

## Chapter 3 | Recruitment and Enlistment

For more information, contact GBHEM's Director of Young Adult Ministry Discernment and Enlistment at [explore@gbhem.org](mailto:explore@gbhem.org) or 615-340-7431.

*"[T]he Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry shall" ... "assume the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ministerial leadership for our churches and other ministry settings by working in consultation with the Cabinet and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) to study and interpret the ordained, licensed, certified and assigned ministerial leadership needs and resources of the Annual Conference, with due regard to the inclusive nature of the Church. It shall, with the assistance of the local church committee on pastor-parish relations, conference agencies and every ordained, licensed, certified and assigned leader of the conference, enlist women and men of all races and ethnic origins for ministry as a vocation and guide those persons in the process of education, training and discernment of the most appropriate path for their ministry, recommending colleges and schools of theology listed by the University Senate, licensing school and other approved educational opportunities. Persons recruited should have an understanding of and appreciation for persons of different racial and ethnic heritages." (§635.2a)*

*"To renew a culture of call in the church by giving strategic leadership to Annual Conferences, districts, congregations, collegiate ministries, camps and other appropriate ministries, especially among youth and young adults." (§635.2b)*

### Recruitment Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the dCOMs and BOMs is to identify and enlist a new generation of Christian leaders – young men and women just beginning their vocational discernment, as well as those leaving other careers to answer God's call to vocational ministry.

This is best fulfilled through a team effort led by the BOM, working in partnership with the bishop and Cabinet, the dCOM, the Vocational Discernment Coordinator and all those concerned with church, youth and young adult ministry.

### Developing a Plan for Recruitment and Enlistment

#### CHALLENGES TO RECRUITMENT

- We live in a time of rapid change. Population and church demographics are shifting; church members and leaders are aging; young people do not depend on the church to meet their spiritual needs. The church is challenged to respond to these changes in relevant and transformational ways with gifted, well-trained and effective leaders.
- As the United States population continues to change, the need to develop diverse leaders for a diverse church cannot be overstated. Additionally, young adults continue to be underrepresented among UM clergy in the United States. In 2015, research from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership documented that there were 1,076 (or 6.73 percent) deacons and elders under age 35 in the United States, which is down from 15.05 percent in 1985. We must continue to focus attention and work on inviting, enlisting and supporting young adults as they explore God's call in their lives. (See more on page 6 in this chapter.)

**VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT COORDINATOR** – This position coordinates the candidacy mentoring process and works within the BOM and Annual Conference to encourage and provide resources for those discerning a call to ministry. (See BOM Handbook, Chapter 6.)

**QUESTIONS THAT MAY HELP THE BOM DEVELOP A VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT PLAN**

- When was the conference's last study regarding ministerial leadership needs?
- What is the conference area's latest census data regarding racial/ethnic groups?
- How many young adults from a conference are attending colleges, universities, theological schools or seminaries? Who among those may be exploring a call to ordained ministry?
- Does the BOM have the contact information for UM collegiate ministers and college/university chaplains in order to connect students to collegiate ministry units and identify those who may be considering a call to vocational ministry?
- Is there follow-up and support for those who have attended national, regional or conference Exploration events?
- How do the bishop and Cabinet members engage youth and young adults in the practice of vocational ministry? How do the BOM and dCOMs support that process?
- Is there data from the last five years to compare retirement, discontinuations, church closings and church mergers with new licensing and ordination?
- Has the conference identified areas for new church starts, as well as leaders to train in starting new congregations?
- What is the ratio of the supply and demand for pastors in the local church and for persons in specialized ministries?
- How many cross-racial appointments are available within the conference? What areas or situations exist in which one might be appropriate? Which clergy are most likely to be successful in serving these appointments?
- What new ministries are being developed to respond to the needs of new immigrants in the conference?
- Which churches or collegiate ministries are more successful in identifying and nurturing persons into vocational ministry? What factors led to that influence?
- What are the conference's short-term and long-term plans to identify and nurture youth and young adults for leadership?
- Has the conference BOM identified the qualities and competencies important for ordained and specialized ministries?

**QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES THAT MAY HELP THE BOM DEVELOP A VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT PLAN**

- What major factors influenced in their call?
- What was positive or negative about the candidacy and provisional process?
- How can the BOM improve its identification and enlistment of those who are exploring ordained ministry?

