

What Is the UMC Doing to Enlist Young Clergy?

MARY ANN MOMAN AND DAVID FUQUAY

The trends among clergy leadership in The United Methodist Church are well-documented, revealing the unique challenges of identifying and nurturing young leaders. Although in recent years we have seen the age of ordained clergy begin to drop, for many years the average age of ordinands was increasing. To encourage young people to consider ordained ministry as their first vocation, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) has made the recruitment of young people a strategic priority.

The mission of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is to lead the church in the recruitment, preparation, nurture, education, and support of Christian leaders. The vision is of a new generation of Christian leaders, boldly committed to Jesus Christ and characterized by intellectual excellence, moral and spiritual courage, and holiness of heart and life. While this mission and vision include lay and clergy leaders of all ages, specific efforts are being undertaken to enlist younger clergy for a lifetime of service and ministry through The United Methodist Church.

Exploration Events

For over a decade, national exploration events have been the centerpiece of our efforts to enlist young clergy. These events help high school and college students hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ministry and explore their gifts for ordained ministry as deacon or elder.



Mary Ann Moman is associate general secretary, Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, and David Fuquay was United Methodist coordinator for the Pastoral Leadership Search Effort of the Fund for Theological Education.

Exploration 2000 and Exploration 2002 each drew over one thousand young people. Persons who participated in these first exploration events are now beginning to be ordained.

With the success of the national exploration events has come an increase in exploration events in annual conferences and jurisdictions. Grants are available to jurisdictions and clusters of conferences to sponsor such gatherings. These regional exploration events are more broadly accessible and responsive to particular needs. As a result of this trend, the national event will now be scheduled once every four years. Exploration 2006 will be held November 17-19 in Jacksonville, Florida. (Visit www.gbhem.org/exploration) The GBHEM is also working in partnership with our seminaries to plan for future exploration events.

Resources for Individuals and Congregations

The board has launched Is God Calling You? (www.isGodcallingyou.org), a website providing accessible resources and ongoing interaction with those exploring

ministry. The interactive site answers questions, provides resources, offers information about forms of ministry including certified and specialized ministries, and outlines the steps toward ordained ministry.

The Pastoral Leadership Search Effort (PLSE) is another important initiative targeting both young people and the congregations and campus ministries in which they are involved. It provides videos and other resources to congregations and campus ministries so they can talk about vocation and ministry with young people. PLSE also provides a website (www.theplse.org) to connect young explorers with one another and a database to track interested young people before they enter the candidacy process.

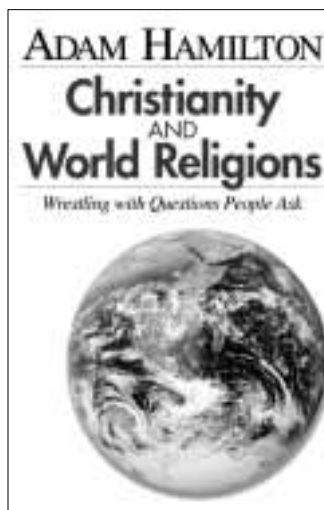
The Young Adult Seminarian Network

The Young Adult Seminarian Network (YASN) was created in 2004 for United Methodist seminarians thirty-five and younger. It connects seminarians with one another as they seek to grow in their faith, deepen their commitment to Jesus Christ, and be bold advocates for social justice.

Beyond these direct efforts, many of the ongoing ministries of our connection impact young people hearing and responding to God's call. The Student Movement, United Methodist colleges and seminaries, Student Forum, campus ministries, camping ministries, and others all provide environments that foster young people's sense of God's call. Similarly, ethnic caucuses and centers and youth ministry institutes at many United Methodist seminaries address unique leadership needs and challenges, nurturing present and future leaders.

GBHEM has re-envisioned a key director's position to continue to develop these emerging ministries. The Reverend Meg Lassiatt began serving as director of Student Ministries, Enlistment and Vocation in July of 2005. Her portfolio seeks to join the work of student ministries and enlistment for ministry. The goal of the board is to create a seamless program for young persons as they seek vocational clarity. If you have any questions or would like more information about any of these programs and initiatives, please contact her directly at mlassiatt@gbhem.org or 615-340-7405.

From Adam Hamilton— Resources for Outreach and Group Study



Christianity and World Religions: Wrestling with Questions People Ask.

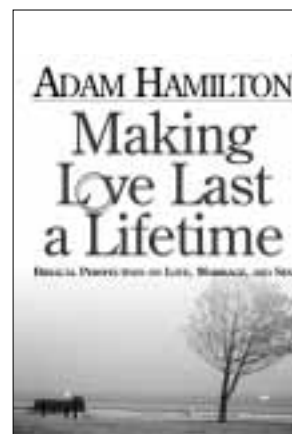
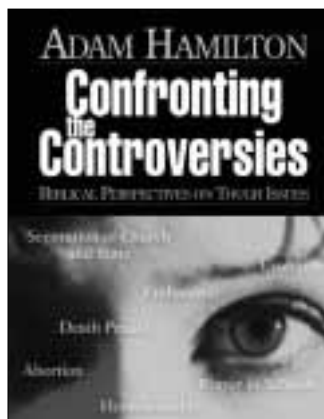
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CIR66610014 PACP00322338-01