

Summary of Testing Process
Board of Ordained Ministry
Texas Annual Conference
United Methodist Church

The primary purpose of the psychological evaluation of clergy candidate process is to prevent people from becoming United Methodist clergy who because of their psychological issues would be a danger to parishioners and/or themselves while functioning in the ministerial role. The client in the evaluation process is the Texas Annual Conference and thus any information obtained through the evaluation process can be shared with the Board. A secondary purpose is to provide feedback to clergy candidates that can be helpful to them in their personal and professional formation.

Different tests are administered at each phase of the ordination process. At certified candidate level the MMPI-2, Strong Vocational Interest Inventory, and the Sentence Completion Test are given. The focus of these tests is "personnel selection" in that vocational interest and level of psychological functioning are determined in order to prevent people from going into ministry because of their psychological issues and/or lack of congruence of vocational interest to those who enjoy being in ministry.

At provisional deacon or elder status the PsychEval Personality Questionnaire is given. This is a version of the 16PF. The focus of this test is more on relational style with some focus on level of psychopathology.

The test given at ordination of deacon or elder in full connection is the Personal Career Development Profile. Since by this time the candidate has gone through a series of psychological tests, this exam focuses very little on psychopathology and much more on leadership style, relationships with parishioners, and growth areas to be focused on in order to be an effective pastor of a congregation.

At each step of the testing process candidates choose people to evaluate them through a written Recommendation Form that is submitted to the Center. At least two of these evaluations must be completed before the clergy candidate evaluation can be finished.

There are at each level of the evaluation three categories to which a candidate maybe be assigned. These categories are as follow:

Type I candidate. A person in this category shows nothing in the testing that indicates that they should not be in ministry. However, like all of us, each candidate has growth areas in which it would be helpful to focus and these are noted to the report.

Type II candidate is an individual who in the perception of the psychological evaluation team is not currently ready to be granted the level of relationship to the Conference to which they aspire. Such a candidate may have psychological issues, poor

recommendations, or vocational interests that vary widely from those of successful clergy. At this stage what is recommended is a specific action or actions that needs to be taken that might allow the individual to move to Type I status. Examples of recommendations that are often made in this way include psychotherapy, Clinical Pastoral Education, Pastoral Care Specialist Program, working in some capacity on a church staff, etc. Generally once a year has passed and the requirement has been met, the evaluation may occur once again.

Type III candidate. This individual is a person who should not now or ever be in ministry. The reason for this designation is that he or she would be damaged themselves or do damage to parishioners in the church. While this category does not call into question a person's faith, such a designation means, in the opinion of the evaluators, this person for a variety of reasons is dangerous and should not be in ministry in the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Two final issues need to be noted. First of these is that while a Type I designation may be necessary for functioning effectively in ministry, it is not necessarily sufficient. In other words, candidates can have an absence of psychopathology that would interfere with their functioning in ministry, but may or may not have the gifts and graces for ministry that will allow them to be effective in this vocation. Thus a Type I designation is not an assurance of pastoral effectiveness.

Finally, it is, of course, the decision of the Board of the Ministry as to who is accepted into relationship with the Annual Conference and who is not. Over the years many people who have received a Type I evaluation on their psychological have not been accepted into relationship with the Annual Conference for a variety of reasons and people with Type II or Type III designations have been accepted into relationship with the Annual Conference. It is important for the Board, however, to note that the liability to the Annual Conference increases, in terms of actions taken by a clergy person, if they have received a psychological evaluation that put the individual in a Type II or Type III category and this rating has been disregarded.