If an applicant not well known asks for sponsorship, it's perfectly acceptable to expect that person to become involved in the life of the congregation for a period of time before considering sponsorship. Some congregations ask for a reference from a UU minister or other mutually acceptable person who knows the applicant to obtain more background.

All candidates are expected to have been minimally been actively involved with a UU congregation for at least two years before interviewing with the MFC. For people who became UU's during seminary or for ministers who want to transfer from another denomination, this requirement may seem like a difficult obstacle. Despite this challenge, the MFC firmly believes that those aspiring to professional leadership positions in our Association need to have grounding in, and understanding of, UU congregational life. Congregational sponsorship may not guarantee this understanding, but it is meant to encourage, facilitate and underscore its importance.

Is sponsorship like having a ministerial intern?

No. Congregational sponsorship and ministerial internships are very different. An intern has contracted with the congregation and the minister for supervision as a learner for an agreed upon length of time. The intern is acting in a professional ministerial capacity, even though ministerial credentials have not yet been granted.

Interns are evaluated and held accountable in a structured way that is not appropriate for someone the congregation sponsors. A sponsored aspirant who is not an intern will participate as a layperson, not a minister. If a congregation has an intern or field education student, it will be important for both minister and congregation to be clear about the distinction so the intern's position of authority is not jeopardized or confused.

Does an applicant need to be a member for congregational sponsorship?

While it is important for an applicant to indicate their institutional commitment by membership in a UU congregation *somewhere*, it is not necessary for them to be members of the sponsoring congregation. It would be important to consider this issue on an individual basis. Some applicants have sought sponsorship from their internship sites and this is permissible.

This seems like a big responsibility. What's in it for a congregation?

What's in it for congregations is the opportunity to play a pivotal role in promoting responsible, well-prepared leaders for our religious communities and Unitarian Universalism in general. The MFC's experience with sponsorship is that it is not burdensome. In fact, both congregations and aspirants have expressed pride and enthusiasm about the opportunity to claim one another.

For more information about sponsorship or a person requesting sponsorship, please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Office.

NEW AREAS OF MINISTERIAL COMPETENCE AND READING LIST

In March 2016, following three years of study and consultation, the MFC approved new ministerial competencies that were inspired by *Fulfilling the Call: A Model for UU Ministry in the 21st Century*, which can be reviewed at:

<http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/becoming/incare/alignment/fulfilling-the-call>

The competencies include a new embedded required reading list.

Any person who is in aspirant or candidate status prior to March 1, 2017 has the option of preparing for fellowship using the seventeen competencies and reading

list, or, they may prepare for fellowship using the seven new competencies and new reading list.

The 2010 competencies and materials are located in [MFC 2010 Documents and Competencies \(PDF, 30 pages\)](#) ([Word](#)).

Any person who enters into aspirant status after March 1, 2017 will be held accountable to the new competencies/reading list included in the [Appendix](#).

The MFC expects that each candidate will have achieved a satisfactory level of basic competence. Students are encouraged to work closely with their seminary in planning their courses of study so that the following areas can be covered through course work, independent study, reading, seminars, workshops or other experiences.

How these areas are covered is left to the candidate and to the seminary.

The Committee requires that each candidate prepare a written statement of competency.

One: Worship and Rites of Passage

- Knows how to prepare holistic, inclusive worship and rituals for life passages.
- Demonstrates awareness of multicultural and multigenerational approaches to worship.
- Prepares and delivers engaging sermons, homilies, and reflections.
- Works collaboratively with professional colleagues and lay worship leaders.
- Uses arts to create multisensory worship.
- Integrates theological theory and practice.

Two: Pastoral Care and Presence

- Can provide pastoral care, recognizing differences between pastoral and therapeutic counseling.
- Demonstrates healthy personal boundaries and knowledge of professional ethics.
- Has awareness and skills to respond appropriately to sexuality, mental health, end of life, and relationship concerns.
- Understands cultural and generational needs in pastoral care.

