

REPORT TO THE BOARD FROM THE MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

December 3, 2012

Rev. Wayne Arnason, Chair

It's a pleasure to send a report to the Board mid-way through the 12-13 year, after our second meeting of the year. My annual report included in the documents distributed at General Assembly caught you up through May 2012, and this is a good time to further update you.

In September 2012 we had our third meeting using an extra panel. The flexibility you gave to us to gather a third panel when necessary has had two very positive results. The first is that we achieved our goal of limiting wait time for MFC appointments to no more than eighteen months. A candidate in their second year of seminary should be able to make an appointment with an RSCC during that year, (we hope no later) and be able to make an MFC appointment in their internship year or their final year of seminary, whichever they prefer. The second positive outcome is that we have an experienced "bench" of people who can be substitutes when we need them or who may want to apply for appointed positions when they are available.

The December meeting of the MFC was held with two panels comprised of our appointed fourteen members (minus one who had a last-minute family health emergency and could not attend.) There was some relief experienced about being able to return to the intimacy of fourteen members, especially in our business discussions. We do not foresee a need to have three panels during the 13-14 year.

At our September 2012 meeting we voted to remove the ability of the Regional Subcommittees to deny candidacy. Instead they can only tell an unsuccessful aspirant that they will need to interview again, for as long as the candidate wishes to pursue candidacy. Our original proposal on this matter circulated last year was modified at the September meeting in response to feedback. We asked our RSCC's to specify whether an aspirant whose candidacy was postponed is recommended for UUMA membership. This allows aspirants who would benefit from participation in their UUMA chapter to take advantage of the informal collegial support and mentorship that could help with formation towards candidate status. Aspirants whose candidacy is postponed who are not recommended for UUMA membership would likely be candidates whose fitness for our ministry was in considerable doubt.

The fall meetings of the two RSCC's were held under this new system. The members of the panels reported that they felt better about their work in a system where their authority is defined in this new way. There has been no feedback from aspirants one way or another. We are seeing aspirants making their RSCC appointments earlier, however.

After the December meeting, at the same time as I wrote you this report, I issued a press release to the UU World on-line as follows:

"The Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) unanimously voted at its December 2012 public business meeting to begin process for review of the competencies required of candidates seeking fellowship as Unitarian Universalist ministers.

This initiative by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee follows several years of study by the Board of Trustees and the UUA Administration of "excellence in ministry". The MFC sees the continuity

between the basic competence they require of candidates entering ministry, and the excellence that we hope all UU ministers can achieve in the course of their careers.

The first stage of the review is a research and consultation phase. The MFC will be seeking the advice of the many stakeholders in this conversation about ministerial competencies: The UUA Board (to whom the MFC is accountable), the Administration, the professional ministry organizations, the seminaries, candidates, and various UU identity and interest groups. The Chair of the MFC, Rev. Wayne Arnason, says that the committee will also welcome reflections from individual members of congregations about the areas of competency that are important to them and how they would define and describe them.”

We have been cooperating with the Administration and the UUMA on a “Ministerial Assessment Framework”. We reviewed the pre-release version of this work and found it to be a helpful tool as we review our competencies and seek to make them as relevant as possible for the needs of our congregations in the years ahead.

We will keep you updated on our progress. There is no time table right now for this project. We will confirm the stakeholder conversations we want to have at our April meeting, and the UUA Board is of course the stakeholder to whom we are directly accountable. So, we would welcome your thoughts about the best way and time and place to have a conversation with you about the competencies for ministry that we should require in our candidates, sometime in the next twelve months. I can be at your disposal to meet with you face to face or help design another method of communication with you that works for you and for us.

Thanks as always for your concern for the future of our ministry, and for the trust you place in those of us who serve on the MFC. It’s an honor and a pleasure to do this work.