

CHAPTER 4

Recruitment and Enlistment

For more information contact GBHEM's director of Young Adult Ministry Discernment, explore@gbhem.org or 615-340-7431.

The annual conference board of ordained ministry shall assume the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ordained clergy by working in consultation with the cabinet and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) to study and interpret the clergy 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/staff parish-relations (P/SPRC), conference agencies, and every ordained minister of the conference, enlist women and men of all races and ethnic origins for the ordained ministry and guide those persons in the process of education, training, and ordination, recommending colleges and schools of theology listed by the University Senate. 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, campus ministries, camps, and other appropriate ministries, especially among youth and young adults. (¶635.2b)

We live in a time of rapid change. Population and church demographics are shifting; church members and leaders are aging; young people are not looking to 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.

The primary responsibility of 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 ministry.

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

Vocational Discernment Coordinator

The vocational discernment coordinator position was added to the BOM in 2012. This position was created to coordinate the candidacy mentoring process and to work within the BOM and annual conference to encourage and provide resources for those discerning a call to ministry. More information about this position is in Chapter 8, Candidacy.

Assessing the Need

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 2011, research from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership documented that there were 1,039 (or 5.80 percent) provisional or ordained deacons and elders under age 35 in the United States. It is critical that we focus attention and work on inviting, enlisting, and supporting young adults as they explore God's call in their lives.

Using the questions below, each annual conference is encouraged to develop a vocational discernment plan to guide this responsibility of the BOM (see page 4-3 for suggestions).

BOM Questions for Consideration

- When was the last study in your conference regarding ministerial leadership needs?
- What is the latest census data regarding racial/ethnic groups within your conference area?
- How many young adults from your conference are attending colleges, universities, theological schools or seminaries? Who among those may be exploring a call to ordained ministry?
- Does your BOM have the contact information for UM campus ministers and college/university chaplains in order to connect students to campus ministry units, and identify those who may be considering a call to vocational ministry?
- How do you follow up and support those who have attended national, regional, or conference Exploration events?
- How do the bishop and cabinet members in your conference engage youth and young adults in ministry? How do your BOM and dCOMs support that process?
- Do you have data from the last five years to help you compare the numbers of newly licensed or ordained clergy each year with the number of retirements and discontinuations, and also factor in church mergers or closings? How many clergy are projected to retire in the next five years?
- Has your conference identified areas for new church starts to provide a fruitful ministry? Have you identified 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 your 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 your conference?
- Consider surveying those entering the candidacy/ordination process or those early in their appointive service to learn:
 - 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 exploring ordained ministry?
 - Which churches or campus ministries are more successful in identifying and nurturing persons into vocational ministry? What factors led to that influence?
- What are the conference's short 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?

Enlistment Plan Suggestions

- Hold an annual consultation/conference including the vocational discernment coordinator; the connectional ministries office; campus ministries and all those involved in ministries with youth and young adults.
 - 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 them to use as they work with youth or young adults in vocational discernment.
- Develop and implement a process for vocational discernment that invites people to consider God's call in many different ways (camp, youth ministries, mission trips, campus ministries, etc.).
- In consultation with the Orders of Deacons and Elders, design retreats and workshops in which they can be reminded of the significance of their leadership as role models and mentors for those discerning God's call into ordained and specialized ministry.
- Plan special events at conference and district levels to enable the largest possible number of persons to hear and respond to God's call for filling ministry leadership roles.
- Hold events 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). List the ethnicity, gender identification, and age of the candidates for reporting purposes and to identify trends and needs for developing clergy leaders.
- Elect a BOM vocational discernment coordinator who is responsible for making the candidacy process inviting and accessible, strengthening the candidacy mentoring program, and giving guidance and training to candidacy mentors.
- Develop conference-wide initiatives to enhance candidates' ministerial formation, both before and after candidacy studies are pursued. Events such as camps for potential candidates and mission experiences for declared candidates in special settings (e.g., the inner city, developing countries, Appalachia, ethnic minority ministries, intercity, and rural settings) may all contribute to their growth and spiritual depth.
- Create an Orientation to Ministry event for ministry candidates to build collegiality and understanding among the varieties of set-apart ministries (deacons, elders, local pastors) (¶ 314).