Three: Spiritual Development for Self and Others

- Models spiritual depth in personal practice.
- Articulates philosophies and theories of teaching and learning.
- Models accountable engagement with diverse spiritual traditions and communities.
- Demonstrates understanding of multi-religious knowledge and practices.

Four: Social Justice in the Public Square

- Is engaged with critical justice issues in the local community and in the larger world.
- Can apply the lens of power and privilege in the areas of antiracism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism.
- Understands basics of community organizing and value of broad-based coalitions.
- Connects the history of UU justice engagement to the present.

Five: Administration

- Is prepared to manage staff and volunteers.
- Has a basic understanding of budgets, stewardship, and fundraising (and the theology thereof).
- Understands role as a minister within a mission-based institution.
- Articulates understanding of conflict management and obstacles to healthy organizational functioning.

Six: Serves the Larger Unitarian Universalist Faith

- Collaborates with Unitarian Universalist and interfaith colleagues, including other religious professionals.
- Articulates historical influence of Christianity on North American culture, including Unitarian Universalism.
- Engages with Unitarian Universalism at the local, regional, national, and global levels.
- Articulates knowledge of current initiatives and issues within the faith movement.
- Demonstrates knowledge of UU history and polity.
- Contributes to on-going scholarship and support of professional ministry.

Seven: Leads the Faith into the Future

- Experiments with emerging media technology.
- Articulates a vision for the future, assessing opportunities and challenges for Unitarian Universalism in a changing society.
- Explores new generational and multicultural expressions of Unitarian Universalism.

MIDDLER REVIEW

The MFC encourages aspirants and candidates to participate in a 'middle review' process (or a comparable review) if this is an option at your seminary. **This is not a requirement.** Typically, about half way through a student's academic program, a small group gathers that might include the student's academic advisor, a professor, other students and a member representing the UUA who is knowledgeable about the policies, procedures and expectations of the MFC.

At the review, the student's academic and vocational journey is discussed, and recommendations are often considered. This report is not typically included in the candidate's file, but can be if it includes information unavailable in other materials in the packet of information, prepared by the candidate in advance of their MFC interview.

CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION (CPE)

All aspirants/candidates are required to complete a basic unit of certified Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and the evaluations will be included in the candidate packet. A directory of certified CPE programs is available from the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc., at www.acpe.edu or the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy at www.pastoralreport.com. In Canada, aspirants and candidates can learn about CPE through the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care.

For many aspiring clergy, CPE represents the first experience of being considered a minister, both by the aspirant/candidate and by others. It is strongly recommended that you complete CPE prior to meeting with the MFC. Most aspirants and candidates find CPE to be a rewarding, though rigorous, learning experience. A significant part of the work occurs in a small group of peers, led by the supervisor, during which issues of self-awareness are addressed. The knowledge gained in this way can be critical to competence in ministry, which depends heavily on the quality of one's character and personal relations.

Most CPE settings are at hospitals, although alternate sites may be available. All CPE programs require a minimum of 400 hours of work on-site. About half of that time will be spent doing the work of ministry, the other half reflecting on that work one-on-one or in the group. CPE is completed in a 10-12 week intensive program or in an extended unit.

The MFC is willing to consider a CPE Equivalency when a candidate brings relevant experience and references. Please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Director for further information.

The St. Lawrence Foundation has limited funds available to offset the costs of the CPE stipend. For more information, please go to: <http://www.nyscu.org/SLFTE/>

INTERNSHIPS

All candidates are required to satisfactorily complete a full-time or part-time supervised internship. Full-time internships must be for at least nine months. Part-time internships typically extend over a total of 18 months at a minimum of 15-20 hours per week. Supervision is to be provided by a UU minister in final Fellowship.

(Equivalent experience, e.g. fieldwork placements or supervised ministries may be considered on a case-by-case basis and please speak with the Ministerial Credentialing Director with any questions. It is acceptable to conflate an academic field education requirement with the UUA internship requirement.)

Aspirants and candidates are not required to complete a parish internship. However, if an aspirant or candidate imagines the possibility of serving a UU congregation in the future, the absence of a parish internship experience will seriously disadvantage them in a competitive search process.

