

Appendix A

Mentor Guide

Part I / Chapter 1

Mentoring and Candidacy Groups

This section outlines important background, processes, and values for mentors, candidates, and the candidacy group. Prepare for this group meeting by reading the Introduction and the Mentoring and Candidacy Groups chapters. Also, prepare an opening meditation or devotion for the group. You may ask candidates to lead this in future meetings.

In this first meeting, candidates will start getting acquainted with each other. They will begin learning each other's stories. Prepare the environment to help them become comfortable and feel safe sharing in the group.

The Introduction brings up the broad subject of call, noting that calls can be subtle or obvious, gentle or unsettling. Ask the group to discuss this, especially as it relates to where they are right now in the discernment process. Share your own experiences and story as well.

Below are some of the major points in these first sections. Guide your group in discussion and interaction around these issues:

- Discuss the relationship between mentor and candidate, candidate and group, and mentor and the group: what a mentor is (and is not), what it means to be exploring candidacy for ministry, how the companionship of a group can be helpful in personal discernment.
- Consider the mutual commitment of participating in a group: including the place of confidentiality, regular participation, hospitality, and openness to everyone in your group.
- Discuss the significance and place of prayer in the group's life, the pivotal role of spiritual support among group members, and the impact of strong spiritual disciplines in the life of the group.

Covenant

This section suggests the group develop a covenant and includes some guidelines for how to do this. Discuss the components of the covenant—presence, prayer, hospitality, and confidentiality. Invite group members to make changes or additions to this covenant, or to write one of their own. You may want to present some Scripture to guide a conversation about covenants (e.g., Jeremiah 31:31–34). When the covenant is firm, each group member should sign it, along with you as mentor. Make sure everyone in the group gets a signed copy of the covenant and encourage them to reflect on it often; perhaps include a reminder at the beginning of each meeting.

Framework and Outline for Meetings

Your annual conference will most likely set the overall structure of your candidacy group. Go over with your group matters such as dates and timelines, number of meetings, and framework and content of those meetings, along with any additional requirements and deadlines. Be clear about your expectations for the meetings and whether your conference allows online/video participation. Be sure to check the resources in the back of this book to see examples from some annual conferences, which may be helpful to you.

The Candidacy Process in Your Annual Conference

It is essential that candidates understand how the candidacy process works in your conference. Stages, dates, forms, and deadlines should be part of this. Share with the group your conference's step-by-step guide to this process. Begin with a person's first contact for entry into the candidacy process and continue through the interview with the district Committee on Ordained Ministry.

Prepare a written "road map" of this process, or use the guide produced by your conference. Highlight with your group the major steps along the way, noting important dates and deadlines. Answer questions. Let the group know you are available to them as they go through this process.

Discuss the function of the report that you, as mentor, will make for each group member at the end of this process. Let them know this report goes to the district Committee on Ordained Ministry as a partial introduction of them to the committee. Share with them some of the facets of this one-page report: the candidate's self-awareness, gifts for ministry, articulation of call, and your observation of their faith journey thus far.

Emphasize that because of the mutual confidentiality covenant you share with candidates, the candidate must approve in writing anything you share in this report. Candidates will have the chance to read, sign, and talk with you about the report before you, as their mentor, send it to the district Committee. Answer any questions they may have about the mentor's report.

(In a later chapter you will find more specific suggestions for preparing this report.)

Closing

Plan a closing time with your group. You could ask for brief reactions or reflections on the group's session together. Prepare the group for the next meeting by discussing any reading or other tasks they need to complete before that meeting.

In addition, part of this time might be used to check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this. You may feel it is too early to do this, or you may prefer to check in one-on-one. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Design a closing ritual or time of prayer. You may decide to close with the same ritual every session or to close in different ways each time. Most likely you will be the one to lead the closing of this first session; going forward, you may want to ask different group members to lead.

