

### CHAPTER 5

# Candidacy Mentoring

For more information contact GBHEM's director of Candidacy, Mentoring, and Conference Relations, [candidacy@gbhem.org](mailto:candidacy@gbhem.org) or 615-340-7374.

*Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth. . . . Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry. . . . Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.* ¶349

*There are two categories of mentor: candidacy mentor and clergy mentor. Each has distinct functions and responsibilities. Candidacy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide counsel and guidance related to the candidacy process. Candidates will be assigned to a candidacy mentoring group wherever possible, or to a candidacy mentor by the district committee on ordained ministry in consultation with the vocational discernment coordinator (wherever named) and the district superintendent.* ¶ 349.1a

Clergy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide ongoing oversight and counsel with local pastors and with provisional members pursuing ordained ministry (¶ 349.1b).

See more about clergy mentoring in Chapter 17 of the BOM Handbook.

## Group Candidacy Mentoring

The candidacy mentoring process formerly occurred in a one-on-one relationship between candidates and mentors. As the Study of Ministry Commission looked for ways to streamline the candidacy process, one of the recurring themes was the frustration of candidates and annual conferences alike in finding qualified and effective mentors to guide candidates through discernment and certification. The 2012 General Conference responded to recommendations from the Study of Ministry Commission by encouraging annual conferences to offer candidacy mentoring in a group setting whenever possible.

### Group Candidacy Mentoring allows for:

- Recruiting only those who are gifted in mentoring.
- Fewer mentors.
- Building intentional time into group meetings to focus on discernment.
- Building community early in the process among candidates and mentors.
- Smoother and more consistent administration of the Online Candidacy Application System (OCAS) and other certification requirements (i.e. psychological assessment, coordinating interviews among the dCOMs, ensuring that candidates don't miss yearly deadlines for certification and renewal, etc.).

## The Vocational Discernment Coordinator

The Study of Ministry Commission also recommended the implementation of a new BOM office called the vocational discernment coordinator. The BOM names this person to “coordinate the candidacy mentoring process” (§ 635.1c). Responsibilities include working with the BOM, dCOMs, and DS to coordinate, implement, and strengthen the candidacy process throughout the annual conference. This includes recruiting, training, and assigning mentors to new candidates.

### The Vocational Discernment Coordinator allows for:

- The BOM to be involved in and coordinate candidacy mentoring among all districts in the annual conference.
- Naming one contact person who makes the candidacy mentoring process effective, and who can answer questions about the process.
- Building connections among dCOMs, BOMs, and district superintendents that ensure consistent sharing of information while making it more likely that candidates will receive helpful information when needed.

While some of the candidacy process focuses more on application for ministry (steps such as background checks, meeting with the dCOM, and completing written requirements), much of candidacy is meant to focus on vocational discernment as the candidate explores how to respond to God’s call in The United Methodist Church.

## Selection and Assignment of Candidacy Mentors

Mentors shall be recommended by the cabinet, and selected, trained, and held accountable by the BOM (§ 349.1).

- The candidacy registrar, DS, and vocational discernment coordinator review the need for candidacy mentors in each district.
- The DS, in consultation with the dCOM and district leadership, suggests clergy to be trained as candidacy mentors.
- The candidacy registrar and vocational discernment coordinator administers the training for candidacy mentors, and confirms those who have been trained.
- The DS assigns a candidacy mentor after receiving and approving a new candidate’s request for admission into the candidacy process (§ 310.1b).

### Criteria for Effective Candidacy Mentors

Whether the annual conference chooses to implement group mentoring or assign candidates and mentors to one-on-one relationships, criteria and standards common among effective mentors should be maintained.

It is important for candidacy mentors to represent a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and to include deacons, elders, and local pastors. Different family life styles, ages, genders, and ethnic groups should also be represented. This variety provides opportunities for candidates to be in contact with church leaders who may represent the community’s wider diversity, while also giving candidates access to mentors with whom they can relate to more closely.

Effective mentors have a mature faith, model effective ministry, and possess the skills needed to help individuals discern their call in ministry (§349.2). As mentors are selected and trained, the following standards are helpful in deciding who should be invited to serve as a mentor.

- Spiritual maturity demonstrated through a deep and continuing commitment to God and to growing in grace and love.
- Calling and commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ as lived through the church’s ministry and the person’s appreciation of the varieties of lay, licensed, and ordained ministry.
- Vocational development that shows the person has learned to cope constructively and to grow through opportunities and challenges in life and ministry.