All interns, regardless of their setting, are expected by the time of their MFC interview to demonstrate basic skill with all seven competencies.

- A.** One: Worship and Rites of Passage
- Two: Pastoral Care and Presence
- Three: Spiritual Development for Self and Others
- Four: Social Justice in the Public Square
- Five: Administration
- Six: Serves the larger Unitarian Universalist Faith
- Seven: Leads the Faith into the Future

B. Lay leaders must evaluate and affirm the ministerial competencies of an aspirant or candidate during an internship. The internship supervision shall therefore include a lay committee of five or more persons.

C. An internship is not only about development of skills. The internship shall therefore be designed to enhance the intern's ability to reflect on the theological and ethical bases from which these skills arise.

D. An internship is an opportunity to grow into the identity and role of a minister. Therefore the internship shall include evaluations from the intern, supervising minister, and intern committee, which are shared with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. Such evaluations shall emphasize reflections on areas of change and growth during the internship. Interns are required to develop a written Learning/Service Agreement with their supervisors and lay committees before, or at the beginning of, any internship.

Whatever the setting, direct weekly supervision is required. For community based internships, it is not required that the intern's supervisor be a Unitarian Universalist minister in final fellowship. However, the intern must have a Unitarian Universalist minister in final fellowship available for consultation and reflection who will serve as a member of the intern committee. The MFC discourages congregations from offering internships during the minister's sabbatical year.

The MFC expects that supervision will occur on-site and discourages off-site supervision. Those interns who seek off-site supervision must consult in advance with the Ministerial Credentialing Director, who in some circumstances may involve the MFC Candidacy Working Group to authorize the arrangement. Off-site supervision guidelines include:

- a. that the off-site supervisor and intern meet preferably face to face weekly;
- b. that the off-site supervisor only be supervising one intern at a time;
- c. that the off-site supervisor must be in final fellowship;
- d. that the off-site supervisor preferably not be a UUA Regional Staff member;
- e. that the off-site supervisor and intern be in consultation with the Ministerial Credentialing Director in design of the Learning/Service Agreement.

IF AN MFC APPOINTMENT IS SCHEDULED BEFORE THE MIDTERM EVALUATION

Any time an intern is scheduled to see the MFC before the midterm evaluation can be completed, a letter of self-evaluation will need to be completed and submitted as part of the MFC packet. The intern should include responses to the following:

1. Describe the highlights of the contracting process.
2. Describe a significant encounter with a congregant.
3. How do you see your emerging role as a minister?
4. What setbacks, if any, have you experienced in your internship thus far?

MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE (MFC)

While each member congregation has the right to call and ordain its own ministers, the MFC has the exclusive right to admit ministers into ministerial fellowship with the Association. In addition, the MFC has exclusive jurisdiction over and makes rules governing ministerial fellowship, subject to approval by their oversight body, the UUA Board of Trustees.

The UUA staff members in Ministries and Faith Development will only recommend a minister to a congregation after the minister has been granted ministerial fellowship by the Committee.

All candidates are expected to be aware of and accountable to MFC Rules and Policies. <http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/support/fellowship/rules-policies>

The Director of Ministries and Faith Development serves as the Executive Secretary of the MFC, and the Ministerial Credentialing Director and the Professional Development Director serve as staff liaisons. UUA staff members do not have a vote in candidate interview decisions or other business voted upon by the MFC.

At every interview is a Liaison to Candidates, a minister that has recently been granted preliminary fellowship. The Liaisons to Candidates do not have a vote in candidate interview decisions or other business voted upon by the MFC.

Please refer to the following link for reports from Liaisons to Candidates who write about their experience sitting with the MFC:

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/ministerialfellowship/liaisonscandidates/index.shtml>.

PURPOSES AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE MFC

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee is a UUA Board of Trustees committee. There are fourteen members on the MFC, six who are lay people and eight who are ministers. Four of the ministers are appointed by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. All the other members of the MFC, including the Chair, are appointed by the UUA Board.