Part I / Chapter 2

Our Theological Task, General Rules, Connectionalism, Mission, and the Social Principles

This section outlines major United Methodist theological and connectional principles. Prepare for this group meeting by reading Chapter 2, “What United Methodists Believe: Our Theological Task, General Rules, Connectionalism, Mission, and the Social Principles,” as well as their corresponding paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline*. Prepare an opening meditation or devotion for the group, or introduce the group member who will do this.

Candidates will continue getting acquainted with each other. Prepare the environment to help them become comfortable and feel safe sharing in the group. You might begin the meeting by asking one or two short questions inviting group members to tell a little more about themselves, such as “Which Bible passage sustains you or gives you joy when you read it?” or “What was the best (or worst) thing that happened to you since we last met?” You may also want to ask some quick preliminary questions of the group about the reading material in this section, such as “What most surprised you about this chapter?” or “What did you find most interesting or compelling about this reading?”

Invite the group to discuss some of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Ask candidates to focus on the intersection between their beliefs and those of United Methodism, as outlined in the reading.

The Theological Task of United Methodist Laity and Clergy

Enable discussion and reflection that helps clarify the theological task of United Methodists. Highlight the four central

principles of our theological reflections: (1) critical and constructive, (2) individual and communal, (3) contextual and incarnational, and (4) essentially practical. Explore these principles by asking the group for concrete examples of each principle. Be prepared to contrast these theological principles with those of other denominations or religious traditions.

General Rules and Small Groups

Wesley's understanding of grace, the General Rules, and small groups is critical to understanding United Methodism. Have the group "translate" Wesley's General Rules into contemporary language. What impact might accountability to a small group and to these Rules have on their lives?

Connectionalism and Mission

Our denomination's connectional ties are one of The United Methodist Church's greatest strengths. This meeting offers an opportunity for your group to survey the impact of our connectionalism. Using the three categories of faith and good works, mission and service, and connectionalism for mission, review how our accountability to and connection with others enriches both our common life and our mission in the world. Contrast that with the structure of other denominations that are congregationally-based. You could draw a continuum, from connectional to congregational, and place United Methodist and other churches (Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Primitive Baptist, etc.) along this continuum.

The Book of Discipline, The Book of Resolutions, and The Book of Worship

Bring copies of *The Book of Discipline*, *The Book of Resolutions*, and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* to this meeting. Prepare yourself to share a brief overview of each—their history, development, content, and place in our church. (Include a look at the Social Principles in *The Book of Discipline* as well.) Ask for questions and comments on these.

More Resources

Look at the Resources section for this chapter. The Foreword in Tom Frank's book, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church* paints a lively picture of the relationship between United Methodist communities of faith and *The Book of Discipline*. This serves as human context for the *Discipline's* legislation and structure. If you have time, read this section (or ask one of the candidates to read it before the meeting), and share it with the group, or consider presenting a quick summary of some other book listed in this chapter's resource section.

Closing

Plan a closing time with your group. Again, you could ask for brief reactions or reflections on the group's session together. You could simply go around the group and ask for one or two words they would like to share about today's time.

Assign any homework or reading for the next meeting. Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any ques-

tions about this. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group's ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 3

Grace and the Sacraments

This section outlines some important theological understandings of grace and the sacraments. Prepare for this group meeting by reading this chapter with an eye to the importance of grace for Wesley—in his life, his teachings, and in his emphasis on grace in his small groups. If you have not opted to ask candidates to do so, prepare an opening meditation or devotion for the group.

Consider opening this session by inviting group members to remember a time in their lives when they felt touched or moved by an experience of grace. Ask them to share their experience. Your own answer to this question will serve to model vulnerability as well as reinforcing the group's covenant to create a hospitable environment for personal and spiritual growth.

Grace

One of the major points in this chapter is the nature of grace and Wesley's understanding of three key aspects of grace: prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying. Ask for volunteers to express their understanding of one or more of these aspects. Work with the group toward identifying the role of each of these kinds of grace and integrating them into the whole

experience of grace. Refer to the first three reflection questions at the end of the chapter for additional discussion entry points. A short Bible study of Psalm 59:10 (the God of mercy shall go before me) is a good way to uncover more of what it means to experience prevenient grace.

