

Chapter 4 | Candidacy Mentoring

For more information, contact GBHEM's Executive Director of Candidacy and Conference Relations at 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.” (§348.2)

“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.” (§348.1a)

(For Clergy Mentoring, see Chapter 15)

Vocational Discernment Coordinator

- Named by the BOM
- May be part of conference staff person's work or may be assigned to a BOM member
- Coordinates the candidacy mentoring process (§635.1c)
- Works with the BOM, dCOMs, and DS to coordinate, implement and strengthen the candidacy process throughout the Annual Conference, including recruiting, training and assigning mentors to new candidates
- Importance of vocational discernment
 - 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.
 - Allows the BOM to be involved in the candidacy mentoring process and coordinate mentoring among all districts in the Annual Conference
- This role allows for a central contact person who is able to answer questions; build connections among dCOMs, BOMs and District Superintendents, and ensure information is consistent, helpful and timely.

Candidacy Mentors

SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT (§348.1)

- The Candidacy Registrar, District Superintendent, 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 administer the training for Candidacy Mentors and confirm 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

- It is important for Candidacy Mentors to represent a variety of backgrounds and experiences and to include deacons, elders and local pastors. Different family lifestyles, 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 (§348.2). As mentors are selected and trained, the following standards are helpful in deciding who should be invited to serve as a mentor. Mentors are clergy who:
 - Are spiritually mature and demonstrate a deep and continuing commitment to God and to growing in grace and love
 - Demonstrate a strong understanding of call and commitment to Christian ministry as lived through the church's ministry and appreciate the varieties of lay, licensed and ordained ministry
 - Continue to develop vocationally throughout life's opportunities and challenges
 - Encourage others to be comfortable and discuss in depth the many facets of vocational and personal development
 - Are able to be open and flexible in adapting candidacy studies to candidates' needs when possible
 - Gain respect from colleagues
 - Maintain family relationships and personal lives that are congruent with the standards expected of clergy

TRAINING

- All mentors should be trained once every four years. This allows all mentors to know the most recent candidacy, licensing and ordination requirements and the Annual Conference's current mentoring and interviewing structure and procedures
- If your conference wishes to award continuing education credits for training events, note that 10 contact hours of worship or educational time is equal to one CEU.
- While training times can vary from a half-day to an overnight retreat, training sessions should include certain features
 - Theological grounding for mentoring and learning from one another
 - Identifying the differences among supervision, evaluation and mentoring and the role of each in candidate development and assessment
 - Discussion and clarification of the meaning of confidentiality in the relationship among the mentor, candidate and candidacy colleagues within a mentoring group
 - Education about the current candidacy, licensing and ordination process, the use of UMCARES (The United Methodist Candidate and Record Entry Systems), the conference's process for psychological assessment and the mentor's responsibilities in these tasks
 - Developing familiarity of the basic candidacy materials, including *The Christian as Minister, Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* and other conference resources
 - Information about any BOM or dCOM deadlines regarding the application process and interviews
- In most circumstances, the Candidacy Registrar and Vocational Discernment Coordinator organize and lead mentor training. Additional leadership may include experienced mentors, dCOM/BOM members, the District Superintendent or the BOM staff person for the Annual Conference. On occasion, GBHEM staff may be available to provide leadership.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Pray for candidates.
- Talk with candidates to establish covenant and meeting schedules.
- Study and discuss *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* with candidates.
- Establish and maintain confidentiality of mentoring relationship.
- Provide information regarding the psychological assessment process.
 - Initiate the psychological assessment process in UMCARES or through the conference's assessment process.
 - Proctor psychological assessments as requested by the conference.
 - Complete and return psychological assessments and accompanying forms/reports in a timely manner.
- Discuss upcoming P/S-PRC and charge conference meetings with candidates.
- Complete annual mentor reports.
- Meet with the dCOM and candidate at the certification approval meeting.
 - Share mentor report.
 - Record dCOM vote and recommendation in UMCARES.
- Make sure the BOM Candidacy Registrar is aware of any status changes for candidates.
- Maintain a Candidacy Mentor file, including all relevant paperwork and reports for candidates.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Candidacy Registrar and Vocational Discernment Coordinator ensure the continuing quality of the candidacy process and oversee 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 may find a replacement.
- Primary concerns are to maintain high standards of guidance and mentoring for candidates so that they will have every opportunity to explore their vocational options and to attract the best possible candidates for ministerial leadership.
- 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 ministerial leaders throughout their ministry.

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 both candidates and Annual Conferences 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. The group setting provides certain benefits.

- Maintains a high quality of gifted mentors
- Requires fewer mentors to serve the candidate pool
- Creates more time to focus on discernment

- Builds community amongst candidates and mentors
- Allows the candidacy requirements to be completed more smoothly and consistently (i.e. psychological assessment, coordinating timing of dCOM and BOM interviews, ensuring that candidates don't miss yearly deadlines for certification and renewal, enrolling candidates in UMCARES, etc.)

Resources

- “Starting Candidacy”, UMCARES user information and a general overview of the candidacy process – www.umcandidacy.org
- BOM Library of Resources and Forms – www.bomlibrary.org
 - Set of Brochures on the Ministry of Deacons, Ministry of Elders, Ministry of Local Pastors and Ministry of Edorsed Clergy
- *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook*. Mentors may download a PDF of the Candidacy Guidebook through UMCARES or request a hard copy through the conference's candidacy registrar