

PASSING THE MANTLE:
PASTORAL FORMATION IN THE
NEW RESIDENCY PROGRAM
OF THE ARKANSAS CONFERENCE
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Professional Project Submitted to
The Faculty of Perkins School of Theology
In
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Of
Doctor of Ministry

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May 2014

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INTRODUCTION

The transition into ministry and entry into the ordination process is a time of new creation. “The first five years of parish ministry set an entire ministry. The habits, the inclinations, the dispositions, the way of understanding vocation is set in those first five years, and it lasts.”¹ For new United Methodist clergy, this transition usually coincides with a time of discernment and assessment during which conference (regional judicatories) boards of ordained ministry are tasked with providing these new resident ministers with a residency curriculum of theological and practical education while also evaluating their effectiveness. Among United Methodist regional judicatories in the country, the Arkansas Conference has one of the highest percentages of young clergy.² The creation and implementation of this program offers the Arkansas Annual Conference the opportunity to shape and create its pastoral culture for decades to come. The purpose of this project is to create, implement, and evaluate a new Residency in Ministry Program that meets the needs of both the commissioned ministers and Board of Ordained Ministry

¹ James Small, coordinator, Office of Theology and Worship for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), from Company of New Pastors, dir. Vernon Leat, prod. Blake Richter, DVD, Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2006, quoted by Palen, Kathryn. “The First Five Years: Four Programs Offering Support to New Pastors.” *Congregations: The Alban Journal* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 11-15, p 11.

² Weems, Lovett H., and Ann A. Michel. *The Crisis of Younger Clergy*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 15.

in the Arkansas Annual Conference. The project examines recent findings of best practices in United Methodist residency programs throughout the United States. It includes a set of residency program goals and a curriculum of assignments that serve both the residents of the Arkansas Conference and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The evaluation phase of the project will include an examination of the new residency program, including surveys of participants who entered residency directly into the new program and those who experienced the program's transition.

A RESIDENCY PROGRAM

A training program for probationary pastors has been needed for some time. The long-term results remain to be seen. My prayer is that as a result of added training, new pastors are more effective at providing leadership to the church, teaching the laity to bring others to Christ and nurturing them to become full disciples of the One who called them from sin and death into eternal life.³

In 1996, the United Methodist Church's General (denominational) Conference approved legislation creating what would eventually be called a residency period that required all probationary (now provisional) ministers who have completed seminary to be involved in a program that "extends theological education," and provides opportunities for them to consider the theological and covenantal ramifications of ordained ministry.⁴ The residency program is placed at the end of the new clergy recruitment and development

³ Manwaring, Donna Bartleson. *An In-ministry Training Program for Probationary Pastors of the Florida Conference, United Methodist Church*. Diss., (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2004), 53.

⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 1996*. (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 1996), Paragraph 317. See also Weems, Lovett H. "Nurturing a Learned Clergy: A Survey of the United Methodist Clergy Probationary Process." *Quarterly Review* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 142-52.

sequence for the denomination that begins with candidacy. During the recruitment stage, potential ministers spend time with a mentor and are evaluated as to call, gifts, and graces for ministry, along with potential future usefulness to expand the ministry of the church. From this point, potential future leaders proceed through a series of processes, both academic and denominational, toward possible ordination. In shorthand, the appropriate church bodies first examine possible candidates' *fitness* for ministry. After some formal theological training, such as seminary, and continued mentoring, the candidates may then be examined for their *readiness* to serve as a minister in a provisional relationship. The culmination of this linear process is a consideration of the provisional minister's *effectiveness* of service. The denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) provides tools and training for annual (regional) conferences for this entire sequence, including tools to create a residency program to bridge the time from readiness (candidacy completed) to effectiveness (ordination) in ministry.⁵ While leaders in the United Methodist denomination, such as Bishop Janice Huie, are beginning to question what she called this "pipeline" paradigm for credentialing new pastoral leadership,⁶ the process remains the operational model for United Methodist annual conferences and the conference boards of ordained ministry that have supervisory and formation responsibilities for ministry candidates.

⁵ Weems, Lovett H. "Nurturing a Learned Clergy," 152. See also a seven page brochure created by the denomination to assist annual (regional) conferences in the creation of residency programs: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. *From Readiness to Effectiveness The Residency Program for Provisional, Commissioned Members of The United Methodist Church, 2013–2016*. (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2013). A version of this brochure has been available for several quadrennia.

⁶ Huie, Janice R. "A New Paradigm for Clergy Leadership: Cultivating an Ecosystem of Excellence." Speech, Excellence in Ministry: Developing Fruitful Leaders Conference, Whites Chapel United Methodist Church, Southlake, Texas, June 2013. Accessed November 2013. <http://www.tmf-fdn.org/learning-transformation/resources-conversations/written-materials/>, p 2.

Until 1996, there was little formal guidance given to these boards of ordained ministry as to how to best guide, nurture, and hold accountable the ministers in the final, probationary point of the ordination process. Some conferences had created programs, while others simply checked to see if any problems had arisen in the probationary minister's early term of service. For example, in the two regional conferences that existed within the state of Arkansas, both served by one resident bishop, there was wide divergence of tradition.⁷ The Little Rock Conference that made up the southern half of the state enjoyed a program adapted from the Perkins School of Theology Intern Program, and there were only interviews conducted with the larger Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) when a candidate sought to begin and finally complete the process, culminating in ordination. Alternatively, the North Arkansas Conference had no program or curriculum at all, but required annual interviews with their Board of Ordained Ministry, along with annual written assignments. In one of the first studies of a program for probationary ministers in the United Methodist Church, Donna Bartleson Manwaring created what she describes as an in-ministry training program for the Florida Conference for new clergy in the 2000 class of probationary members. In her doctor of ministry dissertation submitted to Asbury Theological Seminary, Manwaring shares her experience of a 1998 national conference in Nashville led by GBHEM, in which the denominational representatives were "attempting to take seriously the instruction of the Discipline" to create what we now call a residency program.⁸ I attended a similar conference in Nashville for boards of ordained ministry held by GBHEM in January 2009

⁷ The Little Rock and North Arkansas Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church were merged in 2003.

⁸ Manwaring, Donna Bartleson. *An In-ministry Training Program*. Diss., 6.

that had much the same purpose. Since that study in Florida, there have been two major national statistical studies conducted on behalf of GBHEM's Division of Ordained Ministry⁹ which have helped to better define best practices, along with ongoing experimental programs funded by the Lilly Endowment, which have been studied by the Alban Institute.¹⁰

When I began a leadership role in the Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry in 2005, I knew that our current process for probationary (now provisional) ministers needed to be updated. The Arkansas Conference was created by merging two conference administrative bodies in 2003. The new program and process for probationers seeking ordination was created by simply combining in full the processes from each conference. The Little Rock Conference system, adapted from the Perkins Intern Program, utilized a team composed of laity from the probationary pastor's congregation and two clergy mentors to help offer feedback. The other components were retreats and seminars throughout the year that usually included content that was similar in nature to what the recent graduates had experienced in seminary, often offered by seminary professors. In merging the conference processes, this Little Rock Conference system was combined with the regimen of assignments and annual interviews expected by the former North Arkansas process.

⁹ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness: A Survey of the Probationary Process in the United Methodist Church*. Report. (Kansas City, MO: St Paul School of Theology, 2003). http://www.churchleadership.com/pdfs/Journey_2003.pdf, and Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness: An Ongoing Survey of the Probationary Process in the United Methodist Church*,. Report. 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, 2005). http://www.churchleadership.com/pdfs/Journey_Readiness2Effect.pdf. These two research projects were completed through a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

¹⁰ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition into Ministry*. An Alban Institute Special Report. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008).

In order to create a cohesive Arkansas Conference residency program based upon current research results and suggested best practices, a basic understanding of the transition from academic study into ministry must first be acquired. This transition can be a difficult experience. In an Alban Institute publication, a young pastor shared his experience:

Nothing prepared me for the experience of pastoring the small congregation to which I was first called. Neither my personal experience nor my seminary training had any relation to the dynamics, needs, goals, concerns, or style of ministry found in a smaller congregation. What is worse, I entered believing that there must be something wrong with churches that remain small. It is only by God's grace and years of struggling that I survived such poor preparation and such a bad attitude. It took several years of floundering around before I realized that the biggest problem this smaller church had was not its size, but its pastor.¹¹

This experience is all too common. As the idea for a new residency program was first explored, questions from Kathryn Palen took root:

What challenges do you see new pastors facing as they make the transition from seminary to parish ministry? What ways can you imagine that you and others—in denominational bodies, clergy groups, seminary communities, and congregations — could provide new clergy with concrete opportunities for support and development? What are the benefits of having new pastors whose first experiences in parish ministry are healthy, productive, and nurturing?¹²

It is out of these questions that, in 2009, I formed three goals for a new Residency in Ministry program for the Arkansas Conference:

¹¹ Hagen, Andrew D. "Learning to Pastor a Small Congregation." In *Leadership in Congregations*, edited by Richard Bass, 77-80. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2007), 77. Originally printed in the *Alban Journal*, 1998-01-01 Jan. Feb. 1998, Number 1.

¹² Palen, Kathryn. "The First Five Years: Four Programs Offering Support to New Pastors." *Congregations: The Alban Journal* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 11-15.

1. To provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members seeking ordination and full connection.
2. Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry.
3. Create opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents.

In 2013, in response to multiple conversations with the resident Bishop of Arkansas, Gary Mueller, these Residency in Ministry goals were augmented and set in context with the denomination's mission statement¹³ and to a greater focus on *fruitfulness* throughout the recruitment, formation, deployment, and ongoing supervision of clergy:

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Together as United Methodists, we live out this mission. The RIM [Residency in Ministry] process seeks to further this mission by fulfilling the following goals:

1. Provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members seeking ordination and full connection.
2. Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.
3. Create opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents.¹⁴

These goals are rooted in a theology of ordination that places ordination not in the possession of the ordained, but as a gift from God to the faith community. The church, as the faith community, is then responsible for the discipleship and formation of clergy

¹³ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2012), Paragraph 120.

¹⁴ Bradford, Blake R. "Residency In Ministry." Residency In Ministry: Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church, Board of Ordained Ministry. 2013. Accessed January 15, 2014. http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

leadership and, as Paul writes to Timothy,¹⁵ the faith community also evaluates the “progress” of its pastors.

In June 2009, the new Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program was launched. Over the last five years, 69 ordinands have completed the program, or are currently in process. Included are the following major elements¹⁶:

1. A multi-day summer retreat first organized in partnership with Connected In Christ, an extension ministry of the Arkansas Conference formerly led by the Rev. Dr. Michael Roberts and held at a Roman Catholic retreat center. Following conference restructuring in 2012, the retreat is now led with assistance from the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership and is held at an Arkansas Conference owned campground. This retreat is designed to be a time of learning, vocational formation, and discernment.
2. Small residency Covenant Peer Groups are made up of five to seven residents and two ordained mentor/facilitators that meet around seven times a year, including once at the summer retreat. Each resident is assigned to a peer group based on geographic factors, meaning that most groups have a mix of recent seminary graduates and pastors that have one or more years’ experience.
3. Assignments and annual Board of Ordained Ministry interviews are the third part of the process. Most of the assignments are based on requirements from the current Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. Also included are

¹⁵ See I Timothy 4:15, NRSV.

¹⁶ See Bradford, Blake R. "Residency In Ministry." for an online outline of the program at http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

annual evaluations of effectiveness and fruitfulness from a variety of sources. In the spring of every year, residents meet with the BOM for interviews.

This project will describe the creation and implementation of the Residency in Ministry Program which I developed for the Arkansas Conference BOM, based upon best practices of residency programs and current research concerning the transition into ministry. A survey of current and recent Arkansas Conference ordinands will examine each piece of the program, and compare our results to those of a national denominational survey.

THE TRANSITION INTO MINISTRY

As habits are set and pastoral identity is formed, it is the partially the responsibility of the faith community to engage new clergy and guide them into becoming the leaders that the church will need in the future. The church has a vested interest in developing the kind of clergy leadership which will enable the church to fulfill its disciple-making mission in the name of Christ. This Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry process is an attempt to provide tools, training, and a supportive community to our new clergy, and also ask the right questions that will hold them accountable to bearing fruit in their ministry settings.

BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

“Take authority as an elder to preach the Word of God, to administer the Holy Sacraments and to order the life of the Church, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷ The weight of hands on my shoulders and head pushed me down, seemingly into and through the floor of the rented stage in the local convention center. One by one we ordinands knelt and received this charge from the bishops and judicatory officers. A red stole was placed upon our shoulders. Our “probationary” period was over. We had been deemed as acceptable and ready for ordination by the regional denominational board responsible for such matters.

For most of us, seminary had been completed three years ago, and these years that followed seminary were a time of waiting and evaluation. Once called “being on trial” and then “probation,” the *provisional* ministers who complete their seminary education become a part of a residency process administered by the judicatory. Successful completion of this multi-year residency process and recommendation by the appropriate denominational boards brings the provisional members to the convention hall stage, all awaiting their turn to kneel and receive this ordination by a bishop of the church.

¹⁷ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 1992), 678.

ORDINATION AND THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

In the New Testament book of Acts, the laying on of hands was connected with the transmission of the Holy Spirit. It is an act with divine and community consequences. In Acts 6, the apostles identified a ministry need. The church community recruited individuals gifted for the ministry, and the apostles laid hands upon them, granting them authority to fulfill their mission. In the Second Letter to Timothy, the church is reminded to “rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of hands;”¹⁸ This follows a longer set of instructions in the First Letter to Timothy¹⁹ to young ministers to continue to study and teach scripture and set an example of behavior for the community. In the United Methodist Church, ordination is seen as God’s gift to the church,²⁰ to be administered by the church for the benefit of the mission of the church. This is a continuation of the apostolic ministry of set apart leadership, and the tradition of laying on of hands continues today. Since this project attempts to examine relevant best practices in the administration of a residency process toward ordination in the United Methodist Church, one must first understand the Methodist interpretation of ordination. In attempting to explain the United Methodist theological understanding of ordination, I must admit that there is a sense of historical and contemporary confusion in the matter. In his standard church polity textbook, Thomas Frank opens the chapter on Ordered Ministry in the United Methodist Church with an admission:

¹⁸ 2 Timothy 1:6, NRSV.

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 4:12-13.

²⁰ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 303.

No aspect of United Methodist polity and practice is richer in history and lore, denser with traditions and expectations, or more difficult to interpret than the ministries of pastoral and diaconal leadership in the church. Nowhere is the complexity of United Methodism's synthetic ecclesiological heritage of organic and evangelical elements more apparent. When the 1996 General Conference adopted a plan for ministry radically departing from over two hundred years of Methodist Tradition, it introduced another in a long line of controversies that result from an ever shifting synthesis of understandings. The new plan, like earlier ones, will have to be lived into over time by a tradition that prizes its pragmatism.

Yet, for all the confusion and frustration that sometimes results, United Methodism has been remarkably effective in providing leadership for the churches.²¹

From its beginnings as extraordinary (in the fullest ecclesiastical sense) ordinations by John Wesley to meet the needs of the American mission, ordination in the United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies has been complicated.²² The tensions around ordination in the United Methodist Church are multiple and rooted in theological and practical tensions. Methodism was created as a religious para-church movement grafted on the existing Church of England. Methodism began as a lay movement, with ordination required in the new American nation only for practical reasons of supporting sacramental leadership, and the early days of the ordained circuit rider system meant that local church leadership was primarily lay-led. Over 200 years of ongoing evolution, a theology of United Methodist ordered ministry is always emerging, most recently with the decision in 1996 to create two permanent orders: deacon and elder. While the office and order of elder has a long Methodist tradition rooted in the traveling preachers and modern itinerancy, the more recent permanent and ordained diaconate is still an order

²¹ Frank, Thomas Edward. *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church, 2006 Edition*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 195.

²² See Lawrence, William B. *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church*. (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2011) for an excellent history of ordination in the United Methodist Tradition.

creating an identity in the denomination. As new clergy begin to create a pastoral identity and theology of ordination based on their practice of ministry, and are evaluated on this identity and theology, this process is greatly complicated by the fact that the denomination's theological understanding of ordered ministry itself is in transition.

These tensions around ordination generally are shared in the specific through the denomination's residency process toward ordination. The *2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline*, the denomination's canon law book and theological guideline, informs annual (regional) conferences' duties for the creation of pre-ordination residency program with this written purpose for the service of provisional ministers:

During the provisional period, arrangements shall be offered by the Board of Ordained Ministry for all provisional members to be involved in a residency curriculum that extends theological education by using covenant groups and mentoring to support the practice and work of their ministry as servant leaders, to contemplate the grounding of ordained ministry, and to understand covenant ministry in the life of the conference. . . . Wherever they are appointed, the service of provisional members shall be evaluated by the district superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry in terms of the provisional member's ability to express and give leadership in servant ministry.²³

The purpose of this preparation time toward ordination, therefore, combines provisional ministers' work of forming their pastoral identity and the community's work of support and evaluation.

There is a tension between the dual roles of the church as the community that forms clergy from its body and also must affirm set apart clergy as servant leaders. The first act is generative and supportive, whereas the latter requires the faith community to

²³ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 326.

prayerfully decide (the word “decide” is rooted in the Latin meaning to “cut off” or “kill”) when and if prospective candidates will be ordained.

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE RIM PROGRAM GOALS

The three goals of the Residency in Ministry program reflect this ecclesiastical tension of the church being both the community that forms and the community that evaluates. The second and third goals signify the continuing education and supportive formation of new pastors, while the first goal concerns evaluation and appropriate credentialing. Yet, each of the three goals is grounded in biblical themes and theological doctrines. Arching over all three is the mission of the United Methodist Church: “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,”²⁴ a mission rooted in the Jesus’ Great Commission to his disciples.²⁵

Goal 1: Tools For Evaluation By The Faith Community

In Second Kings²⁶, Elijah and Elisha travel with a company of fifty prophets to the Jordan River. Elijah rolled up his mantle, struck the water to miraculously part the waters, and crossed with his junior colleague. There, on the far side of the River, Elijah passes his mantle to Elisha. Then, after a grand exit by Elijah, Elisha is left alone without

²⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 120.

²⁵ Matthew 28:18-20

²⁶ 2 Kings 2:1-18

his mentor, on the wrong side of the river bank, with the prophets standing witness. The authority and responsibility of faith-filled leadership was his. Elisha claimed the power of God, parted the waters, and crossed. The community of prophets recognized the transition of divine authority and placed themselves under the leadership of Elisha. He passed the test; the faith community approved. The church, as the faith community in which God has gifted the administration of ordination, has a role in the identification and authorization of those whom God calls into ministry.

The first goal of the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program is to provide the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) with the tools needed to gauge the effectiveness of the residents under its care and supervision. The ongoing evaluation and examination of candidates for ministry is part of how the church provides for appropriate leadership and the exercising of spiritual gifts to fulfill the mission of the church. In First Timothy, the supervisory ministries of the faith community, the laying on of hands, and ministerial growth in effectiveness are all seen as connected: “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.”²⁷ Demonstrating progress and effectiveness to the faith community, as represented in the elected members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, is core to this time of preparation for ordination. While God blesses individuals with a call to ministry and grants spiritual gifts to individuals for the living out of that call, it is the theological understanding of the church that God has given ordination to the church. This gift to the church presents the faith community with a

²⁷ 1 Timothy 4:14-15, NRSV

responsibility to set apart those for specific functions of servant leadership. The 2012

Discipline of the United Methodist Church states:

¶ 301. 1. Ministry in the Christian church is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all persons to receive God's gift of salvation and follow in the way of love and service. The whole church receives and accepts this call, and all Christians participate in this continuing ministry (see ¶¶ 120-140).

2. Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God's call by offering themselves in leadership as set-apart ministers, ordained and licensed (¶302).²⁸

This theological statement maintains the biblical understanding that both the individual and the faith community have a role to play in the ordination process. In his 1988 examination of the official ministry studies by the Methodist and United Methodist Churches since 1948, theological historian Richard Heitzenrater argues that the Methodist theological tradition surrounding ordination has shown a degree of confusion for years in that there is a lack of clarity between *ordination* (what a minister is by sign of laying on of hands) and *office* (what a minister does).²⁹ His analysis of official ministry studies was performed before the massive restructuring of the orders of ministry during the 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church. Although the faith community's precise understanding of the meaning and practice of ordination has changed over the decades, the United Methodist Church has maintained the biblical and theological authority to affirm call, assess preparation, approve candidates, make

²⁸ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 301

²⁹ Heitzenrater, Richard P. "A Critical Analysis of the Ministries Studies since 1944." In *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays*, by Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller. Schmidt, 431-47. (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1993), 434, 442-444. This paper was originally given at the United Methodist European Conference, July 15-22, 1987, in Hasliberg, Switzerland. Originally published as *Occasional Paper* (76, September, 1988), by the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

deployments, and continually evaluate its clergy, especially in the early years of seminary training and first appointments. In this particular project, the Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry shouldered the responsibility on behalf of the denomination to supervise the provisional ministers under its care.

Goal 2: Assist in the Transition into Ordained Ministry

Following the narrative in Acts of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus and healing by the Christian disciple Ananias, Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus and even more time with Barnabas. It was only in chapter 13, after Barnabas and Saul were set apart, commissioned by the laying on of hands, and appointed by the church in Antioch that Saul began to be called Paul and the author began to use Paul's name first when describing the missional partners. There is an obvious transition in name, office, and leadership following this laying on of hands.

Ministerial residents in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church are transitioning into a new relationship with the Church. Most have just completed seminary before beginning their first appointment in a ministry setting. Pastoral identity is in formation and transition, much like Saul's own name. In writing for the Alban Institute about the transition from seminary to ministry, James Wind quotes from Duke Divinity School preaching Professor Richard Lischer's book about his own rocky transition in the early 1970's:

In *Open Secrets*, as he reflected back on his seminary education, Lischer concluded that "eight years of theological education has rendered us

[Lischer and his classmates] uncertain of our identity and, like our professors, unemployable in the real world. After years of grooming, we were no longer sure what it meant to be a pastor or if we wanted to be one.” Here, Lischer puts his finger on a pivotal set of challenges that face seminary-educated clergy today: the entry into a first call or ministerial assignment poses unexpected and at times critical vocational challenges to all who cross the threshold. How that transition goes makes all the difference in the world.³⁰

Lischer and Wind rightly share much about the modern challenges that accompany this identity transition, but difficulty in claiming pastoral identity is not a completely new phenomenon. Rebekah Miles shares about the fourth century priest (and later archbishop) Gregory of Nazianzus, who had a crisis of identity as he began his transition into the priesthood:

Gregory, a new pastor in his thirties, wrote that there was one task that had always seemed to difficult and “too high” for him – the commission to guide and govern souls... especially in times like these, when a [person], seeing everyone rushing here and there in confusion, is content to flee... when members are at war with one another and the slight remains of love which once existed have departed, and priest is an empty name.” Gregory was so overcome by the confusion of his culture and his responsibilities of being a pastor that he ran away after his ordination at Christmastime. His people kept sending messages for him to come home. They needed him. By the time he returned to his church at Easter, the people were so mad, they would not come hear him preach. They refused to invite him to their homes and even declined his invitations. So, in Eastertide of the year 362, Gregory Nazianzen wrote a letter telling his congregation why he had run away. He fled because the risks of guidance were high, the times were confused, and he was unqualified... In the end, he decided to come back to his people because they needed him and the risks of disobeying God were surely higher than the risks of becoming a pastor.³¹

³⁰ Wind, James P. "Experimenting with the Transition into Ministry." *Congregations: The Alban Journal* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2006), 6

³¹ Miles, Rebekah. *The Pastor as Moral Guide*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), pp 12-13.

Miles' story of Gregory's difficult transition into the priesthood in the fourth century and the biblical narrative of Paul's early ministry demonstrate anecdotally that the questions of pastoral identity and office have a context beyond contemporary culture and history. And yet, the new identity gained is, in Methodist tradition, not a new identity owned or possessed by the ordinand. Rather, it is *joining* an identity of office held in trust by the faith community.³² In the historical narrative, we find that Gregory needed to discover that he never did possess the "too high" qualifications, and only returned in response to the community's need and God's original call.

The second goal of the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program is to assist our residents with this transition into ministry. As they cross the threshold of a new identity as clergy, how can the church community provide residents with appropriate mentors like Barnabas and Ananias and be a place of community that is supportive of the next generation's Sauls that could become Pauls? It can be a difficult task. In an article for *Circuit Rider*, Rev. Marilyn Thornton shared her difficulty as an African American woman answering the call to ministry later in life through the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church. In explaining her own experience of transition and pastoral identity formation, she offers a story of pain and new creation, binding her journey to that of the apostle Paul:

Oftentimes, the ordination process seemed more like an obstacle course, endurance test, or inquisition than a process toward being enabled to serve God and God's people to my fullest and best capacity. There were times I felt that I was actually being dis-abled rather than empowered, that giving so many people access to my mind, spiritual journey, financial records, and personal history was downright invasive and designed to deconstruct

³² Lawrence, William B. *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church*, 18.

the person God had called. At the same time, I learned that what does not kill you makes you stronger. Like Paul, I had to learn to leave some things behind (personal feelings and opinions, for example) and press on towards the goal of the high calling that God had given me through Jesus Christ, a calling to community.... The process helped me to see that calling has just as much to do with the Church as with me. God was not calling me into a vacuum. Like Paul, who was called from one way of being faithful into a way that empowered him to spread the good news of God's love for all people throughout the known world, God called me from one way of being Christian (Baptist) into the United Methodist Church. God called me into a place where my gifts could be fully utilized, rather than being boxed into one avenue of doing ministry. My first mentor encouraged me to articulate what I knew and believed and to put into words that which I had been embodying and doing. It was a methodology of deconstruction, pulling apart the various pieces that made up my life and looking at my experiences to see the whole package and how God had been using me for the edification of the beloved community.³³

The assistance that the church can provide prospective clergy may not feel very much like support. The identity deconstruction that Rev. Thornton engaged in was, however, necessary in her own understanding of herself and her own reconstruction of a new pastoral identity that is deeply tied to the larger community of faith and her own role, or office, as an instrument of God in this community

The second half of this second goal contains the ultimate objective of providing assistance to provisional ministers in the identity-transition phase of beginning pastoral ministry. The Residency in Ministry program is designed to assist provisional members in the transition so that they can be guided "into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the United Methodist Church and the Arkansas Conference."³⁴

This second clause provides both a rationale and a purpose to the endeavor of assisting

³³ Thornton, Marilyn E. "Obstacles and Opportunities in the Ordination Process." *Circuit Rider* 35, No. 1 (November/December/January 2010-11): 21-22, pp 21-22.

³⁴ See Bradford, Blake R. "Residency in Ministry." http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

Residents through the transition toward ordained ministry. The additional clause describing the objective was a new addition for the 2013-2014 edition of the Residency in Ministry Handbook following a meeting with Arkansas Resident Bishop Gary Mueller, in hopes that the Residency in Ministry program could better focus on the needs of the mission field rather than personal development. New clergy are expected to not only develop a personal pastoral identity, but, like the description of Saul becoming Paul in Acts, also direct this new identity toward the mission. In June 2013, I attended the South Central Jurisdiction Bishop's Week as part of the Board of Ordained Ministry delegation. The event was titled "Excellence in Ministry: Developing Fruitful Leaders Conference," and Bishop Janice Riggle Huie challenged the denominational leaders in an address, "A New Paradigm for Clergy Leadership: Cultivating an Ecosystem of Excellence." In this Bishop's Week keynote presentation, she states: "The time is right to shift from excessive caretaking of those who express a call to ordained ministry to mission field-based decisions about who will be licensed and/or ordained."³⁵ When confronted with the sheer theological magnitude of his ordination hundreds of years ago, the young priest Gregory of Nazianzus ran away in an ecclesiastical identity crisis; finally, it was the needs of his faith community and his fear of disobeying God that brought him back to his church, and eventually to great fruitfulness as a pastoral leader. During the early days of Methodism's founding two centuries ago, John Wesley asked the historic question "Have they fruit?" of prospective leaders.³⁶ Today, the leadership of the United Methodist Church seeks to use the tools at its disposal, such as residency programs, to assist new clergy to experience fruitfulness and community identity as ministers.

³⁵ Huie, Janice R. "A New Paradigm for Clergy Leadership."

³⁶ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 310.d.3.

Goal 3: Covenant Peer Groups as Means of Grace

The third goal of the program is to create opportunities for peer group support and learning. A central method of the Methodist Tradition has been conferencing as a means of grace. Small groups, such as bands and class meetings, were the original Methodist system of discipleship formation, missional momentum, and Christian accountability. Peer spiritual development and accountability in class meetings and among the class leaders made the Methodist movement sustainable beyond its revival beginnings.

When speaking of clergy in the Methodist tradition, the term *conferencing* takes on special meaning, well beyond that of simple *conversation*. Certainly, it is the Charge or Church Conference that serves as the local church's decision making and connectional body, it is the Annual Conference that ordains, and it is the General Conference that has the responsibility for the denominational rulebook, the *Book of Discipline*. But William Lawrence reminds us that Wesley interpreted the word *conference* in a much deeper fashion:

...the term applied not to the art of conversation or conferring, but rather to the constituency of persons who assembled for the purpose of conferring. In other words, the term *conference* referred not to the business that was discussed or to the agenda of items given attention, but to the community of persons who formed a body of members in covenant. Therefore, in a Methodist context, a conference is not an organization, but an organic entity. It is a body, having members who are joined in covenant with one another.³⁷

³⁷ Lawrence, William B. *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church*, 45.

