

## Report of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

June 2007

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee is one of the standing committees of the Board of Trustees, established by the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The fourteen members include twelve persons appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees, including two members who are themselves Trustees, and two persons appointed by the UU Ministers Association. Eight members are clergy and six are lay members. Two recently fellowshipped ministers are invited to attend the meetings as liaisons to candidates; their reports can be found on the web site, [www.uua.org/programs/ministry/mfc](http://www.uua.org/programs/ministry/mfc).

Our primary charge is the jurisdiction of ministerial fellowship, beginning with the credentialing of candidates for Unitarian Universalist ministry. The basic requirements for fellowship, which are established by the MFC, include 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. Candidates will also have interviewed with a Regional Sub-committee on Candidacy (RSCC). All aspirants must first be granted candidacy status by an RSCC before an interview with the Committee can be scheduled.

The Committee also grants renewals toward final fellowship, considers complaints and other possible disciplinary matters, and is engaged in constant review of its own processes and procedures. An up-to-date version of the rules and policies can be found at [www.uua.org/programs/ministry/mfc](http://www.uua.org/programs/ministry/mfc). Portions of each business meeting are open to observers, and the agenda and times are posted on the web site in advance.

The business of the Committee this past year has focused on reviewing our rules and policies. Over the years, the rules and policies have been revised so many times with cutting and pasting here and there that they are in parts difficult to understand, unorganized and not in line with our current practices. In addition, the Committee has desired more flexibility and accountability in the disciplinary process. To that end, the Committee has decided to make some radical changes to our rules and policies. A task force has been meeting this year and will bring suggested rule and policy changes for feedback at this year's General Assembly. Some of the major areas of changes being proposed are how the committee holds hearings to remove a minister from fellowship, how we discipline ministers for whom there is concern of misconduct, and updating rules to reflect our current practice of not fellowshipping based on category of ministry. Many minor changes that reflect current practices are also being proposed.

The Committee continued to affirm its commitment to promoting an anti-racist, anti-oppressive ministry and have devoted time at each of our meetings to address this work. Other focus discussions this year have included meeting with members of the Board of Review and the Consultation on Ministry to and with Youth. Our annual meeting with the members of the Regional Subcommittee on

Candidacy have had us reviewing the issue of Transgender individuals and the issue of Classism. We have been working with the Religious Education Credentialing Committee to develop a new policy on background checks for all candidates seeking a credential.

The MFC Executive Committee met with a number of ministers regarding their professional behavior. One minister was removed from fellowship for conduct unbecoming a minister. Several other ministers are continuing to be monitored and are in conversation with the MFC with varying requirements regarding their conduct.

Sixty-three candidates were interviewed in the past year, at three different sites (Boston, Berkeley, and Chicago). Of those, 53 were granted preliminary fellowship with or without minor contingencies, 7 were seen as making promising progress towards ministry, but we would like to see them again, and 3 were discouraged from continuing their pursuit of ministry. Twenty-six were from one of the two Unitarian Universalist seminaries (Meadville/Lombard Theological School or Starr King School for the Ministry). The number of women exceeded male candidates (49 compared with 14). During the course of the year, 50 ministers completed their first renewals; 45 completed second renewals; and 60 were granted Final Fellowship.

In addition, the Committee moved 20 ministers in Preliminary Fellowship from Full Fellowship to Associate Fellowship. These ministers are not currently working in ministry and not engaged in the process of renewal towards Final Fellowship. They may be moved back into Full Fellowship on petition to the Committee.

Our current Committee members include Rev. Dr. Mark Belletini (Vice Chair); Ms. Abbey Tennis (Executive Committee and convener of the Process Working Group); Dr. P.D. Wadler (Executive Committee); Rev. Emily Gage (convener of the Settlement Working Group and UUMA Rep); Rev. Dr. James Zacharias, the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Owen-Towle; Dr. James Brown; Rev. Geoff Rimositis (convener of the Candidacy Working Group); Ms. Betty Bobo Seiden, Rev. Dr. Patrick O'Neill (UUMA Rep), Ms Justice Waidner, and our Board of Trustee Representatives, Ms. Jacquelyn Shanti and Rev. Linda Olson Peebles. Rev. Beth Miller serves as Executive Secretary and we are ably supported by staff members the Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley, the Rev. David Pettee, and Christine May and MFC assistant Leslie Staples. In June, Rev. Linda Olson Peebles will be going off the committee and we will bid a farewell to our MFC assistant, Leslie Staples, who is moving from the Boston area.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Jory Agate