

# **Toward an Effective Interview Process**

# The Purpose of Interviews in Light of Evaluating for Ministry

- A process to determine the fitness or readiness of individuals for ordained ministry.
- At best, a collaborative process in which candidate and committee join together to discern person's call and gifts.
- At worst, a power abuse used to screen and gate-keep and not form and support.

# Definitions

- Evaluation – to determine fitness, readiness and effectiveness.
- Formation – the shaping and integration of ministerial leadership identity.
- Interviewing – the process whereby the interviewee and committee join in the work of evaluation and formation.

# Theological Components of the Interview

- Community
- Covenant
- Hospitality

- The **community** within which the interview takes place represents the Body of Christ.
- The interview process is the practice of Christ's **covenant**.
- The interview participants express the nature of church. Is **hospitality** experienced?

**Are community, covenant and  
hospitality**

**Interwoven in the interview  
process?**

# What an Interview Is Not

- A therapy session
- A coaching session
- An inquisition
- A rescue mission

# Risks in the Process

- The psychological model places unbalanced weight on the scores of testing or the review of the clinical psychologist.
- The diagnostic approach, searches for problems and issues to be corrected.

# Common Pitfalls

- Overuse of questioning; bullet questions
- Inordinate reassurance or praise
- Interpretation
- Persuasion
- Undue identification
- Clever humor
- Domination

# Overcoming the Risk

- A vocational identity approach uses psychology and testing but uses them in the context of understanding the identity of a person and how that identity will develop into ministerial leadership identity.

# What an Interview Is

It is an inquiry and exploration process,  
bound in community, covenant and hospitality,  
co-joined by committee and interviewee  
in the work of formation and evaluation,  
to determine the way the interviewee meets the  
standards of ministry as formulated by the BOM  
and guided by *The Book of Discipline*.

# Interviewing Skills

- Preparing for the interview
- Creating an appropriate setting for interview
- Shaping questions
- Listening for what is said and what is meant
- Giving feedback
- Helping an interview group function with integrity

# Interviewing Skills

- Assessing information toward decision making
- Forming recommendations
- Keeping notes and records
- Keeping confidences
- Testing assumptions
- Summarizing the interview in oral and written form

# **Interview Type**

The decision asked for in any interview shapes the purpose and the questions.

# Types of Questions to get Positive Results

- Limit restrictive questions:  
yes or no; factual answers
- Use open-ended questions
- Address open-ended situations
- Command questions solicit info naturally
- Choice questions lead to “going deeper”

# Phases of the Interview Session

- **Team briefing** – A moment prior to the interviewee's arrival when the team reviews the team roles, the strategy and questions (the talking points), and centers in on the arriving person.
- **Initial interview phase** – Establishes the climate of welcome, putting person at ease, states the purpose and the plan and goal.

# Phases.....

- **Middle phase** – Turns to the purpose and talking points with an effort to identify and come to consensus about issues with balance between concern and straightforward communication.
- **Final phase** – Reviews significant points; informs when interviewee will hear back; leave time for the person's response.

# Phases.....

- **Debriefing phase** – The team reviews the interview, makes a decision and prepares a report to the full board.
- **Follow-up phase** – Report to the full board and discuss follow-up, if necessary. If possible, someone should report to the interviewee.

# Interview Feedback

- Feedback offered in the interview setting is given as part of the back-and-forth of conversation and helps affirm that what is meant by the speaker is heard by the listeners.
- Feedback following the interview is to be done both orally and in writing.

# Interview for Certified Candidacy

- Fitness and potential effectiveness for ministry are the basic purpose of this interview.
- Exploration of the candidate's call to ministry, relationship with God, and the ability to relate to people are fundamental questions of fitness.
- Interviewing for fitness includes spiritual, psychological and physical dimensions.

# **Certification Interview Information to Use**

- Statements of call
- Statements of faith
- Recommendations
- Interest inventories
- Psychological assessments
- Background checks
- Mentor reports

# Interview for Probationary Membership

- Determination of readiness for commissioning to probationary membership is the purpose.
- Look for areas of developing competency.
- This interview judges one for fitness and whether they are developing the skills to be effective in ordained ministry.

# **Probationary Interview Information to Use**

- Material passed on from dCOM
- Academic background
- Theological statement and understanding of the church
- Seminary reports
- Field education or internships

# **Interview for Ordination and Full Membership**

- This interview focuses on effectiveness in ministry after a period of probationary membership.
- Are there unresolved issues or questions of fitness and readiness?
- Ask questions to get at their articulation of living out the ministry of their call—deacon or elder.

# Ordination Interview

## Information to Use

- Review of previous material and written work
- Reports and evaluations of the DS, SPRC or personnel person of employer, references
- Seminary reports
- Visuals or demonstrations of their ministry

# **Interview for Change of Conference Relationship**

- Get clear about the specific purpose of the change and the interview.
- Questions geared toward one's readiness for the change or the return.
- Questions about one's goals.

# Interview for One from Another Denomination

- Following dCOM recommendation or satisfaction about the following:
  - +verification of character
  - +standing in their denomination
  - +ability to accept and minister within UMC church theology and polity
  - +background check, psyc assess, credit check

# A Sample of Questions

- Share something of your call and Christian experience.
- What is your understanding of the theological position of the UMC?
- What is your understanding of sacraments?  
and their relationship to your ministry?
- What is your understanding of UM polity and doctrine and ordering of ministry? How will you support it?

# Questions of Family/ Life History

- How does the person describe or recall family history? Is it positive? Can the person be reflective or only describe the facts?
- Can the person differentiate from that family system to one's ministry system?
- How does this effect one's expectations for ministry?

# Questions of Faith Identity

- How did the person come into his/her faith?  
Into the denomination?
- How does the person identify with the denomination? What is important to him/her?
- How is the person's faith embodied in his/her identity and ministerial work?

# Questions of Call

- Can the person recognize connections between their life story, faith development and call?
- Can the person articulate their call as a mission outside their own personal need for fulfillment?

# In/Effective Communication

- Lack of vs. Clarity about process, requirements and expectations.
- Reactivity contributes to defensiveness and impasse, vs. ...
- Responsiveness blames less; stays engaged while remaining clear about who is responsible for what.
- Taking care of (being responsible for); vs. caring for the person.