**The Interview Guide: Goals and Questions**

**For Candidates**

The questions asked in a credentialing interview will revolve around six goals or areas or focus. These goals are outlined in this document, along with a variety of questions that the interviewing committee may ask the candidate. This document may be used to help one prepare for the interview.

**Interview Goal No. 1: PERSONAL FAITH**

***To discern whether the candidate’s relationship with God is appropriate to the ministerial calling.***

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. ***For Licensing Toward Ordination***

What is God like?

Describe some of the highlights of your walk with Christ. What have been some of the struggles?

Is there a moment in your life that you would descript as a conversion? Is there more than one such moment?

What do you do to nurture your relationship with God?

When and how did you know that God wanted you to be a minister?

Name one person who has been a model of Christian faith for you and explain how that person has influenced you.

Who is your favorite Bible character, and why?

In what settings are you sharing your faith walk with others?

With what streams of spiritual life and expression do you identify?

Tell about a time you related to Christians who are different than you charismatic, fundamentalist or social activist?

1. **Additional Questions for Ordination**

What have been the faith-shaping events of your ministry? How has your relationship with God been influenced by your ministry?

What intentions do you have to nurture your relationship with God throughout your ministry?

1. ***Questions for Licensing/Commissioning for Specific Ministry***

Any of the above with language appropriately adapted.

**Interview Goal No. 2: THEOLOGY**

***To discern whether the candidate has and can express an adequate understanding of Christian doctrine that is compatible with the understandings of the Mennonite Church.***

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. ***For Licensing toward Ordination***

When someone from a non-church background asks you, “What must I do to become a Christian?” how do you answer?

The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* describes what the Mennonite Church believes, but most church members have a few differences with it. Where do you want to debate, challenge or state things differently than the Confession does? Should the Confession be used as a test of faith?

Specific questions on any section of the Confession are appropriate.

Describe one example of what you think would be a heresy.

On what theological issues have you changed your mind from what you had believed in the past?

What one or two hymns capture the central affirmations of your faith?

What uncertainties are there in your own theological understanding?

What writers and teachers have shaped your understanding of theology?

What experiences in your life have shaped your understanding of theology?

1. ***Additional Questions for Ordination***

How has your experience in ministry affected your theology?

What artistic expressions of theology (music, literature, drama, visual arts, etc.) touch you?

At what points does your congregation disagree with the

Confession? Where do you find yourself on those points?

What parts of the Bible and what doctrinal themes have predominated in your preaching?

How do you intend to keep growing in your understanding of Christian doctrine?

1. ***Questions for Licensing/Commissioning for Specific Ministry***

Any of the above with language appropriately adapted.

**Interview Goal No 3:**

**PASTORAL FUNCTION AND TASKS**

***To discern how well the candidate understands and is able to perform the complex set of tasks and functions expected of a pastoral minister***.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. ***For Licensing Toward Ordination***

Which of the tasks of ministry excite you? Which do you dread?

What are the particular gifts you bring to ministry? How do you want to exercise those gifts? What is your plan for enhancing them?

What aspects of ministry are the greatest challenge for you? What is your plan for strengthening your ability to do those tasks?

Name someone whom you hold as a model for good ministry. What would you like to emulate about this person’s way of functioning?

In the midst of endless needs and opportunities for ministry, what plans do you have in place for taking care of your personal needs (physical, financial, mental, emotional, and spiritual) and for your family commitments?

1. ***Additional Questions for Ordination***

What surprises have you experienced in what you have been asked to do as a pastor? Have you had any disappointments about what you have not been asked or permitted to do?

What has your congregation said to you about the way you do ministry? What have your colleagues said? What does your family say? Do you agree with them?

In what continuing education programs have you participated? How have you chosen these? What plans for continuing education do you have for the future?

What have you learned through your mentoring relationship?

Describe how you have managed the balancing of family, personal, and congregational demands on your time. What would you like to do differently with the tensions between these priorities with respect to your time management?

Describe a situation in your ministry that you would call a conflict. How did you deal with it? Do you want to change anything about your conflict management style? How would you do that?

Are there any personal or family financial issues that arise from being a pastor? How do you deal with these?

1. ***Questions for Licensing/Commissioning for Specific Ministry***

Any of the above with language appropriately adapted.