The Sacraments: Signs of Grace

Examine with the group Wesley's two signs of grace: the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. You may refer to the material in this chapter; you may also refer to the sections of *The Book of Discipline* that address these sacraments.

Our understanding of baptism precludes "re-baptism." Have the group reflect on why Wesley was adamant about baptism being an act of God and a sign of God's grace, not an act we do ourselves. Baptism is God's claim on us—not the other way around. Explore this carefully with candidates. Ask the group members about their baptisms—as an infant, a young person, or as an adult. One of the reflection questions asks the candidate to talk about why United Methodists baptize children. Having the ability to articulate an answer to this question will serve the candidates well as they prepare for interviews with the district Committee.

Wesley believed and taught that the communion table is open to all—believer and non-believer alike. He even taught that the sacrament of Holy Communion could in fact be a means of grace for converting non-believers: God could act on a non-believer's heart in the simple sharing of bread and wine. It is important to allow candidates to consider the difference between the practice of Wesley's "open communion" and other groups' practice of "closed communion."

“Closed communion” is the practice of restricting the serving of the elements only to those who are members in good standing of a particular denomination, church, or sect. A look at the continuum of practices could be helpful to the candidates. Consider having newsprint and markers available for candidates to make a continuum and locate different practices of Holy Communion along that continuum.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church practices closed communion, as do some confessional denominations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America practices “Eucharistic hospitality,” which means it is the person’s and not the church’s decision to participate in the sacrament (though this denomination does open their table to “baptized Christians” only). Some Baptists restrict their table even more than Roman Catholics, opening it only to those who are members of their particular congregation.

Work together with your group to understand Wesley’s teaching about Holy Communion. Candidates should be able to express cogently the United Methodist understanding and practice of this sacrament.

More Resources

The United Methodist Church’s Board of Global Ministries website features a collection of Wesley’s most important sermons. Go to the site <http://www.umcmission.org/find-resources/john-wesley-sermons> and find sermons in which Wesley preaches on grace, baptism, and Holy Communion. Copy excerpts to share with your group. Familiarity with some of Wesley’s sermons is a good resource for candidates as they prepare for interviews. (Date accessed: June 10, 2015)

A rich variety of United Methodist theologians who have followed in Wesley's steps and embraced his thought is listed in the resources section. One book highlights the contribution of women and feminist theology. Another is the history of Hispanics/Latinos in Methodism. Two more books focus on the contributions of African-Americans and Asian-Americans in our church. If you are unable to access these and/or cannot find material on the web about these important contributions, be sure to point candidates to these books and encourage them to explore one or more.

Closing

Prepare the group to close this meeting. Ask members to share briefly one thing that stood out for them from their time with the group today. Assign any homework or reading for the next meeting. Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group's ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 4

Spiritual Disciplines

Tending your faith—and recovering it when it gets mislaid—is fundamental to the life of a Christian. And it's especially critical for those in or considering service as ministers.

One way to open this meeting is to invite your group to talk about times when their faith has been “misplaced.” What were the circumstances? How long did this period last? Who—or what—accompanied them during this time? Were there spiritual practices or disciplines that were helpful to them? How did they find their faith again—or how did their faith find them? Another way to approach this conversation is to have candidates talk in pairs or groups of three to allow additional time for sharing. Then, bring the group back together and invite candidates to share helpful spiritual practices their group discussed.

Wesley knew from personal experience how critical spiritual disciplines were as the means of grace that opened him to God’s presence and leanings. He was a vocal proponent of his ministers spending time in prayer, Bible study, and giving attention to their spiritual lives. Ask the group to reflect on times in their lives when they have been especially attentive to their spiritual journey, and times when they neglected it. What differences did they notice during these times of attention or inattention? How did attention or inattention to their spirituality affect their relationships with family, friends, work, or God? How might members of this group encourage each other on the spiritual journey they share over the next few months?