It is *conference* so understood that Wesley used its regional manifestation (annual conference as the regional judicatory) to be the trustee of ordained ministry in what would become United Methodism. In describing the nature of the ordained office, Lawrence connects the corporate identity of the clergy to this understanding of *conference* (“the ordained ministry as an expression of Christian Conferencing is itself an instrument of God’s grace”) and the conferencing of clergy is related to St Paul’s description of the church’s leadership in his letter to the Church in Corinth (“Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries.”)³⁸

Peer groups are included as part of the new Residency in Ministry program in Arkansas, in order that the residents may practice holy conferencing. Every meeting of a peer group is supposed to begin with a resident-led devotional followed by a time of check-in in which a form of Wesley’s question, “How goes it with your soul?” is utilized to build up accountable Christian community. In explaining the purpose of this question, it has been suggested that Wesley was focused on inward growth as it applied to fruitfulness and the practice of discipleship: “Wesley, it seems, built his Methodist structure to manage not belief or even inward faith, but outward actions.”³⁹ After all, Wesley’s three General Rules for the Methodist societies did all begin with action verbs.⁴⁰ It would be very appropriate, therefore, to use the small group format for

³⁸ Lawrence, William B. *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church*, 54. Scripture quote from 1 Corinthians 4:1, NRSV

³⁹ Werner, David. "John Wesley's Question: 'How Is Your Doing?'" *The Asbury Journal* 65, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 68-93, p 68-70.

⁴⁰ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 102. Page 52 of the Discipline describes the rules: “The General Rules were originally designed for members of Methodist societies who participated in the sacramental life of the Church of England. The terms of membership in these societies were simple: “a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.” Wesley insisted, however, that evangelical faith should manifest itself in evangelical living. He spelled out this expectation

continuing learning and support among new clergy, not limited to questions of personal identity, but also to fruitfulness. The inward spiritual journey and the outward action of ministry should not be divorced. Pastoral theologian John Patton supports group-based reflection by ministry practitioners, such as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), as a “recovery of and respect for our experience” because “Christian ministry involves not only understanding what we do in light of our faith, but also understanding our faith in light of what we do.”⁴¹ By engaging in reflection on the practice of ministry with fellow clergy, a corporate theology of ministry is created.

As the new clergy of the Arkansas Conference begin their ministry, it is hoped that they can experience God’s grace through holy conferencing. They should also experience intentional community as found in small groups of peers, which is really a recovery of early Methodism:

The class structure was a great help to Wesley as he managed the Methodist movement. Yet its greatest benefit came to those who showed up for the class meeting, week after week. The class meeting provided a way for Methodists to “watch over one another in love,” as Wesley put it. The Methodists gathered together in classes to find support and comfort, to be encouraged in their spiritual journeys, to receive counsel and perspective, and to receive accountability for their Christian witness in the world. In the classes, the Methodists were able to bare their souls, share their recent spiritual experiences, and tell of their struggles and victories.⁴²

in the three-part formula of the Rules: “It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, “First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind . . . ; “Secondly: By . . . doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all . . . ; “Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God” (see ¶ 104). Wesley’s illustrative cases under each of these three rules show how the Christian conscience might move from general principles to specific actions. Their explicit combination highlights the spiritual spring of moral action.”

⁴¹ Patton, John. *From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action & Reflection*. Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1995, 12.

⁴² Werner, David. "John Wesley's Question: 'How Is Your Doing?'," 72.

Peer groups of pastors meeting regularly were not a part of the Arkansas clergy culture by the early years of the 2000's. By including involvement in peer groups as part of the Residency in Ministry program, residents have the opportunity to engage in holy conferencing via a focused time of reflection upon fruitful Christian living and leadership, in a format based upon our Methodist heritage.

ON TRIAL AND ON PROBATION

The disciplinary language surrounding the service of new clergy speaks to their accountability to the faith community:

Provisional members are on trial in preparation for membership in full connection in the annual conference as deacons or elders. They are on probation as to character, servant leadership, and effectiveness in ministry. The annual conference, through the clergy session, has jurisdiction over provisional members. Annually, the Board of Ordained Ministry shall review and evaluate their relationship and make recommendation to the clergy members in full connection regarding their continuance.⁴³

This accountability is the practical consequence of a denominational theology of ordination that places ordination as a gift of God to the church, to be held in trust through the administration of the church for the benefit of the faith community and the larger world. Although the theology of ordained and licensed ministry has been historically

⁴³ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012.* Paragraph 327.

expressed by the denomination with some degree of fluidity,⁴⁴ the episcopal laying on of hands in ordination is a part of the gathering of the annual (regional) conference, the representative body of the faith community's leadership, and is the culmination of years of supervision and continuing education in the practice of ministry. The goals of the Arkansas Residency in Ministry program were composed for the purpose of living into this responsibility for the nurture, growth, and accountability of the clergy under its jurisdiction.

⁴⁴ See Heitzenrater, Richard P. "A Critical Analysis of the Ministries Studies since 1944." for a partial outline of changes before the 1996 General Conference, and William B. Lawrence's *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church* for a more recent study of the history of ordination in the United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

The transition into pastoral ministry and the initial years in the parish are difficult. Seminaries, denominations, and the churches themselves need to give careful attention to both the transition itself, issues of placement and first steps, as well as the unique dynamics and challenges that come during this period.⁴⁵

This observation by an interdenominational research team was part of a 2005 study of recent seminary graduates. It calls for an understanding and appreciation of the unique roles each institution has in the formation and development of new clergy leaders.

TRANSITION FROM SEMINARY TO MINISTRY SETTING

In reflecting upon the transition a seminarian must make upon entering the congregation or ministry setting, one must first realize that the seminary itself has evolved from its beginnings as an institution for the creation of pastors. In his studies of the early years of ministry, James Wind notes that the “specialization and professionalization” of seminary faculties over the last century and the creation of multiple academic sub-disciplines has created an environment that has grown more distant from everyday parish life.⁴⁶ Seminaries function as designed, offering an almost encyclopedic⁴⁷ knowledge of biblical, historic, theological, and pastoral disciplines.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years: Noteworthy Conclusions from the Parish Experience of Recent Graduates of ATS Schools." *Theological Education* 40, no. 2 (2005): 65-77, p 71

⁴⁶ Wind, James P. "Experimenting with the Transition into Ministry," 6.

⁴⁷ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 12.

Lawrence Goleman, a research associate for the national study of seminary education by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, recognizes the gap between seminary and congregation, but offers some perspective:

Seminaries only do so much, but they do it well. At their best, seminaries shape a pastoral imagination that begins to integrate the intellectual, skills, and identity apprenticeships in a creative way. But this pastoral imagination has not yet been stretched, challenged, or completely internalized by the daily experience of pastoral practice. The gap between seminary learning and the local parish for new clergy, we believe, is less about the lack of relevant knowledge or practical skills—as both are abundant in most seminaries—and more about the lack of “seasoning” required to develop a strong sense of pastoral identity and judgment to utilize seminary knowledge and skills in adaptive ways. Even the best seminaries only develop competent beginners in ministry, who must be honed, shaped, and polished by the pastoral experience in their first congregation or ministry site.⁴⁹

To create this “seasoning” which is observed and advocated by Goleman, a level of immersion in the day to day matters of a local congregation (or other ministry setting) is needed in seminary, through field education or internships,⁵⁰ to be followed with in-ministry training programs that bridge the transition from student to pastor.⁵¹ In addition, there is also recent denominational analysis that seeks to broaden clergy preparation beyond education (located primarily in the seminary) toward spiritual and practical

⁴⁸ Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years 70-71.

⁴⁹ Goleman, Lawrence. "What Seminaries Do Well." *Congregations: The Alban Journal* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 17-19, p 18.

⁵⁰ Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years," 71.

⁵¹ Manwaring, Donna Bartleson. *An In-ministry Training Program for Probationary Pastors of the Florida Conference, United Methodist Church*. Diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2004, p 37-38. Dr. Bartleson advocates strongly for an in-ministry program separate from seminary, in the belief that it will furnish necessary leadership skills while reducing burnout.

development located in the faith community and among peers.⁵² In an attempt to provide a safe sanctuary in which new clergy can make this transition from seminary to a ministry setting, the Lilly Endowment funded multiple experiments across the country and across denominations, based upon certain assumptions with which I concurred when creating the new Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program. Their basis for supporting creative in-ministry programs following seminary is found on the Lilly Endowment Transition into Ministry grant website:

Like all professions, the first years of a ministerial career are often challenging. Young ministers must establish a new identity as pastor and develop the work and study habits necessary for providing spiritual leadership to their congregations. Yet many new pastors in their first congregations find themselves professionally and geographically isolated, receiving too little support in working through tough transitional issues and developing a healthy pastoral identity. The result is that many promising and gifted young pastors become frustrated and drop out of ministry within the first years of their service. In other cases, inexperienced pastors may slip into leadership styles and practices that are detrimental to congregational life and unable to sustain their ministries. The goal of this initiative is to strengthen pastoral leadership by supporting a variety of pilot projects that test new ways for helping new pastors move through the transition from student to pastor.⁵³

Writing in the Alban Institute's *Congregations*, Episcopal priest and Carol Pinkham Oaks reflects on the first years of ministry: "Traditionally these first years have been viewed as a time of trial and error, a time when new pastors learn what not to do by painful

⁵² Rendle, Gil. *Questions About the Development of Clergy Leaders: Is There Only One Path to Get Us There?* Monograph. Texas Methodist Foundation, 2011. <http://www.tmf-fdn.org/learning-transformation/resources-conversations/written-materials/developing-clergy-leaders>. (Leadership Table Think Tank of UMC Leaders, Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri, October 17, 2011), pp 6-8.

⁵³ "Lilly Endowment, Inc. - Transition-into-Ministry Programs." Lilly Endowment, Inc. - Transition-into-Ministry Programs. Accessed January 09, 2014. http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion_tim.html. According to Lovett Weems and Ann Micahel, following research by Barbara Weeler for the Center for the Study of Theological Education of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City, the attrition rate for United Methodist clergy is slightly lower than that of other denominations, but that women clergy, especially in parish ministry, have a higher attrition rate than men. See Weems, Lovett H., and Ann A. Michel. *The Crisis of Younger Clergy*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 6-7.

mistakes.”⁵⁴ But, as she and the Lilly Endowment note, these mistakes can be costly, leaving career-long “scars,” frustrations, and, occasionally attrition from the clergy office. The Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM), which has responsibility for the formation and evaluation of new clergy, hopes that this Residency in Ministry program will offer tools to assist in the transition. The program seeks to support a culture of pastoral sustainability and success, eventually leading to effectiveness, a primary benchmark for ordination in the United Methodist Church.

The seminary graduate entering ministry exists in a liminal state between student and practitioner, with expectations and methodology shifting, along with definitions of success. The individuality and personal academic initiative that is so highly prized in seminary must now be placed aside for the collaborative tools that a faith community requires for fruitfulness.⁵⁵ Completion of assignments is an individual task in the seminary, and community is comprised of fellow academic travelers. Upon entering the congregation as a clergy leader, expectations of the individual and the entire framework of experienced community are changed. In a study of recent seminary graduates, researchers found that the very skills needed to “read” and give leadership to a congregation are sometimes even “discouraged” in seminaries – skills such as conflict management, and how to “inspire and empower others for ministry.”⁵⁶ In addition to the professional changes tied to leaving academic life as a student, it is recognized that many points of personal transition are also involved, including geographic, economic, and

⁵⁴ Pinkham Oak, Carol. "Creating the Conditions for New Pastors' Success." *Congregations: The Alban Journal* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 20-25, p 21.

⁵⁵ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 13.

⁵⁶ Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years," 72-73.

relational changes. As the Alban study of Lilly Transition into Ministry programs describes it, “as the seminary graduate moves into a first call, she or he is very much a work in progress, an identity that is still under construction.”⁵⁷ The denominational “pipeline”⁵⁸ or “feeder system”⁵⁹ that formerly provided a structured entry for (usually) young (almost always) men to be educated, approved by the ecclesiastical authorities, and enter his first appointment has all but disappeared in today’s world and the church that seeks to minister in it. It is in this circumstance that institutionally supported peer groups and providing trained mentors can assist in the transition. Borrowing a term from secular organizational psychology, researchers and consultants have employed the term “communities of practice” to describe the professional learning and reflective practice of a group of peers.⁶⁰

BECOMING A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Creating the conditions for success honors the first two years as unique in an individual’s ministry, as his or her identity takes shape through positive experiences and a structured learning model that embraces the pastoral life as both joy-filled and demanding, both intellectually stimulating and emotionally intense. Rather than trial and error, this context for vocational formation is both active and reflective, providing an opportunity to

⁵⁷ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 12.

⁵⁸ Huie, Janice R. "A New Paradigm for Clergy Leadership."

⁵⁹ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*.

⁶⁰ Wenger-Trayner, Etienne. "Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction." Intro to Communities of Practice. Accessed January 16, 2014. <http://wenger-trayner.com/theory/>. For in-depth coverage of the learning theory, see Etienne Wenger *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* by, (Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Rendle, Gil, *Questions About the Development of Clergy Leaders*, p 7, and Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 16-17.

celebrate the privilege and responsibility of walking with others in their faith journey and to embrace the challenges of daily ministry.⁶¹

The transition from classroom to congregation can easily create a “Lone Ranger” syndrome of behaviors that negatively shape pastoral identity and limit future pastoral success. The sudden isolation from the academic peer group is often combined with a first appointment in a geographically isolated small congregation or an “arranged marriage” as an associate minister with a tenured senior pastor. Unable to collaborate with peers, these Lone Rangers attempt to gain competence without a system of institutional support or guidance. The model of the reflective practitioner combined with a community of practice (and undergirded theologically with an affirmation of holy conferencing) creates a space for guided contemplation on the office, meaning, and practice of ordained ministry, along with indispensable feedback from fellow ministry practitioners.

There are congregational ramifications of leadership by a reflective practitioner, if this status is identified and claimed:

This reflective space allows a new pastor to enter the initial experience of immersion in ministry with a dual identity: as a pastor and as a pastor-in-training. The new pastor takes on the pastoral authority that is conferred by the congregation and/or denomination and, at the same time, enters into a shared understanding with the congregation that he or she is a pastoral apprentice-in-residence. This duality provides an ideal setting for the formation of a pastoral identity.⁶²

While Wind and Wood’s comment is directed primarily at congregation-based programs, new clergy in the judicatory-based program in this project can benefit from an

⁶¹ Pinkham Oak, Carol. "Creating the Conditions for New Pastors' Success." p 21.

⁶² Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, p 27.

understanding of ministry by a reflective practitioner. This is because the ecclesiastical status of an intern or (in the case of this project) a ministry resident also allows for a congregation to appreciate its role both as a teaching congregation⁶³ and as a safe place where new ideas are seen both as ministry opportunities and learning opportunities. During the project, an attempt to bring awareness of the dual identity of provisional residents was attempted through video training of ministry setting lay leadership, sharing the purpose and composition of the conference expectations for provisional ministers during residency and assisting the congregation in the evaluation process.

In the Alban study of Lilly Endowment programs, *Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition into Ministry*, the researchers delineate between reflective and unreflective immersion. Unreflective immersion is simply the “sink or swim” method of unsupported and isolated entry into a ministry setting. Reflective immersion is the goal of a community of practice. “Only by being immersed in practice, then stepping back to reflect upon judgments made, can the goal of developing a spontaneous capacity for ‘reflection-in-action’ take place.”⁶⁴ The congregation (or other ministry setting) provides the substance and the immersive space for ministry to flourish, and then the resident can “step back and reflect” on the meaning and method of this ministry and her sense of vocation can be explored in the community of practice made up of fellow residents and mentoring clergy. In a resource prepared for United Methodist denominational leaders, consultant Gil Rendle advocates for ministry immersion with space for reflection with other professionals:

⁶³ Pinkham Oak, Carol. "Creating the Conditions for New Pastors' Success," 2.

⁶⁴ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 26-27

... there is both experience and research... to suggest that the most productive form of professional development, beyond the stage of Advanced Beginner, may be the use of clergy peer development groups since both the question to be explored and the content to be explored is controlled by the participants in an environment of both support and accountability....

A common way for me to express this is that we are facing into a time in which no one can teach us what we need to learn. The most effective learning comes from practitioners who work with one another to learn what is most important and what works best. Of course, these peer learning groups of professionals which are generally identified as “communities of practice,” or in teaching are called “professional learning communities,”⁶⁵

While the seminary graduates are, by definition, “advanced beginners,” it is my belief that the tools and habits of reflective immersion within peer groups are needed in the early years of ministry if any openness to communities of practice are to be expected later, once clergy move beyond that “advanced beginner” stage. One cannot expect these skills of reflective immersion and peer-based learning to suddenly appear following ordination.

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The United Methodist Church approved a denomination-wide probationary process for ordination in the 1996 General Conference, and redefined the process as a “residency curriculum”⁶⁶ during the 2008 General Conference. This United Methodist

⁶⁵Rendle is informed by Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Mike Schmoker, *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning* (Alexandria: ASCD, 2006), 105-149.

⁶⁶*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2008*. Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 2008, Paragraph 326.

residency period matches efforts in other denominations, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's (ELCA) First Call program which includes a vicarage year, the United Church of Christ's (UCC) First Five program, and ongoing attention during the first years of ministry by the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA).⁶⁷ Each of these mainline churches has attempted, with different means, to address the same concerns as the experimental programs funded by Lilly Endowment's Transition into Ministry initiative⁶⁸: to support and enable effectiveness and sustainability in ministry at the seminary graduate begins professional ministry.

The Lilly Transition into Ministry initiative has three classifications of pedagogies⁶⁹ which identify the nature of their funded programs:

1. Congregation-based Residency Programs that place small teams of seminary graduates in identified and intentional teaching congregations, creating in each congregation a community of practice of actual peers serving together.
2. Peer-based Programs that locate the community of practice amongst peers serving immersively in multiple local ministry settings, either within a denomination, seminary, or interdenominational gathering. The peer groups can learn from each

⁶⁷ Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years," 67.

⁶⁸ "In 1999 Lilly Endowment began supporting a small number of pilot projects aimed at assisting new pastors in making the critical transition from seminary student to full-time pastor as part of its larger effort to strengthen the preparation of pastoral leaders.....The majority of projects are congregation-based residency programs in which, like the medical school model, new pastors spend time as "residents" in a teaching congregation before assuming leadership of their own church. Other grants in this invitational program include innovative projects designed and implemented by regional and national judicatories, theological schools, and a network of congregations within a denomination. The diversity of projects in this program will test and discover the best ways for helping new pastors get off to a good start. The Endowment has invested \$38 million and made grants to 31 institutions." From "Lilly Endowment, Inc. - Transition-into-Ministry Programs." Lilly Endowment, Inc. - Transition-into-Ministry Programs. Accessed January 09, 2014. http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion_tim.html.

⁶⁹ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 21-26.

other's experiences in multiple ministry settings, and funding for the new clergy's position is usually based solely in the congregation. Using the Lilly definitions, this project's residency program would best be defined as a peer-based denominational program.

3. Hybrid Strategies that combine elements of the congregational and peer based programs. For instance, the North Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church created an early residency program for ten probationary pastors over 6 years that combined trained mentoring churches, conference direction, and ongoing monthly peer interaction and learning.⁷⁰

Each of these pedagogical classifications has strengths inherent in the approach. For the purposes of this project, the peer-based program was the most viable option for the Arkansas Conference BOM. In addition to the previously mentioned opportunity to experience multiple ministry settings through the filter of a peer group community of practice, one of the other strengths inherent in our peer-based program is that, because the residents are fully appointed to serve the ministry setting by the bishop, they "feel the full

⁷⁰ Palen, Kathryn. "The First Five Years": p 15. The North Indiana Conference Residency In Ministry program, funded by the Lilly Endowment, existed for six years and was concluded prior to Palen's article. In researching this program, it is important to note that this early residency experiment was selective in its composition of seminary graduates and required enormous judicatory and congregational resources: "The senior minister would serve as a mentor for the resident, and a group of lay people from the congregation would form a mentoring group. The conference would provide salary support for the resident, and the congregation would provide housing, office space, continuing education, and benefits. A new seminary graduate, recruited for the program because of promise, would then be matched with one of the mentoring churches and would serve there as a resident for two years. The resident would be free of a specific portfolio of responsibility so that he or she would have an opportunity to become familiar with the full gamut of pastoral functions... Several of the residents bonded so well with the congregations where they served as residents that they stayed on as associates. Others moved on to new appointments." While admirable in its depth and certainly demonstrative of multiple best practices in ministry transitions, the Arkansas Conference program described in this project was required to include all current and future provisional ministers seeking ordination, and could not influence the episcopal appointment system.

weight of pastoral responsibility, which often gives an urgency to their readiness to learn.”⁷¹

In creating the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program, I was required to fulfill the broad regulations and guidelines of the denomination and the specific needs of the Arkansas Conference BOM. Following the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church and the inclusion of new “residency” terminology, the Division of Ordained Ministry, a department of the denomination’s General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), held a national training program in January 2009 in Nashville, TN, and shared their legislative interpretation and guidelines⁷² for the four parts of a residency process:

- Mentoring
- Continuing Theological Education
- Covenant Groups
- Supervision

At this training, multiple models and best practices were shared from throughout the United Methodist connection, and I noticed extremely wide variance among residency program practices from the boards of ordained ministry in the annual (regional) conferences across the country. These four elements, therefore, have been broadly interpreted and implemented to fit a variety of contexts and judicatory cultures, with the

⁷¹ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 25.

⁷² General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. *From Readiness to Effectiveness The Residency Program for Provisional, Commissioned Members of The United Methodist Church*, 2013–2016. Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2013. http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/BOM_principles_guides_conf.pdf. A version of this document has been available for multiple quadrennia.

regional boards of ordained ministry allowed to innovate and experiment within the minimum standards of the current United Methodist Book of Discipline and the broad expectations offered by GBHEM.

One of the earliest researched experiments following the 1996 changes in the United Methodist ordination process is a doctoral project by Donna Bartleson Manwaring which followed what she called an “in-ministry training program for probationary pastors” in her Florida Conference during 2000-2001.⁷³ In this program, the four parts of the suggested GBHEM guidelines were followed, and the dual foci of the project was skill acquisition by the probationary pastors (primarily the leadership and management skills which she felt that new clergy often lacked) and creation of a support system for the new clergy.

In 2003 and 2005, Lovett Weems published studies of the probationary processes in a collaborative effort with the Division of Ordained Ministry of GBHEM and the Lilly Endowment. The first study was through the Program to Improve the Quality of Congregational Pastoral Leadership at St. Paul School of Theology⁷⁴ and the second survey study was conducted through the G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary.⁷⁵ The findings of these studies formed the basis of many of the best practices utilized for the creation of the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program, and the evaluative survey issued to current and former Arkansas provisional ministers was based upon these national surveys, using the national

⁷³Manwaring, Donna Bartleson. *An In-ministry Training Program*. Diss.

⁷⁴Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2003.

⁷⁵Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005.

results as an experimental “control.” Out of this research, one of Weem’s primary recommendations to boards of ordained ministry is that “the building of trust among all participants must be the primary goal for the process since all else depends on the establishment of trust.”⁷⁶ This is a difficult task. Previously in this project, the words of Marilyn Thomas, a recent ordinand from the Tennessee Conference were shared, in which she described the ordination process as feeling at times like “an obstacle course, endurance test, or inquisition.”⁷⁷ In the creation and implementation of this program, I am well aware that it may not be received by its participants in an environment of trust. The nature of a mandatory program for those seeking ordination immediately evokes metaphors such as “jumping through hoops” and even “hazing.” Additionally, the dueling internal tension and conflict of interest from one administrative body having to both develop and evaluate potential ordinands impedes the attempts of boards of ordained ministry to create an atmosphere of trust with their residents. Five years after completing his second survey report, Lovett Weems published an article in the *Circuit Rider Journal* calling on a future General Conference to separate the duties of new clergy formation in the transition into ministry away from the credentialing work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, commenting that “the current plan may not be conducive to learning and formation”.⁷⁸ The current and existing goals that I created for the Arkansas Conference reflect this tension and internal conflict, and this project will identify which program elements were created for resident’s growth toward fruitfulness and effectiveness, which

⁷⁶ Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, 15.

⁷⁷ Thornton, Marilyn E. "Obstacles and Opportunities in the Ordination Process," 21.

⁷⁸ Weems, Lovett H. "Under Pressure: How Effective Is the Provisional Ordination Process?" *Circuit Rider* 35, No. 1 (November/December/January 2010-11): 12-13, p 13.

elements are simply for the evaluative benefit of the conference approval regimen, and how many of the elements serve in a combination of capacities.

ELEMENTS TO BE STUDIED

There are four primary elements to be studied in the new Residency in Ministry programs created on behalf of the Arkansas Conference BOM. These four parts are adapted from the required elements outlined⁷⁹ in the GBHEM interpretive guidelines: supervision, covenant peer groups comprised of residents and mentors-facilitators, continuing education during a summer retreat, and written assignments.

The supervision and evaluation of residents will happen through multiple avenues. The first is located in the office of district superintendent, the sub-judicatory supervisors who primarily comprise the episcopal cabinet, and who serve a supervisory and evaluative role, especially for provisional ministers.⁸⁰ District superintendents report annually to the boards of ordained ministry as to the effectiveness and growth of provisional members under their supervision. This project changed the process of reporting to include an open-ended evaluative tool, and an annual recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry as to the status of individual provisional ministers. The BOM also has an independent responsibility of evaluation, through the use of annual interviews, written assignments, and reports from both the ministry setting and assigned

⁷⁹ See General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. *From Readiness to Effectiveness The Residency Program for Provisional, Commissioned Members of The United Methodist Church*, 2013–2016. Nashville, for the most recent set of guidelines.

⁸⁰ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2012. Paragraph 327.5.

mentors. While in my role as Residency Program Director and Assistant Executive Registrar, I have recently created tools for Board of Ordained Ministry interview teams, such as behavioral-based interview question banks, this work is not a feature of the Residency in Ministry Process and is not included in this project.

When reviewing the Arkansas Conference's probationary process existing prior to 2009, the lack of ongoing peer groups was a deficiency, both in my interpretation of the spirit of GBHEM guidelines and best practices shared by both Lovett Weems' studies of United Methodist probationary processes and research by the Alban Institute on the Lilly Endowment's funded Transition into Ministry programs. Likewise, at the time of the residency program's creation, there were no institutionally organized conference-wide peer groups meeting among Arkansas United Methodists. The creation of this component therefore required a shift in the prevailing conference clergy culture. It is my plan that the newly created Covenant Peer Groups will serve as communities of practice for the provisional ministers during their residency period, assisting in growth toward fruitfulness and effectiveness, and assisting in the challenging transition that residents are experiencing from seminary to professional ministry. These Covenant Peer Groups will share ministry experiences and work together toward the formation of members' pastoral identity. Residents are assigned according to geography, so they were mixed in tenure (first years and continuing residents), office (pastors, associate pastors, and appointments beyond the local church), and order (both provisional elders and deacons). To convene and guide the groups, I chose to combine peer groups and mentoring together and use these mentor-facilitators to serve in this dual task. Two mentor-facilitators are assigned

as partners to guide each group. It is my belief that the communities of practice will be richer for their inclusion, and that the mentoring relationship will also benefit from a group dynamic.

A continuing education element is evident in some degree through the ongoing peer groups, but the primary instrument for continuing education is a summer retreat held at a retreat center. In order to be a good steward of conference finances and leadership resources, new partnerships were made with the conference's leadership training directors. Guest educators include conference staff, residency program team members, experienced pastors, consultants, and our resident bishop. Attempts are made to not only include the practical matters of administration⁸¹ found in any secular "on-the-job" training, but also (and especially) skills in leadership, conflict transformation, and forming pastoral identity. Responding to recommendations from Weem's national surveys, special effort is also placed in the retreat being having a worship and spirituality element and having extended opportunities to build relationships.⁸² The ultimate goal of the program's continuing education element during the retreat is to offer tools and experiences which will guide residents toward effectiveness and fruitfulness in their ministerial appointments.

⁸¹ The need to include basic administrative training, such as completing denominational paperwork, was a lesson learned in the creation of the Florida Conference's Probationary process. Manwaring, Donna Bartleson. *An In-ministry Training Program for Probationary Pastors*, 63, 77-78.

⁸² Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, 15, 21.

Many of the assignments required in the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry process began as disciplinary requirements.⁸³ The evaluative needs of the BOM and, to a lesser degree, the continuing educational expectations for residents helped me to further define and arrange the assignments. I question how provisional ministers receive the assignments, and how these assignments may be understood not only as tools for the BOM to gauge effectiveness, but also as experiences which allow the minister to practice reflective immersion.

READINESS, EFFECTIVENESS, AND FRUITFULNESS

To begin the period called “residency” the BOM will have already approved candidates for ministry to enter a status of provisional membership in the Arkansas Annual (regional) Conference. All educational requirements set the by the current *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* and the conference will have been completed. After interviews and completion of written work, the BOM will have evaluated the *readiness* of the candidate to begin ministry as a resident, serving under provisional credentials. In the Arkansas Conference, a resident must serve at least two years in *effective* ministry in the same appointment (ministry setting) before being eligible for ordination. This journey from readiness to effectiveness is the heart of the conference’s Residency in Ministry program.

