

BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

1. Accountability

The work of the Board of Ordained Ministry focuses on the recruitment, credentialing and nurture of the clergy members of the Wisconsin Conference. Our Purpose/Mission is clearly outlined in great detail in ¶634 of The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004.

2. Highlights and Accomplishments of the Past Year

The Board of Ordained Ministry has three primary tasks, as mentioned above: the recruitment, credentialing, and nurture of the clergy members of the annual conference. It is the board's responsibility, on behalf of the annual conference, to determine whether those who offer themselves in service as clergypersons meet the qualifications, ethical standards, and expectations of The United Methodist Church for its clergy, so that the churches of the annual conference may have competent, effective, and skilled clergy leadership. The Board does this directly through the credentialing/commissioning process for probationary clergy members of the annual conference and the ordination process for full clergy members of the annual conference, and indirectly through the supervision of the eight District Committees on Ordained Ministry, which are responsible for administering the process by which persons become certified candidates for ordained ministry, and the supervision of those appointed to serve as licensed local pastors. By Discipline, the District Committees on Ordained Ministry function as subcommittees of the Board of Ordained Ministry and are accountable to the Board for their work.

The Board works in consultation with the cabinet when persons who are clergy members of other Annual Conferences or other denominations are being considered for transfer into or appointment to serve United Methodist churches within the Wisconsin Annual Conference.

Whenever any clergy member of the Annual Conference requests a change in their relationship with the Annual Conference, the Board of Ordained Ministry has a role in that process as well. The Board is responsible for considering requests for retirement, leave of absence, family leave, sabbatical leave, study/renewal leave, and approval of extension ministry sites beyond the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church.

The Board of Ordained Ministry meets for at least three days twice each year: in February, when candidates for Probationary and Associate Membership are interviewed, and in November, when candidates for Full Membership and Ordination are interviewed. (The Board now holds its meetings at the Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader Retreat Center at Pine Lake Camp. We have found that utilizing the facilities at Pine Lake saves about \$5,000 per year in meeting expenses, compared to the cost of meeting at a commercial facility.) The Executive Committee of the Board also meets several times during the year, often via telephone or video conference call. The District Committees on Ordained Ministry each meet between 3 and 5 times per year, depending upon the number of interviews which they need to conduct.

The Board conducts two Inquiring Candidate Retreats each year, in January and July. At these weekend retreats persons who have experienced a call to ministry within The United Methodist Church are invited to explore that call in more depth without the need to make a public commitment to ministry. They also receive information about the complex (and sometimes intimidating) process of entering the United Methodist ministry.

The Board also conducts a two-day "New Clergy Orientation" program at Byron Center each August. All clergypersons who have been appointed that year to serve their first appointment in a Wisconsin United Methodist congregation and all clergypersons who are returning to a local church appointment from an extended leave or from an extension ministry appointment are

expected to attend this retreat. At the retreat, the Board, Cabinet, Conference Staff, the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, and some other agencies, share information about the work of the Annual Conference. The retreat also includes an intensive training in sexual ethics and the maintenance of proper boundaries by clergypersons.

Through the Ministerial Education Fund, the Board provides scholarships to seminary students from the Annual Conference who are certified candidates for ministry, as well as Course of Study Scholarships to licensed local pastors, and continuing education grants to individual clergy persons serving Wisconsin United Methodist Churches.

In 2006 six persons from Wisconsin attended the national "Exploration" event, which was held in Jacksonville, Florida. "Exploration" is sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and is held once each quadrennium. It is an opportunity for young people from high school age through their early to mid 20's to explore the possibility of ministry in The United Methodist Church. The Board of Ordained Ministry provided funding for these persons to attend the event through an offering that was collected at the Annual Conference Session some years ago, and through the Ministerial Education Fund. The Board is also working with other conference Boards of Ordained Ministry in the North Central Jurisdiction to develop a regional "Exploration" event to be held sometime in 2007 or 2008.

In 2006 the Board began to develop standards of clergy effectiveness for the Wisconsin Annual Conference. Working with Dr. Mark Sundby of the North Central Ministry Development Center, and with the support of a generous grant from the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, the board has begun an intensive study to identify effective clergy, and through a process of interviews, assessments, and group discussions, to define clergy effectiveness.

The Board has also been approached by representatives of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary about developing a program through which the seminary would continue to work with and provide structured growth opportunities for G-ETS graduates during their probationary membership period. The Board is excited about the possibilities of this program, and looking forward to further conversations with the seminary about this.

The Board of Ordained Ministry depends heavily upon the staff support provided by the Executive Secretary of the Board. The Executive Secretary maintains the personnel records for the nearly 200 people who are under the care of the Board, either in the candidacy process, in extension ministry, on leave, or in some other relationship with the Board. He provides guidance for those going through the process of entering ministry, which in The United Methodist Church is incredibly lengthy and complex, as well as training for mentors and District Committees on Ordained Ministry. Two of the major responsibilities of the Executive Secretary are the preparation of materials submitted by candidates for commissioning and ordination for review by the Board at our November and February meetings, and the preparation of the Board's report to the Clergy Session (also know as "The Business of the Annual Conference.) For the past five years the Board has been conducting background investigations on all candidates for any clergy position in the Wisconsin Conference, which has added to the workload of the Executive Secretary, who is also responsible for the preliminary evaluation of all psychological assessments for candidates.

During 2006 it become apparent that the work of the Executive Secretary of the Board required significantly more than the one-quarter time which had been devoted to this position. The Board could not function nearly as well without this position. The Board of Ordained Ministry therefore asked the Council on Finance and Administration to include in the 2007 Proposed Budget funds so that the position of Executive Secretary of the Board of Ordained Ministry could be increased to three-quarter time. The Cabinet and the Council on Finance and Administration approved this request and included it in the 2007 Budget which was approved by the Annual Conference.

Through internal adjustments in its 2006 budget line items the Board was able to make it possible for the increase to three-quarter time to take place on August 1, 2006.

3. Plans for the Coming Year

In addition to the on-going work outlined above, in 2007 and 2008 the Board anticipates developing a more comprehensive program of clergy recruitment, including a presence at junior and senior high convo and at conference summer camping programs, and a more comprehensive program to visit students at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, which are the two schools where most Wisconsin Conference seminarians are enrolled.

One important item which will be considered by the 2008 General Conference is the report of the Ministry Study Commission. This report may result in proposals for significant changes to the process for entering ministry, as well as to the ordering of ministry itself. If the General Conference approves a significant re-structuring of ministry for the coming quadrennium the Board will need to devote significant time to studying and discussing any changes made in the Ministry section of the 2008 Book of Discipline and how to implement those changes within our candidacy and ordination process. Each quadrennium the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry conducts training sessions for representatives and staff of all Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry to discuss any changes made by the General Conference. These training sessions will most likely take place in the fall of 2008, and we anticipate that representatives of the Wisconsin Conference Board will participate in these training sessions.

Richard Strait, Chairperson

Kevin Rice Myers, Executive Secretary