Wesley and Spiritual Disciplines

Look at Wesley’s division of spiritual disciplines into two categories: acts of piety and acts of mercy. As you go through his list under both kinds of acts, note Wesley’s concern for both social and personal facets of spiritual formation and growth. How does this understanding match up with group members’ experiences

of their formation and growth? Have there been times when one facet (outward or inward) has outweighed the other?

The Rich Landscape of Spiritual Disciplines

There is richness in the variety of spiritual disciplines that feed the soul and imagination of those who seek closeness with God. This chapter explores that richness by tracing the development of different spiritual disciplines over the centuries.

As your group considers the depth and lavishness of these practices, help them keep these questions in mind:

- What does the diversity of these disciplines say about the nature of God?
- What does it say about the nature of God's relationship with these communities over the years?
- What does it say about the nature of God's relationship with individual believers?
- What does this diversity say about the spiritual lives of women and men, of different ethnic communities, and of people in different stations of life? What can group members learn about their own spiritual development from people whose lives and journeys are so diverse and so different from their own?

There are several ways you might introduce these disciplines: large or small group discussion, having one member describe what they know or have experienced with one or more of these, or leading the group in a few of the disciplines. Another way is to post summaries and instructions for each discipline around the room. Ask group members to walk around, read each one, and stand near the one that most intrigues them,

feels familiar to them, or seems most unfamiliar. Then, invite group members to sit near the posted discipline they have chosen and spend 15 minutes with that discipline.

You will need to prepare for some of these stations. For *Lectio Divina*, you could provide Bibles or a passage of Scripture for people to read. Supply blank paper and pens for *Journaling*. At the *Spiritual Reading* station, provide three or four appropriate books, or have available copied excerpts from a book or two. For *Spiritual Guide*, copy excerpts from a book or article about spiritual direction.

Bring the group back together to debrief.

Closing

Prepare the group to close this meeting. Suggest that group members choose one spiritual discipline new to them to practice in the coming weeks. Ask them to journal or keep notes about the practice so they can share part of the experience with the group. Ask them to journal what part of the practice was easiest. What was most difficult? Put this exercise in the context of how critical it is to take time, constantly, to seek God and let God seek them.

Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group's ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 5

Vocation, Call, and Gifts

“Our vocation is not a sphinx’s riddle, which we must solve in one guess or else perish.” Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk writing about vocation, asserts that finding our vocation is not a game of hide-and-seek with God, but a two-way interaction between God and us. Open this session with Merton’s quote and encourage the group to talk about its implications for them.

Vocation and Call

This chapter speaks to the heart of what it means to be called to a vocation. Here are the major elements of call in this chapter:

- the call from Scripture (with a focus on Zacchaeus, Samuel, and Mary)
- Wesley’s understanding of call (through the *Historic Three Questions* and the role of these questions in the district Committee interview)
- Jesus’s struggle with call (and his relationship with God through the Holy Spirit)

Be prepared to lead your group in discussion and interaction around these issues. Help them make personal connections with these elements of call.

Gifts

Look over the questions in this section. Use these questions, or others you think are helpful, either in a whole group discussion or in smaller groups or pairs. What came up during

the discussion? Highlight reflections on accomplishments, possessions, values, energy, or boredom for work. How do these inform candidates as they seek to discern their calls?

Where Gifts Begin

This section addresses the complex nature of who we are and what we might bring to ministry because of it. Family of origin, family of choice, current family and primary relationships, community of support, sex and gender, race, ethnicity, our bodies, and our socioeconomic background interact in myriad ways to shape who we are. Ask candidates to talk about these questions: Which of the factors have most influenced the development of their gifts? Which had the most positive effect on their gifts? Which get in the way of letting them claim their gifts? What effects do body, health, gender, race, and economic or social status have?

Helping candidates identify the factors that shape their gifts will be important. Figuring out how they are put together and how both their past and present circumstances and relationships contribute to their identity is a crucial step in the process of discernment. This kind of self-understanding will enable them to grow, as well as avoid potential pitfalls that might lie ahead. Use your best judgment about how to structure the candidates' interactions with these nine questions; the time you devote to this will matter a great deal.

