

Korean American Clergy Ordination Task Force

In 2014, the Korean Ministry Plan and the Korean Association of the UMC (KAUMC) created a task force to study the concerns surrounding ordination in the UMC as they seek to understand the issues and to aid in the ordination process for the first generation Korean Americans in the United Methodist Church. This effort was a part of the Future Planning Committee of the KAUMC. The Korean American Clergy Ordination Task Force is composed of the Rev. Grace Pak, chair, Rev. Paul Chang (Korean Ministry Plan), Rev. Kun Sam Cho, Rev. Eugene Han, Rev. Pauline Kang and Rev. HiRho Park (General Board of the Higher Education and Ministries).

The purpose of the task force is to study and analyze the experiences of the first generation Korean Americans who are pursuing the ordination process in the United Methodist Church, to report the findings and make recommendations so that KAUMC and the United Methodist Church can be more effective in supporting those who are in the ordination process and be effective in making the ordination process fair and inclusive.

To this end, a survey was conducted with the first generation Korean Americans who are currently in the ordination process by the Research & Evaluation Office of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. (See Appendix 1.) 24 Korean American candidates who are in the ordination process were invited to take part in the survey and 19 persons responded. The survey results revealed following four issues: 1. Lack of networking opportunities within the Connection. 2. Language/Cultural differences. 3. Legal Immigration Status. 4. Experiences of Racial/Gender discrimination. It should be noted that the first two issues identified are related to supporting the Korean American candidates in the ordination process. Issues 3 & 4 are related to justice, seeking to minimize discrimination within the ordination process.

In addition to the results and analysis of the survey, the Task Force also collected information via interview/conversation with those who are currently in the ordination process and gathering reports of practices from various Annual Conferences.

In order to support Korean American candidates of Ordained ministry and help our church be more hospitable, the Task Force proposes following recommendations.

I. Lack of Networking Opportunities within the Connection

- Issue: There is a lack of networking and relationship building opportunities for Korean American ordination candidates. The survey found that 100% of respondents were born outside the U.S. and they have lived in the U.S. for an average of 4 years. Therefore, they lack supportive relationships and networking opportunities.
- Solution: Provide opportunities to strengthen the relationship between Korean American candidates and Korean American churches, clergy and beyond.
- Recommendations:

1. Invite Korean American candidates to the national and regional gatherings of the KAUMC and introduce them.
2. Create a list of Korean American candidates with contact information and encourage networking within the community.

II. Language/Cultural Differences

- Issue: Ordination candidates have been found to experience difficulty due to language and cultural differences.

According to the survey 60% of respondents indicated that they are not familiar with mainstream American culture. 50% of respondents indicated that it would be helpful to have a Korean translator during their ordination interview.

- Resolution: Find ways to assist Korean American candidates to overcome language/cultural differences.
- Recommendations:
 1. Submit legislation to the 2016 General Conference to have the Board of Ordained Ministry provide a translator for interviews when requested or needed. (A petition was submitted and accepted by the GBHEM to be included in their legislation submission to make available language translation and cultural accommodation for candidates. See Appendix 2.)
 2. Create a list of Korean American translators and distribute the list to Annual Conferences
 3. Provide national and regional workshops for sharing information related to ordination and providing mentoring.

III. Ambiguity of Legal Immigration Status

- Issue: There are difficulties for Korean American candidates to move through the ordination process due to legal status. 53% among the survey respondents indicated that their VISA/immigration status has affected the ordination process. The Task Force also found that many Annual Conferences do not have a supportive system of assisting candidates with legal immigration status.
- Resolution: Ordination candidates should be able to begin and move through the ordination process regardless of their immigration status.
- Recommendations:
 1. Create a list of immigration lawyers and distribute the list.
 2. KAUMC, GBHEM and KMP will work together to submit a petition related to this issue for the 2020 General Conference so that everyone who are called to Ordained Ministry can be in the ordination process regardless of the candidate's immigration status.

IV. Racial-Ethnic/Gender Discrimination

- Issue: Ordination candidates experience racial-ethnic/gender discrimination. According to the survey 21% of respondents indicated that they have experienced racism or prejudice during the ordination process. 29% of respondents have experienced discrimination due to their ethnic background and 21% faced discrimination because of their gender.
- Resolution: Provide a catalyst for candidates who experience discrimination and guide them to a just process.
- A recommendation: Create a fairness and justice committee within the KAUMC to listen and guide ordination candidates that are experiencing discrimination.

