



Office of Clergy  
Excellence

## Group Candidacy Mentoring Details General Guidelines

- **Groups will meet for 6 sessions over the course of 4 months.** If a candidate misses a session, they will make it up individually with one of the mentors. Candidates should make every effort to attend all the group sessions; missing more than 2 group sessions, even if the candidate makes them up individually, may result in the candidate being asked to repeat the mentoring group next cycle (Please refer these cases to the Office of Clergy Excellence staff.)
- **Candidates who live out-of-state** while attending school (or other special circumstances approved by the Office of Clergy Excellence) may participate in their mentoring group sessions using video chat technology such as Skype. All other requirements (Retreat, Psychological Evaluation Interview with the Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS), and DCOM interview for certification) must be attended in person.
- Each mentor or team of mentors will set their own schedule for **meeting dates, times, and locations** and communicate these to the Exploring candidates.
- Each meeting should take about **90 minutes; allow 2 hours if a meal is involved.** Since we have candidates driving from all over the district to attend, it is important to honor time commitments by starting and stopping on time.
- As applicable, **both mentors should be present at each meeting if possible.** If one mentor must miss a session, the meeting can be led by only one mentor. Mentor teams will figure out their own ways of working together, but both should share the leadership of the group.
- The **GROUP CURRICULUM** below is an outline of topics to be covered in each session that review that material found in **Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook**. This is not an exhaustive curriculum. Please adapt and improve! The meetings should open and close in prayer, and allow time to answer questions, etc. Feel free to be creative!
- Pages 143-174 of **Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook** is a MENTOR'S GUIDE that provides additional guidelines for each chapter of the book as well as some general mentoring guidelines.
- **Mentors will review psychological reports with their candidate(s) in a one on one meeting that is in addition to the mandatory 6 group mentoring session. Mentors do not interpret the psychological reports,** but rather support the candidates' growth in self-awareness by sharing the information given in the report that is derived from the candidate's own responses to the tests and to the clinical interview with the Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS).
- Mentors write a **Mentor's Report** for each candidate(s) (guidelines for writing the report are included in your packet provided at the Candidacy Retreat). **The Candidate is responsible for signing and upload the Mentor's Report into UMCARES,** but please keep in mind the candidate's deadline for their DCOM paperwork which is typically one month before the meeting date. Deadlines are available on the district or conference website.
- **Mentors are not required to read and comment on their candidate's written responses to *The Book of Discipline Questions* found in UMCARES as a part of the Certification Application.** However, mentors may

do so, if the candidate asks and if the mentor is available for review and feedback, which would take place beyond the mandatory 6 sessions.

- **Mentors will be present with each candidate at their DCOM interview.** The ministry of presence is supportive and does not include voice or vote. Occasionally, the DCOM will ask Mentors clarifying questions when candidates have left the room, which is at the discretion of the DCOM. It is not the mentor's role to advocate for the candidate.
- The heart of the Candidacy Mentoring Group experience is the candidates learning how to **articulate clearly and succinctly their call to Licensed or Ordained Ministry** – both orally and in writing. Your guidance, coaching and feedback are essential to this process. It is also important for candidates to express at least a **basic understanding of Wesleyan theology**, including as it related to their own life and call.

# Group Curriculum

## Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook

### Homework:

In preparation for Session 1, read, and have the candidates read, **pages 12-21 Part I Discerning the Call/Chapter 1 Mentoring and Candidacy Groups and Pages 57-68 Chapter 5 Vocation, Call, and Gifts** in Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook.

### SESSION 1 — Introductions/Establishing a Group Covenant/Self Awareness

**Goal:** Candidates will begin to know each other's stories, feel safe sharing in the group, and understand what the group mentoring process will entail over the next several months.

#### A. INTRODUCTIONS: Getting to Know Each Other

Go around the room and invite each person to:

- Re-introduce themselves and quickly re-cap their background and calling (already shared at retreat)
- Share one thing they learned at the retreat
- Share one thing they hope to gain from this group mentoring process

**Lead discussion on Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook pgs. 12-21.** You may want to have candidates take turns reading sections aloud or take a few moments for everyone to read silently.

#### B. GROUP COVENANT

If you did not already do so at the Candidacy Retreat, complete a **Group Covenant** using prompts from **pages 17-20 of Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook**. Items to include are:

- The purpose of the Group Sessions (See bullet points on page 13)
- Expectations and Hopes
- Confidentiality with other candidates
- Confidentiality with mentors
- Presence/Attendance
- Hospitality
- Prayer and Support
- Pledge to be Open
- Take responsibility for your journey
- Homework
- Other issues you or the group believe are important.