SCHEDULING MFC INTERVIEWS

Persons seeking ministerial fellowship must request an interview in writing using the Ministerial Fellowship Committee Appointment Form. (MFC-1)

It is not necessary to have all requirements completed in order to interview with the MFC, but most candidates are approximately two-thirds of the way through their preparation for ministry at the time of their MFC interview, often nearing the end of seminary and many at least half way through their internship. Candidates who have previously received a Category IV or V decision by the MFC must receive MFC Executive Committee approval before scheduling a re-interview. Please see MFC Policy 3D for additional requirements. In order to balance the number of interviews at any one meeting, appointments will be made in consultation with, and at the final discretion of, the Ministerial Credentialing Director.

Five months prior to each meeting, a materials checklist and a reconfirmation form will be emailed to each candidate. A candidate canceling their appointment less than four months before the meeting will be put on the next available interview list for a future appointment. Notification of interview date, time and place will be made at least six weeks before the interview. Candidates who fail to submit all materials to the Ministerial Credentialing Office by the deadline, approximately six weeks prior to their interview, may have their appointments canceled.

Candidates who have scheduled their MFC interview but would like to interview earlier may get on the waiting list for an earlier MFC meeting if they get all of their materials into the Ministerial Credentialing Office eight weeks before that interview is to take place. If a vacancy occurs, and the candidate is next in line on the waiting list, they will be contacted immediately. It is more common than not that a cancellation will take place a few weeks before the interview, so getting on a waiting list is a serious decision.

Candidates will be added to the waiting list in the order in which completed packets are received by the Ministerial Credentialing Office. The Ministerial Credentialing Director reserves the privilege to manage the waiting list. Interviews must be requested in writing. As of July 2016, MFC interviews are being scheduled **18 months** out.

The MFC meets three times a year, typically in late September/early October, late November/early December and in March/April.

PREPARING YOUR PACKET TO MEET WITH THE MFC

Information about what is included in the MFC packet can be found in the Appendix. All materials must be typed or printed on one side only of 8 1/2" x 11" white paper. Whenever possible, materials should be submitted online to the MCO, as individual attachments clearly labeled in the subject line. Any duplicated forms must contain exactly the same information as the original form distributed by the MCO. Though candidates will be notified in a timely fashion regarding required materials, items in the packet may be submitted at any time to the MCO. Prior to the interview, candidates will receive by email a copy of their entire packet.

Packets which make the best impression are neat, organized, concise, readable, consistent, complete and *on time*. *It is the candidate's responsibility to make sure all evaluations, letters and other materials arrive by the deadline.* Only after all the material has been submitted, is the Ministerial Credentialing Director available to review the packet upon request.

Members of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee review more than a thousand pages for each meeting. To make sure there is adequate time to review the packets, the Committee authorizes the Ministerial Credentialing Office to forward candidate packets that include only the materials that have been received by the deadline. Incomplete packets will result at minimum in the granting of a Category II.

MFC INTERVIEW

The purpose of the interview is for MFC members to explore the specific areas of your knowledge and competence, determining effectiveness of communication in both formal and informal situations, and observing resourcefulness and openness. For those who had them, the RSCC interview process sought to evaluate your potential to be a UU minister, while the MFC determines if you are ready to serve as a UU minister.

The MFC urges you to arrive at least 30 minutes before your scheduled interview. Prior to the interview, a member of your panel will come out to greet you and ask you about your first question. The first question is developed by the candidate and is written down on a piece of paper and given to the MFC member. Having a first question is not required, but most candidates prepare one. The MFC member will also ask you if you

have words for the lighting of the chalice. Most candidates choose to say a few words, but this is also not required.