The Korean American Ordination Process Task Force would like to suggest the following to fully utilize this report and implement the recommendations.

1. Distribution of the Report via GBHEM connection
2. Article submission to KAUMC website and “United Methodists in Service”
3. Create PPT document for presentation of this report
4. Launch ‘Committee for Supporting Ministerial Candidates’ for implementation of the recommendations in this Report.
5. Submit a petition to 2016 General Conference by the KAUMC regarding assisting ordination candidates with language translation service. (See Appendix 3)

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Pak
Chair, Korean American Clergy Ordination Task Force

August 25, 2015

Appendix 1

KOREAN AMERICAN ORDINATION CANDIDATES SURVEY - SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

In February of 2015, the Korean American Ordination Task Force of The United Methodist Church developed a list of issues and questions to be included in a survey of current Korean American candidates for ordination in the UMC. These issues and questions – focused on ordination experiences generally, as well as on the potential supports, challenges, and experiences of discrimination encountered during the ordination process – were adapted by the GBHEM Office of Research & Evaluation into a brief survey. This survey was subsequently reviewed and approved by the chairperson of the Korean Ordination Task Force as well as by GBHEM staff member Rev. Dr. HiRho Park. A total of 24 current Korean American ordination candidates were identified by GBHEM staff for participation in the survey. An electronic survey was emailed to each of these candidates, resulting in a total of 19 survey responses for a 79% response rate. Given the small size of the survey sample, and the relatively small size of the Korean American UMC ordination candidate population overall, the GBHEM Office of Research & Evaluation was constrained in the types of analyses they could perform using these data. Still, despite these constraints, descriptive analyses and some limited correlational analyses and cross-tabulations should provide Korean Ordination Task Force members with useful findings for informing their important work in supporting and resourcing Korean American leaders in the UMC.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

- ◆ The majority of respondents were male, at 62% of the sample (with 38% of respondents reported female).
- ◆ The majority of respondents reported being married, at 77% of the sample, with the remaining sample reporting as single or not married.
- ◆ 100% of respondents were born outside the U.S., with respondents reportedly having lived in the U.S. for an average of 4 years (median).
- ◆ The mean age of the sample was 33.

There were no notable differences in survey responses among these demographic categories (e.g. married respondents answering a question differently than unmarried respondents), unless specifically noted in the summaries below.

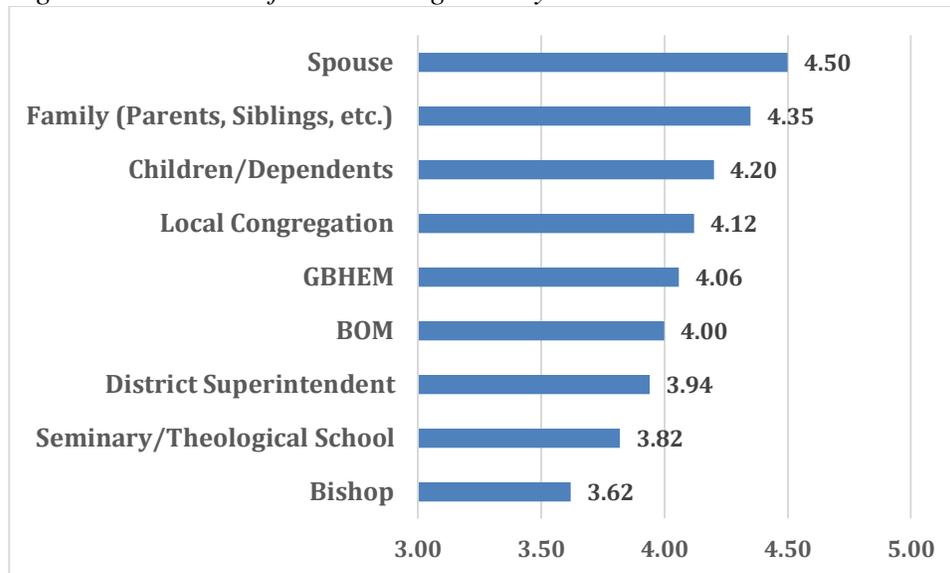
QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY

First, respondents were asked a series of questions related to their experiences in the United Methodist ordination process, including questions about positive influences in

their ordination process and the specific supports and challenges they have encountered through the ordination process.

