

## Fitness for Ministry Assessment Psychological Testing – What to Expect

Once you have completed your proctored testing (MMPI-2 and Sentence Completion), the inventories will be reviewed by a consulting psychologist, who also looks at your Autobiographical Questionnaire (including reported medical history) to provide context in which to view your results. As most candidates do not have much experience with psychological testing, following is some basic information to help you understand how it is used in the context of the Fitness for Ministry assessment process.

### What is the MMPI-2?

- The MMPI-2 is an empirical (i.e., not theoretical, but rather evidence-based per many decades of research) inventory that looks at various aspects of the human personality and screens for psychopathology, ranging from mild depression or anxiety to more severe difficulties such as breaks with reality. Results reflect both long-term personality patterns and reactions to situational stressors, e.g., stressful work conditions, relational difficulties, and so on.
- It is the most reliable and valid such inventory currently available. Reliability refers to how *consistently* a test measures what it purports to measure. Validity refers to how *accurately* it measures what it is intended to measure. Validity reflects how someone approached the inventory and can be affected by factors such as culture or language (the current version of the test is given only in English or Spanish), non-binary gender, significant recent trauma (e.g., death of a loved one), or anxiety/defensiveness (not uncommon in a vocationally-related assessment). “Marginal” or “questionable” validity does not mean someone lied, but rather points to a particular style of responding that may suppress or inflate scores on the clinical scales and subscales.

### How is the psychological testing used in the assessment process?

- A consulting psychologist (a doctoral-level clinician trained in interpreting the MMPI-2 and other testing and who has seen the inventory results of many hundreds of clergy and ministry candidates) reviews test results and writes a summary that provides an objective reflection on what your scores indicate. A “significant” elevation on a scale indicates that the score is notably outside the range of scores that would be obtained by most people. (Think of the “bell curve” – a significant elevation would be in the narrow “tail,” meaning that not very many people would score in that range, and therefore is deserving of note.)
- When you meet with your counselor, the counselor will first have some general conversation with you to review your background and get to know you better, then will go over the test results with you, using the consulting psychologist’s summary as a guide. You will have the opportunity to discuss your results and consider how your past and current history may have influenced your responses on the testing.
- The consulting psychologist’s notes as well as the counselor’s reflections on how developmental or situational factors may have contributed to particular scores are included in your final report, along with any recommendations for addressing relevant issues.

NOTE: Our assumption is that there is no such thing as a “perfect” pastor, and there is no expectation of that on our part. Recommendations that are offered are intended for growth,

stemming from our extensive work with ministry candidates as well as with experienced clergy. We believe that identifying areas for growth is healthy and necessary for persons who will be entrusted with the care and leadership of sometimes vulnerable people.

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