

Requirements of the Fruitfulness Project

2016 Discipline ¶330.4.4: Those seeking ordination will need to present “a project that demonstrates fruitfulness in carrying out the church’s mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

The IGRC Board of Ministry requires that your fruitfulness project be a program of your original design that brings change to individuals, your congregation**, or your community. Those changes shall be relevant to the UMC mission statement.

*** (Deacon candidates may replace the word “church” or “congregation” in this document with the word “institution” or other appropriate term.)*

This paper shall have five parts:

1. **Title and Introduction** to the project
2. **A Progress Map** that visualizes the changes you expect to see in either a) individuals, b) the congregation, and/or c) the community
3. **Your Strategy** that states your mission, lays out your objectives, and anticipates the work that is ahead
4. **Diary of the Execution** recording how the project unfolded chronologically, including successes, surprises, and failures
5. **A Reflection paper indicating** what you learned about fruitfulness in ministry

(The project may still be ongoing at the time you meet with the Board, but it should have a sufficient history to allow the Board of Ordained Ministry to see some significant fruitfulness.)

1. Title and Introduction (300 words maximum)

Your fruitfulness project will consist of designing and executing a strategy for affecting change. Fruitful pastors and deacons affect change in individuals, congregations (or other institutions,) and neighborhoods (or regions.)

Your title should state the name of your project.

In your introduction, first state your focus constituency: are you trying to change individuals, a congregation, a neighborhood, or something else?

Second, name specifically what you aim to accomplish with the constituency you have chosen. We are not looking for busy work or program success. We are looking for a demonstration of

actual improvement in peoples' lives, or needed change in a congregation, or betterment of a neighborhood.

Third, explain how your project is relevant to the mission of the United Methodist Church.

And fourth, give us some background about the people, congregation, or neighborhood you aim to change. Be descriptive. Then briefly envision what "success" will look like.

2. A Progress Map (2-3 pages)

This section of your paper will ask you to be creative and design a map...helping us visualize the changes you see taking place in your project.

The Kingdom of God is about change: individuals, churches, and communities. God tends to work with individuals and systems along paths and continua. All Christians, for example, are 'works in progress,' on the road toward perfection. There is always a 'next destination on the map.' The same is true for churches, institutions, and neighborhoods.

Maps give us a sense of direction. They also reveal whether we are moving forward or going backward, standing still or going in circles. We can map our goals and visualize the mile markers along our journey.

The ability to map out the journey ahead requires knowledge and experience in practical theology. A "road map" can help reveal our understanding of how individuals, congregations, and neighborhoods change. It accentuates *ends* rather than *means*. It focuses on a *rational process* rather than an *ambitious quantum gamble*.

If you are mapping changes for individuals, help us visualize the paths they take to become (or mature) as disciples of Jesus Christ. What is their starting point? Where do you want them to be? What are the incremental milestones of progress along a continuum for them? Draw a map and give a brief commentary.

If you are mapping changes for a specific congregation, show us where that congregation is now? Where do you want them to be? What problems stand in the way? What is an effective sequence (or continuum) for solving those problems? Map that change and give us a brief commentary.

If you are thinking of your community or neighborhood, show us where they are currently on the (so called) economic, political, or social map. UMC social principles are one way to observe the advancement of God's Kingdom into a locality. Pick one social principle that applies to the community surrounding or adjoining your church. What are the conditions of that community now, as defined by that social principle? What changes do you want to see in that community, regarding that social principle? Map the change. Give a brief commentary.

Your map (this section of your paper) and your strategy (the next section of your paper) should reflect your psychological, theological, sociological, political, and economic understandings of how people and systems change.

3. Your Strategy (about 10-15 pages)

The following elements of strategy must be present in your paper:

1. *Write a mission statement for your project:* your mission statement should name or imply a visceral threat that virtually everyone in the church feels.
2. *A plan for developing relationships and teams:* Effectiveness in ministry does NOT mean lone ranger heroics. Pastors and deacons are expected to develop and direct teams. How do you plan to develop relationships...and from those relationships establish teams that can help you achieve success in your project? Plot out your coalitions.
3. *State your objectives and arrange them in sequence:* Objectives must be specific and measurable. Each project will include a handful of objectives. Too many objectives, however, will confuse and burden the project. Be sure the various objectives are relevant to each other and move you toward fulfilling your mission.
4. *Inspire:* Expand your mission statement into a narrative, an image, and an argument.
5. *Establish lines of communication:* You will need effective venues for communicating with all your collaborators. What types of messages do you anticipate will need to be communicated?
6. *Propose a timeline:* List the various things that have to get done in order to meet each of your objectives. Place each item on a timeline, with specific calendar deadlines for completing the tasks.
7. *Establish your rules:* What will you NOT do in order to meet your objectives? Which crucial values will guide everyone on your team whenever a difficult decision must be made?
8. *Select, train, and assign personnel to critical roles in your campaign:* What key jobs need filled? Who will fill them? How will they be trained, supported, and evaluated?
9. *Assessing skills and knowledge needed:* What do you NOT know that you NEED to know in order to successfully achieve your project? Where will you get your answers? What skills will be necessary for completing each task? Who has those skills? Who can be trained? What are the plans for getting the skills and knowledge you need?
10. *Lining up resources:* What materials will you need to achieve success? What groups will you need to involve? How will you maintain the "supply train" when you are in the middle of the project?
11. *Anticipating problems:* What could possibly go wrong? Who might object? What erroneous estimates might derail the project? What other activities might distract your people or compete with your project? What weaknesses do *you* have that might cause your project to fail? What anxieties or conflicts exist among your participants that might

interfere? What is most likely to throw off the sequence or deadlines? How will you handle each of these problems if they arise?

