

BOM Registrar Advice on Credit Check Evaluation by dCOMs

Nov 2018

- A. Use the **Behavioral Health Guidelines** (get a copy of this from the BOM Registrar or on the Sharepoint dCOM Folder) to discuss and evaluate the candidate with regard to credit and all other issues that emerge from the totality of the information you have about the candidate including what might come up during the interview or in the candidate's written documents.
- B. You can also advise/require the candidate to address any concerns regarding debt by working with someone who may help them such as the following (it should not be the dCOM member giving them specific financial advice, but rather making sure the candidate is dealing with it).
- (1) United Methodist Foundation New England (a lot or all of this help is FREE)
 - I think this is a good place to start and I have copied in (on 3rd page of this document) the info Rev. Mentzer gave us at the summer dCOM meeting.
 - Link to the UMFNE webpage to contact them: <http://www.umfne.org/contact-us-1/>
 - Even if the candidate in process is not clergy, UMFNE can help direct them to the resources available. Rev. Mentzer and Rev. Abbott have both encouraged us to reference folks to them for help with debt.
 - (2) Wespath (also free but I would still say talk to UMFNE before starting with Wespath)
 - (3) The candidate's own private financial advisor or other public/nonprofit agencies that help folks. Warn them to be cautious with anyone that has a profit motive.
- C. The New England BOM has not set any exact cutoffs that would make the candidate ineligible to move forward. However, if you are just seeking some sort of ballpark idea of what is considered a problem, I will refer you to the text (copied in below) from a 2017 document the BOM Entrance Committee provided at the summer dCOM meeting:

Excerpt from "dCOM Guidelines for Review of Candidates' Behavioral Health August 2017":

Credit Report

This report does not contain a summary sheet. It requires thorough reading to glean the information.

Items signaling further discussion:

- The candidate has been reported to a credit bureau for nonpayment.
- The candidate has a history of a personal bankruptcy.
- The candidate has had money judgments filed against him/her.
- More than \$50,000 in debt excluding mortgage
- Credit Card debt above \$10,000
- Current bankruptcies, tax liens, or judgments

Recommendation:

- If the candidate has a history of having been reported to the credit bureau, then three years of a good credit history is recommended.
- If the candidate has a history of a personal bankruptcy, then five years of good credit is recommended.
- If the candidate has a history of money judgments, then it is recommended that the judgments be satisfied prior to continuance.

D. Another relevant excerpt for evaluating all sources of info about a candidate:

Examining a candidate for ministry is a sacred task undertaken with appreciation for God's grace in our own lives and in the life of the candidate. Though complete understanding of the candidate cannot be possible, the work of the dCOMs with the Board of Ordained Ministry can help to sound the depths of the candidate over time, listening for gifts and graces expressed as well as areas where the candidate may need more support or development.

One element of our learning about the candidate is by receiving psychological evaluations, medical exams, credit reports, and criminal background checks. These professionally developed reports are read by dCOMs early in the candidate's process so that response and support can be provided should it be needed. All four reports are to be received and reviewed before the candidates become Certified. The dCOMs are responsible for ensuring this occurs.

The dCOMs are to be commended for their current practice of handling these sensitive personal documents with great care for the candidates' privacy. This is done by having one or two members who read the documents on behalf of the group, and not photocopying or distributing the reports electronically.

Rather than these documents indicating that a candidate has "passed" or "failed", they provide an opportunity to open a conversation with a candidate to learn more and recommend any appropriate action to help bring health and wholeness, to maximize the candidate's effectiveness and minimize ineffectiveness.

*This Info Sheet was presented by Rev. James Mentzer (director of UMFNE)
at the Summer dCOM Meeting (for all dCOMs) in August 2018*

“Are You in Debt So as To Embarrass You in Your Work?”

The Financial Challenges Facing Our Future Pastoral Leaders

Research conducted under the auspices of the Lilly Foundation demonstrates a strong positive correlation between financially literate pastors and healthy pastoral leadership (especially regarding generosity) in our local churches.

- The United Methodist Church, through a partnership between Wespath Investments (The General Board of Pensions & Health Benefits) and the National Association of United Methodist Foundations, is in its second year of an initiative funded by the Lilly Foundation designed to address the economic challenges facing local church pastors.
- The most dramatic change in the past 15 years is the rapid rise in educational debt for pastors.
- Acute financial stress is more often reported by pastoral leaders who are women, people of color, or who serve small congregations. They tend to receive lower salaries, fewer benefits, and have greater educational debt.
- Earlier this year, the United Methodist Foundation of New England used funds from the UMC Lilly Grant to help underwrite the cost of offering a three-day stewardship academy to members of the Provisional Leadership Academy.
- However, our ministerial candidates will be better served if we can address their financial challenges before new educational debt is incurred.
- Thus, District Committees on Ministry are invited to develop district-level programs to integrate personal financial literacy into the certified candidacy process. As a first step, the Candidacy Office at the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM) has partnered with Wespath and Ernst & Young (EY) to offer no-cost financial planning services to certified candidates.
- The United Methodist Foundation of New England is also available to assist in shaping programs that will promote financial literacy among candidates under supervision.
- Where appropriate, the Foundation can also offer individual financial planning assistance to ministerial candidates in addition to, or in lieu of, the support offered through Ernst & Young (EY).
- With your assistance, the Foundation will also begin this fall to invite ministerial candidates to financial planning programming offered to NEAC pastors.