

Report of UUA Trustees Ministerial Fellowship Committee November/December 2007 Meeting – San Francisco

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) gathered at Club Quarters in San Francisco from November 27-December 3, 2007, and the following report highlights the activities of the MFC that are of special interest to the UUA Board of Trustees.

Summary of Candidates Seeking Preliminary Fellowship:

We saw a total of 17 candidates (8 men and 9 women) ranging in age from 26 to 58 (with three of them in their 20's, four of them in their 30's, six in their 40's, and four over 50). Nine theological schools were represented, with 6 students from Starr King, 2 from Meadville Lombard, 2 from Union (NYC), and one each from Andover, Brite, Harvard, Iliff, Lexington, and Marylhurst & United (Twin Cities). There was one return candidate who originally saw the MFC in December 2006.

The Committee granted the following Categories to candidates:

- I ("good to go!") – 10 candidates
- II (cleared for fellowship providing contingencies are met) – 3 candidates
- III (individuals the MFC would like to see again following additional work on ministerial formation) – 3 candidates
- IV (discouraging the candidate from further preparation for ministry) – 1 candidate

Required Reading List: The MFC voted to adopt an updated required reading list. As of January 1, 2008 all new candidates will be required to use the new list. Current candidates will have the choice of using either reading list.

Process: We continue experimenting with different ways of deliberating to refine our process, ensure our decisions are grounded in the paperwork we receive from candidates, and use our short time in the most effective manner possible. Beginning with our September 2007 meeting, we implemented a process whereby each panel member writes down their initial evaluation of the interview and any concerns once the candidate leaves the room, and before beginning deliberations with fellow panel members. We have found this new practice limits subjectivity and helps committee members move toward critical assessment. We will also continue our practice of asking candidates and our student liaisons for their feedback on our process.

MFC Changes: We noted that seven of fourteen MFC members, including the new chair, are new to the MFC over the past nine months. We plan to add one day for orientation and retreat to our March 2008 meeting in Chicago.

Proposed Rule/Bylaw Changes: Prior to voting on the proposed Rule/Bylaw changes, the MFC met with three members of the Board of Review, including Chair, Robert Bacon. There was general agreement that we are moving toward a less formal process for fellowship review that does not involve lawyers, so as not to just duplicate the court system. Robert stated that he felt deletion of the formal aspects of review are in support of fairness ("May all who speak here feel they have been heard") where we don't have a situation where the UUA has a lawyer and a minister only has a Good Offices person. Of course, there is always the option, but not the "right" of a minister to have legal counsel. The BOR will be meeting in Boston on January 4 and 5, 2008, where Jory Agate and Beth Miller will join them for additional conversation.

The MFC voted to approve the final draft of the proposed Rules and Bylaw changes. Following is an updated timeline:

- An annotated version of the final draft of the Rules/Bylaws with all changes will be made available to Board members prior to the January 2008 meeting.
- January 2008 BOT: proposed Rules/Bylaw changes to BOT for vote. Jory Agate will be available during Saturday Board meeting for questions.
- June 2008 GA: proposed Bylaw changes to GA for vote

Respectfully submitted by Jackie Shanti and Burton Carley