When asked to indicate whether a list of persons and institutions were a positive influence in their ordination process, on a scale from 1 to 5, the role of family (spouses in particular) as a positive influence for these candidates was very clear. Figure 1 below illustrates the mean scores across each of these categories, from most positive influence to least positive:

Figure 1. Positive Influence Categories by Mean Score.



When asked about various other issues related to their ordination process:

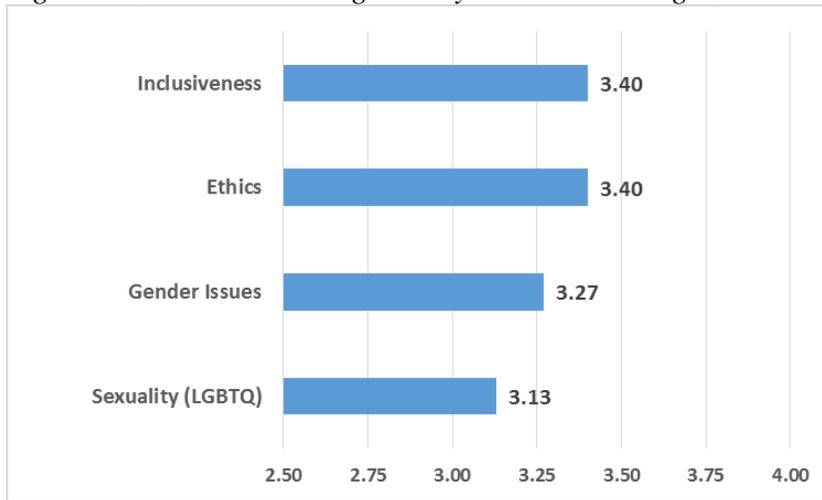
- ◆ 74% of respondents indicated that they have all the information they need to successfully go through the ordination process.
- ◆ 93% of respondents indicated that they know who the primary contact is for any questions they have about the ordination process.
- ◆ 53% of respondents indicated that their VISA/immigration status has affected the ordination process.
- ◆ 47% of respondents indicated that it would be helpful to have a Korean translator during their ordination interview.
- ◆ 40% of respondents indicated that they are familiar with mainstream American culture.
- ◆ 40% of respondents indicated that they have experienced a lack of communication from their DS, DCOM, or BOOM.

- ◆ 20% of respondents indicated that their ordination process has been delayed due to inattention or carelessness from their DS, DCOM, or BOOM.
- ◆ 47% of respondents indicated that their DCOM or BOOM understands them in their cultural context.

Next, respondents were asked a series of questions related to social justice issues in the ordination process, including their level of awareness of social justice issues generally and their own personal experiences with social justice issues.

Respondents were asked to indicate how knowledgeable they were on several issues, on a scale from 1 to 4. Illustrated in Figure 2 below, respondents were equally knowledgeable about Inclusiveness and Ethics, and slightly less knowledgeable about Gender Issues and Sexuality. Further analysis of mean scores showed that younger candidates appear to be more knowledgeable about Sexuality than older candidates, perhaps not surprisingly.

Figure 2. Social Issue Categories by Mean Knowledge Score.



In terms of the discrimination respondents may have encountered during the ordination process, the overall picture presented by respondents is that discrimination (or unfair treatment) is not an issue for the majority of these particular respondents during the ordination process.

- ◆ 21% of respondents indicated that they have experienced racism or prejudice during the ordination process.
- ◆ 29% of respondents indicated that they have been treated unfairly in the ordination process because of their ethnic background.
- ◆ 21% of respondents indicated that they have been treated unfairly in the ordination process because of their gender.

Further analyses show that there is a significant correlation between having experiences of racism or prejudice in the ordination process and feeling that the ordination process has been delayed due to inattention or carelessness from the DS, DCOM, or BOOM ($r=.766$).