Triumph and Shortfall: Valuing Others' Perspectives

The saying is true: if you want someone to get to know you, share three triumphs with them; if you want someone to get to know you better, share three shortfalls. This is the place

where community feedback, affirmation, and critique come into play for candidates. This section includes approaches for helping the group critique and support each other. Emphasize the importance of looking honestly at their abilities, their performance, and the strengths and weaknesses of their gifts.

Honest self-examination is an integral part of preparing candidates for ministry. Share this, and your support, with your candidacy group.

Closing

Prepare the group to close the meeting. Assign any homework or reading for the next meeting. Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group's ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 6

Same Spirit, Many Callings

“Many people labor under the impression that those who work for the church—missionaries, consecrated lay ministers, licensed or ordained clergy—have a higher calling than those who work in other professions and jobs.” This quote from the chapter is a widely held belief and one most candidates would have heard, and may even believe. Using the Scriptures and church history cited below, lead your group through a discus-

sion that will help them place “church” work alongside other kinds of work as God-given and holy. You might do this by:

- Looking at the juxtaposition in Luke of the stories of Mary and Martha alongside the Good Samaritan. What do these stories say about the nature of callings?
- Relate biblical calls to church-related work. Aaron and his sons were called to the priesthood; Mary was called to bear Christ into the world; Simon and Andrew were called from fishing to supporting Jesus’s work and evangelizing; and Barnabas, Saul, and John were called to proclaim the word of God in synagogues.
- Examine the many examples in the Bible of God calling people to non-church-related work. Joshua was called to be a military and political leader; David was called to become king during a crisis in Israel; Esther was called as queen to risk her life to save her people; and businesswoman Lydia was called to provide financial support to the new Christian community.

End this portion of the session by focusing on these words from the chapter: “Keep in your mind and heart that, whatever your profession—whether it was something you did or did not have a choice in—the calling is to full-time service.” What effect does this have on candidates as they discern their callings? What effect do these statements have on candidates’ attitudes toward “church-related” and “non-church-related” work?

Deacons, Elders, and Local Pastors

Ask the group to focus on the differences—sacramental, functional, day-to-day—among deacons, elders, and local pastors. What are these? In what ways are these three most similar? In what ways are they most different? What most distinguishes each from the other two?

Find out which of the short vignettes of deacons, elders, and local pastors each candidate most identified with or found most intriguing. What was it that struck them about one or two of the stories? Which looked most challenging to them? Which felt more familiar or comfortable?

Taking Time to Reflect

After these discussions, lead your group in a time of personal reflection. Gather them in silence and invite them to center for quiet prayer and contemplation on today's discussion. Guide them through an extended meditation. You may want to use some of the following as prompts:

Consider your own gifts and present circumstances.

- What feelings and thoughts come when you consider being at work in the world
 - > as a lay person,
 - > as a deacon,
 - > as an elder,
 - > or as a local pastor?
- Imagine yourself on each of these paths. What might your work look like as a deacon? An elder? A local pastor? As a faithful Christian in a setting outside traditional ordained or licensed ministry?
- What appeals to you about each of these? What gives you pause? Why? What is least enticing?

- To which form of ministry are you most attracted? Why? Which feels as though it might fit you well?
- Think about God and God's presence in your life. Sit quietly and listen for anything God might be telling you right now.

Give candidates time to ponder these questions. Then, call them back together. If there are those who wish to share something of their prayer experience, invite them to do so. But remind them that this reflection was simply a time for them and God and that keeping the time private is fine.

Closing

Prepare the group to close the meeting. Assign any homework or reading for the next meeting. Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group's ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 7

Yes, No, Maybe: Health and Wholeness

If you are not familiar with Wesley's *Primitive Physick: Or An Easy and Natural Way of Curing Most Diseases*, you might peruse it in preparation for this session. The preface is reproduced on the website of the General Board of Global Ministries of The

United Methodist Church, as listed in the chapter's resource section. Choose a few passages from it to open this session. Wesley was very interested in health and wholeness; some of his observations are useful and stand the test of time. Others are simply entertaining.