⁸³ Following the publication of the 2012 Book of Discipline, some assignments had to be changed in the 2013-2014 conference year Residency in Ministry Handbook to meet new denominational standards, and I took the opportunity to make other updates and modifications as well.

Defining *effectiveness*, however, is not an easy endeavor. Effectiveness often gets wrapped up in numerical metrics, lack of congregational complaints, or some secular ideal of “success.”⁸⁴ Recently Lovett Weems and Tom Berlin published the book *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results* and an accompanying workbook. This book was incorporated into our Residency in Ministry curriculum beginning the 2013-2014 conference year. It focuses on the term *fruitfulness*, which has multiple biblical allusions, and serves as a more descriptive term than *effectiveness*. This matches the language and direction our resident bishop is focusing on throughout the life of the Arkansas Conference, and which he shared with me during our initial briefing and evaluation of the residency program. In their introduction, Weems and Berlin offer an explanation of their use of the term *fruitfulness* as an alternative to the often utilized benchmark of *success*:

Clergypersons sometimes feel that they have only two options: one is "faithfulness," with little regard for results, and the other is to adopt the "success" culture they see around them. But a third option is fruitfulness. Success is not the goal of pastoral leadership, but fruitfulness is. Fruitfulness always holds within it the important passion for faithfulness, for no genuine and lasting fruitfulness is possible without such faithfulness. But fruitfulness also captures a comparable passion for accomplishments repeatedly referenced in the Bible as *fruits*. Fruitfulness is vastly different from what the world regards as success. Fruitfulness has as its goal not personal advancement or acclaim but the advancement of God's reign on earth. It seeks to shape the life and work of the congregation through a shared passion for its mission. Fruitful leaders care about results because results are ways to go beyond merely *filling* a pastoral role to active participation in seeking results that we are convinced emerge from the gospel we preach.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Gil Rendle has published a set of five monographs for the Texas Methodist Foundation, with the series title of “Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness and Metrics,” that examine the use of metrics and measures in the United Methodist denomination, and advocates for careful use of statistical information when assessing congregational vitality. The five monographs may be found at <http://www.tmf-fdn.org/learning-transformation/resources-conversations/written-materials/>

⁸⁵ Berlin, Tom, and Lovett H. Weems. *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*. xvi.

It is my prayer that the new Residency in Ministry program will “assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the United Methodist Church and the Arkansas Conference” while also allowing the Board of Ordained Ministry, as a representative body of the larger faith community, to hold prospective clergy to the high standard of expectations that the fulfillment of our mission requires.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Bradford, Blake R. "Residency In Ministry." Residency in Ministry: Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church, Board of Ordained Ministry. 2013. Accessed January 15, 2014. http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

PROJECT REPORT

This project consists of creating and implementing a Residency in Ministry program for the commissioned provisional ministers of the Arkansas Conference. I was chosen as a co-chair of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry probationary program in 2007 and became the director of the program in the summer of 2008. Following the 2008 General Conference, publication of the *2008 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, and attendance at a January 2009 GBHEM training for provisional residency directors, I requested permission from the Chair of the BOM to create a new Residency in Ministry Program based upon the latest in research and best practices.

I recruited a small team of clergy and a laywoman from the BOM's membership to assist in program development, to read the Residency Program Handbook for inconsistencies, and to serve as a focus group for the program elements. The clergy involved included my former co-chair of the probationary program committee and the Executive Registrar for the BOM. The laywoman, Dr. Sandy Smith, is a professional educator, professor in a university nursing program, and clergy spouse, in addition to serving as a lay member of the Board of Ordained Ministry. I also shared drafts of the new Residency Handbook⁸⁷ with a resident who was serving a neighboring church, to get feedback from someone currently in the process. Once the program's handbook was written, I have continued to serve as program director, and I have worked with three different clergy who served as mentoring supervisors over the last five years. The current

⁸⁷ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A.

mentoring supervisor is an ordained deacon, and she was one of the first ordinands to experience the new Residency in Ministry program.

The new Residency in Ministry program began in the summer of 2009. Following their commissioning service and assignment to new appointments, all the new provisional ministers of the Arkansas Conference began the new residency program, along with existing provisional ministers, who were transitioned and also included. As of July 2013, five classes of new provisional ministers have entered the new Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry ordination process.

CONTEXT, PLANNING, AND PREPARATION

Pre-2009 Ordination Process

Prior to the creation of the Residency in Ministry program, there was an existing process for probationary ministers. The existing process consisted of a combination of elements from the predecessor bodies that combined to create the Arkansas Conference in 2003, and used many of the tools of the Perkins School of Theology Internship Program from the mid-1990's.

In this previous process, designed only for local church appointments, probationary members were assigned an ordained mentor and were also supposed to recruit a second ordained mentor. The widespread use of licensed, unordained local

pastors in the Arkansas Conference in many rural areas⁸⁸ combined with the concentration of ordained elders and our relatively few ordained deacons into the urban areas made this requirement for two ordained mentors for every probationary member unsustainable. These mentors were asked to meet and work with a lay “care committee” created by the provisional in the local church to review ministry progress and evaluate sermons, and they offered an annual evaluation to the BOM. Unlike the Lay Teaching Committee in the Perkins Intern Program, there was no pre-selection of members or training of the care committee. The care committee’s primary role was to provide feedback to the new minister every few months. The care committee was a creation of the ordination process and different than the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the congregation’s elected personnel committee as defined in United Methodist polity, which has, as one of its primary functions, the communication of clergy evaluation to the denominational hierarchy. The mentors and the probationary minister attempted to guide the care committees along the way. The feedback I had received from care committees was that they felt unequipped to provide meaningful evaluation. The probationary ministers (often arriving from out-of state after years away at seminary) often felt overwhelmed in their attempts to recruit a team of laypeople and an ordained mentor for a three year process within a few weeks after arriving, but those who had very nurturing committees and mentors appreciated their support. The Arkansas Conference BOM felt that the written evaluations submitted by the care committees were lacking in actionable evaluative content, and that a committee chosen by the probationary pastor could not reflect a full picture of effectiveness in the ministry setting.

⁸⁸ The Arkansas Conference has one of the highest percentages of local pastors of any annual (regional) conference in the United States.

In addition to the care committee and mentor components, there was also a breakfast during the session of Annual Conference, and a single day continuing education event which was usually either a workshop with a seminary professor or an invitation to the annual preaching workshop held at United Methodist–affiliated Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. In the late 1990’s and first few years of the 2000’s an overnight camp was held and topics such as theology, pastoral care, or worship were presented, often with assistance from Hendrix College religion department professors or seminary professors. Feedback from participants usually centered in content not being much different than that which they just completed during their formal education.

Creation of a Residency in Ministry Program: Goals and Expectations

In crafting a new Residency in Ministry program, I sought to assemble the best practices suggested by research and the GBHEM. There were limits on the program (and therefore, this project) arising out of Arkansas Conference culture and/or institutional separation of powers. For example, there could be no additional Board of Ordained Ministry expectations for the district superintendents which serve as supervising ministers in the bishop’s cabinet, beyond that of an annual evaluation. There has been an institutional firewall created in our conference between the BOM and district superintendents, which stems from a mix of church law and conference culture. Second, the lay and clergy members of the BOM could not be expected to perform on-site visits to the ministry settings of residents. At the time of the program’s creation, we had forty probationary ministers engaged in a three-year ordination process, which would be quite

burdensome, especially if attempted on Sunday mornings. While I had mixed feelings over the change, the Arkansas Conference BOM also decided to shorten the ordination process to a two-year minimum following the 2008 General Conference, so I needed to create a flexible program that could be reasonably be completed within two or three years. An additional concern was funding, because the probationary process was very financially limited in the BOM budget. This problem was solved by my creating a partnership with Dr. Michael Roberts, director of Connected In Christ, which completely funded the Residency in Ministry retreats.⁸⁹ Finally, I knew that Arkansas Conference culture dictated that the new program would need to be created “lean” without many extraneous assignments or homework readings. I wanted to attempt to build trust with the residents that this program was not just more “jumping through hoops,” and I knew that the BOM members evaluating the residents did not have want to read stacks of papers.

I began creating the program by first laying out three goals, which, as I stated previously, were modified in the spring of 2013:

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Together as United Methodists, we live out this mission. The RIM [Residency in Ministry] process seeks to further this mission by fulfilling the following goals:

1. Provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members seeking ordination and full connection.

⁸⁹ Connected In Christ was an initiative of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church and received a \$2 million, multi-year grant from the Lilly Endowment’s “Sustaining Pastoral Excellence” program and “Partnership for Excellence” program.

2. Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.
3. Create opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents.⁹⁰

These three goals formed the vision of what I wished to achieve through Residency in Ministry, and I attempted to test every aspect of the new program against this vision.⁹¹

For example, during the program's implementation I was unhappy with many elements of the second retreat, but I was able to diagnose and adapt future retreat plans after refocusing on the three goals (and ignoring some conference politics).

To fulfill these three goals, along with GBHEM recommendations and denominational requirements in the *2008 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, I composed four primary elements for the new Residency in Ministry program:

1. Supervision and evaluation
2. Residency Covenant Peer Groups convened by Mentor-Facilitators
3. A multi-day Summer Retreat
4. Assignments, both written and filmed

The *Book of Discipline* requires that no resident may continue in provisional status past the eighth year,⁹² and the BOM decided to make it possible for residents to complete the program in two years. Instead of a set program of two or three years, I created a flexible

⁹⁰ Bradford, Blake R. "Residency in Ministry." Residency in Ministry: Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church, Board of Ordained Ministry. 2013. Accessed January 15, 2014. http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

⁹¹ See Weems, Lovett H. *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity*. Revised ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), chapter 1, pp 21-53.

⁹² *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 327.

format in which a resident might remain in process between 2-8 years. The assignments may be easily and equally divided among three years, but if a resident wishes to double up and complete assignments in two years, it is certainly possible. Because of an Arkansas Conference requirement that the resident must complete two years of effective ministry in the same appointment, if a provisional minister is transferred during residency, then the residency process will necessarily require at least three years.

After almost five years of implementation, this project will evaluate the different components that comprise the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program, and how the program fulfills its listed goals.

ELEMENT 1: SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

The first goal of the Residency in Ministry process is “Provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members.” By *Discipline*, residents are evaluated by the BOM and supervised by their district superintendent.⁹³ Boards of ordained ministry have the responsibility to recommend continuation or changes in status for provisional ministers, including continuance in the residency program, ordination, or discontinuance and removal from provisional membership in the annual conference. The focus for interviews of provisional ministers is *effectiveness*. In the Arkansas BOM, provisional ministers are interviewed annually by a small group interview team which receives all their evaluations, reads written

⁹³ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 327, with emphasis on Paragraph 327.4-327.5.

assignments, and views videos of sermons and/or projects completed. Following that small team interview, a larger division of the BOM receives their comments and recommendation and has a shorter interview with the provisional minister before deciding on the status of the candidate. To assist our conference BOM, I created a series of evaluation tools to be completed by the district superintendent, the resident's mentor-facilitator team, and the ministry setting.⁹⁴ All the evaluation forms were created as online submission forms, so that they could be easily submitted and retained. It is my hope that not only is the BOM given more tools with these evaluation results, but also that, through evaluative feedback, the residents may discover ways to be more fruitful and effective in their ministry, the second program goal.

Supervision by District Superintendents

District superintendents serve as members of the Bishop's Appointive Cabinet and provide ongoing judicatory supervision of all ministers in their jurisdictions. The District Superintendent Evaluation seeks information about strengths and growth areas. It also provides space for the superintendent to describe how she or he has observed the resident in the practice of ministry. The answer to this question enables the BOM to gauge the evaluation's depth and usefulness, since on-site visits could not be required in the program. I modified this form in 2013 by combining questions regarding ministry context and effectiveness into a single mission-focused question: "How has the resident,

⁹⁴ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, pp A18 and A21-A25.

in her/his appointment, displayed fruitful ministry in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of individuals, communities, and the world?”

Before the advent of the new program, all the BOM received from the bishop's cabinet was a short memo the final year recommending individuals for ordination. By including an annual evaluation from the district superintendent (with a focus on issues of effectiveness), the BOM was able to have actionable information from each resident's supervisor, and use this information to make better use of limited interview time.

Expectations and Evaluation in the Local Ministry Setting

To provide context to reports by the district superintendent and day-to-day evaluation of fruitfulness and effectiveness, local ministry setting evaluation is also asked of the personnel committee, called staff parish relations committee (SPRC), or sometimes pastor parish relations committee. If the resident is serving in a staff role of an institution, an identical evaluation is requested from the resident's senior pastor or institutional supervisor. My experience as a BOM member showed me that the pre-2009 report forms from the probationary care committees did not provide actionable information about the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the provisional ministers. The questions required narrative that the care committee was not equipped to write, and questions of effectiveness were actually avoided in favor of a question asking what the probationary minister learned this year.

To replace a report by a lay care committee, an evaluation by the SPRC (or, if serving outside the local church, other official board) is required. The SPRC is already designed by denominational polity to relate with the larger church through officials of the conference, to relate with clergy concerning priorities and expectations, to engage in regular evaluation of pastoral ministry, and to practice confidentiality in the execution of their duties.⁹⁵ This portfolio of duties, combined with the fact that the committee's membership is elected by the congregation, with provisions made for diversity, makes the SPRC a more effective assembly for the evaluation of a resident's effectiveness and fruitfulness. Instead of expecting the committee to answer in "churchy language" with long narratives, the new SPRC evaluation form uses a list format from which the committee can select areas of particular effectiveness and growing edges, with an opportunity for narrative listing specifics or examples below each section. When I created the new evaluation tool, I followed some of the suggestions proposed by Gwen Purushotham, director of clergy supervision and accountability in the Division of Ordained Ministry of GBHEM, in her book on ministry assessment. In the evaluation submitted to the BOM, the staff-parish relations committee is asked what goals were made with the resident early in the year and asked to evaluate residents on those previously set goals.⁹⁶ For the committee's convenience, the annual evaluation is submitted online via a form on the Arkansas Conference website, with a due date of January 31 each year.

⁹⁵ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 258.2

⁹⁶ Purushotham, Gwen. *Watching Over One Another in Love: A Wesleyan Model for Ministry Assessment*. (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, 2007), p 36.

Since associate pastors often do not relate very much with the SPRC in larger congregations, the exact same form is also completed by supervisors or senior pastors. Early in the process, I understood that some degree of training for the local ministry setting would be necessary. From past experience on the BOM, I knew that I needed to show congregational leaders the breadth of the programs expectations, explain that the process was mandatory and attending meetings was not considered “days off” or counted against vacation, and assure them that this program was designed for fruitfulness and effectiveness in ministry. I also wanted to remind SPRC members and supervisors that the best evaluation is that which is based on clear goals, and give each committee tools for providing helpful feedback.⁹⁷ I knew that I could not visit every congregation that receives a resident, so I produced two videos, first distributed on DVD and later re-filmed for online access, to introduce the residency process⁹⁸ and to train local ministry setting leaders in offering effective evaluation and feedback.⁹⁹ The BOM interview team is given copies of the submitted ministry setting evaluations in preparation for their interview of the resident. By having access to these evaluations, the BOM interview

⁹⁷ Purushotham, Gwen. *Watching Over One Another in Love*, 67-69. “Rules for Feedback”, Appendix C, was adapted by Gwen Purushotham from workshop materials prepared by Jane Giacobbe-Miller, former chairperson of the SPRC of Wesley United Methodist Church in Amherst, Massachusetts, for judicatory training in the New England Conference. The Arkansas Conference BOM Training for SPRC video on feedback and evaluation quotes extensively from this material.

⁹⁸ *Introduction to the Residency Process*. Directed by Martha Taylor. Produced by Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Performed by Blake Bradford. Staff Parish Relations - Part 1. August 6, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHLqFtO6ij4>. Video may be viewed at http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

⁹⁹ *Introduction to the Residency Evaluation Process*. Directed by Martha Taylor. Produced by Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Performed by Blake Bradford. Staff Parish Relations - Part 2. August 6, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcZjAT5EW8I>. Video may be viewed at http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim. As noted previously, the section on constructive feedback was adapted from and appendix in Gwen Purushotham’s *Watching Over One Another in Love: A Wesleyan Model for Ministry Assessment*, p 67-69. Her original source was a SPRC training workshop prepared by Jane Giacobbe-Miller.

team is able to understand the context of each resident's ministry, along with gifts and growing edges.

Self-Evaluation

In addition to evaluations of effectiveness and fruitfulness in their local ministry setting, residents are also asked to provide a self-evaluation, using a narrative format to reply to behavioral based questions that ask for examples of growth, effectiveness and challenges. As in all the evaluations, the residents are able to also share anything of significance that would assist the BOM in its determinations. Unlike the short answers I have received from local churches over the years in official forms, the residents often share a tremendous amount of information with our Board of Ordained Ministry in these self-evaluation forms. The interview team is then able to utilize residents' self-evaluations as the team attempts to nurture and support the ministries of residents on behalf of the BOM. Of course, as the interview team chooses appropriate interview questions to gauge effectiveness and fruitfulness, the self-evaluation is invaluable.

Reports from Assigned Mentors

The final evaluation form that the BOM receives is from the assigned mentor-facilitation team. Unlike the SPRC, supervising pastors, and district superintendents, who all present information that primarily meets the first goal of the Residency in Ministry program to provide evaluative tools to the BOM, the mentors do not really serve

a evaluative functions. Since they relate only to the residents, and usually only in a group format, they are not in a circumstance where they would have a good awareness of issues of fruitfulness in the local ministry setting. Much discussion went into the decision to have mentor-facilitators even offer an evaluation, or to maintain a confidentiality firewall between the BOM and the covenant peer groups facilitated by the mentors. The January 2009 training provided by GBHEM recommended that no information from the peer groups be shared outside the groups. I decided that, as a practical matter, it would be best to have an evaluation but limit it, with one exception, to whether assignments were completed and if the resident participated in the process. The one exception is what I termed the “red flag” scenario, that the Board must be informed of concerns as to the capacity and fitness of the resident for ordained office. Practically speaking, as a creation of the BOM, there would be an expectation (a mistrust, perhaps?) that information shared in the covenant peer groups with BOM assigned mentors *would* be shared with the larger BOM, regardless of any covenant. There is also an existing culture of mentor reporting during the entirety of the candidacy process that leads up to commissioning and the beginning of the Residency in Ministry process. Additionally, I felt that there is a duty to report behaviors that could hurt the church. Therefore, to build trust and fulfill the goals of the Residency in Ministry Program, I decided to make the limited evaluative process as transparent as possible. All the conversation in the groups was considered sacred, but confidentiality of peer group proceedings *may* include the BOM.

Sharing Feedback

I receive all these evaluations on behalf of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and they are shared with the appropriate interview team and made available to the rest of the board. In addition, I always recommended that the submitter of the evaluation shared their feedback with their resident, so that the resident can utilize this constructive feedback to grow in effectiveness and fruitfulness well before the BOM spring interview. Some groups, such as the district superintendents, requested that all forms remain confidential to the BOM leadership, while many local church settings simply included the BOM form in their existing agendas of evaluation, feedback, and annual appointive consultation, making the BOM form a part of their regular communication with their pastor.

ELEMENT 2: COVENANT PEER GROUPS AND MENTORS

Peer Group Creation and Goals

MISSION: In covenant groups, commissioned ministers receive encouragement for the practice and work of ministry as servant leaders. They reflect on the grounding of ordained ministry and consider covenant ministry in the life of the annual conference (§326, *Book of Discipline*). Participation in a covenant group during the residency program is part of the process of vocational discernment. For those who proceed into ordained ministry, it forms habits and practices of accountable covenant

ministry that will continue through their participation in the order of deacons or the order of elders.¹⁰⁰

This 2005 mission statement crafted by GBHEM for covenant groups informed and influenced my development of the model for covenant peer groups in the Residency Process. While the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church did not have wide experience with peer groups in 2009,¹⁰¹ the use of such groups of provisional members was considered a priority in the 2009 GBHEM training of residency program directors and supplementary materials.¹⁰² Peer groups were a persistent feature of the Transition into Ministry programs funded by the Lilly Endowment and researched by the Alban Institute.¹⁰³ It is out of this research and use of best practices that I included covenant peer groups as an element of the new Residency in Ministry program. Peer groups are instruments of two of the Residency in Ministry goals. They obviously meet the third goal of creating “opportunities for peer group learning and support among the resident.” The covenant peer groups also provide a community of practice where issues of fruitfulness and effectiveness can be examined with each other, in an environment of mutual learning under the guidance of a team of mentor-facilitators. This helps fulfill my second Residency in Ministry goal: “Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission

¹⁰⁰ General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. *From Readiness to Effectiveness*, p 6.

¹⁰¹ It was my hope in 2009 when creating the Residency in Ministry program that experience in these types of “communities of practice” would challenge residents to continue to see the value of peer support, training, and accountability. As of 2012, almost all the ordained and licensed clergy appointed in the Arkansas Conference are now assigned by district superintendents to groups led by a circuit elder in a program organized by the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership.

¹⁰² General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. *From Readiness to Effectiveness*.

¹⁰³ See Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, and Wood, David. "A Strong Start: Transitions into Ministry Program Aims at Helping Young Ministers Thrive." *Congregations: The Alban Journal* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 8-10.

of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.” I chose to use the covenant peer groups as avenues for group mentoring, one of the options suggested as a possibility during GBHEM training, but not practiced extensively. In the Residency Handbook, the Covenant Peer Groups have seven functions:

Covenant Peer Group (CPG), functions in the following ways:

1. To help the Resident meet the requirements for full conference membership.
2. To enable the Resident to make the transitions in ministry with support and guidance.
3. To enhance the Resident’s vocational discernment with critical reflection on the use of authority.
4. To encourage the Resident to examine the issues of effectiveness in ministry with regard to his/her own performance.
5. To urge the Resident to seek spirituality through the fellowship with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
6. To give opportunity for each resident to reflect on the meaning and purpose of the Orders of Elder and Deacon.
7. To assist the Resident and the BOM in providing appropriate feedback concerning the resident’s effectiveness and fruitfulness in ministry.¹⁰⁴

I also learned that the best covenant groups include practices of spiritual disciplines and formation.¹⁰⁵ Effort and emphasis is placed during mentor-facilitator training to make spirituality more than a perfunctory devotional, and to make relationships a priority, not a happenstance.

Peer Groups are encouraged to write their covenant in their own words each year as they are reconstituted, with an emphasis on participation, fulfilling the expectations regarding assignments and mutual feedback, and remembering the appropriate level of

¹⁰⁴ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A15.

¹⁰⁵ Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness: An Ongoing Survey of the Probationary Process in the United Methodist Church*, 2005, p 21.

confidentiality with the group being a place of sacred conversation and mutual accountability.

When circuit elder groups were created in the Arkansas Conference in 2012, much thought and discussion ensued as to the relationship between these two conference-mandated peer groups. The Handbook reflects this relationship, while also comparing the covenant peer group to other different group settings which many seminarians have heard about or personally experienced:

The Covenant Peer Groups have both a spiritual formation element and colloquium element. The BOM, through the Residency Team and Covenant Peer Group, offers support to the Resident Provisional in reflecting upon the ministry he/she is doing. This kind of counsel is not the same as Circuit Elder Meetings, where the ministry context is the focus. Neither is it the same as Clinical Pastoral Education with its controls and limits. It is not a therapy group or a consulting group. While mutual support is part of the style and nature of the group, a covenant group is not simply a support group. Each participant uses the group to help reflect on his or her identity, roles, and authority in the clergy office to which he or she is appointed¹⁰⁶

The director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership agreed that the focus of the BOM Covenant Peer Groups is formation during the residents' transition into ministry, while the focus of the new circuit elder groups is the ministry context itself.

¹⁰⁶ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A15.

Composition of Residency Covenant Peer Groups

The covenant peer groups are composed of 4-8 residents and two mentor-facilitators. The residents are assigned geographically, with assistance from the district superintendents during appointment-making season. Early in the program, I decided to combine provisional elders and provisional deacons into groups together. The clergy in these orders should be able to work closely together as colleagues in ministry, and my hope is that a better appreciation and understanding of both orders would emerge. We mix the newly commissioned residents with residents continuing the process, because I believed that this diversity of experience levels benefits the group dynamic. I decided that every group would be reorganized annually after the meeting of annual conference during the summer because new residents are always joining the program, residents are leaving the program through ordination or discontinuances, and the itinerancy necessarily creates lots of moves among both the residents and the mentor-facilitators. While this would mean that groups would not have longevity of multiple years together, there would, I believe, be a level of creativity and new experiences brought to the community of practice that would be valuable to all who participate. The mentor-facilitators are recruited from the geographic region, with an attempt to have demographic diversity and a mix of ordained elders and deacons, especially in groups that contain provisional deacons.

The groups have 4-8 residents, but the target is 5-7. During the program's first year (2009-2010), I served as one of the mentor-facilitators in order to experience the program's implementation, and in the process, I learned from personal attempts in

leading a large peer group that the residency peer groups needed to remain small. That first year, we had 11 residents all serving in the greater Little Rock area, and I and the team did not think it feasible to seek out additional mentors to break that large group into two smaller groups, a mistake which we rectified in the following years because that size group was not conducive to learning, listening, or providing individual attention. The conference now usually has five groups around the state, with two of the groups usually located in the Central Arkansas/Little Rock area.

Because Perkins School of Theology (Southern Methodist University) Interns serving in Arkansas do not get the benefit of the Intern Peer Groups located in the Dallas area, I have, for several years, included them in the Residency Covenant Peer Groups when I have learned about of their assignments from District Superintendents. The structure and goals of the Perkins Intern Program makes their inclusion in peer groups quite comfortable. I have heard from those former interns that our invitation and their experience in the Residency Peer groups was an important part of their transition into ministry, and I hope to continue to include future Perkins interns.

Content and Expectations of Covenant Peer Group Meetings

The covenant peer groups meet 6-8 times a year, with no meetings held during the months of Board of Ordained Ministry annual interviews, the month of June due to the gathering of the Arkansas Annual Conference, and December. The first peer group meeting of the conference year is at the Residency in Ministry summer retreat in July, where the group members meet their mentors and one another. There they begin sorting

out their group covenant, work out practical details, and begin brainstorming about the year's ministry goals (an assignment for their August meeting). After this introductory meeting at the retreat, peer groups usually meet at a local church for 3-4 hours and share a meal together. Since the residents were assigned to groups geographically, it is recommended that the peer groups take turns meeting in one another's churches. This would help ground their conversations about ministry and their experiences in a real context of place, and provide an opportunity for the mentor-facilitators to see the residents in their ministry setting. Depending on the locations of the group members (and travel distances from one another), this practice has continued, and it has become quite popular, with local church members often providing lunch and tours of their facility.

A typical meeting of the covenant peer group begins with times of centering and devotion led by one of the residents followed by a check-in based around Wesley's question, "how goes it with your soul?" This beginning time is considered to be just as valuable as the work later in the session, with an opportunity for the residents to form meaningful relationships with each other, to hold one another in prayer, and to live into the Wesleyan concept of *conferencing* as a means of grace and a place for reflection and accountability in the practice of Christian servant leadership. The residents are asked to offer devotionals as an attempt to provide space for the residents to have input into the content and direction of the group,¹⁰⁷ and to give them opportunities for shared group leadership.

¹⁰⁷ Resident involvement in program content is a best practice, according to Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005. p 19.

After an extended time of sharing, prayer and devotion, the group takes turns (based on a previously set schedule for the year) sharing their work on assignments required by the Board of Ordained Ministry, such as sermons, disciplinary questions for ordination, fruitfulness project progress, the required Bible study plan, and (pre-2013) case studies. While presenting and getting feedback on BOM assignments could seem like busywork, each assignment has the opportunity to create discussion about daily life in ministry, from writing and delivering sermons that connect with one's congregation to reflection on how the practice of ministry has impacted and enhanced one's theological understandings. Beginning in 2013, I added a new component to the content of peer group meetings. Following the increasing use of metrics in ministry and a renewed focus on fruitfulness in the language of the Arkansas Conference and our new resident bishop, I distributed copies of *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*¹⁰⁸ and a companion study guide to the groups to use as a discussion piece each month. I understand that at least one of the groups has gone so far as to integrate the book into their time of devotion. The success of including this book in the residency program has led several of the residents and mentor-facilitators to employ the book in their congregations and staff meetings. The meetings close with housekeeping business, such as confirming which residents will be leading the next devotional or presenting assignments, and a time of prayer with and for each other. As clergy, these residents must pray for others all the time, so this is a time for them to experience being the recipient of intentional prayer.

These group meetings are mandatory as part of the ordination program. Residents are expected to read each other's assignments before the peer group meeting, and attend

¹⁰⁸ Berlin, Tom, and Lovett H. Weems. *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*.

all sessions, unless prevented by funerals, other pastoral care concerns, or other emergencies.

