

Report of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

June, 2005

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.

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 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. Most candidates will also have interviewed with a Regional Sub-committee on Candidacy (RSCC); after December 31st, 2006 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. A major revision of the rules and policies was carried out over the past year; the up-to-date revisions can be found at www.uua.org/programs/ministry/mfc. During this past year, candidates were asked to write a short reflection paper "explaining how your analysis of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism is reflected in your ministry." Portions of each business meeting were open to observers, with the agenda and times posted on the web site in advance.

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. The proposals for change seek to honor all ministries, recognize specialized expertise and experience, acknowledge the increasing complexity of our overlapping forms of ministries, and create a just system for granting fellowship for all ministers. Two changes from among the proposals studied will be implemented this fall.

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. 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.

Sixty-five candidates were interviewed in the past year, at three different sites (Boston, Berkeley, and Chicago). Almost half (31) were from historically Unitarian Universalist seminaries (Meadville/Lombard Theological School, Starr King School for the Ministry, Harvard Divinity School). The number of women exceeded male candidates (42 compared with 23). This may be the last time we report categories of preliminary fellowship; most candidates opted for parish ministry (51), with 13 identifying community ministry and one choosing religious education. During the course of the year, sixty-one ministers completed their first renewals; fifty completed second renewals; and thirty-five were granted Final Fellowship.

Committee members include the Rev. Dr. Mark Belletini (Vice Chair); the Rev. Jory Agate (Executive Committee); Betty Bobo Seiden (Executive Committee); the Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa (convenor of the Settlement Working Group, UUMA liaison); Ms. Abbey Tennis (convenor of the Candidacy Working Group); the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Owen-Towle (convenor of the Process Working Group); the Rev. Wayne Arnason (Board of Trustees liaison); Dr. James Brown; the Rev. Dr. Ken Reeves (UUMA liaison); Ms. Susan Stukekey (Board of Trustees liaison); the Rev. Geoff Rimositis; the Rev. Dr. James Zacharias; Dr. P. D. Wadler. The Rev. David Hubner serves as Executive Secretary and we are ably supported by staff members the Rev. Dr. Michelle Bentley, the Rev. David Pettee, Griffith Bell and Christine May.

Respectfully submitted

Phyllis Daniel

Chair