**Once you have developed your Group Covenant, have everyone in the group sign the original and provide copies to each group member. You may want to revisit this Covenant at the beginning of each meeting.**

#### Possible discussion questions for session I.

- What does it mean to you that calling begins at baptism?
- Do you think all people are called? What does that mean to you?
- Did your calling arise suddenly or gradually? Has it changed over time?
- Wesleyan dimensions of calling—what do the terms grace, gifts, and fruit mean and what do each have to do with calling?

The mentors should be willing to share their own call stories in a succinct and compelling manner.

#### C. SELF AWARENESS

**Goal:** Candidates will begin to understand how everything about them affects their ministry—their family of origin, age/race/gender, strengths and weaknesses, life experiences, etc.

### **Backgrounds, Ages, and Stages**

Chapter 5 of the ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook*** (pages 57-68) reflects on family relationships, lifestyle, age, gender, diversity, etc. You will need to use the questions in the Candidacy Guidebook and tailor the discussion to your group (i.e. if you do not have any single candidates, you don't need to spend much time on that section.) Make sure to discuss something that relates to each group member.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Areas of Interest, etc.**

The IRAI (which is mentioned in the Candidacy Guidebook) has been removed as a candidacy requirement, so your candidates will not have taken this assessment. *But the reflections in the Candidacy Guidebook on their areas of interest, gifts, skills, etc. would still be helpful for discussion purposes.*

### **Self-Awareness**

End the discussion by reflecting on the theme of self-awareness. We all have strengths and weaknesses, issues, imperfect motivations, etc. God can still use us! The goal is to be come as aware as possible about ourselves. Encourage the candidates to keep learning about themselves.

### **Homework**

In preparation for Session 2, read, and have the candidates read, **Chapter 4 on Spiritual Disciplines, pages 47-55** in ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook***.

## **SESSION 2 — Spiritual Disciplines**

**Goal:** Candidates will gain a broader understanding of spiritual disciplines and understand how important our own spirituality is to sustain a future in ministry.

The ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook*** explores seven spiritual disciplines:

1. Lectio Divina
2. Journaling
3. Daily Prayer
4. Spiritual Reading
5. Confession
6. Spiritual Guide (See <https://www.flumc.org/shadeandfreshwater>)
7. Simplicity

You may wish to add other spiritual disciplines or practices to the discussion.

For each of the disciplines in the Candidacy Guidebook, read the explanation (or have one of the candidates read it) and then allow them to reflect on it, asking:

- Do you regularly use this discipline?
- What do you get out of it?
- What struggles do you have with it?

Close the group by participating in one of the spiritual disciplines. The Guidebook has some specific suggestions for each discipline.

**Homework: For Session 3 Read Chapter 2 on What Methodists Believe in *Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook* pages 23-33.**

**This is also a good time to look ahead to other “process” stuff, such as:**

- **Meet with the MAS:** Hopefully by now the Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS) has called to schedule a time with the candidate.
- **Schedule their SPRC and Charge Conference meetings in consultation with their pastor.** There is a form to be filled out to document their SPRC and Charge Conference approvals (located on the District website and in UMCARES new candidate application track). They should ask their pastor what they should do to prepare for each of these meetings, as it varies. There is a suggested list of SPRC questions/process on the [flumc.org](https://www.flumc.org/files/fileslibrary/staff+parish+candidate+interview+process+and+questions.pdf) Clergy Excellence website at <https://www.flumc.org/files/fileslibrary/staff+parish+candidate+interview+process+and+questions.pdf>
- The candidate should also **let their DCOM Registrar know that they are on track to be interviewed for certification** and schedule to attend the DCOM meeting.

**SESSION 3 — What Methodists Believe: Part I: Our Theological Task, General Rules, Connectionalism, Mission, Social Principles. Chapter 2 in Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook pages 23-33.**

**Goal:** Candidates will begin to articulate their personal stories in terms of Wesleyan theology, and to see theology at work in their lives. Sessions 3 and 4 are not meant to be a seminary class —just a simple confirmation-level overview of Wesleyan Theology. You may have a wide variety of knowledge in your group; work hard to keep focused on the basics and keeping everyone included.