Mentor-Facilitators of Residency Covenant Peer Groups

One of my first decisions when creating the Residency in Ministry program was the combination of the role of mentor with the duties of group facilitator. One of the burdens of the Arkansas Conference's relatively low number of ordained clergy and the travel distances in rural areas is that we do not always have an abundance of clergy gifted in mentoring who can also take the time to perform this work with residents. Many of our rural ordained clergy must already serve as mentors to several ministry candidates early in their process, and additionally take multiple district committee "jobs." I needed to create a system that would allow a minimum number of ordained clergy lead this aspect of the program in order for the Residency in Ministry program to be successful in our context.

In this process, mentors were chosen and recruited by my co-chair, later titled the mentoring supervisor, with responsibility for the group health of the peer groups. I did decide to have 2 mentor-facilitators for every group. I had personally experienced this pattern as the model for field education group leaders when I attended seminary at Iliff School of Theology. It allows multiple perspectives of leadership simultaneously, and problems with mentor-resident personality clashes can be minimized because another mentor is always available. Having two assigned mentor-facilitators provided for a "safety valve" in case pastoral duties suddenly claimed one of the mentors on a day the

group is scheduled to meet, or if one of the mentors had to drop out of leadership or be removed by the mentoring supervisor or me for cause. When selecting mentors, much effort is exerted to create diversity in leadership, with both male and female paired as small group mentor-facilitators, and we attempted to have an ordained deacon co-facilitate every group that contained a provisional deacon. Broadening out to the entire annual class of mentors, we also seek to recruit clergy with differing levels of experience, including those who have been ordained in the last few years, and types of experience, with solo senior pastors and staff/associate clergy. It is understood that having excellent mentors is an essential element in a successful ministry transition program,¹⁰⁹ and that these mentor-facilitators will not only have an impact in their relationship with their resident, but also will be the primary factor in a successful covenant peer group.

In preparing mentor resource material, I was informed by books produced by Willow Creek Association's Bill Donahue.¹¹⁰ I had used these books extensively when creating a small group discipleship ministry at my previous appointment, and I was able to further adapt forms and small group best practices from this ministry experience directly into the Residency in Ministry mentor forms and handouts. Because of financial concerns and retreat center space issues the first year, the team was unable to have a training event for mentors in summer of 2009. Instead, they were given the Residency Handbook and mentor materials and walked through the program (usually over the

¹⁰⁹ See Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years," 68, and Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 21.

¹¹⁰ See Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-changing Small Groups*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), and Donahue, Bill, and Greg Bowman. *Coaching Life-changing Small Group Leaders: A Practical Guide for Those Who Lead and Shepherd Small Group Leaders*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

phone) by one of the program co-chairs. Over that first year, the need for formal training became apparent, with some groups needing replacement mentors, and uneven quality between groups. By the second year, the total number of provisional ministers was lowered (a two-year residency minimum replaced a three-year minimum, so there were less program participants) and full funding from Connected In Christ was in hand, so mentors were trained in an overnight event during the Residency Program Summer Retreat, which was one of my original hopes for the program. When we approached the second year of the program and making arrangements for formalized mentor training, I began planning for the inclusion of mentor training during the Residency Program Summer Retreat. The recent production of a group training video and related supplementary resources by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership titled “Taking Clergy Mentoring to the Next Level”¹¹¹ provided several short, useful presentation segments helpful to the mentor training. We use three or four of the seven provided video segments to provide a theological and theoretical context for clergy mentoring, and then inserted information peculiar to the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry Program to complete the training, such as being the facilitator of a covenant peer group.

Combining the training with the retreat has proven quite effective. Mentors are trained as to expectations and best mentoring practices, and following that generalized instruction on mentoring and group facilitation, the mentors and residents are joined together in a single group to learn about the residency program together. Over the last

¹¹¹ *Taking Clergy Mentoring to the Next Level*. Performed by Dr. Ann A. Michel and Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr. Washington, D.C.: G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, 2009. Group Training Version with Supplementary Facilitation Aids and Training Resources on CD-ROM. DVD.

four retreats, more and more structured time has been created for mentor-facilitators and their peer group members to be together for sharing.

On the fifth retreat (the fourth mentor training event), all the mentors attending happened to have already experienced BOM Residency In Ministry training in previous years, so the mentoring supervisor and I changed the schedule to have reduced use of the broad contextual training materials and video in favor of more time preparing for group facilitation, including spiritual formation practices and how to integrate the new book, *Bearing Fruit*, into a peer group setting.

ELEMENT 3: THE RESIDENCY IN MINISTRY PROGRAM SUMMER RETREAT AS PASTORAL FORMATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Goals of Continuing Education during the Residency Period

MISSION: an emphasis on learning has been characteristic of the Methodist movement from its beginning and continues to be vital for effective ministry. The years of provisional membership are intended to foster habits, attitudes, and practices of theological study that will influence one's entire ministry.¹¹²

The primary means of providing continuing education within the new Residency in Ministry program is located in the Summer Retreat.¹¹³ In the 2005 mission statement

¹¹² General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. *From Readiness to Effectiveness*, 5.

¹¹³ It is understood that the covenant peer groups, as communities of practice, will also offer a more implicit form of continuing education.

provided by GBHEM, I note that “habits, attitudes, and practices” are included in their continuing education section, but *education* seems a limited term to apply to this mission’s set of expectations for the new clergyperson. More appropriately, continuing education and the Arkansas Residency in Ministry Summer Retreat are about *formation*. Our Residency Handbook describes the retreat as being “a time of learning and spiritual/vocational formation and discernment. The objective of the retreat is to encourage and equip residents for fruitfulness in carrying out the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.”¹¹⁴ The retreat serves a dual purpose in fulfilling two of the three Residency in Ministry goals. The educational content included is geared toward advanced beginners, providing information, tools, administrative knowledge, and practical information for those transitioning into ministry from seminary, helping to guide them into greater effectiveness and fruitfulness (Goal 2). The retreat itself is designed with a large amount of time dedicated for actual *retreat* and the building up of relationships, both in unstructured time and intentional covenant peer group gatherings (Goal 3).

Throughout the retreats, I have seen many friendships and professional relationships form. Part of the transition into ministry in our denomination is a process of becoming a part of the clergy community. Through visits with one another, conference staff, and other guest speakers, new residents were able to be acculturated into the spoken and unspoken values, mission, and identity of the Arkansas Conference and the clergy of which it is comprised.

¹¹⁴ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A9.

Strategic Partnerships

Before I began working on a plan for a new residency program, I was in discussions with Dr. Michael Roberts, the then director of Connected In Christ, the lay and clergy training initiative of the Arkansas Conference. I was a member of group 3 of Connected In Christ, meeting in 2003-2004, which had included multiple week-long retreats at Subiaco Abbey, a Benedictine monastery and school that housed a retreat center. Connected In Christ had continued to have multiple retreats at Subiaco every year, and the schedule and pattern of the retreats seemed an excellent match for what I wished to accomplish at a retreat for residents. Connected In Christ retreats intertwined guest lectures, small group time, spiritual disciplines, and focused time on ministry planning with space for experiencing actual retreat and building lasting friendships. Subiaco Abbey provided a beautiful and spiritually enriching location that enhanced the entire experience. We were able to enjoy the scenic views of the Arkansas River Valley and the grand abbey church, and join the monastic community in the praying of the Divine Office throughout the day. By creating a partnership between the Board of Ordained Ministry and Connected In Christ, I was able to utilize the expertise and logistical support of the Connected In Christ office in organizing the retreat and guest speakers. Dr. Roberts, who also serves as field supervisor for this project, was able to assist as retreat master, musical worship accompanist, and presenter for the ministry planning educational session. I was also relieved to have Connected In Christ fund the retreat through their existing Lilly Endowment grant.

In 2012, the Arkansas Conference reorganized and Connected In Christ was merged into the new Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, a department of the Arkansas Conference which includes clergy leadership development in its area of responsibility. Dr. Kurt Boggan was appointed the director of the new Center by the Bishop, and I entered into a similar partnership with the center for logistical support and partnership in leading The Residency in Ministry Program Summer Retreat. With the organizational and structural change, the retreat was moved from Subiaco Abbey to Mount Eagle Retreat Center, a camp in the Ozarks owned by the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.

In addition to providing retreat expertise and logistical support, my forming strategic partnerships between the BOM Residency in Ministry Program and judicatory agencies was an excellent stewardship of talent, capacity, and money. I believe that it is important to support and utilize our conference resources. The responsibility of such concerns as meal plans, lodging, and contracting guest speakers was placed on those who are able to complete these important tasks in their day-to-day ministry. These partnerships also signal an increased cooperation and mission alignment between the entry process for clergy and the larger Arkansas Conference. Understanding the conference leadership and our judicatory organization is an important part of a clergyperson's transition into ministry. Knowledge of an institutional structure is a part of the acculturation that is inherently needed when one begins a new organizational role. Also, seeing the expertise and ministry capacity of our conference ministries in action during the Residency Program Summer Retreat could provide awareness of the

conference's tools and people available to assist the residents in their local congregations. By relating to the conference staff and knowing the possibilities available for the resident's ministry settings, new opportunities for increased fruitfulness and effectiveness may emerge.

Retreat Curriculum and Content

The acculturation of new clergy servant leaders into the Arkansas Conference is integrated into the curriculum of the retreat as well. In 2009, when conceptualizing the retreat, I created a three year scope and sequence for the retreat's continuing education content. While I never completely followed this original "flight plan," themes of conference acculturation, the role and life of a minister, special content for first year residents, and ministry planning remained in the retreat as constant elements. Especially in the early years of the retreat, I attempted to closely connect the retreat's theme and guest presentations with the priorities of the Arkansas Conference. However, the Arkansas Conference itself has been through a huge amount of self-examination and change over the last few years, making attempts to connect to conference priorities a "moving target." The second retreat in 2010 was a perfect example of trying too hard to make the retreat about acculturation into the Arkansas Conference. Once many leaders of ministries and conference officials heard about the successful first retreat, I received many requests to bring ministry presentations to the retreat, or include different initiatives into the curriculum. I accepted too many of these well-meaning requests, though I did draw the line and declined invitations to take the residents on field trips to extension

ministries around the state. By resetting the focus on the second and third goals of the Residency in Ministry program, I returned the retreat to its original conception as a place for ministry formation where the residents can grow and learn together in relationships, and residents can be assisted in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness.

Originally, a pattern of presentations and relationship building time was built directly upon the framework I had experienced while enrolled in Connected In Christ. Opportunities for group worship are built in throughout the day, with a longer worship period in the evening. Guests would come for morning and/or afternoon sessions, and time was built in free time, relationship building and informal conversations between the guest presenters and the residents, and daily prayers with the monks of Subiaco. Following worship in the evening, the residents and retreat leadership would be found talking late into the evening. I have attended continuing education events which often felt like lecture marathons, but the Connected In Christ model offered a path more conducive to the goals of the Residency in Ministry Program. Each year at the retreat, I have told the residents that more unscheduled time was built into our schedule than most standard continuing education events because the peer relationships that were formed were just as important as the information learned. I want communities of practice to be formed out of their time of sharing about the thrills and challenges of entry into full-time ministry, but the existing covenant peer groups that meet throughout the year have a very limited time together to build rapport and trust. Therefore time was intentionally built into the retreat schedule for this more informal relationship building. Scheduled in late

July (new residents in local churches usually begin at pastoral appointments on July 1), the first retreat lasted from a Sunday to midday Thursday. Feedback and leader self-evaluation led to the retreat being shortened by one day, to end after lunch on a Wednesday.

When the retreat is described to the residents, they are told that the curriculum will be ever changing:

Topics and goals will rotate through subjects such as:

- Orientation on Arkansas Conference basics, culture, mission and administration
- Seeking fruitfulness and mission-minded outcomes
- Forming ministerial identity
- Leadership, teamwork, & planning for servant leadership
- Healthy living and clergy family concerns
- Working with congregation members & conflict management
- Money matters: congregational stewardship & clergy financial planning
- Spiritual formation and peer relationships¹¹⁵

Over the last five retreats each of these matters has been addressed, some once and some annually. Following the recommendations of probationary process research, I attempt to avoid topics that were clearly taught in seminary, in favor of a focus on practical subjects related to fruitfulness and effectiveness.¹¹⁶ In 2013, the schedule was changed due to feedback, new disciplinary requirements arising out of the *2012 Book of the Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, and lessons learned from multiple previous retreats. The rhythm of the retreat curriculum is:

¹¹⁵ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A9.

¹¹⁶ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005. 20.

Sunday:

During the first four retreats, only first year residents were included in Sunday's sessions, in what was imagined to be a pre-retreat orientation to ministry in the Arkansas Conference and the Residency in Ministry program. The bishop or a district superintendent was invited to share supervisory expectations of Arkansas Conference Clergy, with both "big picture" visioning and administrative requirements. The primary change that occurred those first four years was the requirement that returning residents arrive for worship on Sunday Evening because the previous expectation for Monday arrival often meant tardiness and lack of a "retreat mindset" until Tuesday. In planning the fifth retreat in 2013, I overhauled the Sunday schedule to create an opening worship and check-in experience in which the Residency in Ministry goals were expressed and explained, along with a sermon about Biblical models for ministry and a "how goes it with your soul?" time of sharing around tables and as a larger group. Now, all the residents began together on Sunday Evening. This change helped improve the retreat by setting the appropriate atmosphere, and beginning a common journey.

Monday:

Monday is set aside for what it means to be a provisional clergy member of the Arkansas Conference. In previous years, a district superintendent or bishop

shared time with the group in the morning. While our bishop is scheduled for the 2014 retreat, my retreat co-leader, the current director of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, is a former district superintendent and current appointive cabinet member and is, therefore, able to integrate cabinet expectations into his presentations about clergy leadership in the Arkansas Conference. In 2013, based on feedback and a desire to make the retreat experience as relevant as possible to each resident,¹¹⁷ I created three affinity groups that met on Monday Morning: provisional deacons, first year elders, and continuing elders. The provisional deacons met with the Mentoring Supervisor, an ordained deacon herself, to talk about the specialized ministry of deacons, and how the ministry transition may develop for those seeking ordination as deacons. The first year provisional elders met with a district administrator who taught the new pastors about denominational administration, including charge conference forms, expectations concerning regular statistical reports, the procedures behind clergy assignments in congregations in the Arkansas Conference, and understanding the clergy compensation form. I have had this administrator teach at every retreat, and the practical information she imparts is consistently one of the favorite components among participants. This mirrors the experience and results of the probationary program in the Florida Conference, in which their new clergy expressed a great need for technical education in denominational administration, which was considered vastly different from other types of administration.¹¹⁸ I led the third affinity group, which was composed of returning residents. We spoke

¹¹⁷ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, 19-20.

¹¹⁸ Manwaring, Donna Bartleson. *An In-ministry Training Program*, 77-78.

about the new fruitfulness project that was included as a required assignment, and the residents shared possible ideas of ministries which could fulfill the assignment's goals and requirements. In the afternoon, other practical topics are on the agenda; with examples such financial matters for ministers and churches (including the peculiarities of clergy tax law) and the application of church size theory to local ministry settings.¹¹⁹ In 2013, the Monday afternoon session was scheduled to be led by our retreat co-leader, Dr. Kurt Boggan of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership. His session was focused on helping the new clergy understand how the Arkansas Conference and the larger United Methodist Church measures ministry, a topic of much conversation and contention in our denomination.

Tuesday:

The keynote guest presenter is scheduled for the entire day on Tuesdays. Subjects have included conflict transformation and ministry planning, with guests such as Mike Bonem and Craig Gilliam, both authors and church consultants. During the years when circumstances and funding allowed for high-caliber presenters from outside Arkansas, the residents overall retreat experience and individual topics were rated much higher than in years in which laity or ministers from Arkansas led sessions. While the residents attend these keynote sessions, the mentor-facilitators arrive and begin training in another classroom. The residents and

¹¹⁹ See Hagen, Andrew D. "Learning to Pastor a Small Congregation." In *Leadership in Congregations*, edited by Richard Bass, 77-80. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2007), p 77. Originally *Alban Journal*, 1998-01-01 Jan. Feb. 1998, Number 1, for a first person account of a difficult transition into ministry, and the need for an healthy understanding of differently sized church congregations.

mentors are then combined after dinner for times of introduction, sharing call stories, and discussing the meaning of ordination. The evening is closed with an extended service of worship and Holy Communion, with a covenanting service that included the mentors, residents, and the program staff, which I adapted from the Perkins Internship mentor covenanting service.

Wednesday:

The last day of the retreat is only a half day, to allow for returning travel. Ministry goal planning and the specifics of the Residency program are the two topics, with time scheduled for the covenant peer groups to meet together with their mentor-facilitators to discuss members' ministry goals and schedule upcoming peer group meetings. A closing blessing precedes a final lunch together.

The time the residents spend with their mentor-facilitators in peer groups has expanded every year since mentor training was added to be simultaneous to the retreat. With around 25-30 residents in process every year, it is really not possible for complete sharing with the entire group. These smaller peer group settings have proven to be more conducive to the revealing of intimate life details, such as call stories.

Ongoing Retreat Evaluation

In addition to the broad survey sent in January 2014 for this project, most years, the retreat participants were emailed an online evaluation soon after the retreat in which they could evaluate the retreat experience, including lodging, speakers, and overall value to their ministry. The findings assisted the Residency in Ministry Team and our partners in adapting the retreat's content and structure each year.

As part of a denomination with a professed appreciation for connectionalism, I also wish to continue to support and emphasize the relational aspects of the retreat, in addition to issues of content and structure. I do this with the understanding that many of the feeder systems of the denomination that originally created clergy relationships in the conference, such as conference-owned campgrounds, apprenticeships, and expected attendance at particular denomination-affiliated colleges and seminaries, have stopped functioning as they did in decades past.¹²⁰ Special care and intentionality must take place among conference leadership to provide space and time for peer relationships and communities of practice to flourish early in the tenure of our new clergy.

¹²⁰ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, 13-17.

ELEMENT 4: ASSIGNMENTS FROM THE BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

Objectives of BOM Assignments

One of my early decisions in creating the new assignments required by the Board of Ordained Ministry as residents worked toward ordination was a reduction in the number and type of assignments required by the conference board. Over the years, additional assignments had multiplied, and it was difficult to tell which assignments were the most important. The first standard is the required assignments for ordination as printed in the *Book of Discipline*.¹²¹ The goals of the Residency Program provided the second standard I used for assignment creation. In addition to the listed assignments, the interview team or the entire BOM may, at times, desire provisional ministers complete additional assignments, based on certain deficiencies or particular goals, and I am responsible for crafting the actual assignment.

As stated previously, the assignments may all be completed in two years, but that requires the residents to complete major items simultaneously in the year seeking ordination. Currently, the first year requires ministry goals and a sermon (written and videoed) be submitted by January 31 so that the interview team can use it for evaluation. Later in the first year, a Bible study is also submitted, to be reviewed by the covenant peer group. The second year's assignments have been modified due to changing

¹²¹ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraphs 330.4-5 for those seeking ordination as deacons, and Paragraphs 335.5-8 for elders.

disciplinary requirements. During the second year, residents must complete a fruitfulness project and update their ministry goals. In every year of residency that follows, ministry goals will continue to be updated, and often additional written assignments will be required. The year seeking ordination, which could be the second year or a later year, the resident submits a written doctrinal exam based upon the *Book of Discipline* questions for each order. Residents will usually have the opportunity to share their assignments, in part or in whole, with their covenant peer group, which will offer constructive criticism and supportive discussion. The next sections describe each of the assignments, and the interpretive guidance which I used for both the benefit of the residents and my fellow Board of Ordained Ministry members who will be evaluating their work. Each of the assignments is associated to at least one of the three goals of the Residency in Ministry process. All of the assignment descriptions are included in the Residency Handbook located in Appendix A of this project report.

Assignment 1: Annual Ministry Goals (Formerly Ministry Plan)

In your years of residency in the Arkansas Annual Conference, the BOM attempts to provide an atmosphere in which each Resident is surrounded with valuable resources for growth in ministry. A central part of this process is the development of annual ministry goals. The particular process that we advocate is much more than a “to do” list. It is more than a checklist of things to accomplish. Rather it is a process designed to provide clarity of calling and focus for ministry. Each Resident is encouraged to take this goal-creation process seriously as a means to more faithful and fruitful ministry¹²²

¹²² See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A19.

Fruitful and effective ministry requires planning. By setting goals, new clergy can create priorities and some clarity even as they enter the whirlwind of ministry for the first time. The Board of Ordained Ministry can use the plans the resident creates as a tool for understanding the priorities of the resident, and their effectiveness at reaching these goals. Though ministry goals may provide some better evaluative tools for the BOM, the second goal of the Residency in Ministry program is the emphasis of this assignment, in that practicing ministry planning and prioritization early in ministry will the new clergy into greater fruitfulness and effectiveness.

When the Residency in Ministry Program was formed in 2009, ministry plans had recently begun to be required in the Arkansas Conference by district superintendents. Connected In Christ had influenced the creation of a culture of transformational ministry planning. For those clergy, such as all of the new residents, who had not been a part of a Connected In Christ group, little guidance was given on how to actually write ministry plans for clergy and congregations. As part of our partnership with Connected In Christ, Dr. Michael Roberts shared a simplified format for writing a clergy personal ministry plan, and taught this component at our Summer Retreat. Residents were asked to write plans from the perspective of four areas: ministry functions, professional and personal development, interpersonal relationships, and continuing ministry. In creating the assignment, I wanted residents to be reflective and intentional in their transition into ministry, and help them to be successful in completing cabinet expectations.

As episcopal and cabinet leadership changed, ministry plans were no longer required of clergy. I also noted that many first year residents (and quite a few second

year residents) simply did not have the experience to write quality multi-year ministry plans. For many of them, the next month is a mystery because they have never experienced the seasonal ebbs and flow of church life as a clergy leader. At first, I asked them to make the personal ministry plan a living document, with strikethroughs and italics showing changes to the document through the years of provisional ministry.

During the 2013 overhaul of the Residency in Ministry program, I recreated the assignment to something more appropriate for provisional ministers who are in the advanced beginner stage of learning. I used Alban Consultant Susan Beaumont's adaption of S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time bound)¹²³ to create a replacement assignment, assigning residents to formulate two or three of their own personal ministry goals for their ministry context. This new assignment is more flexible for multiple forms of ministry contexts, including appointments beyond a local church. It also is based on a short-term timeframe that may be better suited for clergy experiencing full-time ministry for the first time.

Assignment 2: Sermon Presentations

Before the Methodist movement had clergy, it had preachers. The ministry of the Word is central to both the Orders of Deacon and Elder. The *Book of Discipline* requires deacons prepare and preach "at least one written sermon on a Biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry or another act of proclamation of the Word

¹²³ Beaumont, Susan. *Stepping Up to Supervision*. PDF. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, March 2012). Handout materials for March 6-8, 2012 seminar "Stepping Up to Supervision: Basics of Leading a Staff Team." Produced by the Consulting and Education Department, Alban Institute.

appropriate to the candidate's ministry setting" and that elders prepare and preach "at least one written sermon on a Biblical passage specified by the Board of Ordained Ministry."¹²⁴ In awareness that our Arkansas Conference BOM has historically desired that all ordained individuals have experience and skill in preaching, the Residency in Ministry program requires both elders and deacons to submit sermons. Originally, provisional deacons and elders offered the same first year sermon, and then provisional elders presented a sermon the second year while provisional deacons submitted a field education project. Following the 2013 modifications due to disciplinary requirement changes in 2012, both provisional elders and deacons present a single sermon the first year and a fruitfulness project the second year. Additional sermons may be assigned by the BOM at spring interviews. Sermons are to be submitted to the BOM both in written form and on video. The sermon feedback during peer groups and the interview team may provide some assistance to clergy beginning their ministry, but this assignment is primarily a tool for the Board of Ordained Ministry to better evaluate the resident.

When I was in the probationary process, the scripture and liturgical day were set by the BOM, creating some difficulty for those serving in associate positions or outside the local church. For instance, I was required by the BOM to preach about the Epiphany and the wise men in October on World Communion Sunday because of staff preaching schedules and due dates. In crafting the new assignments, I took some interpretive license and asked that first year provisional ministers deliver "a Biblically based sermon

¹²⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraphs 330.4.4 for those seeking ordination as deacons, and Paragraphs 335.5-8 for elders.

that includes in its content the Wesleyan view of prevenient grace.”¹²⁵ Allowing flexibility of scripture passage use provides a great deal of flexibility for the resident and helps the BOM avoid comparing residents’ sermons with one another. One of the most productive questions during interviews to learn more about the residents and their sermon writing process is “why did you choose that particular scripture?” The common theme of prevenient grace provides some structure and boundaries to the assignment, and allows the BOM interview team to assess the Wesleyan theology of candidates. Since we have a number of provisional ministers with a theological heritage outside Methodism and many who attended non-United Methodist affiliated seminaries, reading and viewing a sermon about prevenient grace is an excellent approach to deeper BOM evaluation of the candidate’s theology.

I attempt to provide some guidance to the residents as to their written and video submissions. The primary suggestion was for residents to preach in a style that they and their congregation were accustomed. As a BOM member, I had viewed many sermons that were not appropriate for their context, or in which the preacher had made dramatic stylistic or delivery changes which seemed uncomfortable. I also made suggestions for “no notes” preachers, and adaptations for those serving in alternative worship venues are often discussed during the Summer Retreat. The subjective nature of the sermon assignment makes it one of the most difficult for both the residents to complete and the BOM interview team members to evaluate.

¹²⁵ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A10.

Assignment 3: Fruitfulness Project (Formerly Deacon's Field Education Project)

In the 2012 Book of Discipline, a new requirement for ordination states that provisional ministers must have “presented a project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church’s mission of ‘Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.’”¹²⁶ This requirement stems from an existing ordination requirement created by the North Texas Conference. This model assignment eventually became legislation submitted by the North Texas Conference to the 2012 General Conference, and it was an approved addition to the standard set of ordination requirements in the *Book of Discipline*.¹²⁷ In creating the assignment, I spoke with our Arkansas Conference resident bishop, Gary Mueller, who formerly served as chair of the North Texas Board of Ordained Ministry until his episcopal election. He directed me to the requirements of the North Texas Conference and suggested I adapt these requirements for our purposes. In creating the assignment, we spoke at length concerning the goals of the new requirement. I decided to design the assignment in a way that guides the provisional resident into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in ministry. This is goal two of the Residency in Ministry program, and it is my hope that the provisional ministers will experience the work toward this assignment as a way to transition from the academic work of seminary to the community-based work of ministry. It is an act of

¹²⁶ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 330.4.5 for ordination as a deacon and Paragraph 335.7 for ordination as an elder.

¹²⁷ "Legislation Tracking." General Conference 2012. Accessed January 27, 2014. <http://calms2012.umc.org/Menu.aspx?type=Petition&mode=Single&number=454> .

reflective immersion, in which a ministry initiative is envisioned, created and evaluated by the resident as to its effectiveness and fruitfulness.

This new assignment replaced the second year sermon required for elders and the Deacon's Field Education Project, an assignment which was continued from the pre-2009 probationary program. The provisional deacons were required to produce a video showing the deacon engaged in an act of ministry, and was originally designed to allow the BOM to examine and evaluate the contextual implementation of a provisional deacon's gifts for ministry. Although this earlier assignment was useful in giving the BOM more tools to evaluate the provisional deacon's ministry (the first Residency in Ministry goal), an expansion of the assignment, and the inclusion of all second-year provisional clergy in the requirements, could accomplish so much more. With greater intentionality and purpose, the new Fruitfulness Project could do more than serve an evaluative function. By making the second Residency in Ministry goal the primary objective of the assignment, a new focus is placed on the resident's growth, transition, and experience in ministry fruitfulness. This assignment has the potential to encourage residents to rethink ministry as to its impact and fruitfulness in the faith community and the ministry setting's mission field. The newly required covenant peer group book, *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results* naturally informs the residents' Fruitfulness Project concept design and the project's underlying motive by providing a theological, theoretical, and Biblical foundation to the project.¹²⁸ The BOM interview team will continue to use the final project as a tool for evaluation, but also as a window into the

¹²⁸ Berlin, Tom, and Lovett H. Weems. *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*.

ongoing contextual ministry of the resident and as a springboard into deeper discussion about the resident's prayers and vision for future fruitfulness.

The content of the fruitfulness project is to create a ministry initiative that fulfills the denomination's stated disciple-making mission statement. Great leeway is given as to topics and concepts, but a proposal is required four months before the project is due. The proposal asks three questions that require the resident to take an approach that has fruitfulness as the project's goal:

1. What is the vision for this initiative?
2. How will it demonstrate fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World"?
3. What are the expected outcomes?¹²⁹

The answers to these questions are submitted on an online form on the conference's Residency in Ministry website.

The final written report is an adaption of the North Texas Making Disciples Project.¹³⁰ A 15 page report (not including the appendix) is required with responses to multiple areas of inquiry, the resident's vision for the initiative, a defense of the project's disciple-making goals and implementation, a description of the theological integration that undergirded the initiative, the resident's role in the ministry, and an evaluation. To provide a sense of structure and clarity to the assignment, the Residency Handbook provides the resident with an actual list of questions and statements requiring response.¹³¹

¹²⁹ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A11.

¹³⁰ Board of Ordained Ministry, North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. "Making Disciples Project." Making Disciples Project. Accessed January 27, 2014. <http://www.northtexasumc.org/board-of-ordained-ministry/qualifications/making-disciples-project.html>.