This section addresses health and wholeness—physical, emotional, and behavioral. Helping candidates address their own health and encouraging them to consider ways to become or stay healthy are the major issues here. Begin by discussing with your group our Christian and Wesleyan roots in holistic care and how entering licensed or ordained ministry might affect their personal care practices.

Physical Health and Abilities

Being or becoming physically healthy requires thought, time, and effort. Caring for the body is a spiritual discipline. This means being connected and aware, living through the body, and not just living in it. (The concept of soma informs the conversation here.)

Healthy eating, regular exercise, and adequate rest strengthen our health and can improve our quality of life. Address these with your group. How well are they addressing these physical issues? How often are they connected with their bodies? How well do they listen to what their bodies need?

“*The Book of Discipline* is clear: a disability is not considered an unfavorable health factor (§324.8). What matters is your ability to meet the professional standards and to render effective service in your appointment setting.” Go over this statement from the chapter, highlighting its meaning for those who are differently abled and for our perspectives on ability and disability. Clarify the church's position that what

matters most about a candidate's health is their ability to be effective in service as a minister.

Emotional Health

Coping with stress, fostering the ability to understand and manage feelings, and practicing adaptability in the midst of change are some of the challenges candidates face in everyday life—and some of the challenges they will face in their lives as ministers.

Give your group time to examine various aspects of caring for their emotional health. Encourage them to discuss which practices are relatively familiar to them and which present particular challenges. Ask people to share their own habits or suggestions for becoming more emotionally healthy in these areas. Help them understand that the district Committee will address these issues with them in their interviews.

Behavioral Health

Become familiar, if you are not already, with the *Behavioral Health Guidelines* by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church. These were written to help conference Boards of Ordained Ministry address behavioral health as it relates to effectiveness in ministry and the avoidance of misconduct. This resource assists boards in the selection of candidates for ministry. These guidelines are available on the Board of Ordained Ministry Library at www.bomlibrary.org.

Behavioral health as part of holistic health is critical, yet it is one of the more difficult health measures to talk about and address. Talk with your group about the behavioral health categories. How would good health in each of those catego-

ries affect ministry? How would disruption in each of those categories affect ministry in a congregation?

Spiritual Health

For many, taking a full Sabbath is a major point of resistance. Slowing down is difficult. Over-commitment is an easy rhythm to fall into. Learning how to rest in a world that encourages us to go faster and faster, to produce and consume more and more as a sign of success, is no easy task. Ask your group if any of them practice Sabbath. What does this look like—is it a full day each week, or an hour each day? What do they do to maintain boundaries when life gets busy? Are there any candidates who do not practice Sabbath, or feel they cannot? Ask them what impedes them? How might they find rest each day, rather than taking a full day each week?

A Life of Health and Balance

The context for getting healthy and staying healthy is not just the individual. Consider this statement from the chapter: “. . . the responsibility for your health is not yours alone. The local church (or other setting) in which you serve has a responsibility, too. They are, in fact, partners in this endeavor with you. They can help in a variety of ways.” What are the implications of this statement? How does your group react to this? Are they surprised? Skeptical? Encouraged?

Talk with your group about the importance of understanding their needs in the many areas of health, as well as finding ways to articulate that to others. Can they see themselves being able to do that, or would they have trouble asking for what they need? Explore with candidates what it means to ask others—family, church, friends—for what they need.

Closing

Prepare the group to close this meeting. Suggest that each group member choose one specific area of health to be mindful of in the coming week. Also, tell candidates to look ahead to the next chapter, and point them to the “Planning for Ministry Financial Worksheet” on page 124. Ask them to complete this worksheet in preparation for your next meeting.

Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference’s process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this. Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members’ progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group’s ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 8

Yes, No, Maybe: Financial Literacy

Discussing money can be sensitive, complicated, and even problematic. But for candidates, financial literacy is essential.