**SUGGESTED COMPONENTS OF AN ENLISTMENT PLAN**

- Host an annual consultation or conference
  - Include the Vocational Discernment Coordinator, the Connectional Ministries Office, collegiate ministries and any involved in youth and young adult ministries.
  - Communicate the supply and demand issues of ordained ministry, as well as other specialized ministries and enlistment needs.
  - Alert participants to their role as influencers, individually and collectively.
  - Provide resources for participants to use as they work with youth or young adults in vocational discernment.
- Create a vocational discernment process that invites people to consider God's call in many different ways (camp, youth ministries, mission trips, collegiate ministries, etc.).
- Provide retreats and workshops, designed in consultation with the Orders of Deacons and Elders, that emphasize the significance of leadership as role models and mentors for those discerning God's call into ordained and specialized ministry.

- Host events at conference and district levels for people at different life stages or educational levels, i.e., high school, college-age, second career, etc.
- Share contact information with the dCOM, BOM, cabinet and bishop for those considering the candidacy process.
- Maintain a database of names, addresses, school classification and economic need, if possible, of each potential candidate. In this way, a unified plan can be developed for utilizing the support and financial resources of the BOM, conference and Ministerial Education Fund (MEF).
- Designate a BOM Vocational Discernment Coordinator to oversee the candidacy process so it is inviting and accessible to new candidates.
- Train gifted mentors who will guide new candidates in the mentoring program.
- Develop conference-wide initiatives to enhance candidates' ministerial formation, both before and after candidacy studies are pursued. Events such as retreats for potential candidates and mission experiences for declared candidates may all contribute to their growth and spiritual depth.
- Sponsor an Orientation to Ministry event for ministry candidates to build collegiality and understanding among the varieties of set-apart ministries (deacons, elders, local pastors) (§312).
- Promote any other discernment-related events and experiences offered by GBHEM.

#### IDENTIFICATION AND ENLISTMENT HAS TO BE COORDINATION

Identification and enlistment has to be coordinated and shared among local church, district and conference leaders. The future of ministry in the UMC depends on the quality of today's candidates for licensed and ordained ministry.

## Enlistment of Young People

Today's young adults approach the world differently than young adults did 25, 10, or even five years ago. Young adult leadership development is integral in any future planning for conferences and BOMs. The sharp decline in the numbers of young adult clergy has focused the church's priority on inviting, training and retaining young adult clergy.

## Young Clergy Initiative

- At the 2016 General Conference, the Young Clergy Initiative (YCI) was funded for a second quadrennium and “provide[s] support to increase the number of young clergy among the jurisdictional conferences. This begins a three-quadrrennium effort to enable The United Methodist Church to focus efforts on encouraging young adults who wish to respond to the call to ordained ministry to receive a strong theological education in the United Methodist tradition in preparation for ordination. This initiative is in addition to the funds that the church already has budgeted for discernment, recruitment, nurturing, education and support of young clergy leaders.” – excerpt from YCI legislation, 2012 General Conference.

- In response to the YCI, a grant program was developed to encourage opportunities that leverage for denominational change on systemic and cultural levels through various conversations, events, experiments, resources, research and training. GBHEM sought projects that help:
  - Prepare young people to hear God's call to ordained ministry
  - Assist young people in responding to God's call to ordained ministry
  - Develop young people in spiritual and theological formation
  - Nurture young clergy for lifelong transformational ministry
- 78 projects from across the jurisdictions were funded in the 2013-2016 quadrennium. A majority of the projects fell into these categories:
  - Call exploration events
  - Educational experiences
  - Internships
  - Missional experiences
  - Small group experiences
- A more complete breakdown of awards, progress of current YCI projects and plans for future project funding can be found online at [www.explorecalling.org/yci](http://www.explorecalling.org/yci).

## GBHEM-sponsored Events, Programs and Networks that Focus on the Recruitment and Development of Young Adult Clergy

- ***CALLED: One Word, Many Ways*** – The congregational vitality of The United Methodist Church begins in the local church, where faith is formed and nurtured in people of all ages, especially the young. Equipping congregations to speak the language of call and to move intentionally toward discovering and nurturing their vocational goals will contribute to the health and vitality of their own faith, community and of the denomination. God calls everyone into ministry, but ministry means more than ordination. CALLED: One Word, Many Ways is a free resource that helps local congregations explore how to listen for God's voice, discern what they have heard and respond faithfully. Resources in the CALLED package include a Bible study, children and youth curriculum, liturgical helps, video call stories and more ([www.explorecalling.org/called](http://www.explorecalling.org/called)).
- ***Exploration*** – A three-day event for young adults age 18-26 to listen, discern and respond to God's call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church. Exploration creates sacred space for young adults to be in meaningful fellowship, passionate worship, theological reflection and practical workshops as they discern whether God's call on their life is to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church and what faithful steps they can take next on their journey ([www.explorecalling.org/exploration](http://www.explorecalling.org/exploration)).
- ***The Journey Toward Ordained Ministry*** – A leadership development experience for racial/ethnic college and/or seminary students who are interested in ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church. This mentoring and scholarship program provides a \$5,000 scholarship per academic year with continued mentoring through seminary and ordination. Scholars attend an annual three-day retreat. Applications for JTOM are received through the Office of Loans and Scholarships during their regular open enrollment season (typically January-March) ([www.explorecalling.org/jtom](http://www.explorecalling.org/jtom) and [www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships](http://www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships)).