¹³¹ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, pp A11-A12.

In addition to the written report, I knew that the BOM would want to view the resident engaged in contextual ministry, especially with the loss of the second elder's sermon. Therefore a video under 25 minutes is also required that reports on the project. The residents are told during the Summer Retreat that the video does not need to answer the same questions as the written reflection on the Fruitfulness Project, but should instead show the resident engaged in ministry leadership.

Assignment 4: Bible Study on Luke

One of the assignments in the *Book of Discipline* requires a plan for teaching a Bible Study but no mention is made in the *Discipline* of a resident actually needing to present the study. The original pre-2009 probationary program required a study on the year's lectionary Gospel, but there was not really any setting in which the assignment was reviewed and evaluated. I changed the requirements to require that the Bible study be on the Gospel of Luke, provided structure and flexibility to the assignment, and placed review and feedback in the hands of the covenant peer group. In crafting the new assignment, my emphasis was on peer learning, the third program goal, within a community of practice.

Standardizing the assignment to use the Gospel of Luke allows conversation and feedback on the studies within the peer group to be based on mutual recent study of the Gospel, among both first year residents completing the assignment and returning residents who completed the Bible study on Luke in a previous year. Originally, the book was chosen to continue to the pattern as existing residents were transitioned over to

the new program in lectionary year. With the popular *Disciple 2* covering Luke, I thought there would be plenty of accessible tools that would inform and assist residents who may be writing a Bible study for the first time. In order to create a sense of flexibility and encourage personal creativity, I suggested: “Be creative, this may be organized thematically, by chapter, etc. The whole Gospel does not have to be covered. For instance, you could write a study on Jesus and the Poor in Luke or Luke’s Parables or the Sermon on the Plain.”¹³² By providing an assignment based on the same book of the Bible, but completed by individuals in different and imaginative ways, the peer groups may spark creativity in each other in how they share the Christian message in their ministry settings.

In years before the Bible study assignment was standardized and clarified in 2009, I had often received simple outlines that looked very much like a list of chapter headings from a study Bible. In order to hold residents to a higher standard and make sharing in the peer groups beneficial, I asked that the teaching outline include a 1-2 page overview or syllabus and a 3-5 page sample lesson plan from a particular session. This allows fruitful discussion of both the comprehensive direction and formation of the study and a discussion of best practices when teaching.

¹³² See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A9.

Assignment 5: Doctrinal Examination

The doctrinal examination questions for provisional deacons and elders seeking ordination are fully listed in the current United Methodist *Book of Discipline*.¹³³ The questions include a variety of theological and ecclesiological areas, and, together, form a document that could demonstrate the level of theological integration in which the resident has engaged in understanding their practice of ministry. In interpreting the disciplinary requirement, I have continued the practice of the Arkansas Conference, which has required ordinands to complete written answers to the theological questions. The objective of this assignment is for partial fulfillment of residency process goal one, which provides the BOM with the tools necessary for appropriate evaluation. I do believe that these questions may offer space for reflection on the experience of ministry immersion, but the assignment has tended to become a theological and practical capstone of the residency period, providing an evaluative tool and avenue for the resident to demonstrate theological clarity and orthodoxy.

When composing the Residency Handbook, I gave formatting and “rule of thumb” suggestions for length. I also note that these questions for ordination were of a different character than the disciplinary questions which the provisional ministry previously completed to be commissioned and begin residency, writing:

Unlike the questions you completed for commissioning, this set of questions centers on your effectiveness, fruitfulness, and experience in

¹³³ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012*. Paragraph 330.5.a-c for ordination as a deacon and Paragraph 335.8.a-c for ordination as an elder.

ministry. Please be sure to make your answers a reflection on your experience in ministry and not simply an academic treatise.¹³⁴

Clarity of purpose and expectations has historically been a difficulty for both the residents and the BOM in this doctrinal examination assignment. By offering this clarity, I hope to not only give some direction to a very large assignment, but also to remind BOM interview team members to ask questions appropriate to the actual assignment.

Assignment 6: Other Additional Assignments

In addition to the standard assignments listed in the ordination program, there are also additional assignments required of individuals. There is also one assignment, the case study, which was discontinued in the 2013 modification to the Residency in Ministry Handbook.

Additional ordination assignments have recently included papers on theological or practical topics, wellness and/or financial plans, and additional sermon presentations. These assignments are primarily designed by the Board of Ordained Ministry for evaluative purposes. I work with the board to craft an assignment that meets the expectations of the interview team or larger BOM body, and give interpretative information or reading material suggestions relevant to the particular assignment.

The case study was an annual requirement for residents. The original probationary program had a verbatim requirement, but there were problems with the

¹³⁴ See Residency Handbook in Appendix A, p A13.

assignment, including the rarity of clinical pastoral education experience in the Arkansas Conference, the fact that a new resident in a new congregation was often not equipped for verbatim writing and not trusted enough in the congregation for conversations that lend themselves to the writing of a verbatim, and the limiting nature of an assignment that covers only pastoral care. Even with these problems, I wanted the residents to experience reflective immersion within the peer group that serves as a community of practice. For a replacement, I adapted the case study model from a SMU Doctor of Ministry Program syllabus¹³⁵ and asked residents to write on any kind of ministry event in which they had some responsibility for the outcome, from one-to-one sessions to a committee meeting. By adapting the case study format, I encouraged residents to analyze and evaluate their role in the event and in their ministry setting. For privacy reasons, the case study was not kept in the resident's BOM file. As a tool for growth in effectiveness, its information remained in the covenant peer group. I removed this assignment from the process to make additional time for the group study of the book *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*¹³⁶ and the accompanying workbook, which provides many of the same benefits as completing a formal case study.

¹³⁵ Sylvest, Ed. *Case Study Instructions*. 2005. Syllabus, Doctor of Ministry Course 9380: Seminar in Practical Theology, Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas.

¹³⁶ Berlin, Tom, and Lovett H. Weems. *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*.

THE RESIDENCY PROGRAM REVIEWED

The Project Participants

In the evaluation of this doctor of ministry project, I sent online surveys to 69 current and previous Arkansas Conference residents. 36 individuals started the survey and 35 completely finished the survey. Surveys were not sent to those who withdrew from the ordination process or were involuntarily discontinued. In many of these cases, there is much grief involved, and, even if current contact information could be obtained, I did not wish for this project to inflict more pain in delicate situations.

Prior to the creation of the Residency in Ministry program, there was an existing process for probationary ministers, which required a minimum of three years in the process. Depending on the tenure status of each resident, accommodations were made to make the transition as smooth as possible, with most changes involving the year in which assignments were due. All the current residents were required to attend the summer retreat, participate in the covenant peer groups, and be evaluated by the appropriate supervisor bodies. In the evaluation surveys of this project, a fair number of the residents will have, therefore, experienced a huge shift in BOM expectations during their ordination process.

In addition to issues of transition for probationary ministers during the 2009 changes, every year I have attempted to make adjustments in the program. Additionally, issues such as differences in quality among mentor-facilitators and summer retreat

presenters mean that resident experiences of the program could differ wildly based on their geography and which years they were required to serve in the program.

Evaluation Survey

The evaluation of this project is based in a survey to the participants sent in January 2014. Each element of the program was surveyed, and the participants were also asked if they believed the Residency in Ministry program fulfilled each of its three goals. The survey tool itself was designed with much of the same question language and order as that of Lovett Weems in his nation-wide studies of the United Methodist probationary process for the General Board of Higher Education in Ministry.¹³⁷ I sought to compare my Arkansas Conference results with the national United Methodist results serving in some capacity as an experimental control.

¹³⁷ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2003, and Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005.

EVALUATION OF PROJECT

In assessing the Arkansas Conference Residency Program, there are two primary areas of evaluation. The first is the theological and theoretical underpinning of the residency program as a required ordination process and as a transition into ministry program. The second is the practical implementation of the Residency in Ministry Program, and how the program lived up to its stated goals.

As part of the ongoing of evaluation process, it is understood that the Residency in Ministry program will continue to require adaptations to the changing ministry needs of the Arkansas Conference, and modifications are always needed to produce an ever more effective program. In assessing this program and using participant surveys, one must note that the participant pool is always changing, with seminary graduates being commissioned and residents being ordained. The program also has been impacted by the very hard decisions of the BOM to delay approval for ordination in some cases, sometimes for several years, leaving some residents in the program for an extended period. At times, this can cause deep hurt that can poison peer groups and retreat experiences. Finally, participation in the residency program is a mandated policy of the Arkansas Conference for those seeking to be ordained. I know that any standardized program of continuing education will have its critics, and, since successful completion of the program is required on the pathway toward ordination, it is reasonable to understand that any time spent in the program often feels like a delay of ordination, especially since seminary peers from other denominations are often ordained immediately following graduation.

The Use of Participant Surveys

One of the tools in this evaluation section is the survey to the participants, the 69 current or recent ordinands who experienced the Residency in Ministry program. While I did find some level of distaste in a mandatory ordination program, the overall results of the evaluation were quite good. This mirrors one of the findings of Lovett Weems in his studies of probationary programs in the United Methodist Church:

While the survey generated a fair amount of overall negativity about the probationary experience, it is also true that the survey captures deep appreciation by many probationers for the formative value of the experience.¹³⁸

A summary of responses to the survey may be found in Appendix B.

THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

Three goals currently provide the vision and backbone of the Residency in Ministry Program:

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Together as United Methodists, we live out this mission. The RIM [Residency in Ministry] process seeks to further this mission by fulfilling the following goals:

1. Provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members seeking ordination and full connection.

¹³⁸ Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*. 2003, p 9.

2. Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.
3. Create opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents.¹³⁹

These three goals are inherently connected to the rules of our denominational polity concerning ordination and the guidelines that are produced by the denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, but also informed by a theological and practical understanding.

Trust in the BOM and the Implementation of the Program Goals

In the evaluation of the program's stated goals, it is also interesting and important to note the level of trust experienced by the recent Arkansas Conference residents. After his national study of programs that are similar in purpose to our Arkansas program, Weems observed,

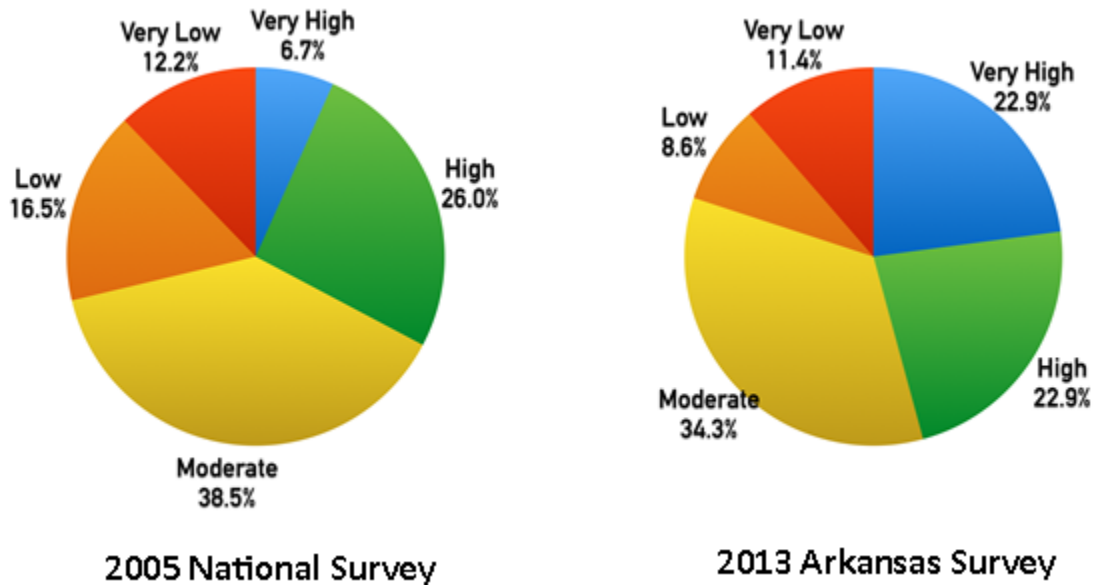
The establishment of trust among all participants is foundational for a positive and formative probationary experience. Where trust is established, programs are viewed as helpful. Without trust, anxiety and fear dominate the experience. Factors inhibiting trust between probationers and boards of ordained ministry are (1) lack of direction to the process; (2) inconsistency in dealing with candidates; (3) failure to name, train, and hold accountable the leaders; and (4) lack of regular communication with probationers.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Bradford, Blake R. "Residency in Ministry." Residency in Ministry: Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church, Board of Ordained Ministry. 2013. Accessed January 15, 2014. http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

¹⁴⁰ Weems, Lovett H. "Nurturing a Learned Clergy," 145.

When I compared our current level of trust with that of probationary programs during Weem's 2005 study,¹⁴¹ I found very favorable results, with a threefold increase in those marking a "Very High" level of trust:

9. How would you assess the level of trust present between you and the Board of Ordained Ministry during the provisional process?



In my survey to participants, I asked how well they believed that the Residency in Ministry program lived up to its stated goals. In his research of United Methodist ordination programs, Weems observed that clear articulation of the goals will assist in the resident's willingness to fully engage in the ordination process:

The probationers' view of the process ranges from extremely helpful to a waste of time. On the one hand, there were comments that the experience was helpful and meaningful. For others, it was an experience to get

¹⁴¹ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 7.

through, not personally meaningful, but jumping through hoops. Unclear expectations can be a major stumbling block. When probationers clearly understand the purpose, process, timeline, and expectations, there is a good chance they will receive the experience well and benefit from it.¹⁴²

Since the three goals of the program were the principal way I endeavored to make decisions in both the creation and implementation of the Residency in Ministry program, I was interested in how well the residents believed the program met these goals. From cross tabulation of survey results examining the level of trust in the BOM (question 9), I believe that a clear understanding of the program's goals is connected to a greater appreciation and feelings of mutual trust with the Board of Ordained Ministry.¹⁴³ For example, among only those who report a "very high level of trust" between them and the BOM, I found consistent elevations in the top tier response that there is "a great deal" of belief that the Residency in Ministry program fulfilled its goals. When asked if the program met its stated goals, the percentage of those who selected the highest rating jumped when filtered to include only those who stated a "very high" trust in their relationship with the BOM. The first goal (evaluative tools) went from 34.2% to 62.5%. The second goal (Equipping for transition) went from 40% to 87.5%. The third goal (peer relationships) went from 60% to 75%. Clearly, our resident's trust in the BOM and the Residency in Ministry goals are linked.

¹⁴² Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 13.

¹⁴³ From another perspective, the percentage of residents reporting a "Very high" level of trust between them and the BOM almost doubles from 22.9% to 41.7% among those who believed that the program provided the appropriate tools for the BOM to evaluate residents. See Appendix B, Survey of Residents.

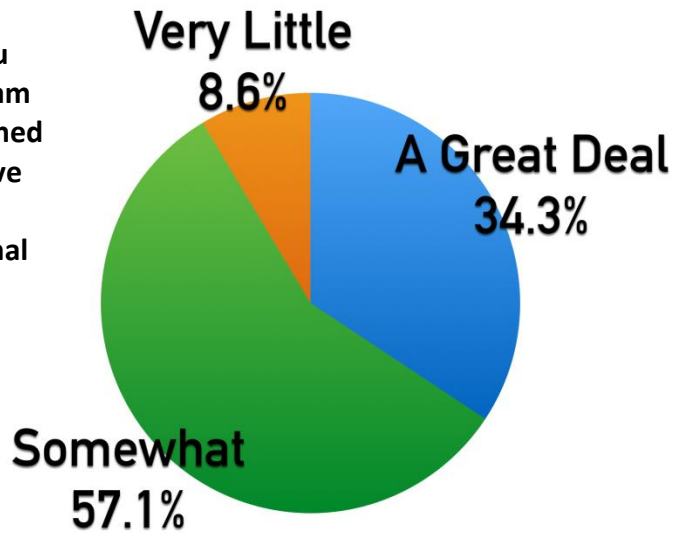
Goal 1: Evaluation by the Faith Community

In the biblical narrative of Elijah passing his mantle to Elisha, the assembled prophets, as divinely blessed representative members of the faith community, stand as witnesses to the gifting of God to Elisha as Elijah's successor. Theologically, we believe that ordination itself is God's gift to the church, administered by the church for the fulfillment of Christ's mission on earth. In the United Methodist denomination, the elected members of the Board of Ordained Ministry bear the responsibility to credential candidates for ministry and evaluate new clergy's fruitfulness and effectiveness as servant leaders, working towards the mission of the church.

I believe that the members of the BOM now have excellent tools to inform our decision. The process has created more clarity as to expectations, both for the residents being examined and for the BOM, which is composed of a rotating membership that requires constant training. The new Residency Program has received great praise from the members of the BOM, especially for its well-defined, actionable evaluation forms and clear assignment instructions.

In the survey to the participants, a large majority of the residents felt like the program met this goal:

38. To what extent do you believe that the RIM Program supplied the Board of Ordained Ministry with the evaluative tools to gauge your effectiveness as a provisional member?

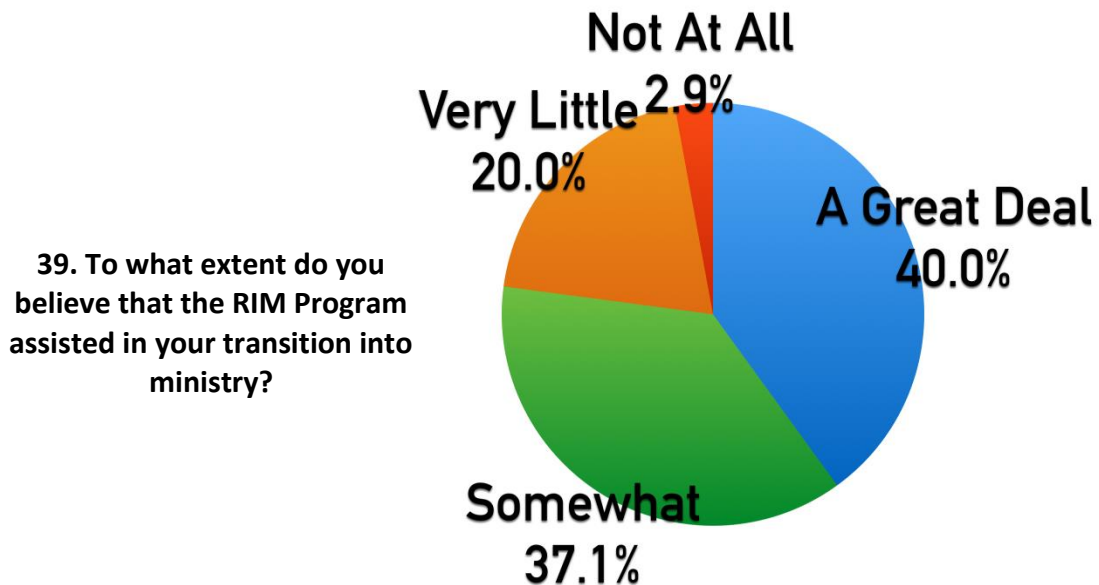


Since the residents were not in the best place to see the program from the board's perspective, I am quite pleased that such a high number believed that the program gave the BOM the right evaluative tools. When the answers of only those currently in the program were filtered, 46.2% answered "A Great Deal" and 53.8% answered "Somewhat," which shows growing faith in the BOM evaluation process.

Goal 2: Assist in the Transition into Ordained Ministry

The formation of clergy requires a number of institutions and individuals working together, including congregations, mentors (official and unofficial), denominational structures, and seminaries. Each of these has a role as the new minister transitions into full time ministry. The Residency in Ministry program seeks to assist with the new pastor's transition with the tools and processes given to it by the Board of Ordained

Ministry. We want provisional members to not only survive the transition, but also thrive with experiences of fruitfulness and effectiveness. By creating a space (albeit mandatory and standardized) for reflective practitioners to be immersed in the day- to-day experience of ministry and then thoughtfully reflect upon the acts of ministry through peer group settings and written assignments, the Residency in Ministry program creates an opportunity for the new clergyperson to step beyond the “what do I do?” questions and address the “why?” questions of ministry. The survey results suggest that the program succeeded, with a combined 77.1% of residents stating that the program assisted in their transition into ministry “a great deal” and “somewhat.”



The transition into ministry can be difficult. As James Wind and David Wood note, “Shifting roles from the community of scholarship to the community of ministry practice requires significant shifts in one’s personal style of initiative taking, collaboration, and decision

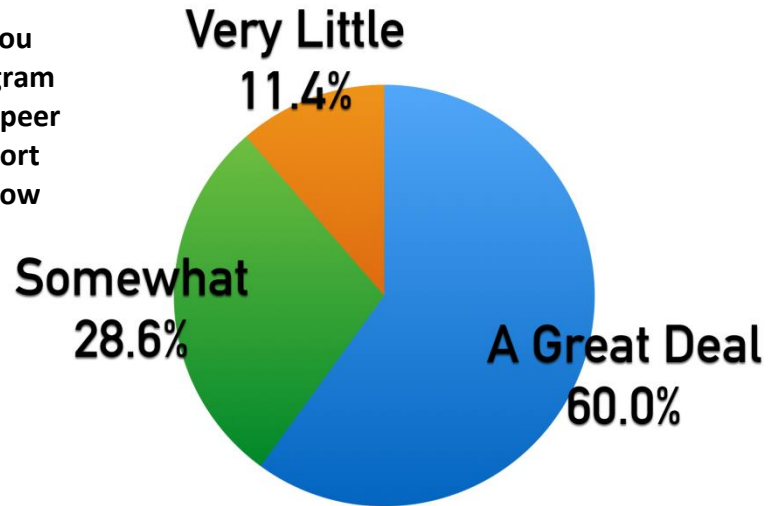
making.”¹⁴⁴ Questions of finding meaning in the midst of ministry are invaluable in this transition, as is creating a clear expectation of fruitfulness. I believe that the Residency in Ministry program helped bring up the right questions and offer a level of clarity for those entering ministry.

Goal 3: Creating Communities of Practice

In 2003, while attending a Connected In Christ retreat, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie led a session about miraculous expectations for the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. During an open time of discussion, she was asked what she first noticed about the Arkansas episcopal areas when she arrived in 1996. Her answer was that the clergy did not pray together. One of the aims of the Connected In Christ semi-annual retreats was to change the clergy culture in Arkansas United Methodism, both spiritually and in the practice of ministry. Several years later, as I was crafting the Residency in Ministry program, I sought to recreate the atmosphere (both in prayerful community and in peer learning) I experienced during Connected In Christ in the formation of the Summer Residency Retreat. Deeper ongoing experience of a spirit-filled community of practice was positioned in the Covenant Peer Groups, meeting almost monthly during the school year. When asked about their experience of peer learning and support, the residents gave the highest scores of the three goals.

¹⁴⁴ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. *Becoming a Pastor*, p 13.

40. To what extent do you believe that the RIM Program created opportunities for peer group learning and support among you and your fellow residents?



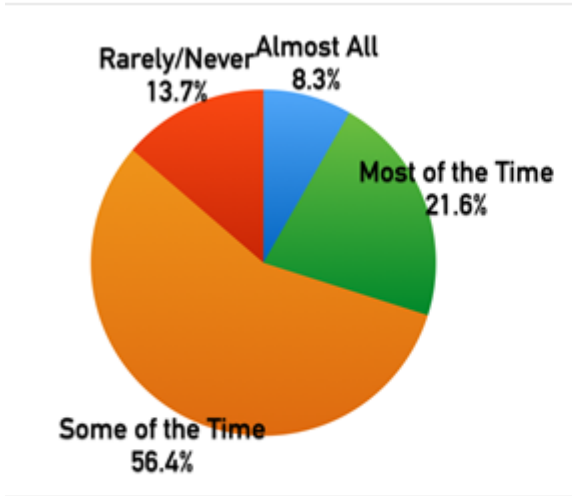
I found this quite exciting. In addition to this goal-based question, I also asked if the Covenant Peer Groups contributed to their growth and success, and a combined total of 88.6% of the responses indicated “a great deal” or “somewhat,” which is a little bit higher than that reported by Lovett Weems in his 2005 survey.¹⁴⁵

One of the assertions I found in the research is that “a model that appears to work well for covenant groups combines the practice of spiritual disciplines along with reflection on topics and issues out of the probationers’ experience.”¹⁴⁶ The mentor training and the Residency Handbook both emphasized the results of this research. The next two charts compare our results with those of the GBHEM national survey.

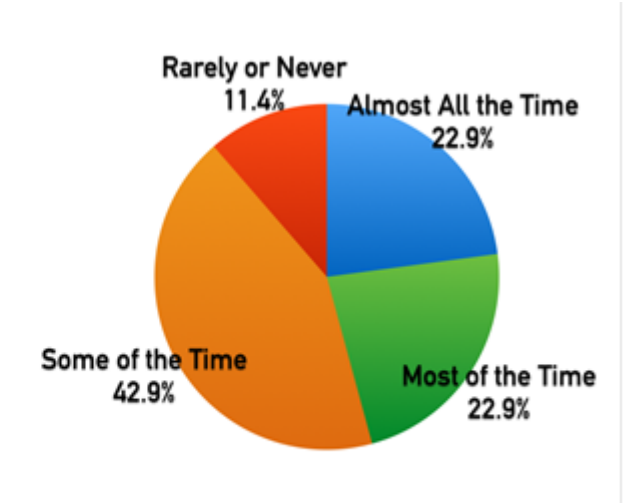
¹⁴⁵ Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 5.

¹⁴⁶ Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 21. See charts of survey results on pp 11-12.

13. How often did your Peer Group focus on spiritual formation practices?

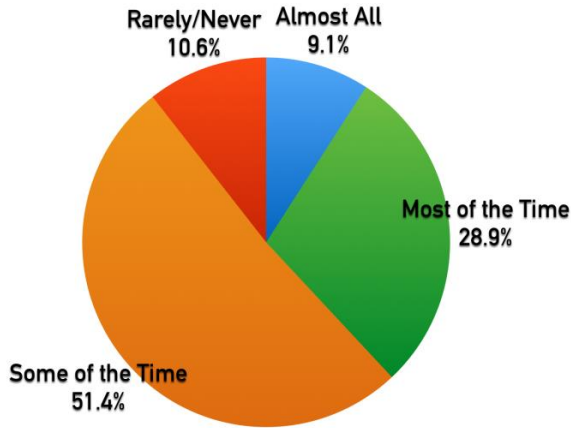


2005 National Survey

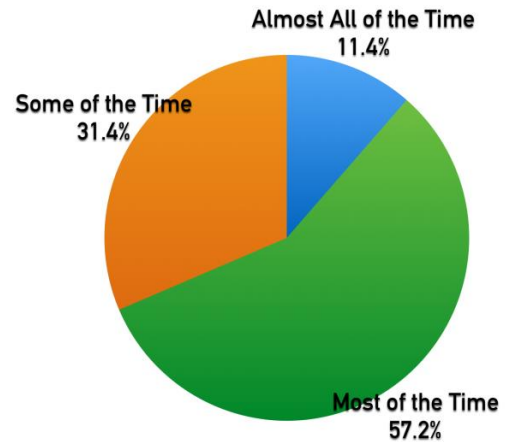


2013 Arkansas Survey

14. How often did your Peer Group focus on specific ministry topics?



2005 National Survey



2013 Arkansas Survey

The results of this comparison show that the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program compared favorably with national findings. The Covenant Peer Groups included both spiritual formation practices and focused ministry topics, and therefore met the expectations I formed following research on best practices and my desire to create healthy, spiritually-enriched communities of practice.

There were also comments that arose from the questions on the Summer Retreat and the Covenant Peer Groups that relate specifically to creating opportunities for peer learning:

“The [Summer Retreat] workshops and presentations were very good, however, the bonding experience in forming lifelong ministry relationships was priceless.”

and

“The peer groups were very beneficial, not only for the provisional process but also helped build relationships that I believe will strengthen the connection.”

and

“Although I initially believed this meeting was unnecessary, I later discovered it was an essential part of the process for me. The guidance, encouragement and support were essential for me.”

Both the retreat and the groups had peer relationships as a priority, through worshipping, learning, challenging, and praying together. I believe that the residents were able to create communities of practice in which deep reflection on their ministry could take place, and that this had a great deal of impact on residents’ effectiveness in ministry.

PRACTICUM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Element 1: Supervision and Evaluation

The responsibility for supervision of provisional ministers in residency rests with the office of district superintendent (middle judicatory officers who serve as the bishop's appointive cabinet) and the boards of ordained ministry. The resident's district superintendent has been meeting with appointed clergy (including residents) at least once annually for consultation, often in January. In 2013, that schedule changed, with superintendents meeting in the early Fall for an evaluation time, and consultation in January only with those who may be moved. The Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry officially meets with residents annually for spring interviews, usually only in the form of an interview team of 4-6 persons and then a division of the board that includes about 15 BOM members. Beyond these interviews, the only official contacts that many residents have with the Board of Ordained Ministry are the two members of the Residency Team (the mentoring supervisor and me, as program director) and any BOM members who happen to serve as Covenant Peer Group mentor-facilitators. Lack of community with the BOM members is a concerning matter, and it was raised in some of the open-ended responses.

