

Dear Candidates for Ministry,

If you're already concerned about the ministerial credentialing process, you might be wondering who the liaisons to candidates are and whether their reports are trustworthy. Before becoming a liaison, I had my own suspicions figuring: (1) the MFC would only choose ministers to be liaisons who'd had good experiences with the MFC, (2) liaisons would be reluctant to be critical of the MFC because they were still subject to its review throughout preliminary fellowship; and (3) only some of the liaison reports make it to the UUA website. Therefore, as a frequent critic of UU ministerial credentialing process, I was surprised and pleased to be asked to be a liaison.

My blog, "Calling Ministers," <http://callingministers.blogspot.com/>, is about ministerial interviewing and examining and contains a lot of useful information and guidance. Please check it out and post comments or write to me at Rev.EarlK@gmail.com.

I will not repeat here what's already on the blog, but will focus on what I learned and/or what became clearer through being a liaison.

- The members of the Committee care deeply about UU ministry and want you to succeed. I saw and shared the tremendous amount of work that goes into their process, their joy in welcoming candidates to fellowship, and their sorrow when they couldn't. While they want you to succeed, that desire will not overcome their obligation to the UUA and its member congregations when they believe you are not ready.
- Though I had been told that the MFC sees an accumulation of information not available to others, I didn't realize the full impact until I was reviewing packets myself. If the Center for Ministry makes a recommendation/observation, which is later reinforced by your CPE and internship supervisor, you better be able to speak to what you've done to address it.
- Be prepared to stand in your UU identity. Know UU history, your UU history, your UU theology, and your UU call to ministry. You're not going on Jeopardy: you will not "lose" because you've not memorized every factoid, but you must have some facts at your disposal and a passion for and a philosophy of UU ministry.
- The Committee wants to "see a minister," that's very, very hard to quantify or even describe, and you're going to have to do your best to figure out what that means. Because it is so hard to quantify share your packet with several people you trust, ask them to help you imagine what the MFC will ask, and have a mock interview if you can arrange it.

Preparing for the MFC interview can be quite stressful. However, there are many helping hands and hearts available. Reach for them.

In faith,

Rev. Earl W. Koteen