When the MFC has determined which questions will be asked, a UUA staff person will come and escort you to the interview. You will be introduced, and be invited to briefly greet each member of the panel. The chair of our panel will know if you have words prepared for the lighting of the chalice, and the chalice will be lit. After the chalice has been lit, you will deliver a ten-minute sermon or presentation. The sermon is your opportunity to have the full attention of the Committee and the choice of the sermon topic is made by the candidate. You may wish to speak about meaningful religious experiences, theological views, ministerial roles and functions, the meaning of religion, religious education, etc. Both the content and appropriateness of the subject, the structure and quality of the presentation, and the effectiveness of delivery are seriously considered.

The MFC encourages candidates to practice their sermon in advance. If the sermon goes too long, you may be interrupted, because the Committee has many questions for you! The questioning will cover a wide range of subjects. The MFC will cover many of the required competencies and ask you about personal and professional behaviors drawn from your references, career assessment, CPE and internship evaluations and other materials in your packet. The interview typically lasts about forty-five minutes to an hour, but occasionally, can go longer.

At the conclusion of the interview, you will be escorted back to the waiting area while the Committee deliberates and reaches a decision. When a decision has been reached, you will be escorted back to the meeting room and the decision will be shared with you. Frequently, the Committee chooses to make recommendations or suggestions which it feels may be helpful in future preparation for the ministry. In addition, the Committee may have specific requirements or contingencies that must be met before fellowship will be granted. Because of the Committee's desire to honor the schedule, there will not likely be time to discuss the outcome of the interview with the Committee once the decision has been shared.

Candidates are encouraged to come to the interview with a spouse, friend, colleague or other supportive person who will remain in the waiting area during your interview. Candidates are asked to limit the number of support people to one or two to avoid having the waiting area become overly crowded, negatively impacting the experience for others who are waiting to interview with the Committee.

Following the MFC interview, a letter is sent officially informing the candidate of the decision. Any questions concerning the decision letter should be directed to the Ministerial Credentialing Director.

DECISION CATEGORIES

Category I Qualified for Unitarian Universalist ministry with no contingencies other than satisfactory completion of degree, internship and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE.)

Category II Qualified for Unitarian Universalist ministry provided specific contingencies are met satisfactorily.

Category III Encouraging progress for Unitarian Universalist ministry, but with work still to be addressed, (i.e., academic, personal, institutional understanding, etc.) so that the MFC requires a return visit. If specific work has been outlined, it must be completed before a return visit.

Category **IV** Considerable doubt as to whether the candidate meets the general qualifications for Unitarian Universalist ministry.

Category **V** The MFC sees no potential for the candidate in Unitarian Universalist ministry and discourages the candidate from further preparation.

Decisions of I thru III will not be valid after three years without further action by the Committee.

Candidates receiving a Category IV will retain candidate status for three years from the time of the interview and are not eligible for further UUA scholarship assistance. Those who receive a Category V will be removed from candidacy status.

PETITIONS FOR RETURN APPOINTMENTS

When a person receives a Category IV or V decision from the MFC, it is necessary to petition the Executive Committee of the MFC for a return appointment. The Committee expects to receive a sober and reflective letter that shows an understanding of why the original decision may have gone the way it did, and as importantly, what has been done in the meantime to address the Committee's concerns.

Excuses and reasons why the Committee was wrong the first time are not particularly helpful. The Executive Committee is looking for evidence that things will go better for the Candidate the next time.

The petition may also include evaluations from, for example, Clinical Pastoral Education units or internships, and/or relevant letters and reports from career centers, therapists, employers, supervisors, etc. It is important to consult with the Ministerial Credentialing Director regarding appropriate and helpful content for the petition.

All material for petitions should be submitted to the Ministerial Credentialing Office at least six weeks prior to the MFC meeting at which it will be reviewed. Successful petitioners will be placed on the waiting list for the next available, and mutually agreeable, MFC appointment.

PRELIMINARY FELLOWSHIP

Preliminary Fellowship is granted to candidates who have completely fulfilled all the requirements for fellowship to the satisfaction of the MFC. It is your responsibility to make certain that the Ministerial Credentialing Office has received all final internship, CPE and other reports, plus official notification of graduation.