While the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program did not include expectations or requirements beyond the new annual evaluation, it is interesting to

compare the results of the survey to national results.¹⁴⁷ Nationally, most (64.7%) provisional members receive supervision from their district superintendent less often than quarterly, with matches our results (67%). The Arkansas Conference residents, however sought much more time with their district superintendent, reporting there to be “too little” time (52.8% in Arkansas compared to 42.9% nationally). In my survey’s open ended comments, a few expressed a great mentoring relationship with their district superintendent, but most wanted more contact with their superintendent during these early formative years in ministry. It should be noted that, in the last several years, the Arkansas Conference has drastically changed the number and boundaries of districts, and there has also been great turnover and reassignment of cabinet members. Without changing churches, many residents have experienced a new superintendent every year, and the district office may have moved locations every year as well. I cannot help but think that these contextual factors have impacted the amount of time shared between residents and their district superintendents. Regardless of these factors, from the residents’ perspective, largely similar levels of trust were considered to be present with their district superintendents.

The Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry utilizes various assignments, evaluations, and the spring interview to assess the suitability of residents for ordination, along with their fruitfulness and effectiveness. As stated previously, residents felt that the program met the goal of providing evaluative tools to the BOM, and residents expressed a favorable level of trust between themselves and the BOM. One of the

¹⁴⁷ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness: An Ongoing Survey of the Probationary Process in the United Methodist Church*, 2005, p 6.

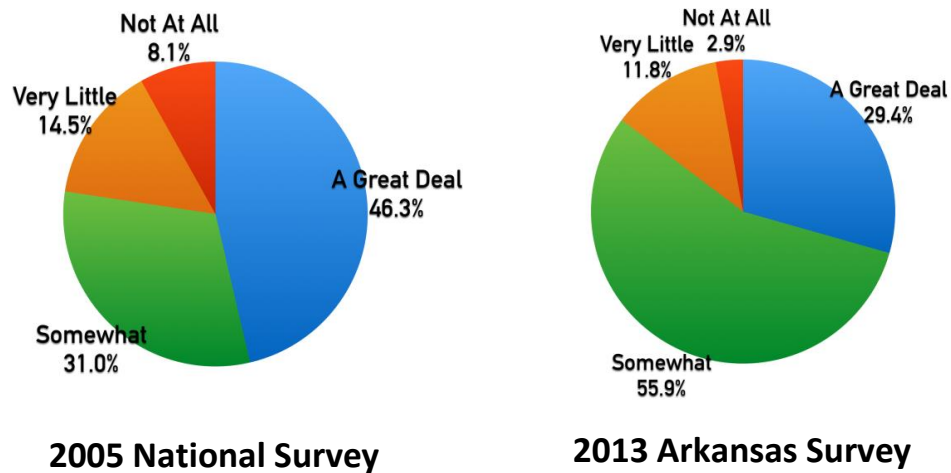
changes in the program was the information sought by the BOM from the ministry setting. Using the staff parish relations committee (or other official institutional personnel committee) and, if applicable, the senior pastor (or institutional supervisor) as the conduit of evaluation was a huge shift. The BOM has responded to this change in protocols with great enthusiasm. The form itself allows for more informative content, because it does not rely on long narratives in “churchy” language. Staff parish relation committees are designed to be representative bodies, so a broader perspective of the church is obtained. Supervisors’ voices are now heard, and their day-to-day interactions with the residents are quite helpful as the BOM attempts to understand the residents’ fitness and effectiveness in ministry. While several of the Lilly Endowment’s Transition into Ministry program initiatives included some kind of local church lay teams to provide feedback in the local ministry settings in a forum outside of the normal church personnel committee or board, my deletion of this component from the ordination process seems to not been detrimental. Viewing the survey results of those members of the first class (2009-2010), no mention in open comments was ever made of the previous lay care teams, except perhaps a comment in the covenant peer group section that “I think it was better than what we had pre-2009.”

Element 2: Peer Groups and Mentors

In understanding the effectiveness of the new Covenant Peer Groups and mentors-facilitators, one finding stands out when I filtered the results: when mentor-facilitator rating was low (as indicated on questions #12 or #21), then every item of the Residency

in Ministry was rated lower, including trust in the Board of Ordained Ministry.¹⁴⁸ I also noticed in comparing my results with the GBHEM national study in 2005 that we rate lower in mentors' contribution to resident success (Question 21). In the following comparative charts, note that the Arkansas residents who marked the highest rating for mentoring's contribution was at 29.4%, a marked difference from that national rating of 46.3%.¹⁴⁹

Mentor's contribution to resident's growth and success



This speaks to the need for diligence in the selection of mentor-facilitators and the training of the mentors. The lack of formal training the first year was probably a factor. Three of the four participants that rated mentor-facilitation leadership as “poor” were part of the first class of residents (2009-2010) in which mentors was not formally trained.

¹⁴⁸ The opposite did not hold true. Even those who expressed “low” or “very low” trust in the BOM most often gave good or moderate marks to their mentor-facilitators and to the peer group experience.

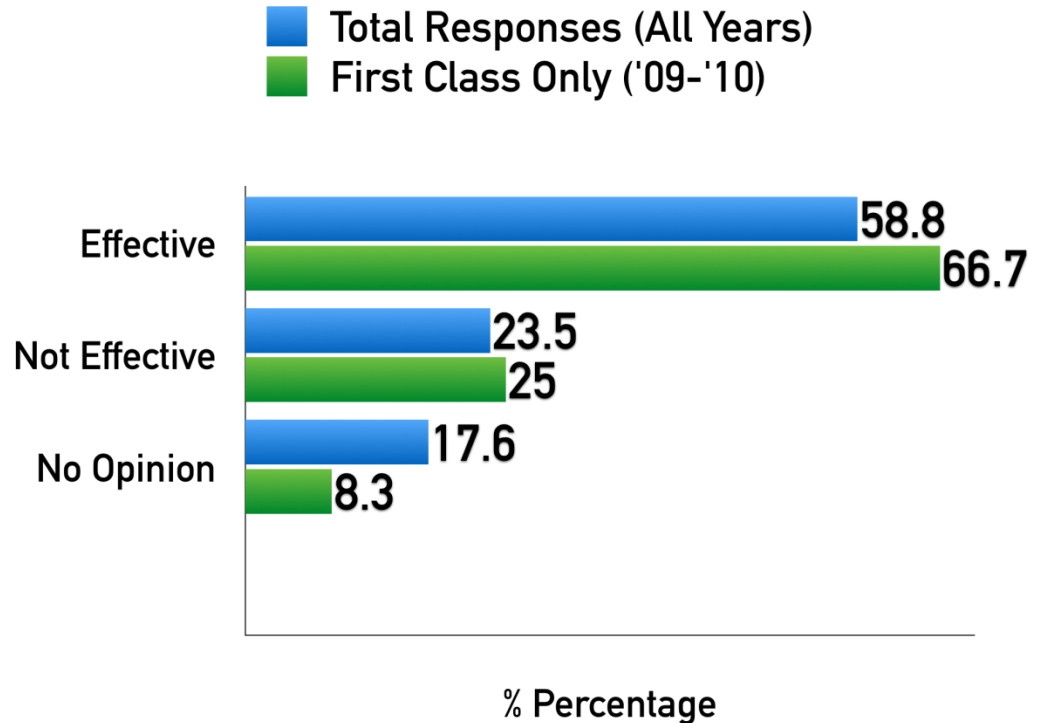
¹⁴⁹ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 5.

One of my early decisions, for practical and theoretical reasons, was the combining of peer group facilitation with mentoring. While the Lilly Endowment Transition into Ministry initiatives often used this method, Lovett Weem's studies of United Methodist probationary programs in 2005 only showed 11.1% of mentoring to happen in group settings¹⁵⁰ but that there was no statistical significance in results when comparing group mentoring to one-on-one mentoring.¹⁵¹ Today, the Arkansas Conference has moved much of its local pastor and some candidacy mentoring into group models, but this idea was quite novel in 2009. In the open-ended responses to my survey, a few participants expressed a continued desire for individual one-on-one mentors. While a majority of the residents thought that combining mentoring with peer group facilitation was effective, a larger percentage of the first class (2009-2010) of residents approved of the combination. While this first class may have not had mentors with formalized training, they had either experienced or heard about the previous system of individualized mentoring and liked the group method.

¹⁵⁰ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 10.

¹⁵¹ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 16.

23. The Arkansas Conference combined Mentoring with Peer Group Facilitation in 2009. Do you believe that combining these two elements of the residency process was effective?



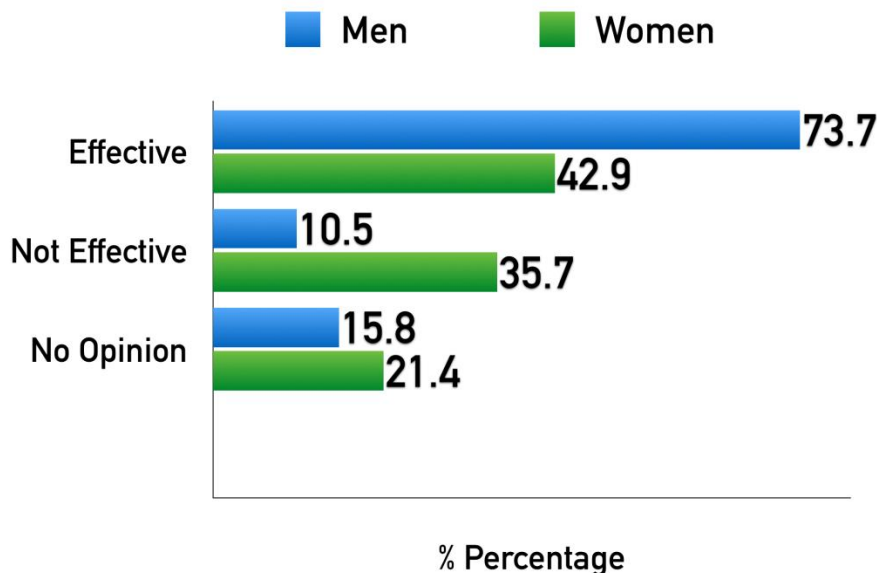
What is even more fascinating is that a full 100% of residents who actually experienced the transition from the pre-2009 probationary process to the Residency in Ministry program (serving in both 2008-2009 and 2009-2010) believed that the group method of mentoring was effective. These survey participants came from the group that had assigned individual mentors when they began their ordination process and then lost them in summer 2009 when they were assigned to be a part of peer groups with mentor-facilitators. I also find it interesting that one of the only statistically significant differences in responses between women and men in the survey concerned this question. In studying the all the survey results, I attempted to be aware of gender differences in the

residency experience. Reporting on a study of seminary graduates, the research team states:

Is gender a significant factor in “the first five years”? It is commonly observed that a higher percentage of women than men do not complete the first years. It would be helpful to know the reasons for this attrition. Are there notable extrinsic stress points for women in congregational life that add to the intrinsic tensions of the first five years? Conversely, is there something in the experience of women that enable them to bring particular capacities to the early years of ministry—something that should perhaps be highlighted and encouraged?¹⁵²

In my survey, female participants rated the effectiveness of combining mentoring with peer group facilitation much lower:

23. The Arkansas Conference combined Mentoring with Peer Group Facilitation in 2009. Do you believe that combining these two elements of the residency process was effective?



¹⁵² Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years," p 75.

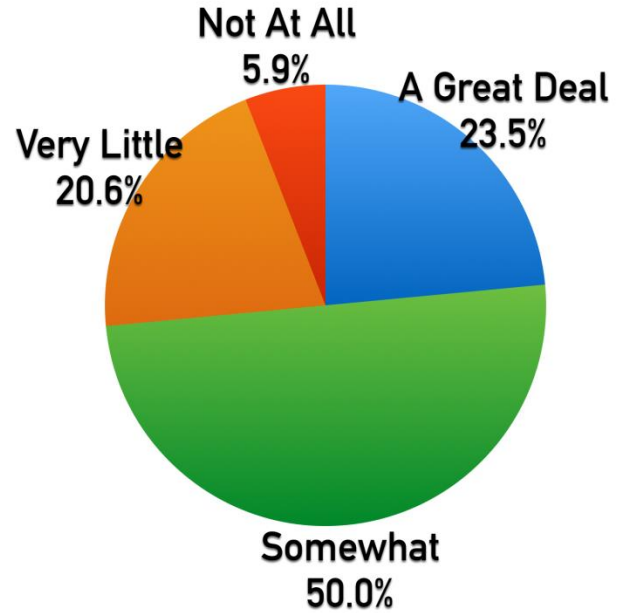
I am surprised that the question of mentoring experience in the residency process had such a marked disparity among men and women, especially since there seems to be little other significant statistical differences in the survey. With group mentoring becoming a norm throughout the candidacy and local pastor system, this difference would be an excellent area for further research and examination.

With the recent introduction of Circuit Elder groups in the Arkansas Conference, I was interested in how provisional deacons, who are usually excluded from circuit elder groups, experienced the value of Covenant Peer Groups during residency. Provisional deacons answered “a great deal” twice as often (60%) as did the provisional elders (30%) in response to survey question 18, “To what extent did your Covenant Peer Group contribute to your growth and success?” Provisional deacons also answered “a great deal” 100% of the time compared to the elders’ 53.3% in response to survey question 40, “To what extent do you believe that the RIM Program created opportunities for peer group learning and support among you and your fellow residents?” I believe that this response indicates a deep desire and appreciation among our provisional deacons for inclusion in communities of practice.

Element 3: Continuing Education and Retreat

The Summer Retreat showed moderate to good results in the survey ratings, with a combined 54.2% reporting the retreat quality as “good” or “excellent” in Question 26. Question 27 seeks information about effects on future effectiveness and fruitfulness:

27. To what extent did the Summer Retreat continuing education event sponsored by the Board of Ordained Ministry contribute to your growth and success?



In open-ended questions, the best indicator of overall value is the selection of the keynote presenter. Residents also appreciated the practical administrative topics, such as completing denominational forms, and desired even more practical direction in this area. These findings mirror those of Lovett Weems, in his 2003 and 2005 national studies of continuing education in the probationary process.¹⁵³ A desire for more interaction (beyond the lecture format of many speakers) is common. I readily admit that the overall quality of the retreats have been uneven. The second year retreat (2010) was influenced too much by conference political requirements, and the changes in the Arkansas Conference structure leading to the loss of Connected In Christ as a partner in planning and logistics and made the 2012 retreat much less effective because it had to be relocated and reorganized with a new partnership and uncertain funding. The continued inclusion

¹⁵³ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005, p 20.

of high quality and experienced presenters must be a non-negotiable element to future retreats.

In the open-ended comments, I found that topics praised by one participant were sometimes the topics rejected by another. I will need to remain faithful to the three program goals to maintain a tight focus on matters involving the provisional ministers' transition into ministry and growth in fruitfulness. Having also taught pastoral administration for the extension course of study for part-time local pastors, I have discovered that there is a great need for conference and denominational administrative matters to be taught, and often this need occurs before a retreat. Possibly at the regular meeting of the Arkansas Annual (regional) Conference in June, all new clergy could be offered training in institutional administration and clergy compensation/taxation. The time in the retreat could then be used for more residency program goal-based educational experiences.

Element 4: Assignments

Each assignment has different expectations and functions. Some serve primarily as tools for the BOM to evaluate the resident, such as the doctrinal exam. Other assignments, such as the Bible Study were created chiefly as a tool for residents to take time to reflect on their practice of ministry. I asked current and former residents to rate how well each of the Board of Ordained Ministry assignments related to their ministry and their identity as United Methodist ministers. The highest rated was the doctrinal exam composed of the theological questions in the *Book of Discipline*, with 54.3% of

responses indicated that the exam related to their ministry and identity “a good deal” and remaining answering somewhat (28.6%) or that they have not yet reached that part in the ordination process (17.1%) . Since this doctrinal exam’s audience is only the BOM interview team, I found this high rating surprising. Meanwhile, the Bible study, a disciplinary requirement which I implemented in our program as an instrument for peer group reflection, was the lowest scored. Overall, most of the survey answers registered “somewhat” in the questions concerning how well assignments “relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister”

The fruitfulness project is an exception in this survey. Since so few people have completed this new assignment, even in its previous incarnation as a deacon’s field education project, I was unable to really test its usefulness and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Since I began working with probationary pastors for the Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, I have attempted to improve the process every year. Since its activation in July 2009, the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program has already seen many changes. It has changed in terms of leadership, partnerships, denominational requirements, and in its relationship to the greater (and evolving) Arkansas Conference vision.

The changes brought by the *2012 Book of Discipline*, the arrival of a new resident bishop with an interest and background in the work of conference boards of ordained ministry, and my own observations of the program provided an opportunity for major modifications and for a complete overhaul of the Residency in Ministry program's handbook in the spring of 2013. As noted previously, even the stated program goals were enhanced to better include the mission of the United Methodist Church.

Even in this adaptive environment, this study raises some particular lessons and a few areas of particular concern when developing and implementing a transition into ministry program. In studying survey results and examining the creation and implementation of the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry program, several areas of future study or further needed modifications have been discovered.

RESIDENCY IN MINISTRY PROGRAM GOALS

The three program goals have served the program by providing direction and clarity. I have used the three goals in decision-making throughout both the creation and the implementation of the program, and in maintaining the integrity of the program's many elements amid many possible institutional distractions. Concerning the goals, the lesson I learned can truly be seen in the 2013 modifications I made to the three goals. It was important that the Residency in Ministry program be understood as a furtherance of the disciple making mission which Christ has given us. The Board of Ordained Ministry, through the Residency in Ministry program, does not transition people into ministry simply to support institutional existence, but to be fruitful and effective ministers of the Gospel, making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

FURTHER STUDY AND PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE RESIDENCY IN MINISTRY PROGRAM

The Fruitfulness Project

This Fruitfulness Project assignment is new to the United Methodist Church's ordination requirements. During recent training programs for BOM leaders who work with residents, we were told that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry are looking forward hearing about annual (regional) conference experiments for this assignment as they seek out best practices. In many ways, I believe that the Arkansas

Conference was fortunate to have as resident bishop the former chair of the North Texas BOM, which created the original assignment. It remains to be seen if my combination of written project guidelines and video presentation requirement will prove effective in meeting both the evaluative and educational goals of project's concept. I hope to share experiences and best practices with my colleagues at future GBHEM training events, in order that our residents may become more effective and fruitful ministers.

Peer Group Goals and Implementation

The peer group element performed well in the residency process, with high marks and multiple positive comments in response to open-ended questions. I believe helpful communities of practice were formed that gave direction and opportunities for reflection among the residents, and the result was at least some degree of impact on residents' effectiveness (Question 18). I do believe that too much peer group time has been given to the ordination process itself, as indicated in the high ratings for "all of the time" and "most of the time" for Question 17. The inclusion of the book study of *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results* in the 2013-2014 program year was my first attempt to shift the focus from the ordination process to the actual purpose of ministry. Perhaps the third program goal of creating "opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents" should be expanded and clarified to explain the purpose for the peer groups. Currently, there is no defined purpose that undergirds the groups' time together. Additional language from theories on communities of practice and reflective immersion,

or perhaps the spiritually rich vision of fruitful practitioners can be included in the goals to provide more meaning to the covenant group experience.

Mentor Selection and Training

In their study of young clergy in the United Methodist Church released in 2008, Lovett Weems and Ann Michel state that “all of the Lewis Center’s research points to the conclusion that mentoring has more potential to develop effectiveness in those entering ministry than any other component of the process.”¹⁵⁴ I believe that the lack of formal mentor training the first year of the program made us miss the mark for many residents, and damaged trust in the BOM and the entire Residency in Ministry program. From open-ended comments, it is clear that residents in different groups had vastly different experiences of the program. Mentor training, both in the purpose of the covenant peer groups and in the nature of mentoring, is vital to the success of Residency in Ministry Program.

The difference in opinion between male and female participants concerning group mentoring is an area that requires further study. Is there something about the group mentoring experience that men found particularly effective but women found ineffective, or did women completing the survey simply prefer one-on-one mentors? Group mentoring is beginning to become a normal part of the Arkansas Conference, so the answers to these questions will be important.

¹⁵⁴ Weems, Lovett H., and Ann A. Michel. *The Crisis of Younger Clergy*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 51.

Structural Issue: The Role of the Board of Ordained Ministry In Pastoral Formation And Evaluation

Finally, there is an issue with the Board of Ordained Ministry having the responsibility to operate the Residency in Ministry program. In 2008, Lovett Weems and Ann Michel suggested that every piece of the ordination process be philosophically based around the growth of the ordinand and not the boards of ordained ministry or the conference.¹⁵⁵ Currently, this is not possible. The Board of Ordained Ministry has the responsibility for both formation of new clergy and the credentialing of these clergy. The goals I crafted for the program meet these disciplinary requirements. Later in 2010, Weems refined his thinking, suggesting that formation and examination be separated, with the BOM only responsible to make evaluative judgments on behalf of the annual (regional) conference, and leave some other body responsible for a much longer transition into ministry process that is focused only on fruitfulness and would continue after ordination.¹⁵⁶

Serving as the BOM member relating to provisional ministers, I have historically been asked to “fix” new clergy in preparation for ordination. Though clarity of residency program goals and BOM member education has ended most such requests, this does bring up a deeper question: is the Board of Ordained Ministry the correct place to locate our transition into ministry program, or does its evaluative function and responsibility preclude its ability to do that ministry of formation well? Especially in difficult cases of poorly performing clergy, the three program goals could often be seen as being at odds

¹⁵⁵ Weems, Lovett H., and Ann A. Michel. *The Crisis of Younger Clergy*, 50-51.

¹⁵⁶ Weems, Lovett H. "Under Pressure," 13.

with each other. Certainly pastoral formation fits in with the BOM's role of credentialing and formation during the early stages of candidacy, but perhaps the BOM should cease the formation role during the ordination process. Perhaps, like Lovett Weems suggests, a different conference body could claim the role of pastoral formation and transition. I have wondered if the Orders of Elders and Deacons could perform this task, if properly constituted and funded.

Simply from a timeline perspective, there is much to be said for a split approach. The provisional process may take two years from graduation to ordination, but the reality is that many sit with the BOM for final ordination interviews just 19 months after beginning full time ministry. The pressure of guaranteed appointment looms large as the BOM meets, knowing that a scant 19 months of service must inform our decision to grant the equivalent of lifetime tenure to a provisional minister. Many transition into ministry programs are designed for the first five years of ministry,¹⁵⁷ so 19 months is simply not long enough for adequate guidance and support in the first years of ministry. Perhaps ordination could be decoupled from full connectional membership in the conference (effectively, tenure). Separating judgments about ordination from transition issues could assist in making the first five years more fruitful and effective. All these possibilities are matters of denominational polity that would require General Conference legislation and are, therefore, well outside the bounds of this project.

¹⁵⁷See Palen, Kathryn. "The First Five Years," 11-15, and Dash, Michael I.N., Jimmy Dukes, and Gordon T. Smith. "Learning from the First Years."

Passing the Mantle

Regardless of the approaches taken, the faith community holds in trust the gift of ordination from God. The faith community also must train and shape future leaders, holding all the servant leaders accountable to fruitfulness in advancing God's vision and mission for the church. This project is an attempt to share one way the faith community called the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church has sought to love, challenge, support, evaluate, invite, and bless the new clergy entering its membership. Fundamentally, the Residency in Ministry program is an act of hope – hope that, as the mantle is passed to a new generation of clergy leaders, these new leaders may inherit a double share of our spirit and many blessing for faithful and fruitful ministry.

APPENDICES

Professional Project
Doctor of Ministry
Perkins School of Theology

May 2014
Blake R. Bradford

APPENDIX A: 2013 RESIDENCY HANDBOOK

Handbook has been reformatted and contact information, such as email addresses,
have been removed for inclusion in this project report.

APPENDIX A

RESIDENCY HANDBOOK CONTENTS

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RESIDENCY HANDBOOK

The materials in this book are based on the Disciplinary and Arkansas Conference requirements for a minimum two-year process for Resident Provisional Ministers.



**ARKANSAS CONFERENCE
BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY
RESIDENCY IN MINISTRY PROGRAM**

Revised July 2013

Blake R. Bradford, Director

**Current Information and Evaluation Forms are at
http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim**

RESIDENCY IN MINISTRY PROCESS

Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry Residency Team

Commissioned provisional ministers who:

- *have completed all educational requirements*
- *received a full time appointment (less than full time appointments are considered on a case-by-case basis)*
- *and are seeking full membership and ordination in the Arkansas Conference*

shall enter a Residency in Ministry (RIM) Process. It is the responsibility of the Board of Ordained Ministry to nurture and evaluate those persons who are provisional members of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

"The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Together as United Methodists, we live out this mission. The Residency in Ministry process seeks to fulfill this mission by fulfilling the following goals:

1. *Provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members seeking ordination and full connection.*
2. *Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.*
3. *Create opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents.*

It is clear from studies of career stages that early patterns and attitudes become basic for a person's self-confidence and view of his/her ministry. Your way of understanding your vocation as a United Methodist Minister is created during this time, and research shows that it will last during the whole of your ministry. Some persons have been scarred by real or imagined failure during this period and never recover their confidence. The value of the Residency Process cannot be over-estimated. This is the time that you set habits, styles, and inclinations for a lifetime of ministry. Through the Residency Team, clergy mentors, and covenant peer groups, the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) offers provisional ministers a curriculum that supports the practice and work of their ministry as servant leaders, to contemplate the grounding of ordained ministry, and understand the covenant ministry in the life of the Arkansas Conference of the UMC. Successful completion of this process is a requirement for ordination as a deacon or elder in full connection in the Arkansas Conference. In accordance with recent and existing General Conference decisions, residency is a 2-8 year process. The BOM expects that the average length of residency will be 3 years, but the new RIM process will not be designed with a 2-year or 3-year "default" calendar. Instead, the process will allow flexibility so that you, the resident, are assisted with the tools you need to transition into effective ministry as an ordained United Methodist minister in full connection. Also, it will allow the people of the BOM to have the evaluative tools we need to assess your effectiveness in

ministry. **Two years of effective ministry in a single appointment as a Resident is the minimum time required to complete the Arkansas Conference Residency Process.** It is the responsibility of the Resident to complete assignments and be present at meetings and interviews.

Some notes from the Residency in Ministry Program Team:

We seek to serve Christ together. Our prayer is that this RIM Process will provide you with a rich experience as you transition into full-time ministry as a servant of Jesus through the ministries of the UMC.

If your appointment status is changed during the year between sessions of Annual Conference, it is imperative that you contact BOTH the RIM Program Director and Mentoring Supervisor in order that your peer group assignment and process be updated and your provisional residency status be determined. It is the resident's responsibility to keep the RIM Program Director informed of any changes of appointment.

A SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE RESIDENCY PROCESS

The BOM will assign sermons to be preached, Bible study outlines to be developed, and a Fruitfulness Project to be evaluated. Throughout the program, residents are assessed as to their gifts, readiness and effectiveness in ministry. This RIM process is coordinated and supervised by the Residency Team of the Conference BOM and shall be in full accordance with the disciplinary requirements and such other requirements as deemed necessary by the Annual Conference (2012 Discipline, ¶326).

The requirements of the RIM Process are derived from both *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* and the rulings of The Arkansas Annual Conference. In addition to the mandates of the general church, the conference requires complete participation in its own RIM process under the supervision of the Residency Team of the Conference BOM. The Chairpersons of the Residency Team will communicate annually with the BOM concerning the progress of the Resident. The Residency Team of the BOM has designed a program of peer groups, evaluations, retreats, and other requirements, which must be completed by the Resident. The process requires the Resident to actively participate in illuminating, evaluating, and reflecting on the practice of ministry and the disciple-making mission of the United Methodist Church. The Resident must attend all meetings and produce all paperwork on time. Successful completion of the residency program and its assignments is the responsibility of the Resident.

The RIM program is comprised of three primary elements:

1. A multi-day summer retreat organized in partnership with the Center for Clergy & Laity Excellence in Leadership

A requirement is attendance at an annual summer retreat, a time of peer learning, spiritual/vocational formation, and discernment.

2. Small Residency Covenant Peer Groups (5-7 residents + 2 mentor/facilitators) that will meet 6-8 times a year

One purpose of the Residence Process of the Arkansas Annual Conference is to surround each Residency Member with supportive caring groups. One of the groups is a Covenant Peer Group (CPG). Provisional members are expected to participate in the CPG “to support the practice and work of their ministry as servant leaders, to contemplate the grounding of ordained ministry, and to understand covenant ministry in the life of the conference” (2012 Discipline, ¶326).

3. Assignments and Annual Board of Ordained Ministry Interviews

By January 31 of each year, materials are due to the Board of Ordained Ministry Administrator in preparation for the yearly interview/retreat with the BOM. Some basic assignments include:

- In the first year, a biblically based sermon that includes in its content the Wesleyan view of prevenient grace and a Bible study curriculum and lesson plan on Luke are due.
- In the second year, a Fruitfulness Project (§330 and §335) that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World" is required. *{NOTE: The FRUITFULNESS PROJECT, which is an addition in the 2012 Discipline, replaces the Provisional Deacon's Field Education Project and the Provisional Elder's Second Year Sermon.}*
- In the third through eighth year, written assignments are given by the BOM
- In the year seeking ordination (year 2 – year 8), answers to the doctrinal questions required for conference membership (2012 Discipline, §330.5.a-c for deacons and §335.8.a-c for elders) are due.
- Every year, evaluation forms from your SPRC (or Agency Board/Personnel Committee), senior pastor/supervisor (if applicable), mentor facilitators, and your District Superintendent are due.

