

Good afternoon. It is my privilege to report to you today on behalf of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. I'll begin by telling you a bit about the Committee and its work, and then highlight some of the important issues from the past year.

The bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association establish the basic responsibilities of the committee

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Basically, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee has exclusive jurisdiction over ministerial fellowship and that includes making rules governing fellowship; and we deal with complaints and actions regarding suspension, termination, reinstatement and readmission.

Fulfilling these responsibilities requires a minimum of three meetings a year, of at least four days per meeting. And they are full days! In addition, subcommittees or Working Groups put in added time.

We spend at least two days of each meeting interviewing candidates for preliminary fellowship, including those already ordained ministers who transfer from another denomination.

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The basic requirements for fellowship, which are established by the MFC, include an undergraduate degree and a Master of Divinity degree or their equivalent, a career assessment program, a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, an approved internship, sponsorship by a UU congregation, and an interview with the MFC. Before meeting with the committee, most candidates will also have interviewed with a Regional Sub-committee on Candidacy (RSCC); and after December 31st, 2006, all aspirants must first be granted candidacy status by an RSCC before scheduling an interview with the Committee.

Completing all of these requirements takes several years and requires considerable expenditure of financial as well as other resources.

Some basic information about those who came before us in the past year since the last General Assembly:

We interviewed sixty-five candidates.

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Almost half (31) were from historically Unitarian Universalist seminaries (Meadville/Lombard Theological School, Starr King School for the Ministry, Harvard Divinity School), and slightly more than half were from a wide variety of other seminaries; some of these schools have a significant number of UU students while others have very few.

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As has been the case in recent years, more women than men were candidates.

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Once admitted to preliminary fellowship, the minister is then in a probationary period for a minimum of three years, at the end of which time the minister may be admitted to final fellowship. The Committee requires that evaluations from the minister and from appropriate supervisory bodies be completed for each renewal, as well as a professional development plan and a statement that the minister has a mentor. Thirty-five ministers achieved final fellowship during the past year.

Now for some comments on our other work. For several years, conversation has been going on among Unitarian Universalist ministers, the UUA Board and members of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee about the wisdom of continuing to grant fellowship in three categories of ministry: parish ministry, ministry of religious education and community ministry. Reform proposals from the MFC have been studied with the UUA Board and the UU Ministers Association since 2002. Workshops have been conducted at the last several General Assemblies on these proposals, both at Ministry Days and during the GA, and input has been sought through a number of avenues.

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As a result of this work, starting in September 2005, the MFC will grant preliminary fellowship in UU ministry, not in a category of ministry. Three successful annual renewals of preliminary fellowship in at least half time compensated work in any ministry will lead to the granting of Final Fellowship. That Fellowship may or may not include a recognition of specialty. Three renewals, not necessarily successive, in a particular specialty of ministry will lead to "Final Fellowship with a Specialty in...". At the present time we plan to recognize specialties in parish ministry, ministry of religious education and community ministry, which have been the categories of preliminary fellowship in the past. At each renewal, the area in which the minister has been serving will determine the credit toward the specialty.

This plan recognizes specialized expertise and experience, and the increasing complexity of overlapping forms of ministries, while honoring all ministries. It's a much less complex plan than some of those which have been under consideration and study, and we are grateful for the many voices which have been heard throughout the course of this discussion.

Another issue we have held before us is our commitment to support ministerial preparation for doing anti-racist anti-oppression work, and I want to report to you on the work we have done in this area. For the past year we have required a reflection essay from each candidate, explaining how the analysis of anti-racism,

anti-oppression and multiculturalism is reflected in the candidate's ministry. We have worked with recommendations from the UUA's Transformation Committee for Wholeness and Justice about our processes and look forward to continuing this interchange. A subcommittee has been formed to monitor the anti-racism anti-oppression work of the committee. Although not under the auspices of the MFC, a conference for ministers of color was held this spring, coordinated by the Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley, and a major conference for ministers of Color/Latino/Latina is planned for the coming year.

On another issue related to the work of the General Assembly, the Committee has held a portion of each business meeting open to observers. Most of our work is of course confidential but we have used the open meeting to continue work on the structure around preliminary fellowship and the path to final fellowship. Times and places of those meetings are posted on the web site and other appropriate channels.

The work of the six Regional Subcommittees on Candidacy, or RSCCs, has been extremely useful to the MFC. Students are given feedback, encouragement, and an opportunity to try out their presentations and sermons. We find that candidates are better prepared to come before us as a result, and we have given many fewer discouraging decisions than in the days before the RSCC system was in place. The Rev. Kim Wilson, who is the Internship Clearing House Coordinator, provides important support to the congregations and students in the invaluable internship process. The work of the many faculty members and support personnel in seminaries who provide mentoring and advisement as well as academic preparation for those preparing for our ministry is greatly appreciated.

(Selected slides of members)

As we meet in the interview process, daily worship, and lengthy business meetings, we enjoy our work and our colleagues. We could not do our work without the support of the Rev. David Hubner, who serves as Executive Secretary; the Rev. David Pettee, Ministerial Credentialing Director; the Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley, Professional Development Director; Griffith Bell, MFC Administrative Assistant; and Christine May, Ministerial Credentialing Administrator. We are the Rev. Dr. Mark Belletini, Vice Chair; the Rev. Jory Agate; Betty Bobo Seiden; the Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa; Abbey Tennis; the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Owen-Towle; the Rev. Wayne Arnason; Dr. James Brown; the Rev. Dr. Ken Reeves; Susan Stuke; the Rev. Geoff Rimositis; the Rev. Dr. James Zacharias; and Dr. P.D. Wadler. I am Phyllis Daniel, chair of the committee.

A written report from the MFC can be found in the Reports book and questions or comments can be directed electronically to mfc@uaa.org.

Thank you for your attention.