Those who report experiencing racism or prejudice and those who report being treated unfairly due to their ethnic background are significantly more likely to report that their DCOM or BOOM does not understand them in their cultural context ($r=-.704$, $-.675$). Female respondents were far more likely to report having experienced racism or prejudice during the ordination process, with a mean score of 3.80 compared to a mean score of 2.13 among male respondents (on a scale from 1 to 5).

QUALITATIVE SUMMARY

In addition to the quantitative items summarized above, the Korean American Task Force survey also included several open-ended qualitative questions about the respondents' ordination experiences. Responses to these open-ended questions will be briefly reviewed here.

First, respondents were asked to describe the person or persons who were most encouraging to them in starting the ordination process. Respondents most typically named the pastor of their local church as most encouraging in starting the ordination process, with 9 respondents giving this type of response. The second most typical response to this question, with 5 respondents, was a family member (including parents and spouses).

Next, respondents were asked to describe what support, if any, they have received from their local congregation in going through the ordination process. Most typically, respondents described the "affirmation" they received from their congregation, with 5 respondents mentioning this type of support. Respondents also mentioned "endorsement" and "experience" as types of support they receive from their congregation, with 4 respondents mentioning each of these types of support.

Respondents were also asked about where they most typically go to receive information about the ordination process. Respondents most typically mentioned going to colleagues – friends, other pastors – as a source of information about ordination, with 6 respondents mentioning this type of source. The second most typical response to this question was seminary or a theological school as a source of information, with 4 mentions from respondents.

Next, respondents were asked to describe any supports that would be helpful to them as they prepare for their ordination interviews. 6 respondents discussed needing more information about ordination in general, with several of these respondents further specifying that a class or seminar about ordination would be a helpful means of getting this information. 3 respondents mentioned that it would be helpful for their interviews to get help with their English, either through translation assistance or through assistance in improving their English proficiency.

Finally, respondents were asked to describe any challenges they have encountered in completing the written work during the ordination process. Most typically, with a total of 5 mentions from among the sample, issues with language barriers and/or cultural understanding were discussed by respondents as a challenge with the ordination process.

Appendix 2

GBHEM Petition Number: BP-01

Total Number of Pages: 2

Suggested Title: Translation and Cultural Accommodation for Candidates

Discipline Paragraph: 310 and 666

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: No

Amend ¶310.2b)(2) and ¶666

¶310.2b)(2)

(2) a notarized statement....sexual misconduct, or child abuse.

The district committee on ordained ministry through the Board of Ordained Ministry shall seek ways to consider cultural and ethnic/racial realities and language translations as candidates ~~in meeting~~ meet these requirements, including interviews, psychological assessments, criminal background, and credit checks.

¶666. Add after current ¶666.3 and renumber following sub-points.

4. The committee, through the Board of Ordained Ministry, shall seek ways to make reasonable accommodations for cultural and ethnic/racial realities and language translations as candidates meet the requirements for candidacy, including interviews, psychological assessments, criminal background, and credit checks.

Rationale: To honor the language and cultural realities of candidates who do not speak English as their first language and respond to the need for some candidates to need translation or other accommodation to successfully complete certain candidacy requirements.

Date: August 31, 2015

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Appendix 3

WHEREAS The United Methodist Church seeks to be the church of “Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors” in this diverse world welcoming all God’s people to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

WHEREAS The United Methodist Church is blessed with lay and clergy membership from all corners of the world bringing rich resources and varied worship experiences to the missional engagement of the denomination.

WHEREAS The United Methodist Church is striving to fulfill the Great Commission through the missional engagement of people of all races and language by starting new congregations for recent immigrants to the United States, engaging leaders who have emerged from their respective communities and making possible worship and ministry in their own languages.

WHEREAS Leaders who have emerged from the various racial ethnic communities who are called to be in ministry in the United Methodist Church leading these new worship communities are mandated to go through psychological assessment and be examined in English language with the high level of proficiency expectation; such undue expectations subject the language ministry pastors in a disadvantageous position and severe road blocks

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that those who pursue candidacy, license and ordination process within the UMC to serve in non-English speaking immigrant communities may take psychological test, receive instructions, and interview in their own languages with help of translators, mentors and guides provided by the Board of Ordained Ministry of each annual conference.