Specific details on all of these and other requirements are found throughout this handbook. It is the responsibility of the Resident to be sure that all these elements are completed and on time. The focus of the residency process is the work of ordained ministry and reflection on the practical aspects of being a servant leader in the United Methodist Church. At this stage of provisional membership, ministerial effectiveness and fruitfulness are the focus of the BOM and the Residency Team. The Resident will reflect on his/her own ministry using the feedback from the Covenant Peer Group, the mentor facilitators, the SPRC, the Residency Team, the DS, and other concerned parties.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Some notes for all written assignments: Use the following digital title process for pdf file names: *Lastname.firstname.assignment.year.pdf*.

For example: *Doe.Jane.Sermon.2014.pdf*

- Format on letter sized 8.5x11.
- Please use Times New Roman (or similar) 12 pt. font and single space with one inch margins
- Include your Name & Page Number on each page (Use the “footer” or “header” function for this)
- The year of the residency program (1st, 2nd, 3rd ... 8th) and a description of the assignment at the top of the page
- Send e-mail attachments using **ONLY** the PDF formats.

In order to assist the Resident in acquiring “how-to skills” and holy habits in full time ministry and meet all the requirements for reception into membership in full connection and ordination, the Resident is charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Covenant Peer Group:

One purpose of the Residence Process of the Arkansas Annual Conference is to surround each Residency Member with supportive caring groups. One of the groups is a Covenant Peer Group (CPG). These covenant groups can help the Resident face the possibilities and challenges of ordained ministry and his/her growth in that ministry. It is composed of 5-7 residents + 2 mentor/facilitators, which will meet 6-7 times a year.

It is required that the Resident meets regularly and participates actively with their CPG. Groups are based geographically around the state. Due to budget restraints, the annual conference cannot pay expenses for these events. Therefore, you should budget travel costs into your own professional expense agreements at your church/ministry setting. Every year, Residents are assigned a group and two mentors/ group facilitators.

Mentor/facilitators:

- Members in Full Connection
- Lead and guide the peer groups

Peer Group goals will include:

- Forming ministerial identity
- Formulate ministry goals
- Working with congregation members & conflict management
- Addressing ministerial effectiveness issues, using case studies & conversations
- Spiritual formation and peer relationship
- Sharing best practices and assess each other’s written BOM assignments

2. A multi-day summer retreat organized and funded in partnership with the Center for Clergy & Laity Excellence in Leadership

Residents are required to attend an annual summer retreat, which is a time of learning and spiritual/vocational formation and discernment. The objective of the retreat is to encourage and equip residents for fruitfulness in carrying out the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.

Topics and goals will rotate through subjects such as:

- Orientation on Arkansas Conference basics, culture, mission and administration
- Seeking fruitfulness and mission-minded outcomes
- Forming ministerial identity
- Leadership, teamwork, & planning for servant leadership
- Healthy living and clergy family concerns
- Working with congregation members & conflict management
- Money matters: congregational stewardship & clergy financial planning
- Spiritual formation and peer relationships

3. Resident's Annual Ministry Goals: The Resident will formulate Annual Ministry Goals early in his/her experience that will be refined in the ministry context and in the Resident's Covenant Peer Group. The focus of this process is the Resident's development of his/her own ministry goals in the resident's ministry context. Ministry goals are not designed to be a comprehensive plan for every aspect of ministry. Directions to create S.M.A.R.T. ministry goals can be found on pages 19-20. Each Resident's will bring a draft of her ministry goals to the Covenant Peer Group, after which the resident will e-mail the plan to the BOM Administrator and the Residency Director by January 31.

4. Teaching a Book of the Bible: Plan a teaching outline of the Gospel of Luke. This includes:

- 1-2 page curriculum overview/outline/syllabus of the entire Study for the Gospel of Luke
- 3-5 page sample lesson plan from a particular session of your overview/outline

Be creative, this may be organized thematically, by chapter, etc. The whole Gospel does not have to be covered. For instance, you could write a study on *Jesus and the Poor in Luke* or *Luke's Parables* or the *Sermon on the Plain*. Again, be creative!

Each Resident's Bible Study teaching outline & lesson plan is e-mailed to the BOM Administrator and the Residency Director by May 15 of your first year in residency.

5. Sermon: Written sermon(s) are submitted to the BOM. In the first year, a biblically based sermon that includes in its content the Wesleyan view of

prevenient grace is due. For the video, please record the full worship service to show the Resident's leadership in worship. Additional sermons may be required by the BOM and are often assigned as additional assignments (See #12 below). The resident will e-mail the written sermon and mail six (6) copies of the DVD to the BOM Administrator and e-mail the written sermon to the Residency Director by January 31.

The resident is responsible for making copies of the DVD video format. If a technical glitch occurs with recording, please notify the Chair of the Residency Team for options. If you are an outline or "no notes" preacher, please transcribe your sermon after it is preached so that the board will have the full text, (*edited for grammar and reading*).

***Some advice for sermons written for the BOM:** A common mistake is for the resident to create a sermon that that is so technical in its Biblical exegesis that the resident's own voice is overshadowed. The Board wants to hear your voice in your sermon to your congregation. Please don't make any dramatic stylistic or delivery changes for the sermons sent to the BOM. Making dramatic changes in your personal style or presentation just for videotaped sermons for the Board will make you nervous and will not reflect your true preaching style.*

***Advice for taping:** Some residents tape a few sermons for practice to get used to being recorded and to work out technical issues with filming. Please film some sermons ahead of time to check for sound levels (for example, an attached microphone in the back of the room will NOT pick up your voice) and position. An unusable video or a video of a sermon not before a congregation may be grounds to refuse your assignment.*

6. Fruitfulness Project for Elders and Deacons (*formerly Deacons' Field Related Experience*)

To further the mission of making disciples of the Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, second year residents shall report on a significant disciple-making initiative they have led during their time as a Provisional Member of the Arkansas Conference so that fruitfulness in ministry can be better evaluated.

NOTE: This is a new Disciplinary Requirement in the 2012 Discipline. While we have designed this requirement to be completed in the second year, ALL RESIDENTS seeking Ordination in 2014 or later MUST complete a fruitfulness project to be considered for Full Connection.

The format for the Fruitfulness Project is a video (under 25 minutes) and written report (under 15 pages, plus appendix) that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World".

This initiative may have been something similar to the following:

- Launching a new worship service or satellite ministry.
- Launching a major outreach project to address a social justice issue.
- Beginning ‘home’ groups to reach un-churched persons.
- Organizing and leading a mission trip.
- Initiating a divorce recover ministry.
- Leading a long-term Bible study, targeting a new population.
- Designing new ‘Inviting’ ministries.
- Starting a new member class where persons were intentionally led to a profession of their faith and were integrated into the life and work of the congregation.
- Leading a confirmation class from start to finish.
- Directing a major musical or theatrical production in which the public was invited to participate.
- Starting a new music ensemble for potential new Christians.

PROPOSAL:

Written approval of your concept is needed from the Residency Director by October 1. There is a form online to submit your Proposal.

1. What is the vision for this initiative?
2. How will it demonstrate fruitfulness in carrying out the church’s mission of “Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World”
3. What are the expected outcomes?

FINAL REPORT:

Submit a video (under 25 minutes) and written (under 15 pages, plus appendix) Fruitfulness Project report to the BOM. Following completion of the project, the resident will e-mail a PDF of the written report, with appendices of documentation (lesson plan, handouts, etc.) to the BOM Administrator and Residency Director) and mail six (6) copies of the DVD to the BOM Administrator by January 31.

The Final Report, Due on January 31 of your second year, should share responses to the following questions and statements:

1. What was the vision for this initiative?
 - Why did you decide to initiate this particular ministry?
 - How did you determine and communicate the vision?
 - How did the Bible or other theological resources guide your effort?
2. How did this project show fruitfulness in disciple-making? Provide specific examples of fruitfulness for this initiative.
 - How many new disciples were made?
 - How many professions of faith occurred as a result of this ministry?

- How is this ministry being sustained today?
 - How did those participating grow in their discipleship?
 - How did this initiative impact the mission field?
3. How did you ground your initiative theologically? How did you integrate theology with practical ministry?
 4. Describe how you and your leaders reached out to the community, and especially to persons not currently involved in a faith community, including guest follow-up.
 5. What was your role in this ministry?
 - What was your budget for this initiative? How did you fund this ministry?
 - How did you engage and partner with leaders in the initiative? How did you train and equip them? What resources did you use to equip your leaders? How did you foster spiritual growth in your leaders?
 6. Describe how you evaluated yourself and provided feedback to the other leaders involved in the ministry.
 - What mistakes did you make and what did you learn from these mistakes? How did you celebrate the successes and debrief the mistakes? What specifically would you do differently if you were to teach or lead this again?
 - How did you and your leaders grow as disciples and in your ability to make disciples?
 - How are you a different disciple and servant leader now than you were before?
 - How did you grow spiritually?
 - What did you learn overall from this initiative about making disciples?

Adapted from Board of Ordained Ministry, North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. "Making Disciples Project."

7. Doctrinal Questions: In the year seeking ordination and full connection, the Resident will answer the Full Connection doctrinal questions from the 2012 *Discipline*, ¶330.5.a-c for deacons and ¶335.8a-c for elders. Please be sure you are answering the correct question set.

- Print the question before each answer. A suggested rule of thumb is an average of one page per question, although some answers will require more. Please single space with 1 inch margins and follow all the formatting requirements for written assignments.
- The resident will e-mail the Disciplinary Questions & Answers to the BOM Administrator and the Chair of the Residency Team of the BOM by January 31.

Some advice for writing your Disciplinary Doctrinal Questions: Unlike the questions you completed for commissioning, this set of questions centers on your effectiveness, fruitfulness, and experience in ministry. Please be sure to make your answers a reflection on your experience in ministry and not simply an academic treatise.

- 8. Evaluations:** The ministry assessment process is rooted in Wesleyan theology that is grace-filled and built upon covenantal relationships and disciplines. The ministry assessment process assists the Resident in reflecting on the consistency (or inconsistency) between his/her beliefs and his/her practice, provides feedback in a manner that encourages and supports learning from experience, extends care to Residents as they gain new insights from failures, and celebrates growth. The process holds Residents accountable for demonstrating fruitfulness and keeping commitments made in covenant with the community of faith. As such, the ministry assessment process involves the self- evaluation of the Resident and the annual evaluations of the Resident by the District Superintendent, local church SPRC, Senior Pastor or Supervisor (if applicable) and peer group mentors, If the Resident is serving in a ministry setting beyond the local church, then the Resident **shall** contact the Residency Program Director for alternate evaluation instructions. The evaluation process gives the Resident some much-needed feedback on how others see him/her in comparison with how he/she sees him/herself. These evaluations are used by the BOM as it gauges the effectiveness of the resident. A video produced by the conference will train your SPRC on the requirements of the program and on how to do evaluations. Please watch this video early in your tenure.

All evaluations are submitted electronically via forms on the Arkansas Conference Website (http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim). Worksheets to prepare for the evaluation are located in this Handbook, but please do not mail the worksheets. Evaluations are due January 31, and it is the responsibility of the Resident to make sure all parties complete their evaluations.

9. Board of Ordained Ministry Spring Interview

Each year, the BOM will interview continuing residents and residents seeking Full Connection. Small team, Division and full BOM interviews may be used. In order to explore the effectiveness of the resident in ministry, verbal responses to questions and materials such as Assignments, Disciplinary Questions & Answers, Evaluations, Psychological assessments, health reports, background checks, academic records, and other documentation are included as topics of discussion. At issue for the BOM is determining the Resident's effectiveness and fruitfulness in ministry.

10. Health and Psychological Examination; Criminal

Background/Credit Checks: In keeping with provisions of the *Discipline*

and the policies of the Arkansas Conference, the BOM may, at any time, require a candidate to take an additional physical examination, additional psychological testing/counseling, and/or updated background/credit checks.

- 11. Application for Orders and Full Connection:** The Resident will download an application for full connection and deacon/elder's orders from the Conference Website (www.arumc.org). This application is submitted to the Administrator of the BOM at the Conference office by **October 1** in the year before the Annual Conference in which you seek ordination.

Beginning in 2013, a Supervisory Recommendation (2012 Discipline, ¶330.1.a and ¶335.1.a; 2013 ARUMC BOM Policy) is required to be submitted by the Resident's District Superintendent and the Cabinet by **November 1** in the year before the Annual Conference in which you seek ordination.

12. Additional Assignments from the BOM:

The Board of Ordained Ministry may, at the Board's discretion, direct residents to repeat a residency year's assignments, require additional assignments, and /or complete additional years of residency. The goals of such assignments are to assist residents in the transition into full-time ministry and to determine call, fitness, readiness, and effectiveness in United Methodist ministry.

Please submit additional written assignments to the BOM Administrator and the Program Director by January 31. (OR OTHER DATE AS ASSIGNED)

THE COVENANT PEER GROUP

The Covenant Peer Group is an official extension of the Residency in Ministry Program. Each resident is assigned by the BOM to a Covenant Peer Group (CPG). Each group will have 5-7 residents and two ordained members in full connection acting as mentor/facilitators.

The Covenant Peer Groups have both a spiritual formation element and colloquium element. The BOM, through the Residency Team and Covenant Peer Group, offers support to the Resident Provisional in reflecting upon the ministry he/she is doing. This kind of counsel is not the same as Circuit Elder Meetings, where the ministry context is the focus. Neither is it the same as Clinical Pastoral Education with its controls and limits. It is not a therapy group or a consulting group. While mutual support is part of the style and nature of the group, a covenant group is not simply a support group. Each participant uses the group to help reflect on his or her identity, roles, and authority in the clergy office to which he or she is appointed. Residents reflect on the grounding of ordained ministry and consider covenant ministry in the life of the annual conference. Participation in a covenant peer group during the Residency Program is part of the process of vocational discernment. For those who proceed into ordained ministry, it forms habits and practices of accountable covenant ministry that will continue through their participation in the Order of Deacons or the Order of Elders.

Covenant Peer Group (CPG), functions in the following ways:

1. To help the Resident meet the requirements for full conference membership
2. To enable the Resident to make the transitions in ministry with support and guidance
3. To enhance the Resident's vocational discernment with critical reflection on the use of authority
4. To encourage the Resident to examine the issues of effectiveness in ministry with regard to his/her own performance
5. To urge the Resident to seek spirituality through the fellowship with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit
6. To give opportunity for each resident to reflect on the meaning and purpose of the Orders of Elder and Deacon
7. To assist the Resident and the BOM in providing appropriate feedback concerning the resident's effectiveness and fruitfulness in ministry

Each group will take on its own character and style, and that identity will change every year due to members and mentors moving, members completing residency, and new members beginning residency. Therefore, the groups will be recreated and reconstituted every summer. The Residency Team will attempt to make group assignments relate to geographical groupings so as to keep travel times and costs down.

Mentor-Facilitators

In the Arkansas Conference, the BOM has chosen to use the mentoring within groups (the Covenant Peer Group) as the method of providing clergy mentors to residents. Two mentor-facilitators are assigned to every CPG, and they will share duties as a group facilitation team. A mentor helps to create a safe place for the members of the group to share and explore their call, roles, and vocational office. To have a positive group process, it is vital that the mentor be at ease with group processes and be clear about his or her role in these processes. The mentor-facilitator is not a “fix-it” person for group members. Nor should a mentor be expected to be an expert in every issue of ministry. The role of the mentor is to help group members focus on issues of role, authority, and office. Mentors help group members to reflect theologically about their ministries and to talk about the struggles, anxieties, and joys of ministry. Mentors may contact the RIM Mentoring Supervisor any time throughout the year for backup support, questions, or assistance. Backup support should be shared with the group and the meaning of confidentiality clearly defined.

Spiritual Formation in the Group

Spiritual formation in the group begins with members telling about their call, vocation, spiritual disciplines, and authority. The prayer, worship, and ritual practices of the group deserve attention and preparation. The whole group should make the decision about these practices, not just the mentor-facilitator. Usually, the facilitator team will lead worship and prayer during the first session and then allow the residents to rotate leadership the rest of the year. As part of “Check-in” a form of Wesley’s question: “*How goes it with your soul?*” will be asked. How are you really doing? What pains and burdens are you carrying today? How can the group pray for you today?

Typical CPG Meetings

The Covenant Peer Group will meet 6-8 times a year. The CPG Facilitation Team will determine the schedule and advise the CPG members of the schedule and location of the meetings. It is the hope of the Residency Team that meetings will rotate among the CPG members’ ministry settings so that the ministry context of fellow CPG members may be visualized. CPG meetings will generally last 3-4 hours and may include a fellowship meal.

Basic meeting pattern:

- *Devotions rotated among the residents*
- *Check-in and “how goes your soul” time*
- *Sharing and Study on effectiveness and fruitfulness using a common book*
- *Share any questions about assignments*
- *Before close, the Mentor will set up the schedule and details for the next session*
- *Close by sharing prayer requests and praying for one another*
- *Include a communal meal of some sort before or after the meeting: Dutch treat at a restaurant, brown bag, or provided by the host church – this is an important fellowship opportunity*

Annual Schedule of CPG Meetings

July (Retreat)	Welcome Ground rules & organization, Share time (call to ministry & current appointment);
August	Begin Book Study Ministry Goals and Fruitfulness Project Thoughts
September	Continue Book Study
October	Continue Book Study & Share Questions about BOM Assignments <i>(Don't forget to fill out Form AR105 – "Application for Clergy Relationship to the Annual Conference" by October 1 to be on the ordination interview list)</i>
November	Continue Book Study & Share Questions about BOM Assignments
Early January	Share Final Questions and Share about BOM Assignments (Sermons, Discipline Questions, Fruitfulness Projects) Discuss SPRC/Ministry setting Evaluations Discuss & prepare for BOM interviews scheduled for the spring <i>January 31 is the due date to submit BOM materials to the conference office, including all assignments, evaluations, and the Facilitator/Mentor's Evaluation</i> <i>The BOM Spring Interviews for all Residents are usually held in February or early March.</i>
April and/or May	Conclude Book Study and Share Bible Study Assignments

Evaluation

Annually, the mentor facilitation team will complete an online evaluation of each resident assigned to their group and submit it to the Residency Team Co-Chair (see sample below) before January 31. Mentors-Facilitators will team together to produce a single evaluation for each resident.

Additionally, if a resident is struggling or wishes a delay in the RIM program, mentors should immediately contact the RIM Program Director and Mentoring Supervisor so that a proper response can be implemented.

Sample Mentor Team Evaluation:

MENTORS: Please fill out an Evaluation for each of your Residents. Please only complete ONE evaluation per resident. The 2 mentors should agree on the evaluation and one copy is submitted electronically to the BOM. You may use this Evaluation Worksheet printed in your Handbook to prepare your answers with your fellow Mentor-Facilitator and keep a personal record of your evaluation. For questions, please contact Rev. Blake Bradford OR Mentoring Supervisor Rev. Mary Jane Cole.

EXPECTATIONS: The BOM does not expect a comprehensive evaluation of the Resident's effectiveness in the ministry context. Mentoring groups are not designed to produce such information. However, please let us know how the resident was involved in CPG meetings, and what fruitfulness was reported by the Residents. Also, if you have "red flag" concerns, please let us know in the comments section at the end of the evaluation so these issues may be addressed during the BOM Interview process.

1. CPG Attendance:

Did the resident attend all Covenant Peer Group Meetings?

YES

NO, however notice and explanation **was** given to the Facilitation Team

NO, and **NO** notice or explanation was given to the Facilitation Team

2. In what ways did you see fruitfulness & effectiveness in the ministry of the Resident?

3. Participation & Assignment Completion:

Did the resident participate & complete ALL assignments to the Facilitation Team's satisfaction?

Yes

No, see comments below

4. Any concerns?

Do you have any concerns for which the BOM Interview team needs to be aware?

No

Yes, see comments below:

CREATING ANNUAL MINISTRY GOALS

In your years of residency in the Arkansas Annual Conference, the BOM attempts to provide an atmosphere in which each Resident is surrounded with valuable resources for growth in ministry. A central part of this process is the development of annual ministry goals. The particular process that we advocate is much more than a “to do” list. It is more than a checklist of things to accomplish. Rather it is a process designed to provide clarity of calling and focus for ministry. Each Resident is encouraged to take this goal-creation process seriously as a means to more faithful and fruitful ministry.

Performance Goals focus a staff member on the priorities of the congregation. They are outcome statements. They provide the staff member with direction about how to channel their energy, encouraging the staff member to grow their area of work in defined and targeted ways over the next six-twelve month period, in accordance with the overall strategy of the congregation.

Goals provide: Purpose → Direction → Alignment

To be effective, performance goals must be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. Two to three performance goals are plenty. Remember that the performance goals help to sharpen focus and energy, and align with the contextual mission of the congregation/agency. Finally, make certain that your goal passes the “so what” test. A reasonable person reading the goal should understand why the goal has inherent worth and how it will advance the mission of the congregation.

Specific: Goals must be easily understood. They must tell precisely what the resident will accomplish

Measurable: Goals must measurable or observable (on some level) so that there is clarity about whether the staff member has been successful or not in reaching the goals. Measurable and observable isn’t necessarily the same thing as quantifiable; be creative in the measures that you define.

Attainable: Goals must not be too difficult or too easy. If the goal is too challenging, the employee may become frustrated. A goal that is too easy won’t prompt any changes in behavior.

Relevant: Your goals as a resident must be congruent with the overall goals of the congregation/agency.

Time bound: Goals must be bound by specific time parameters and deadlines for completion.

Adapted from Susan Beaumont. Stepping Up to Supervision. PDF. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, March 2012. Handout materials for March 6-8, 2012 seminar "Stepping Up to Supervision: Basics of Leading a Staff Team." Produced by the Consulting and Education Department, Alban Institute.

EVALUATION OF RESIDENTS

The BOM and Evaluation

On behalf of the Arkansas Annual Conference and in accordance with *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, it is the duty of the Board of Ordained Ministry to determine candidates' and residents' fitness, readiness, effectiveness, and fruitfulness in United Methodist ministry. This evaluation is ongoing throughout the residency process, with the CPG and the assigned mentors being extensions of the BOM.

The Evaluation Process:

The local SPRC, a resident's Senior Pastor or Supervisor (if applicable), the assigned Mentors, and the District Superintendent will evaluate the resident's effectiveness in January of each year of his/her Residency. The evaluation process gives the Resident some much-needed feedback on how others see him/her in comparison with how he/she sees him/herself. The Resident is also asked to complete a self-evaluation. These evaluations are used by the BOM as it gauges the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the resident.

The Evaluation Forms:

Several Evaluation Worksheets are included in this Handbook. The actual forms to be submitted are online:

- **Staff-Parish Relations Committee**
Often, the evaluation for the BOM is completed at the same time as the consultation form for the District Superintendent
- **Senior Pastor or Institutional Supervisor (if applicable)**
- **District Superintendent Evaluation Form**
It is the responsibility of the resident to make sure the DS submits the evaluation. You may want to supply the DS with a copy of the attached worksheet ahead of time. Since the BOM form is due on January 31, many residents get this worksheet to their DS before consultation, so that the DS may fill it out as part of the consultation preparations.
- **Self-Evaluation Form**
Every year, the resident shall complete and send in a self-evaluation describing growth and challenges over the last year and plans for continued growth in the future.

It is the responsibility of the Resident to get all evaluation forms submitted electronically to the Chairperson of the Residency Team.

ALL EVALUATION FORMS ARE TO BE SUBMITTED BY JANUARY 31
All evaluations will be submitted electronically via a form on the Conference Website
at http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim.

SPRC / PPRC Senior Pastor Evaluation Worksheet

Resident's Name _____ Date _____

Current Year in Residency First Second _____ Appointment _____

SPRC INSTRUCTIONS:

The Resident is to collaborate with the SPRC on ministry goals. The whole committee fills out this worksheet as a group, and then, following the meeting, the SPRC Chair or a designated representative may submit the electronic form to the Residency Team of the Conference BOM. The due date is January 31. You may send a letter or documentation to Program Director if you believe it will assist the BOM in its process.

SUPERVISOR / SENIOR PASTOR INSTRUCTIONS:

Please submit to the Conference BOM by January 31.

For Questions, please contact Rev. Blake Bradford, Co-Chair of the BOM's Residency Team

1. Please note 3 or 4 areas in which you believe that the Resident is particularly effective in ministry:

- Preaching and leading worship
- Clear articulation Wesleyan theology
- Teaching the Word and engaging people in study
- Outreach to the community (Missions)
- Empowering and equipping others for ministry
- Leadership and vision for the ministry setting
- Interpersonal Relationship / Teamwork (Laity & Staff)
- Personal faith/spiritual formation
- Connectional ministries
- Emotional & Spiritual Maturity
- Writing and Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Pastoral care
- Evangelism
- Self-Care and Balanced Ministry & Family Life
- Administration
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Specifically:

2. What areas still need to be addressed in the life and ministry of the Resident (growing edges)?

- Preaching and leading worship
- Clear articulation Wesleyan theology
- Teaching the Word and engaging people in study
- Outreach to the community (Missions)
- Empowering and equipping others for ministry
- Leadership and vision for the ministry setting
- Interpersonal Relationship / Teamwork (Laity & Staff)
- Personal faith/spiritual formation
- Connectional ministries
- Emotional & Spiritual Maturity

- Writing and Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Pastoral care
- Evangelism
- Self-Care and Balanced Ministry & Family Life
- Administration
- Other: _____

Specifically:

3. What ministry goals did the SPRC (and/or Senior Pastor) and DS set in consultation with your resident at the beginning of the year? How effective was the resident in progressing on or completing the annual ministry goals?

4. How has the resident displayed fruitful ministry in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of individuals, communities, and the world?

5. Please share any additional information you think would be helpful to the Board of Ordained Ministry as it assesses the resident on her/his gifts and effectiveness in ministry:

Thank you for your part in the Board of Ordained Ministry evaluation process.

**THIS WORKSHEET MAY BE KEPT FOR YOUR RECORDS
SUBMIT EVALUATION ELECTRONICALLY FROM THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE at
http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim**

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT RESIDENT EVALUATION WORKSHEET

RESIDENT'S NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Evaluation Process:

The Resident is to provide the District Superintendent with this form and a copy of his/her Plan for Ministry. This worksheet mirrors the questions on the electronic evaluation form located on the Conference Website at http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim. Please submit the electronic form to the Chairperson of the Residency Team of the Conference BOM by January 31. You may also attach a letter or documentation to Program Director if you believe it will assist the BOM in its process. In December or early January, the BOM will send a link to the electronic evaluation form. Please contact Blake Bradford at the above e-mail for questions.

Your honest, prayerful consideration in the Evaluation is essential to its success. Please take a few moments to consider each question, and please be specific.

1. How have you observed the Resident in the practice of ministry?
2. What are some areas that you would view as the resident's strengths?
3. What are some areas you believe the resident will need to grow in her/his ministry?
4. How has the resident, in her/his appointment, displayed fruitful ministry in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of individuals, communities, and the world?