**Interview Goal No 4: CHARACTER**

***To discern whether the candidate’s character of person is suitable for pastoral ministry.***

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. ***For Licensing Toward Ordination***

Tell us about your family of origin and your place in the family. What are your primary memories of your growing up years? What do you appreciate about your family? What do you wish had been different? What steps have you taken to be at peace with those things that you wish had been different?

How do other people see you? Are they right in their perceptions?

What experiences have influenced your personal growth in the past five years?

Where or to whom do you look for support and encouragement? How is that support expressed?

How do you handle failure or those times when things do not go well?

Is there anything in your past that, if it came to light, would be detrimental to your ministry? How have you dealt with those events?

What attitudes or actions should disqualify a person from ministry? What steps will you take to protect yourself from falling into those?

What are your career aspirations?

1. ***Additional Questions for Ordination***

What have you been learning about yourself during the experience of ministry? How have you learned these?

What aspects of ministry have you found the most fulfilling? What about ministry gives you energy and joy? What has been most disappointing? In what ways do these surprise you?

To what will you want to give special attention for your personal growth in the coming years? How will you keep your "being" and "doing" in appropriate balance?

When do you feel you will be emotionally and relationally vulnerable in ministry? Do you ever feel "out of control"? How do you deal with these situations?

1. ***Questions for Licensing/Commissioning for Specific Ministry***

Any of the above with language appropriately adapted.

\*Ethical standards are identified and discussed in *A Shared Understanding for Ministerial Leadership*, pp.55-72

**Interview Goal No. 5: COMPATIBILITY**

***To discern whether the candidate is sufficiently compatible with the ethos of the Mennonite Church and the calling congregation to gain acceptability as a legitimate minister.***

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. ***For Licensing Toward Ordination***

(For a person who has been a Mennonite from childhood) What are your earliest memories of consciousness of being a Mennonite?

(For a person who came to be a Mennonite as a youth or adult) Tell us about the factors that persuaded you to become a Mennonite.

How do you feel when you are with people who think that being a Mennonite means dressing strangely and driving a horse and buggy?

What cultural characteristics distinguish your

congregation from other Mennonite churches or from non- Mennonite churches?

Which of the stereotypes about Mennonites would you like to change?

How have you seen the area church deal with conflict? Are you comfortable with the role the church played?

*A Shared Understanding for Ministerial Leadership* is the official definition of how the Mennonite Church understands ministry. What parts of that document do you especially like? What makes you uncomfortable?

1. ***Additional Questions for Ordination***

What aspects of the life of your local community have you especially enjoyed?

How have you used the *Minister’s Manual* (Herald Press/Faith and Life Press, 1998)? What has been especially helpful? What other comparable resources have you used?

Has your congregation really received you (and your family) as a part of it? How would you want to change that relationship in the next five years?

In what area church or denominational activities have you participated? Do you feel that you belong in those settings?

1. ***Questions for Licensing/Commissioning for Specific Ministry***

Any of the above with language appropriately adapted.

**Interview Goal No. 6: OFFICE OF MINISTRY**

***To discern whether the candidate has a sufficient understanding of and claim of the church's office of ministry to be able to "carry the mantle" of ordination.***

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. ***For Licensing Toward Ordination***

Tell us about the most significant teachers you have had during your preparation for ministry. What was empowering in their role and relationship with you?

What power does a minister have over congregational members?

To whom is a pastor accountable?

If you were asked as Jesus was, "By what authority do you do these things?" what would you answer?

Many people think a minister preaches on God's behalf and relates to people as one of God's representatives. What does this mean to you as a minister?

Describe your expectations of an area church minister (bishop, overseer) in their relationship to you and your congregation?

When would you hope not to act differently or be treated differently than others because you are a minister?

1. ***Additional Questions for Ordination***

How has your ministry affected your spouse and children?

Have your relationships with friends changed since you became a pastor?

Describe your typical interaction with people after

Sunday morning worship.

What have you been learning about power and your ways of handling power?

Describe an experience where you felt empowered by the pastoral role to do something that you would otherwise not have done?

What has most surprised you about your identity as a minister?

Are you comfortable with being a pastor?

1. ***Questions for Licensing/Commissioning for Specific Ministry***

Any of the above with language appropriately adapted.