**Our Theological Task.** (See Part III of *the 2016 Book of Discipline*, Paragraphs 102-105, pages. 47-91 - Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task)

**General Rules** (*The 2016 Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 104, pages 77-80)

**Connectionalism** (*The 2016 Book of Discipline*, Paragraphs 8-61, pages 27-46)

**Mission** (*The 2016 Book of Discipline*, Paragraphs 120- 143, pages 93-104)

**Social Principles** (*The 2016 Book of Discipline*, Paragraphs 160-166, pages 105-146)

The Social Principles are currently under review and revision. For a draft of the most recent revisions go to <https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/social-principles-revision/social-principles-2020/sp2020-english>

**Homework:** In preparation for Session 4 read, and have the candidates read: **What Methodists Believe: Part II: Grace and Sacraments. Chapter 3 in Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook pages 35-45.**

**SESSION 4 — What Methodists Believe: Part II: Grace and Sacraments. Chapter 3 in Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook pages 35-45.**

**Grace**

- What is grace?
- Wesley described three different expressions of grace:
  - Prevenient grace—grace that goes before us, grace before we know we need it
  - Justifying grace—grace that sets us right with God, through Jesus Christ
  - Sanctifying grace—grace that continues to make us more like Christ as we grow
- Grace is not a one-way street. Wesley saw life as a dance of grace-and-response between us and God.
  - We respond to prevenient grace by realizing our sin and need for God
  - We respond to justifying grace by saying “yes” to salvation
  - We respond to sanctifying grace when we allow God to shape us, correct us, grow us.
- Can the candidates identify these expressions of grace and response in their own life and call story?

**Personal and Social Holiness**

- **Sanctifying grace.** The word sanctify means “to make holy.” But holiness isn’t just becoming better individuals. Wesley also emphasized **social holiness**—becoming holy in how we treat the oppressed, in how we alleviate suffering, in how we give and serve communally.
- **Personal holiness** is important, too. It means that, even though we believe in grace and forgiveness, it really matters how we live. We are supposed to be “**moving on toward perfection in love.**” Do you think this matter even more for clergy? Why or why not?
- Wesley said, “**There is no holiness without social holiness.**” What does this mean to you?
- Do you tend to gravitate toward a more personal or a more social holiness? Why do you think it’s important to balance out your own tendencies?

## Sacraments

- In the United Methodist Church, we have **two sacraments: baptism and communion.**  
See:
  - <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/by-water-and-the-spirit-full-text>
  - <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/this-holy-mystery-a-united-methodist-understanding-of-holy-communion>
- Those who are on the **Elder track are pursuing a ministry of Word, Service, Order, and Sacrament**, while **Deacons are pursuing a ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice.**
- **Elders in Full Connection can celebrate the sacraments anywhere.**
- **Local Pastors and Provisional Elders who serve under a license for ministry can celebrate the sacraments in the ministry setting where they are appointed.**
- **Deacons may assist Elders or Local Pastors with serving the Sacraments. With special written permission of the Bishop, they may be authorized to administer the Sacraments in their specific setting.**
- Wesley called the sacraments “**certain means of grace.**” We are promised that we can experience God’s grace in the sacraments.
- **Baptism—we baptize infants** in the United Methodist Church because we believe baptism is primarily about God’s action. It is an act of prevenient grace. God’s action precedes our response. God is extending grace to the child before they know they need it. The parents and Christian community commit to raise the child to a point where the child can accept God’s grace for themselves. **We do not re-baptize** in the United Methodist Church because we believe God’s grace was sufficient the first time.
  - Were you baptized as an infant, child, or adult?
  - What is your understanding of your baptism?
- **Communion**—some denominations believe that communion is just a symbol of what happened in the past (a memorial). Others believe that the bread and wine become Jesus’ body and blood (transubstantiation). Wesleyan theology is somewhere between those two—our theology of communion is called “**real presence.**” We believe that Christ is present to us when we receive the elements in faith. We also practice an “**open table,**” which means that you do not have to be a member of the UMC or any church to receive holy communion. Wesley even spoke of communion as being a “**converting ordinance,**” meaning that people could meet and accept Christ for the first time through the act of receiving Holy Communion.
  - Share an experience where communion was meaningful to you
  - How do you feel about the UMC practicing an open table? What does this mean?

**Homework:** In preparation for the Session 5, read **Chapter 6: Same Spirit, Many Callings, pages 69-88** in **Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook**

**Goal:** Candidates will clarify their understanding of **Elder, Deacon, and Local Pastor** and have their practical questions answered about life in ministry, **the appointment system, itinerancy**, etc. Mentors might want to invite representatives from each ministry track to visit and share with the group. Refer to information provided at the Candidacy Retreat for each order of ministry or go to the [GBHEM.org](http://GBHEM.org) website.

