

## **Ministerial Fellowship Committee Annual Report to the General Assembly**

Wayne Arnason, Chair

May 13, 2010

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) is a by-law defined committee of the UUA Board of Trustees charged with broad responsibilities for credentialing Unitarian Universalist ministers for service in our association of congregations and for insuring the ethical integrity of our credentialed ministry. The committee meets three times each year to interview candidates for preliminary fellowship, to review renewals of preliminary fellowship, to grant final fellowship, and to consider circumstances and charges which could lead to a change in the fellowship status of a minister. 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 committee has very much enjoyed working with the Rev. Beth Miller, who has served as our Executive Secretary during her years as Director of the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group at the UUA. We all wish her the best as she leaves the UUA and thank her for her commitment and grace in performing this role with us.

During a time when many of the functions and programs of the UU have been undergoing review and evaluation, the MFC has been no exception. Anticipating and responsive to the December 2008 “Summit Meeting “ on Ministry, we requested the UUA Board to undertake an evaluation of credentialing and the MFC’s role in it. The UUA Administration has also undertaken such a review. We were pleased to meet with the Board’s project manager for this review, Tamara Payne-Alex, and have provided requested information and opinions as we move into the early stages of this process. In response to administration requests to conserve funds, we have scheduled only one meeting of three outside of Boston this past year and next. The December 2009 meeting was in San Francisco and the December 2010 meeting will be in Chicago. The committee may be asked to schedule meetings only in Boston to save money in the future.

The committee’s membership changes each year as terms end and lives change. Two new UUA Trustees joined us: Rev. Jose Ballester and David Friedman. We said goodbye to our two longest-serving members of the committee : Rev. Carolyn Owen-Towle and Abbey Tennis completed their service in December 09. In addition, the Rev. Greg Stewart chose to resign before his term ended. Our MFC has been blessed by their service.

During the year three new members were appointed – two clergy and one lay member. The new clergy members are Rev. Karen Stoyanoff (Costa Mesa, CA) and Rev. Marge Corletti (Arlington, VA.) The new lay member is Cary McDonald (Columbus, OH.)

The most significant change in policies that the MFC approved this year was to add a new competency that all our candidates will need to demonstrate after December 2010: a competency on Sexual Health. We appreciate the leadership of our member Rev. Debra Haffner, whose community ministry has focused on this field, for guiding us in the crafting of this competency.

The Committee continued to affirm its commitment to promoting an anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural ministry. We devote time at each of our meetings and our orientations for new members to addressing this work, and now schedule an extra continuing education day for ourselves as a routine practice.

The MFC Executive Committee met with a number of ministers regarding their professional behavior and fellowship status. Decisions affecting a minister's fellowship status are reported in the UU World after they are made. Several ministers are continuing to be monitored and are in conversation with the MFC with varying requirements regarding their conduct.

Sixty-one candidates were interviewed in the past year, at two different sites (Boston and San Francisco). Of those, forty-eight were granted preliminary fellowship with or without minor contingencies, ten were seen as making promising progress towards ministry, but we would like to see them again, and three were discouraged from continuing their pursuit of ministry. Twenty-five 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 (thirty-nine women compared with twenty-two men). During the course of the year, fifty-two ministers completed their first renewals; forty-four completed second renewals; and forty-eight were granted Final Fellowship.

In addition, the Committee moved twelve ministers in Preliminary Fellowship to Inactive Status. 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 Preliminary Fellowship on petition to the Committee.

I was honored to be asked to chair the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and in concluding this annual report I want to pledge to you my best efforts as we go forward together.