Please also include any information that impacts effectiveness, such as the town has reduced in population dramatically OR the congregation has been healing from conflict

5. Please outline any comments or concerns you think would be helpful to the BOM as it reviews and evaluates the resident:

Recommendation: *As of date submitted, what is your status recommendation to the BOM? (Check all that apply)*

- I recommend the provisional resident for Full Connection *(this category is only for those provisional members who have applied for a change in status)*
- I do not recommend Full Connection at this time because of the concerns listed above in #5. *(this category is only for those provisional members who have applied for a change in status)*
- I recommend Continuance of Provisional Membership for another year.
- I recommend Discontinuance of Provisional Membership

Cabinet concurrence with DS evaluation & recommendation:

**THIS WORKSHEET MAY BE KEPT FOR YOUR RECORDS
SUBMIT EVALUATION ELECTRONICALLY VIA THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE at
http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim**

RESIDENT'S SELF-EVALUATION WORKSHEET

Resident's Name: _____ Date _____

Current Year in Residency First Second _____

This worksheet mirrors the questions on the electronic evaluation form located on the Conference Website at http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim

*This evaluation is filled out by the Resident after the SPRC meets for its RIM Evaluation Session.
The Resident submits it by January 31.*

- 1. What have you learned about yourself during this year of residency? How did you grow spiritually and as a disciple?**

- 2. How have you displayed fruitful ministry in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of individuals, communities, and the world?**

- 3. Briefly describe some ministry challenges you have experience in the last year. How have you grown in the practice of ministry?**

- 4. In what ways do you intend to grow in your effectiveness and fruitfulness in the coming year?**

- 5. Please share any additional information you think would be helpful to the Board of Ordained Ministry:**

Ordination & Full Connection Primary Requirement Checklist

First Year

- Jan 31 Complete Educational Requirements and Begin Residency
- July Summer Retreat

- August 31 Watch training video with SPRC/Senior Pastor/Supervisor
- Aug/Sept Begin attending Covenant Peer Group
- Jan 31 Sermon #1 (Elders & Deacons)
- Jan 31 Ministry Goals
- Jan 31 Online Evaluations Submitted: Self-Evaluation, District Superintendent, SPRC/Supervisor, Peer Group Mentors
- Jan 31 *or as directed* Any Additional BOM assignments
- March BOM Spring Interviews

- May 15 Bible Study/Lesson Plan on Luke

2 Year Seeking Full Connection Plan:

Minimum 2 years in Effective Ministry in One Appointment as a Resident

- July Summer Retreat

- August 31 Watch training video with new SPRC members/Senior Pastor/Supervisor (if applicable)
- Aug/Sept Begin attending Covenant Peer Group
- Oct 1 Application for Ordination & Full Connection (Form 105)
- Oct 1 Submit Fruitfulness project proposal
- Nov 1 Supervisory Recommendation from DS and Cabinet
- Jan 31 Fruitfulness Project
- Jan 31 Ministry Goals (updated)
- Jan 31 Discipline Questions (Elders ¶335.7a-c; Deacons ¶330.5a-c)

- Jan 31 Online Evaluations Submitted: Self-Evaluation, District Superintendent, SPRC/Supervisor, Peer Group Mentors
- Jan 31 *or as directed* Any Additional BOM assignments
- Satisfy the BOM re: physical, mental, and emotional health
- February BOM Spring Interviews

2 Year Continuance Plan:

Minimum 2 years in Effective Ministry in One Appointment as a Resident required for Full Connection

- July Summer Retreat
- August 31 Watch training video with new SPRC/Senior Pastor/Supervisor (if applicable)
- Aug/Sept Begin attending Covenant Peer Group
- Oct 1 Submit Fruitfulness project proposal
- Jan 31 Fruitfulness Project
- Jan 31 Ministry Goals (updated)
- Jan 31 Online Evaluations Submitted: Self-Evaluation, District Superintendent, SPRC/Supervisor, Peer Group Mentors
- Jan 31 *or as directed* Any Additional BOM assignments
- Satisfy the BOM re: physical, mental, and emotional health

March BOM Spring Interviews

3rd Year or more Full Connection Plan:

Minimum 2 years in Effective Ministry in One Appointment as a Resident required for Full Connection

July Summer Retreat

August 31 Watch training video with new SPRC/Senior Pastor/Supervisor (if applicable)

Aug/Sept Begin attending Covenant Peer Group

Oct 1 Application for Ordination & Full Connection (Form 105)—***If seeking Ordination***

Nov 1 Supervisory Recommendation from DS and Cabinet—***If seeking Ordination***

Jan 31 Discipline Questions (Elders ¶335.7a-c; Deacons ¶330.5a-c) ***If seeking Ordination***

Jan 31 Ministry Goals (updated)

Jan 31 Online Evaluations Submitted: Self-Evaluation, District Superintendent, SPRC/Supervisor, Peer Group Mentors

Jan 31 *or as directed* Any Additional BOM assignments

Satisfy the BOM re: physical, mental, and emotional health

Feb or March BOM Spring Interviews

PRIMARY PROVISIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Please include for all written assignments:

- Format on letter sized 8.5x11.
- Title the document as lastname.firstname.assignmenttitle.year: *Doe.Jane.Sermon.2013.pdf*
- Please use Times New Roman (or similar) 12 pt. font and single space with one inch margins
- Your Name & Page Number on every page (Use the “footer” or “header” function for this)
- The year of the residency program (1st, 2nd, 3rd ... 8th)
- A description of the assignment at the top of the page
- The Resident will send an e-mail PDF attachment of the written documents and six (6) copies of DVDs to the BOM Administrator at the conference office and one (1) copy of written documents to the Director of the Residency Program.
- Send e-mail attachments using ONLY the PDF format

Resident’s Ministry Goals

(DUE JANUARY 31 every year)

Every year, the resident will e-mail the Annual Ministry Goals to the BOM Administrator and the Director of the Residency Program by January 31.

1st Year Sermon & Video

(DUE JANUARY 31)

- A Biblically based sermon that includes in its content the Wesleyan view of prevenient grace.
- If you are an outline or “no notes” preacher, please transcribe and edit your sermon after it is preached so that the board will have the full text.
- Written + 6 DVD’s to BOM Administrator. Written emailed to the Residency Director

Teaching Plan/Outline and Sample Lesson Plan

(1st YEAR, DUE May 15)

- 1-2 page curriculum overview/outline/syllabus of the entire Study for the Gospel of Luke
- 3-5 page sample lesson plan from a particular session of your overview/outline
- Each Resident’s Bible Study teaching outline & lesson plan is e-mailed to the BOM Administrator and the Director of the Residency Program by May 15 of your first year in residency.

Fruitfulness Project**(DUE JANUARY 31)**

- In the 2nd year, a video and written project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church's mission of "Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World" is required.
- Written approval of your concept is needed from the Residency Director) by October 1. There is a form online to submit your Proposal.
- Submit a video (under 25 minutes) and written (under 15 pages, plus appendix) Fruitfulness Project report to the BOM. Following completion of the project, the resident will e-mail a PDF of the written report, with appendixes of documentation (lesson plan, handouts, etc.) to the BOM Administrator and the Director of the Residency Program and mail six (6) copies of the DVD to the BOM Administrator by January 31.

Discipline Questions**(DUE YEAR SEEKING ORDINATION, JANUARY 31)**

- 2012 *Discipline*, ¶330.5.a-c for deacons and ¶335.8a-c for elders.
- Print the question before each answer. A suggested rule of thumb is an average of one page per question, although some answers will require more. Please single space with 1 inch margins.
- Written emailed to BOM Administrator and copied to the Residency Director.

2013-2014 RIM Handbook Acknowledgement of Receipt

Please read this RIM Handbook and appropriate UMC Discipline sections carefully to understand these provisional Residency expectations before you sign this document.

I understand that this Residency Program Handbook is designed to reflect the RIM Program's guidelines for provisional members for the 2013-2014 annual conference year, and I understand that the handbook, its contents, and assignments are often changed following annual conference each year to comply with conference policy and residency best practices. I understand that the Residency in Ministry Program may change the requirements for Ordination/Full Connection at any time based on church law in the current UM Discipline (and Judicial Council rulings), GBHEM interpretations, Arkansas Annual Conference policy changes, and/or Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry action. I understand that the contents of this handbook are simply general expectations, policies, and guidelines, not a contract or implied contract with the resident. The contents of the handbook may change at any time.

Finally, I understand that, as a provisional resident, I am "on trial in preparation for membership in full connection in the annual conference as deacons or elders." I am also "on probation as to character, servant leadership, and effectiveness in ministry." I understand that the completion of assignments and directives is my responsibility as a provisional resident, and that the "Board of Ordained Ministry shall review and evaluate" me and my ministry for effectiveness and fruitfulness as I seek continuance of provisional membership and Full Connection. (2012 Discipline, ¶327)

I have reviewed the Residency Handbook and understand its content.

Resident Name (Printed): _____

Resident Signature: _____

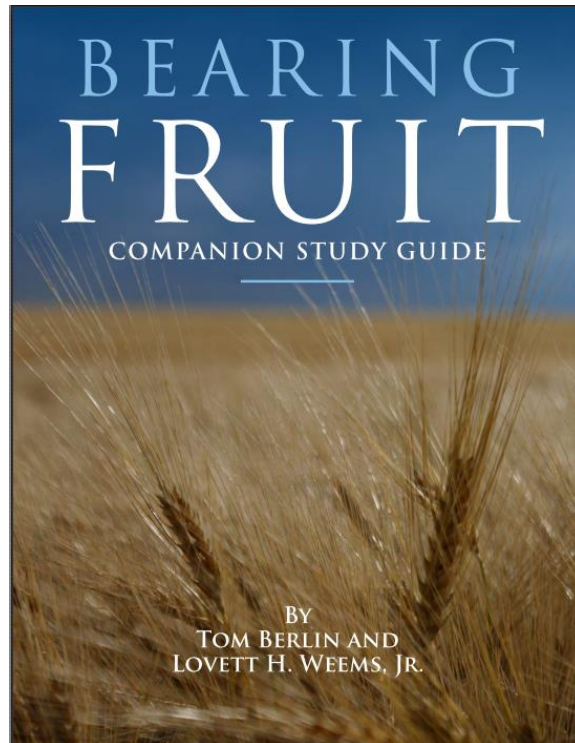
Date of Acknowledgement: _____

Include this document in Resident's BOM file:

**Arkansas Conference Office of Ordained Ministry
800 Daisy Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202-3770
Office: 501-324-8033
Fax: 501-324-8018
http://www.arumc.org/bom_rim**

2013-2014 Covenant Peer Group Study Book

2013-2014 Covenant Peer Group Study Book is “Bearing Fruit”.
Copies of Book and Study Guide distributed at the Summer Retreat.



Permission to place *Bearing Fruit* official study guide
on Arkansas Conference Website was granted by Lovett Weems
August 2013

<http://docs.arumc.org/bom/2013/BearingFruitStudyGuide.pdf>

<http://www.churchleadership.com/resources/bearingfruit.html>

APPENDIX B: SURVEY OF RESIDENTS

**Arkansas Conference
Residency in Ministry Program
2009-2014**

Survey Information

Survey of Residents' Experience

In January 2014, a survey was distributed online using the popular tool *Survey Monkey* to 69 current or recent provisional ministers that participated in the Residency in Ministry Program. 36 participants started the survey, and 35 finished the survey.

Survey Design

Survey included 40 questions about the Residency in Ministry Program, 9 demographic questions, and a final open comment question. The 50 questions were divided into 8 pages.

1. Welcome and Description
2. Supervision by District Superintendent
3. Supervision by Board of Ordained Ministry
4. Covenant Peer Groups and Mentoring
5. Continuing Theological and Pastoral Education, Assignments
6. Residency in Ministry Program Goals
7. Demographic Information
8. Note of Appreciation and Final Comments

Survey questions contained a mix of scale questions and open ended questions. Survey design was adapted from an ongoing multi-year national research study by Lovett Weems for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ See Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2003, Weems, Lovett H. "Nurturing a Learned Clergy, and Weems, Lovett H. *The Journey from Readiness to Effectiveness*, 2005.

Summary of Survey Results January 2014

Survey Page 1: Provisional Residency Process in the Arkansas Conference

Thank you for filling out this survey. I am working toward a Doctor of Ministry degree at SMU, studying the creation and implementation of the Residency in Ministry program for provisional members of the Arkansas Conference. Your recent experiences during the RIM program are invaluable.

Please answer all the questions that follow. You will NOT be asked for your name or contact information, so all your answers are completely anonymous. Questions will cover the primary parts of the Residency program: Supervision, Mentoring & Peer Groups, Continuing Education, and Assignments.

Thanks again for your contribution to the ministry of the church and the future effectiveness of the ordination process.

Rev. Blake Bradford

Residency in Ministry Program Director

Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church

Survey Page 2: Supervision by the District Superintendent

According to the Discipline, during the provisional membership period, supervision is provided by both the District Superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry.

1. How often did you receive supervision from your District Superintendent?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Once a week	0%	0
Every other week	0%	0
Once a month	0%	0
Every other month	8.3%	3
Quarterly	25%	9
Less often	66.7%	24

2. Was the time spent with your District Superintendent...

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Too Much	0%	0
About Right	47.2%	17
Too Little	52.8%	19

3. To what extent did supervision by your District Superintendent contribute to your growth and success?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	11.1%	4
Somewhat	30.6%	11
Very little	41.7%	15
Not at all	16.7%	6

4. How would you assess the level of trust present between you and your District Superintendent during the provisional process?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Very high	20%	7
High	25.7%	9
Moderate	34.3%	12
Low	14.3%	5
Very low	5.7%	2

5. What else would you like to add about your experience of supervision by your District Superintendent during the Provisional Process?

Open ended question with 24 comments. Many comments reflected a sense that the District Superintendent was not experienced as being a part of the provisional process.

Survey Page 3: Supervision by the Board of Ordained Ministry

According to the Discipline, during the provisional membership period, supervision is provided by both the District Superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry.

6. How often did you receive supervision from the Board of Ordained Ministry?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Once a week	0%	0
Every other week	0%	0
Once a month	20.6%	7
Every other month	2.9%	1
Quarterly	26.5%	9
Less often	50%	17

7. Was the time spent with the Board of Ordained Ministry ...

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Too Much	2.9%	1
About Right	74.3%	26
Too Little	22.9%	8

8. To what extent did supervision by the Board of Ordained Ministry contribute to your growth and success?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	17.1%	6
Somewhat	54.3%	19
Very little	17.1%	6
Not at all	11.4%	4

9. How would you assess the level of trust present between you and your the Board of Ordained Ministry during the provisional process?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Very high	22.9%	8
High	22.9%	8
Moderate	34.3%	12
Low	8.6%	3
Very low	11.4%	4

10. What else would you like to add about your experience of supervision by the Board of Ordained Ministry during the Provisional Process?

Open ended question with 16 comments. There were a mix of very affirming and quite negative comments about BOM supervision, reflective of very personal experiences of the BOM during their years of residency.

Survey Page 4: Covenant Peer Groups and Mentoring

The Board of Ordained Ministry requires that all provisional members be in covenant groups. The Arkansas Conference combined Mentoring with Peer Group Facilitation following the 2009 Annual Conference.

11. Was the time spent with your Covenant Peer Group (6-7 times a year)...

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Too Much	0%	0
About Right	94.3%	33
Too Little	5.7%	2

12. How would you rate the overall facilitation/leadership for your Peer Group?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Excellent	38.2%	13
Good	38.2%	13
Average	11.8%	4
Poor	11.8%	4

13. How often did your Peer Group focus on spiritual formation practices?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Almost all the time	22.9%	8
Most of the time	22.9%	8
Some of the time	42.9%	15
Rarely or never	11.4%	4

14. How often did your Peer Group focus on specific ministry topics?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Almost all the time	11.4%	4
Most of the time	57.1%	20
Some of the time	31.4%	11
Rarely or never	0%	0

15. How often did your Peer Group focus on identity as a United Methodist Clergy person?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Almost all the time	17.6%	6
Most of the time	17.6%	6
Some of the time	52.9%	18
Rarely or never	11.8%	4

16. How often did your Peer Group focus on peer support and peer coaching?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Almost all the time	20%	7
Most of the time	22.9%	8
Some of the time	40%	14
Rarely or never	17.1%	6

17. How often did your Peer Group focus on the ordination process itself?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Almost all the time	34.3%	12
Most of the time	34.3%	12
Some of the time	22.9%	8
Rarely or never	8.6%	3

18. To what extent did your Covenant Peer Group contribute to your growth and success?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	34.3%	12
Somewhat	54.3%	19
Very little	5.71%	2
Not at all	5.7%	2

19. What else would you like to add about your experience of Covenant Peer Groups during the Provisional Process?

Open ended question with 20 comments. Many of the comments were offers of practical, helpful suggestions to improve the Covenant Peer Group experience. It is noted by some commenters that, in some cases, mentor-facilitators did not participate or lead as expected, resulting in a poor group experience. Several participants were pleased by the peer relationships and support they experienced in Covenant Peer Groups.

Now please share about your experience of mentoring during the residency process.

20. Was the time spent with your assigned Mentor-Group Facilitator...

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Too Much	0%	0
About Right	82.4%	28
Too Little	17.6%	6

21. To what extent did your assigned Mentor-Group Facilitator contribute to your growth and success?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	29.4%	10
Somewhat	55.9%	19
Very little	11.8%	4
Not at all	2.9%	1

22. How often did the mentoring process have a clarity of focus based upon previously identified and agreed upon issues?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Almost all the time	26.5%	9
Most of the time	26.5%	9
Some of the time	38.2%	13
Rarely or never	8.8%	3

23. The Arkansas Conference combined Mentoring with Peer Group Facilitation in 2009. Do you believe that combining these two elements of the residency process was effective?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Yes, it was effective	58.8%	20
No, it was not effective	23.5%	8
I do not have an opinion on the combination	17.6%	6

24. What else would you like to add about your experience of Mentoring during the Provisional Process?

Open ended question with 19 comments. It is again noted by several commenters that some mentor-facilitators did not provide support as expected; many of these commenters also expressed a desire for one-on-one mentoring.

Survey Page 5: Continuing Theological and Pastoral Education

Provisional members should be involved in a residency curriculum that extends theological education to support the practice and work of their ministry as servant leaders, to contemplate the grounding of ordained ministry, and to understand covenant ministry in the life of the conference.

25. Was the total time spent in continuing education through the Summer Retreat and your Covenant Peer Group...

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Too Much	17.1%	6
About Right	77.1	27
Too Little	5.7%	2

26. How would you rate the quality of the continuing education during your experience of the Resident's Summer Retreat?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Excellent	17.1%	6
Good	37.1%	13
Average	25.7%	9
Poor	11.4%	4
NOT APPLICABLE	8.6%	3

27. To what extent did the Summer Retreat continuing education event sponsored by the Board of Ordained Ministry contribute to your growth and success?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	23.5%	8
Somewhat	50%	17
Very little	20.6%	7
Not at all	5.9%	2

28. What speakers or subject material in a RIM Summer Retreat education event contributed to your effectiveness?

Open ended question with 24 comments. Several indicated appreciation for practical topics, such as the session on budgeting and clergy compensation with the Arkansas Conference Treasurer and church size theory. There was also continued interest in the Arkansas Conference visioning process called *Imagine Ministry* and the fruitfulness and effectiveness issues that this new vision entails.

29. What speakers or subject material in a RIM Summer Retreat education event contributed to your effectiveness?

Open ended question with 21 comments. Most all of the comments requested even more information about denominational forms, clergy taxes and other administrative details.

30. What else would you like to add about your experience of continuing education during the Provisional Process?

Open ended question with 8 comments. Two of the comments praised the peer relationships that were created on the retreat.

Each year, the Board of Ordained Ministry requires different assignments to help evaluate those seeking ordination. Share about your experience of completing these assignments

31. How well did the Sermon Topic(s) assigned relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	42.9%	15
Somewhat	45.7%	16
Very little	0%	0
Not at all	8.6%	3
Not Yet Completed (I am still in process)	2.9%	1

32. How well did the Case Study assigned relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	17.6%	6
Somewhat	41.2%	14
Very little	8.8%	3
Not at all	2.9%	1
NOT APPLICABLE to my ordination requirements	29.4%	10

33. How well did the Disciplinary Theological Questions assigned relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	54.3%	19
Somewhat	28.6%	10
Very little	0%	0
Not at all	0%	0
Not Yet Completed (I am still in process)	17.1%	6

34. How well did the assigned Personal Ministry Plan relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	35.3%	12
Somewhat	38.2%	13
Very little	17.6%	6
Not at all	2.9%	1
NOT APPLICABLE	5.9%	2

35. How well did the Fruitfulness Project (formerly called Deacon's Field Education Project) assigned relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	8.6%	3
Somewhat	8.6%	3
Very little	0%	0
Not at all	2.9%	1
NOT APPLICABLE to my ordination requirements	57.1%	20
Not Yet Completed (I am still in process)	22.9%	8

36. How well did the assigned Bible Study on the Gospel of Luke relate to your ministry and your identity as an United Methodist minister?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	17.1%	6
Somewhat	51.4%	18
Very little	8.6%	3
Not at all	8.6%	3
Not Yet Completed (I am still in process)	14.3%	5

37. What else would you like to add about your experience of completing BOM assignments during the Provisional Process?

Open ended question with 10 comments. Some commenters mentioned dislike for any assignments, while others considered the assignments to be helpful. A few participants gave practical suggestions, or desired more written instructions about assignments.

Survey Page 6: Did the RIM program fulfill its goals?

The Residency in Ministry process seeks to assist in fulfilling the disciple-making mission of the church with the following goals:

- 1. Provide the BOM with the evaluative tools necessary to gauge the effectiveness of provisional members seeking ordination and full connection.*
- 2. Assist provisional members in their transition into ministry, guiding them into deeper fruitfulness and effectiveness in fulfilling the mission of the UMC and the Arkansas Conference.*
- 3. Create opportunities for peer group learning and support among the residents.*

38. To what extent do you believe that the RIM Program supplied the Board of Ordained Ministry with the evaluative tools to gauge your effectiveness as a provisional member?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	34.3%	12
Somewhat	57.1%	20
Very little	8.6%	3
Not at all	0%	0

39. To what extent do you believe that the RIM Program assisted in your transition into ministry?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	40%	14
Somewhat	37.1%	13
Very little	20%	7
Not at all	2.9%	1

40. To what extent do you believe that the RIM Program created opportunities for peer group learning and support among you and your fellow residents?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
A great deal	60%	21
Somewhat	28.6%	10
Very little	11.4%	4
Not at all	0%	0

Survey Page 7: Demographic Information

Please share some demographic information, so that the researcher can best understand your experience in the Arkansas Conference Residency in Ministry process.

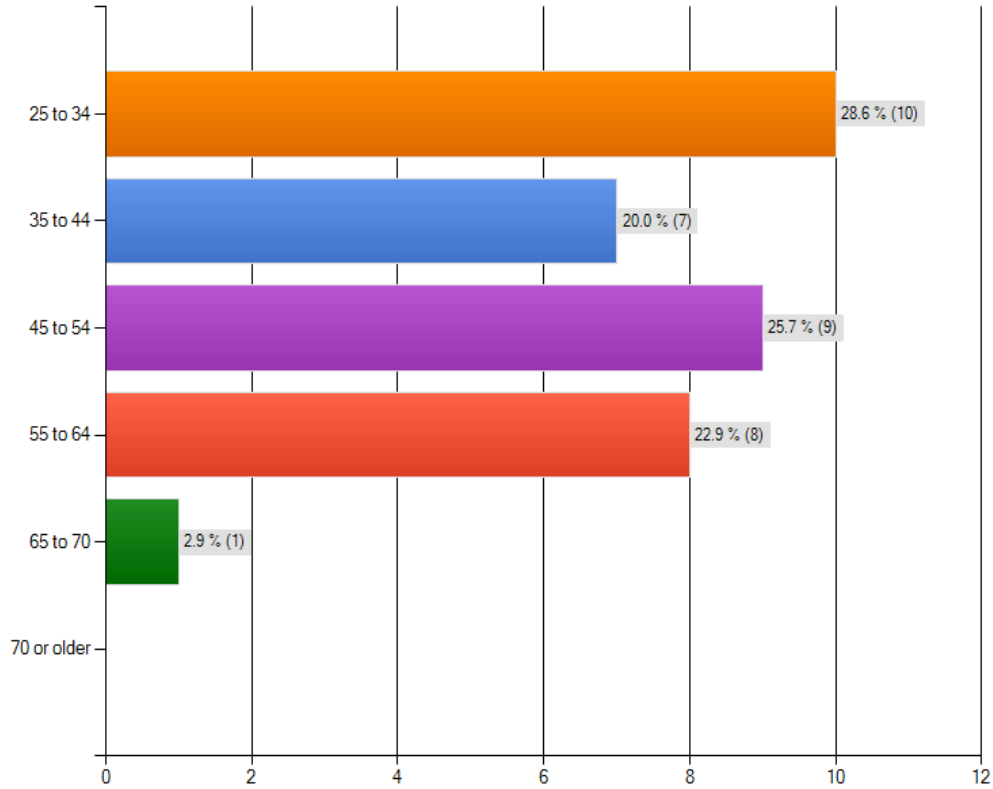
41. Which Ordination Track?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Elder Track	85.7%	30
Deacon Track	14.3%	5

42. Education?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Seminary Graduate	94.3%	33
Course of Study Graduate	14.3%	0
Basic Graduate Theological Studies	5.7%	2

43. Age at Completion of Provisional Process?



44. What is your gender?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Female	41.2%	14
Male	58.8%	20

45. Total Years of Membership (Lay and Clergy) in the UMC at time of Ordination?

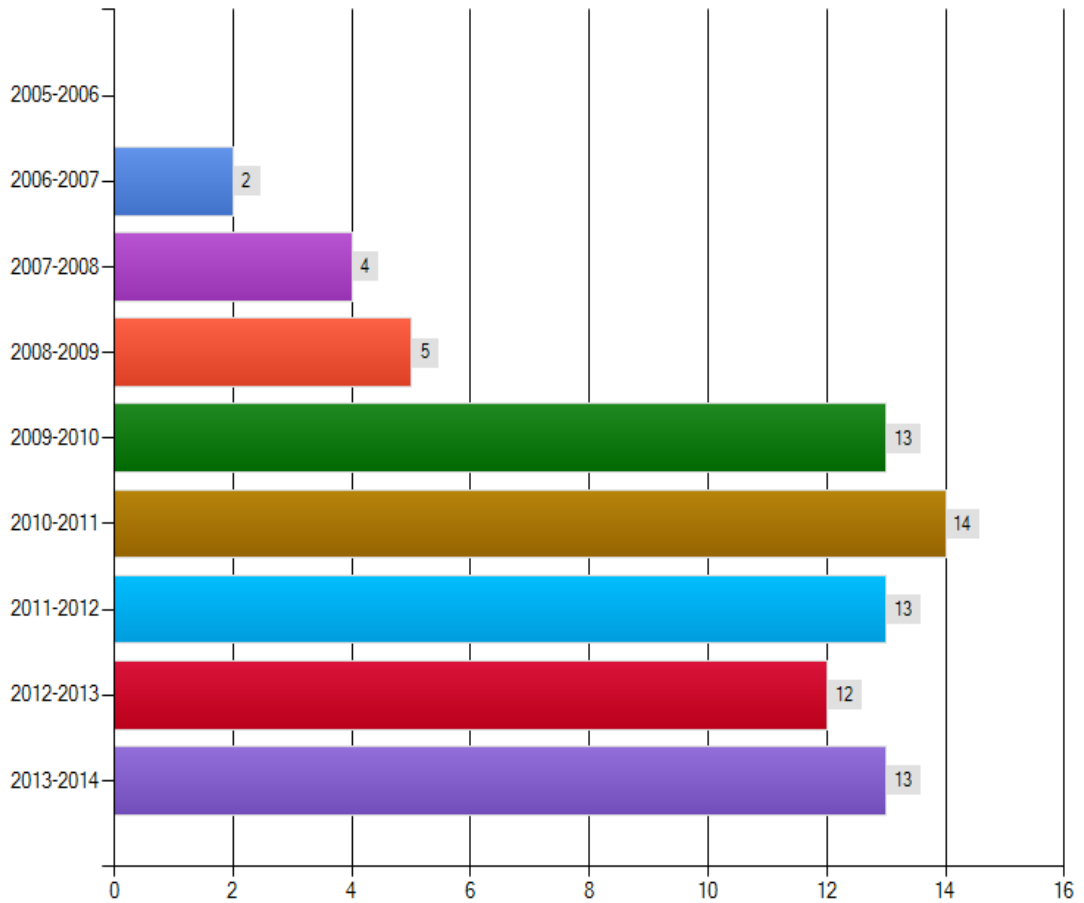
Open ended question with 31 answers. Mean average is 21.5, and range is 56 (3-59).

46. Total Years of Membership (Lay and Clergy) in another Denomination Prior to the Time of Ordination?

Open ended question with 12 answers other than 0. Mean average of non-zero answers is 20.5, and range is 42 (1-42).

47. What Annual Conference years did you participate in the Arkansas Residency in Ministry Program during your Provisional Process?

(Note: the process is 2-8 years, and this survey includes previous and current residents)



48. Total number of Conference Years spent in the Arkansas Residency in Ministry Process following completion of seminary educational requirements.

(Note: the process is 2-8 years, and this survey includes previous and current residents)

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
1 year	12.1%	4
2 years	60.6%	20
3 years	15.2%	5
4 years	9.1%	3
5 years	3%	1
6 years	0%	0
7 years	0%	0
8 years	0%	0
More than 8	0%	0

(Required Restart of Provisional Status)

49. Did you serve a local church in a field education, internship, or appointed clergy position before entering the Residency in Ministry Program?

<u>Options</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>number of responses</u>
Yes	91.4%	32
No	8.6%	3

Survey Page 8: Thank You

Thanks again for your contribution to the ministry of the church by filling out this survey. You have an opportunity to make additional comments below.

Rev. Blake Bradford

50. You are invited to make Additional Comments on any aspect of the Board of Ordained Ministry Residency Process:

Open ended question with 10 responses. There was a mix of responses, from those considering it a “waste of time” to a “blessing.” One comment helped me understand wide the range of answers, not only for this question, but for the entire Residency in Ministry survey: *“In my opinion, the process is well defined, well executed, and well planned. I appreciate the guest speakers and the insight from their perspective. The covenant peer groups seemed to take on the personality of the leaders, and in conversations with others in the process, some groups appeared to be more meaningful and relevant than others.”*

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Reverend Blake Bradford, an ordained Elder in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, received the B.A. degree in religion from Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas in 1996. After graduation, Blake studied in England at Oxford University's Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. He read Medieval and Reformation theology for his first master's degree at Vanderbilt University (M.A., *History of Christian Thought*, 1998), and received his Master of Divinity degree at Iliff School of Theology in Denver in 2000. During seminary, he was the student associate pastor at University Park UMC in Denver, Colorado. Blake served as associate pastor of Texarkana First UMC, and was pastor of Wesley UMC in Russellville and St. Paul UMC in Little Rock. In June 2011, he was appointed as executive pastor to St. James UMC in Little Rock, Arkansas. Blake and his wife Kerri, an artist and museum educator who currently teaches art history at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, have two children: Gabrielle and Micah.