Begin by outlining the three-main ministry tracks of **Elder, Deacon, and Local Pastor**. Depending on how clear the candidates already are on each track, you should move more quickly or more slowly as needed.

**Commissioning** – those who are commissioned are issued a license for ministry and their practice of ministry is limited to the place where they are appointed to serve like local pastors.

**Ordination**—note some of the highlights from **Paragraph 138-139, pages 100-101, and Paragraphs 301-305, pages 223-227** in ***The Book of Discipline***.

- How would you describe to someone what ordination means?
  - What is the difference between Licensing and ordination?
  - What is your understanding of the ministry of all believers?
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- **Elder**—Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service
  - **Deacon**—Word, Service, Compassion and Justice, connecting the church with the needs of the world
  - **Local Pastor**—called to the ministry of the pastor of a local congregation; not ordained but approved annually and licensed by the bishop to perform the duties of a pastor, including sacraments, in the location to which they are appointed.

#### **Appointments**

- **Elders** are guaranteed an appointment within the Conference under the itinerant system, while **Deacons** find their own ministry position and the bishop appoints them there.
- The **itinerant system** means that you are sent by the bishop; you are not the one who decides when and where you move. Nor is the local church. There is a time of consultation with you and the church, and there is a great deal of prayer.
- **Local pastors** are appointed a year at a time and are not guaranteed an appointment.
- **Extension Ministry Appointments** paragraph 343-344, pages 279-286 of ***The Book of Discipline***

**Q and A**—candidates should be given a chance to ask questions about **ministry tracks, appointment-making**, etc. Let their questions guide the rest of your discussion.

**Homework:** Read, and have the candidates read **Part II: Yes, No, Maybe, pages 89-141** ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook***

**This is another great time to check in on process items, such as:**

- Has everyone met (or scheduled to meet with) the Ministerial Assessment Specialist?
- Have they scheduled their SPRC and Charge Conference meetings? Candidates should ask their pastor what they need to do to prepare for these meetings, as it varies.
- Checked in with the DCOM registrar to get on their schedule to be interviewed for certification. The registrar will give the candidate a list of requirements for that meeting, and a due date. They must complete an application for certification as a candidate through UMCARES.

**SESSION 6—Next Steps Part II Yes, No, maybe pages 89-141** ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook***

**Goal:** Candidates will have a sense of the direction God is leading them at this point, and know the next steps needed in response.

**Health and Wholeness** pages 93-106 ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook***

**Financial Literacy** pages 107-127 ***Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook***

### **Looking back, looking ahead**

- Ask each candidate to share something they've learned in this mentoring/discernment process about how God is calling them.
- Remind candidates that "yes," "no," and "wait" are all valid responses at this point. God may be calling them to move ahead toward certification. God may be leading them toward something other than Licensed or ordained ministry. Or God may be asking them to wait.
- The step of becoming certified does not mean that they are fully ready to be the perfect pastor; it simply means that they, their church, and the district committee are agreeing together that you are called, and that you are ready to move on to the next steps.
- In the UMC we believe in both an **internal and external call**. Just completing the steps toward certification does not mean that each candidate is necessarily called to Licensed or Ordained Ministry in the UMC. The church, through the mentors, District Superintendents, SPPRC, Charge Conference, DCOM and Board of Ordained Ministry are all charged with the responsibility of also discerning and confirming or denying this call.

### **Next Steps pages 129-141 Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook**

#### **DCOM Preparation**

- Invite candidates to share their stories of their background and call again. It is important that the candidates become very comfortable with articulating your story in a succinct and compelling manner. The first thing the DCOM will probably ask is for the candidate to tell a bit about themselves and their call to ministry.
- Outline for the candidates the other things that could be asked about in DCOM — which ministry track they feel called toward and why? Their future for education/preparation? Their strengths and areas of growth? Anything that stood out from their psychological testing, medical, or financial reports.
- Answer any other questions the candidates may have about the DCOM.
- MENTORS COMPLETE MENTOR REPORTS FOR THEIR CANDIDATES(S). The Mentor reviews the report with each candidate. The **CANDIDATE** must sign it and upload it to their online UMCARES application for certification as a candidate.

**Prayer: Close with an extended time of prayer for the candidates.**

#### **Follow-up**

**While the formal portion of mentoring is done, you are the candidates' assigned mentors until they are certified.** Make sure they have your contact information and know that they can follow up with you as needed. (\*If a candidate needs more individual help than you can give, contact the Office of Clergy Excellence and we will assist you in finding a supplementary mentor.)