

Pastor Parish Relations/Staff Parish Relations Committee
Candidate for Ministry Inquiry Tool

Dear Staff/Parish Relations Committee Chair,

Among the many tasks of the SPR Committee in your church is the discernment of call for those who believe that they are called to vocational ministry in Christ's church. Discernment of ministry candidates can be a daunting process. Often, SPR Committees wonder what questions they are expected to ask of these persons called of God or they wonder what authority they have to discern the call of someone from their own congregation.

All baptized Christians are called to ministry. These ministries are as various and unique as the churches that you serve in. United Methodists believe that the discernment of call for baptized Christians for vocational or ordained ministry is best discerned *in community*. The discernment process begins with your committee at the local church level. It then proceeds to the district level and eventually to the Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Throughout the entire process, the *community of faith* will surround this person in the discernment process.

The tool attached to this document is provided to help your committee engage in meaningful, discerning conversation with persons who come to your committee as part of the candidacy process of the United Methodist Church. This is certainly a time to encourage and pray for this candidate. It is also a time to ask reflective questions about God's call upon this person's life. Perhaps the most important questions your committee members need to ask each other are, "Is this person called into ministry as a lay person, as a part-time clergyperson, or as a full-time clergyperson?", "Does this person exhibit gifts and graces for ministry?", or "Would we like this person to be our pastor?"

Use this tool as a guide for open and honest discussion with your candidate. On behalf of the church, be bold in your discernment as a committee. Helping your candidate process and discern their call early on in the process will be of great benefit to them and the church. The SPR is encouraged not to give a yes vote lightly in recommending the candidate to the district Committee on Ministry. If the candidate's calling and decision are valid, the call can stand the test of careful inquiry and examination. Please remember that the conversations of your committee with the candidate are of a confidential nature and should not be shared with your local congregation. Any concerns about the candidate may be shared with your pastor or the district superintendent.

Staff Parish Relations Committee
Candidate for Ministry Inquiry Tool

- 1) Please tell the committee about your faith journey: (space for notation provided below)

- 2) Tell us about your call to ministry:

- 3) Tell us about your desire to do God's will. Are you willing to trust God with your future, wherever God may lead you?

- 4) Are there any areas of your life that you are experiencing healing right now? (sin, brokenness, finances, addictions, divorce, etc.)

- 5) How is it with your soul?

- 6) How has your spouse and family reacted to your call to ministry? (*Please note that many families struggle with a call to ministry*)

- 7) Tell us about some of the fruitful ministries that you have led or been a part of.

Internal Questions for the SPR to Ponder

- 1) Could you envision this person as your pastor one day?
- 2) Do we see opportunity for growth in the candidate's preaching, leadership skills, and interpersonal skills?
- 3) What gifts and graces for ministry can we identify in this candidate?
- 4) What are the reasons your committee should recommend this candidate to the district Committee on Ordained Ministry?
- 5) Are there reasons why you should not recommend this candidate?
- 6) Does this person have the love of God abiding in them?

PPR/SPR Recommendation Form

Candidate's Name: _____

Date: _____

Charge/Church: _____

District: _____



We recommend this candidate.

Reasons:



We do not recommend this candidate.

Reasons:

Next Steps for Your Candidate

(Please review these steps with your candidate at the close of your meeting)

- 1) If your committee approves your candidate, then they will need to be affirmed and approved at your church's charge conference. (Please see included form)
- 2) Your candidate will need to write a letter to your district superintendent expressing their call to ministry and desire to enter into candidacy.
- 3) Your candidate will need to register for the candidacy retreat. This retreat is held twice a year (January and August). At this retreat, the candidate will learn more about the candidacy process, have an opportunity to network with other candidates, begin the paperwork required for candidacy, and participate in the first level of psychological testing required by the candidacy process. The retreat costs \$500 to register and the bulk of this cost is due to the requisite psychological tests. Your candidate can contact their district superintendent for information on how to register for the retreat.
- 4) If your candidate is still in a time of discernment, there are many opportunities to serve while in this discernment process. One of these opportunities is the Isaiah Project. This program is for college age adults who are discerning a call to ministry and would like to work in a ministry setting during a summer internship. More information about the Isaiah Project is available online at www.kyumc.org
- 5) We are providing a bibliography at the end of this document that includes books on discerning a call to ministry. Please forward this information to your candidate

RESOURCES FOR DISCERNING YOUR CALL

Alive Now - Discerning God's Will

by The Upper Room

<http://alivenow.upperroom.org/2012/04/30/discerning-gods-will/>

The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life

by Os Guinness

Listening to God in Times of Choice: The Art of Discerning God's Will

by Smith, Gordon T.

Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God

by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King

Spiritual Leadership: A Commitment to Excellence for Every Believer

by J. Oswald Sanders

RESOURCES ON SACRAMENTS

By Water and the Spirit -Baptism

(<http://www.gbod.org/lead-your-church/by-water-the-spirit-baptism-study>)

This Holy Mystery - Communion

(<http://www.gbod.org/lead-your-church/this-holy-mystery-communion-study>)

AVENUE TO EXPLORE YOUR CALL FURTHER

Isaiah Project

Kentucky Annual Conference's initiative to identify, encourage and support young people who feel a possible call to ordained ministry.

(<http://www.isaiahprojectumc.com>)