12. *Delegating the planning to your team*: Planning consists of scheduling, arrangements, and adjustments. It involves pre-arrangements and procedures for people, places, activities, and resources. This is where the project gets highly practical. (In your paper, we do not want to know all the details of the planning. But we do want to know how you delegate.)
13. *Feedback loops*: Your objectives must be measurable. What measurements will you utilize? Your maps need to instruct and reveal whether you are reaching your goals? How will you get an objective assessment of 'where you are?' Your sequence and deadlines must be met. People need to change in their thinking and activities. Institutions and communities must be transformed in measurable ways. What measurements will you use to give some objectivity to your evaluations? Attach the measurements tools and results in an appendix to the paper.
14. *How will you use the feedback to alter the plans?*
 - a. adjust for environmental changes
 - b. secure alternate resources
 - c. change personnel
 - d. make new rules
 - e. alter the objectives
 - f. revise the mission

4. Diary of the Execution (minimum of 5 pages)

As you execute the project, keep a diary. Narrate the story of what is happening. Also include appropriate metrics that will help you in evaluating the project.

5. Reflection Paper (1-2 page)

Prepare a **reflection** paper of what you have learned in developing and executing this project. What thinking was reinforced? What assumptions were confirmed, which ones proved to be wrong? Where was the strategy strong, where was modification needed. What would you do differently the next time? Was the training adequate? If not, how should it be altered?

Commentary on the Fruitfulness Project

“Fruitfulness” in any organization involves three different skill sets:

1. An ability to picture the changes which must take place in order for the organization’s mission statement to be fulfilled.
2. An ability to create a strategy in order to bring about some desired change
3. An ability to plan and execute programs in order to carry out the strategy

United Methodists aim to reform the individual, the church, and the society. Your fruitfulness project will focus on one of those.

We do not expect you to completely reform individuals, the church, or the world in your project. But we do expect you to demonstrate that you know how to carry out the UMC mission statement in terms of objectives, strategies, and programs.

We expect to see sophistication in your understanding of the continuum involved in making disciples for Jesus Christ. We expect to see sophistication in your understanding of how congregations and institutions must progressively change in order to be effective agents of the UMC mission statement. And we expect to see sophistication in your understanding of how neighborhoods, communities, and systems are transformed to reflect God’s will.

Pastors and deacons participate in the ministry of Jesus. The gospels indicate that Jesus’ ministry involves three fundamental activities: preaching, teaching, and performing. All these activities reveal God’s emerging Kingdom.

The candidate for ordination is thus asked by the Board of Ministry to demonstrate each of these respective activities: by preaching a sermon, by creating an original Bible study, and by executing a fruitfulness project.

The goal of the *fruitfulness project* is to show that the candidate can perform signs of God’s power through shepherding changes in individuals, congregations, systems, or societal entity.

Fruitfulness in ministry consists of the following:

- Shepherding individuals by making real what it means to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior
- Shepherding congregations by leading them through healthy changes
- Shepherding neighborhoods by achieving reform (cf. UMC Social Principles)

The *Fruitfulness Project* shall require results. Plans, intentions, activities, meetings, and efforts are insufficient in themselves. We expect to see end results, not just means-to-an-end.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this project, a disciple is an individual who has accepted Jesus Christ to be Lord and Savior of her or his life. While the individual's *acceptance* is critical to the making of a disciple, so are the phases prior to acceptance...and afterward. The phases before and after *acceptance* include experiences of mercy, story-telling, Bible study, faith sharing, dialogue, discernment, community, spiritual formation, reflection, spiritual disciplines, and doubts.

For purposes of this project, "the world" is the specific community around the local church. It may also be some specific system that is germane to the region: such as a local prison, a local hospital, or a local school.

The local church is the agent which coordinates people and resources in fulfilling the UMC mission.

- ✓ The local church nurtures individuals along the continuum of maturing discipleship
- ✓ The local church organizes and collaborates to make the neighborhood more just and hospitable.
- ✓ The local church relates to both insiders and outsiders through neighborliness, invitation, hospitality, apologetics, spiritual formation, equipping, guidance, counsel, affirmation of God's callings, programming, and deployment.

The goal of pastoral fruitfulness is complex: simultaneously engaging individuals, congregations, and neighborhoods. But that complexity is part of the United Methodist tradition. John Wesley had three aims: reform the individual, reform the church, and reform the society.

- Individuals are reformed as they progress along pathways of discipleship
- Congregations or institutions are reformed as they progress along pathways of healing, sustainability, relevance, strength, and growth
- Neighborhoods or systems are reformed as they progress along pathways toward achieving United Methodist Social Principles