Start with a non-threatening exercise. Divide the group into threes. Ask them to discuss these questions:

- Are you comfortable talking about your financial situation?
- What attitudes and approaches to money did you learn from your family of origin?
- If you are married or in a relationship, who handles the finances? How did you decide on that approach? How is it working? If you are single, are you the only person

in charge of your finances? How long have you been financially independent?

- Are you more of a spender or a saver? What did you see modeled as you were growing up in the area of finances?
- How does your faith influence your decisions about money?
- What discoveries or insights have you gained as you have thought about your finances?
- Have you ever made and used a budget?
- What part does charitable giving play in your life?

After the small groups have had time to discuss these, bring everyone back together. Find out what the experience was like for them and ask them to share something from their group.

Goals: Today and Tomorrow

The ability to articulate personal and professional goals will help candidates gain clarity as circumstances change and will serve them well during the discernment process, as well as in the future. Give your group a chance to reflect on their goals.

Encourage them to consider these four requisites to setting and achieving goals:

- Identify the financial costs of achieving these goals.
- Make a timeline that includes steps along the way to the goals.
- Ask for help—scholarships, loans, ways to reduce spending.
- Remember the big picture; be honest and open; talk with others about goals as they evolve and change.

Theology and Psychology of Money

In this section there are several key areas. First, the origins of candidates' attitudes and approaches to money most likely surfaced in the previous group conversation. In addition, theological convictions about debt, spending, and giving are key to understanding money. Share how these factors are critical to financial literacy. Since this particular discussion may make some candidates feel uneasy, remind the group that no one is required to share anything they do not want to.

A Closer Look

Developing a healthy financial plan requires becoming aware of and paying attention to a variety of economic elements: spending, income, borrowing, additional funding. Find out where members of your group stood in their awareness of these elements of their finances before they filled out the worksheet and where they stand now that they have completed it. What changed? How do they see their own financial situation right now, as they consider seminary, graduate school, or Course of Study (or continue in those studies, if already started)? What areas of concern do they have in providing for themselves, family members, or other dependents in the next few years? What resources can they identify for additional funding? (If you are aware of other resources, share those.)

Closing

Prepare the group to close the meeting. Check in with individuals on their place or progress in the conference's process toward a possible certification interview with the district Committee, and to see if they have any questions about this.

Use your judgment as to the best way to keep track of your group members' progress. Continue to let them know you are available to help them along the way.

Close the meeting with your group's ritual or with a time of prayer.

Part I / Chapter 9

Yes, No, Maybe: Next Steps

It is time for candidates to make decisions. Will they apply for certification as a candidate? Will they decide instead to continue their ministry as a layperson? Are they undecided, unsure of where they are being called to go next?

As a mentor, your role has been significant in this process. It is even more so now. How will you facilitate these candidates—whose journeys are so varied and whose decisions will be so varied—as they listen even more closely for God's direction and will? Praying—for them and yourself—is vital.

But you, like the candidates, are not alone. God has promised you the Spirit's presence, even as you have promised to be present to the candidates. Rely on the Spirit and place yourself in God's care as you care for these candidates.

Consider how you will structure this session. The decisions candidates make now require both one-on-one time with you as well as time with the group. The size of your group, the parameters of time, and your own availability will factor into how you address this next step.

If you meet one-on-one with each candidate before the group meets, discuss with them where they are in their decision-making. You may want to schedule these individual times after the group has met for the last time in order to follow up

with each candidate about their decision. Or you may want to lead the group halfway through the session, break to spend one-on-one time with candidates, then call the group back together to discuss candidates' decisions. If logistics preclude doing any of these, consider dividing the group meeting into two separate sessions and meet individual candidates in the time between the two sessions. Whatever you (and the group, to the extent you are able to involve them) decide, make sure the major points below are part of the plan.

Gaining Clarity

Begin your group meeting with the questions in this section. These questions address group members' images of their call, the feedback that has helped them better understand their call, the place of their ego in hearing God's intention for them, and any conversations they may need to have to get a clearer answer to their call.