CLEARANCE FOR SETTLEMENT

If you are granted a "I" by the MFC, *you may be eligible* to be referred to the Transitions Office by the Ministerial Credentialing Director for entrance into the settlement process. There are occasionally reasons why there is a delay. The Ministerial Credentialing Director makes sure all contingencies have been adequately met. Please contact the Ministerial Credentialing Director for further information.

If you are granted a "II" you will need to complete the specified contingencies before being cleared to enter search. The Ministerial Credentialing Director will assist you to get

cleared to enter search as quickly as is possible. The Transitions Director is unable to meet with candidates until they have been cleared for settlement.

Before contacting the Transitions Office, you are encouraged to read the *Settlement Handbook for Ministers and Congregations* and to review the Opportunities for Ministry page and other materials available from the Transitions website: <http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/transitions>.

After being cleared to enter the settlement process, you will need to submit the "Application for Ministry Position," and meet with the Transitions Director, either in person or by phone, before you can begin indicating interest in being considered by specific congregations. Candidates are eligible to work on their Ministerial Record prior to being granted fellowship.

SERVICE OF THE LIVING TRADITION

Ministers will be invited to participate in the annual Service of the Living Tradition (SOLT) at General Assembly as soon as they have been granted Preliminary Fellowship. If a minister has been granted Preliminary Fellowship by **May 15th**, they will be eligible to participate in the service held the following month in June. If Preliminary Fellowship is granted after the May 15th deadline, the minister will be invited to participate in the service the following year.

In some cases, graduations do not take place until after May 15th. If this situation applies to you (and you do not wish to wait until the following year to be in the Service of the Living Tradition) please make certain that the Ministerial Credentialing Office receives a letter from your seminary by the May 15th deadline, stating that you have completed all requirements for the degree and that the faculty or board has voted that you will graduate.

Although the requirements for participation in the Service of the Living Tradition are tied to completion of all requirements for ministerial fellowship, the Service of the Living Tradition is **not** a graduation ceremony. It is an important worship service honoring our ministry and those who have traversed the rites of passage in a minister's career, including death. We ask that you please insure that relatives, friends and classmates attending the service understand the need for this decorum.

MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT

The Transitions Office plays a primary role in the placement and settlement of ministers in congregations, and working with congregations to secure interim ministers. Only UU ministers in fellowship can be considered for a settled or interim position in a UU congregation. Candidates *can* complete a Ministerial Record. The ministerial search process is detailed in the Settlement Handbook, which is sent to new ministers when the Ministerial Credentialing Director clears them for settlement. Ministers seeking placement as chaplains, pastoral counselors, and other non-congregational ministries use the networks and organizations specific to each ministry. In addition, the Transitions Director periodically sends announcements of community based positions to ministers who express interest in receiving them.

Some in candidate status seek a contract ministry position, which *must* be negotiated with the regional staff in the region where the congregation is located. Contract ministries are understood to be time-limited hires, typically of one year's duration, and must also be approved in advance by the Ministerial Credentialing Director.

TIMING OF SEARCH AND SETTLEMENT

If you hope for a fall settlement, it is a good idea to schedule your MFC interview for no later than the previous December. Those who interview at MFC meetings scheduled in the spring often find that there are very few congregations with open pulpits are still available.

Three additional pieces of advice from the Transitions Office: 1) congregational experience is often the most underrated part of preparation for ministry. This experience, however, is crucial to a candidate's preparation and is always important to congregations when they are looking to hire ministers; 2) Save evidence of the work you have done while preparing for ministry. This will be vital when you are putting your packet together; and 3) continually solicit feedback on your ministry from friends, teachers, and laity--even strangers! It is important to know your strengths and weakness.

ORDINATION

It is the custom and recommendation of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association that ordination occur only after the granting of Preliminary Fellowship. Ordination certificates and letters of congratulation are sent out only to those who are in preliminary fellowship. While ordination information is available through the UUMA, you can contact the Assistant to the Director of Ministries and Faith Development to request two ordination certificates. Premature ordination planning runs the risk of causing a great deal of embarrassment and confusion to everyone concerned if things don't work out as expected.