Shared Responsibility and Quality Enlistment

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

Enlistment of Young People

In 2012, Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr., reported that 1,014 of the 17,573 provisional or ordained deacons and elders in the United States were younger than 35 – only 5.8 percent. This is down from 15.05 percent of clergy in 1985. Said differently, 94.2 percent of clergy are older than 35 – with the largest group, 52.8 percent, being 55-72. The sharp decline in the numbers of young adult clergy has focused the church's priority on inviting, training, and retaining young adult clergy.

At the 2012 General Conference, the Young Clergy Initiative was created to:

Provide support to increase the number of young clergy among the jurisdictional conferences. This begins a three-quadrennium 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.

Today's young adults approach the world differently than young adults did 25, 10, or even 5 years ago. Young adult leadership development is integral in any future planning for conferences and BOMs.

GBHEM-sponsored programs and networks that focus on the recruitment and development of young adult clergy include the following:

- **Exploration** is a three-day event for young adults age 18-26 who are considering a call to serve as an ordained deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church. These events are held every two years. (www.gbhem.org/exploration).
- **NEXT** is 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. Drawing on the resources of leadership development, community organizing, innovation, and social entrepreneurship as well as dynamic preaching, worship, and service, NEXT seeks to bring the best of the church and the world together for 48 hours of transformative experience. Held in November on opposite years from Exploration, NEXT also provides momentum and direction for the United Methodist Student Movement (www.umsm.org).
- **The Young Adult Seminarians Network (YASN)** is a network of United Methodist seminarians, age 35 or younger, who seek to grow in faith, deepen their commitment to Jesus Christ, support one another in their faith journeys, be bold advocates for social justice, and have an active voice and role within the UMC (www.yasn.org).
- **Spark12**, launched in January 2012, provides coaching and resources to help young entrepreneurs initiate innovative ideas to transform the world. The program will help connect young adults with a passion for ministry and mission with the resources, mentorship, and networks needed to launch ministries, while giving philanthropists the opportunity to work with creative young people. While GBHEM staff is taking the lead in this project—which has the unanimous support of the Council of Bishops' Leadership Table—the project has input from the General Board of Church and Society, the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Communications, and the General Board of Discipleship (www.spark12.org).
- **Annual Conference Recruiters** is an event for conferences that are strategically planning and implementing programs and ministries to invite and nurture youth and young adults as they consider God's call to ordained ministry. This event focuses on strategic planning for annual conferences to build and implement a plan for recruiting young adult candidates and clergy.

Additional Resources

Publications from Cokesbury

Beyond the Burning Bush: Hearing and Answering God's Call (ISBN# 97809381622810)

The Christian as Minister: An Exploration into the Meaning of God's Call 2009 edition (ISBN# 9780938162834)

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

Web Information

Candidacy—www.gbhem.org/candidacy—United Methodist Candidacy Information

Exploring God's Call—www.ExploreCalling.org—provides resources, tips, tools, for youth and young adults who are considering how God is calling them to live.

The Fund for Theological Education—www.thefund.org

[The Glossary of Candidacy Terms](http://www.gbhem.org/bom)—www.gbhem.org/bom

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership—www.churchleadership.com

Scholarships and Loans for members of the UMC—www.gbhem.org/loansandscholarships

Enlistment of Racial/Ethnic Candidates

Representatives of many different racial/ethnic groups should be appointed to 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. GBHEM staff is available for consultation in these circumstances (§324.3).

Enlistment Guidelines for those with Immigration Status

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

Considerations to Support and Examine Persons with Immigration Status

- What training is provided for BOM members related to immigration issues and cultural diversity?
- How prepared is the BOM to assist clergy or candidates with immigration status according to 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?

Resources Available to Annual Conferences

General Board of Church and Society: www.umc-gbcs.org

New Sanctuary Movement: <http://www.newsanctuarymovement.org>

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service: www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis

Justice for Our Neighbors: search the Web for a branch in your area

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 handicapping 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."

From 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.

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