Consider breaking into small groups to discuss these questions, and then return to the large group for debriefing. Or allow time for candidates to engage these questions by journaling privately, and then ask them to share their observations and insights with the whole group.

Remind the group that everyone's call or decision is unique, and though that call may look different from anyone else's, it is still a valid call. Encourage candidates to value and trust their own relationship with God—again, God's relationship with each of us is uncommonly singular.

Three Possibilities Ahead

Lead your group in the exercise in this section. If they have not yet done so, ask candidates to summarize their call in

one or two sentences on an index card. As each person reads their summary aloud, ask the group to give them feedback. How do group members see that person's gifts for ministry in the context of what that candidate has written about their own call? How do reactions from the group reinforce or challenge what the candidate has said about their call? Follow the group's discussion to help them give effective and comprehensive feedback to each other.

Honoring Passages

Marking the beginning or end of a season with a ritual can be a profound way to honor candidates' decisions and choices. Together with your group, come up with a short ritual or liturgy to send them forth. Find a way to bless, as a worshipping community, the next steps each will undertake in the coming weeks and months. Honor the covenant you made with your group at the beginning of this process with a final pledge of continued support.

Next Steps

Find ways to accompany members of your group in their next steps. If their answer was "no," discuss with them what their next steps will be in discerning their call. If their answer is "maybe," discuss what next steps might be. If their answer is "yes," work with them to begin the next steps they will take in order to meet with the district Committee regarding certified candidacy. Whatever their decision, be careful to work out a follow-up plan that makes sense for each group member and the particular requirements in your conference.

Mentor's Report

As a mentor, you have responsibilities both to the candidates in your group and to the wider Church. You covenanted to serve the group in its discernment process; you also covenanted to serve the Church by helping candidates discern how they can best serve.

Now it is time to write a mentor report for each of your group members. These written reports are shared with the district Committee on Ordained Ministry. Keep in mind this report is introductory and informational. It highlights the candidate's understanding of their own gifts, grace, and calling for ministry, as well as issues the candidate may need to explore further. This report is not evaluative or supervisory; it is relevant to the candidate's experience thus far in their preparation for ministry.

As a mentor, you prepare this report and share it with the candidate before sending it to the district Committee on Ordained Ministry. You and the candidate together will consent to the contents of the report and will each sign the report before sending it to the district Committee. It will not contain any confidential information without the candidate's permission. In fact, no conversation or personal information will be shared unless the candidate gives written permission. Mutual respect and confidentiality are the baseline for the report.

Share with your group some of the facets of this one-page report: the candidate's self-awareness, gifts for ministry, articulation of call, and your observation of their faith journey thus far. Answer any questions they may have about the mentor's report.

Consider the following questions as you prepare the mentor report:

- What is this person's self-understanding in relation to a possible call and career in ministry?
- What gifts does this person have for licensed or ordained ministry, and how have you observed evidence of grace in their life, and what is this person's understanding of how she or he hopes to serve in licensed or ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church?
- How do they understand their call from God into licensed or ordained ministry? Can they clearly articulate an understanding of that call?
- How have they responded to the information and content about the call and work of an ordained or licensed minister in The United Methodist Church?
- How has their understanding of their call been affirmed by others?
- Have they honored their covenant with the group to be present, open, and involved in the group's process?
- How do they respond to feedback from others? Have they given others helpful feedback?
- How do they understand their spiritual life? What spiritual disciplines have they experienced during these last weeks? What disciplines seem to undergird them in their daily lives?
- What other comments, factors, or suggestions can you, as their mentor, offer that might be important for the district Committee's consideration?

Also, be sure to check with your conference's candidacy registrar to see if there is a conference standard form for you to prepare for candidates.

Your Time and Commitment

The time, energy, and commitment you have invested in the lives of those exploring ministry have the potential to affect the spiritual lives of these candidates for a lifetime. Your efforts also shape the future of your annual conference and of United Methodism. You may see some of the fruits of your work and be gratified and humbled. In other instances, you will probably never know the extent of your influence. But all your efforts—and the efforts of all the candidates—are seen as blessed by God.