- **NEXT** – A biennial national United Methodist event to challenge college students to imagine and plan the next faithful steps for their vocations, their communities, the church and the world. The Imagine What's NEXT community is a unique space created out of The United Methodist Student Movement. NEXT is about encouraging and supporting those who dream of making a difference in the world right now for Christ. As we grow and connect across the globe, NEXT serves as a pool of partners, perspectives and resources to help in faith and leadership development. Most importantly, doing good work is not a chore; it's who we are as United Methodists. It is a way of life. ([www.nextumc.org](http://www.nextumc.org))
- **The Vocational Discernment Coordinator Conference** – An event for Annual Conference leaders involved in the recruitment of young clergy to gather together and engage around the status of young clergy and issues related to young clergy recruitment, and to learn about successful strategies. This event focuses on assisting Annual Conferences to build and implement a plan for nurturing youth and young adults as they consider God's call to ordained ministry ([www.explorecalling.org/vdc](http://www.explorecalling.org/vdc)).

## Enlistment of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

- Representatives of many different racial/ethnic groups should be members of the BOM and the committee on enlistment.
- BOMs may allocate special funds from the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) for financial support of racial/ethnic candidates.
- The Journey Toward Ordained Ministry program is specifically for racial/ethnic candidates.
- Enlistment for those who are immigrating into the United States
  - “We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life .... We assert the obligation of society and groups within the society to implement compensatory programs that redress long-standing, systemic social deprivation of racial and ethnic people .... We support affirmative action as one method of addressing the inequalities and discriminatory practices within our church and society.” (Social Principles, ¶162.A)
  - “We recognize that no nation or culture is absolutely just and right in its treatment of its own people, nor is any nation totally without regard for the welfare of its citizens .... While recognizing valid differences in culture and political philosophy, we stand for justice and peace in every nation.” (Social Principles, ¶165.A)
  - Questions to consider in order to support those who are immigrating and wish to serve in the United States
    - What training is provided for BOM members related to immigration issues and cultural diversity?
    - How prepared is the BOM to assist clergy or candidates who are immigrating?
    - How familiar is the BOM with current immigration law?
    - What resources are available to help the board verify the immigration status of clergy or candidates?
    - What are the established guidelines for English language proficiency in the Annual Conference? What structures are in place to assist those learning English as a second language?
    - What are the policies for providing financial assistance for clergy or candidates who need to improve language proficiency?
    - How regularly do the BOM, the cabinet and the committees on pastor/staff relations consult about the needs of clergy or candidates with immigration status?
    - What orientation program is available for clergy or candidates recently immigrating to the United States?
    - Are all clergy receiving adequate salary, health and pension benefits?

## Enlistment of Persons with Handicapping Conditions

- “Disabilities are not to be construed as unfavorable health factors when a person with disability is capable of meeting the professional standards and is able to render effective service as a provisional member and commissioned minister.” (§324.8)
- The *Book of Discipline* requires that candidates are considered in terms of their ability to serve, not their physical capabilities. In fact, people with what are sometimes seen as limiting conditions may have insights and strengths that able-bodied people may lack.
- Communication between the board and candidate can help to ensure that the board fully understands the candidate’s gifts and potential for ministry. In making decisions about a candidate’s potential for ministry, the BOM should remember that not all ministry follows traditional roles.
- Clergy with handicap conditions have reflected, “As with other persons to be ordained, we expect that our calling, gifts and graces need to be tested by the community. We need to be honest and modest in identifying our shortcomings. Still, we feel sure of our call while sensing that the church may not accept us.” (Ellis Leif Larsen, *A Profile of Contemporary Seminarians Revisited, Theological Education*, Volume XXXI, supplement, 1995, The Association of Theological Schools, Pittsburgh, Penn. Pp. 17-18).
- For an extensive discussion of health, see Chapter 7, “Yes, No, Maybe: Health and Wholeness,” in *The Candidacy Guidebook: Answering the Call*.