- Demonstrates personal qualities that enable the mentor to encourage others to be comfortable and discuss in depth the many facets of vocational and personal development.
- Openness and flexibility in adapting candidacy studies to candidates' needs when possible.
- Respected by colleagues who value their effectiveness in the ministry.
- Family relationships and personal lives that are congruent with the standards expected of Christians.

## Training Mentors to Work With Candidates

All mentors need to be trained once every four years (even if they have previously participated in a training program). This allows all mentors to know the most recent candidacy requirements and the annual conference's current mentoring and interviewing structure and procedures. Experienced mentors are invaluable resources for training new mentors.

Continuing education credits may be awarded for participation in these training events. Ten contact hours of worship or educational time is equal to one (1) CEU.

While training can last anywhere from three or four hours to an overnight retreat, training sessions should include:

- Theological grounding for mentoring and learning from one another.
- Identifying the differences among supervision, evaluation, and mentoring, and the role each of these play in candidate development and assessment.
- Discussion and clarification of the meaning of confidentiality in the relationship between the mentor, candidate, and candidacy colleagues within a mentoring group.
- Education about the current candidacy, licensing, and ordination process, the Online Candidacy Application System, the process for psychological assessment and the mentor's responsibilities in these tasks.
- Developing familiarity of the basic candidacy materials including *The Christian as Minister*, *Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process*, and *Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy*, and others as required by the annual conference.
- Information about resources, contact persons, and procedures relevant to the candidacy process – including any BOM or dCOM deadlines related to the application process and interviews.

## Responsibilities of the Candidacy Mentor

- Meet with the candidate to establish covenant and schedule for meetings.
- Pray for the candidate.
- Work with candidate through *Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy*.
- Establish and maintain negotiated confidentiality between candidate and mentor.
- Provide guidance for the psychological assessment process.
- Apply online for packet (Form 112) or know the system that your conference uses.
  - Proctor assessments unless the annual conference provides a proctor.
  - Make sure all forms in the assessment packets are completed before returning to the GBHEM Candidacy Office.
- Assist candidate with preparation for S/P-PRC and charge conference meetings.
- Write annual mentor reports to dCOM.
- Meet with the dCOM and candidate at the certification approval meeting.
  - Share mentor report.
  - Record vote and recommendation of dCOM online via Form 113.
- Inform BOM Candidacy Registrar of any change of status of candidate.
- Maintain a Candidacy Mentor File:
  - Copy of Form 101

- Copy of psychological assessment application form
- Biographical information
- Copy of Form 113
- Copy of mentor reports

## Leadership for Training Events

In most instances, the candidacy registrar and vocational discernment coordinator organize and lead mentor training. Additional leadership may include dCOM or BOM members, the DS, or the BOM staff person for the annual conference. On occasion, GBHEM staff may be available to provide leadership.

## Establishing an Accountability Structure

The candidacy registrar and vocational discernment coordinator are responsible for the continuing quality of the candidacy process and for overseeing the work of the candidacy mentors. Most mentors will work well with candidates. However, a few may lose interest or may not have the skills needed for the work. If this is the case, then the registrar or vocational discernment coordinator can find a replacement.

The central concerns are to maintain a high standard of guidance and mentoring for candidates so that they will have every opportunity to explore their vocational options, and to attract the best possible future candidates for licensing and ordination.

The importance of mentoring candidates in the development of future church leaders cannot be overstated. The resources that mentors and the annual conference invest in the mentoring program have the potential to effect church leaders throughout their ministry.

## Resources

Beginning Candidacy – [www.gbhem.org/candidacy](http://www.gbhem.org/candidacy).

*Beyond the Burning Bush: Hearing and Answering God's Call* (ISBN# 9780938162810).

BOM Training Resources Web page – [www.gbhem.org/bomtraining](http://www.gbhem.org/bomtraining).

*Fulfilling God's Call: Guidelines for Candidacy*. The annual conference Candidacy Registrar may order the guidebook from GBHEM at [candidacy@gbhem.org](mailto:candidacy@gbhem.org).

### [Glossary of Candidacy Terms](#)

The Ministry of [Deacons](#) (Item# X536622), [Elders](#) (Item# X536647), [Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors](#) (Item# X536658), and [Local Pastors](#) (Item# X536610) brochures.

### [Online Candidacy Application System User's Manual](#)

[Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church DVD](#) (Item# X534642).

[Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church](#) – web clips.

Understanding God's Call: A Ministry Inquiry Process ([English](#), ISBN# 9780938162827 or [Spanish](#), ISBN# 9780938162704).

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