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Introduction & Overview of Ordination in MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is an increasingly global and diverse people who proclaim and practice a spirituality that is liberating and sufficiently profound to address the issues of our volatile, uncertain and complex world.

We are called to develop and equip leaders, congregations and ministries to do the work of justice, act with compassion and integrate sexuality and spirituality.

We will do this through high value training, cutting edge theological exploration, expanding partnerships and engaging with similarly minded justice movements.

From the MCC Strategic Plan 2013

Professional Spiritual Leadership in Metropolitan Community Churches

With critical minds and passionate hearts, professional spiritual leaders in MCC are those who seek to love God, follow the teachings of Jesus, serve people and know ourselves. We are committed to engaging in life-long spiritual practices for ongoing spiritual development, including integration of spirituality and sexuality. MCC Clergy are those who lead ministries that are in and for the world, bring the blessing and joy of the liberating gospel as we work to dismantle systems of injustice.

Spiritual leaders in MCC live and gather wisdom from and among the people to create together a spirituality that is sufficiently profound and liberating for an increasingly complicated world.

Articulating the Theology of Ordination in MCC

In the New Testament book of Acts, we learn that Paul and Barnabas ordained leaders for each congregation, praying for them and committing them to God’s service.\(^1\) In the Hebrew Bible, Moses is told to anoint, ordain and consecrate priests.\(^2\) Throughout the bible we read of people answering a call to ordained ministry and being commissioned to serve the community in the name of God.

Answering the vocational call to ordained ministry in Metropolitan Community Churches is a lengthy and courageous process. One discerns within oneself such a

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1. Acts 14.23
2. Exodus 28.41
calling, and then seeks guidance in testing and having that call confirmed. Periods of spiritual formation, psychological testing, theological education, and practical training bring one finally to a place where the larger “body” says that one is fully prepared to enter into the life of professional ministry.

Ordained ministry is not superior to lay ministry. However, ordained ministers do teach, equip, and empower the laity; and/or serve as chaplains or in other ministry settings as professional spiritual leaders. Therefore, the call to ordained ministry must be taken very seriously as ordained ministers influence and impact many people and ministries both in and beyond a congregation.

Realizing that ordained clergy have a great responsibility to the communities they serve, there are many voices on the journey that will contribute to the affirmation of a candidate. From the candidate who first acknowledges a belief that God is calling her/him into professional/ordained ministry - to the local church leaders who encourage the candidate to pursue the perceived call - to the seminary that academically prepares the candidate for professional ministry - to the instructors of MCC specific courses - to the Interview team - to the parish or organization that asks the candidate to accept an Authorized, Accountable, and Active ministry, many people will be prayerfully involved in the process of equipping and approving the candidate for ordination.

**Affirmation of the Call to Ordained Ministry**

Once one has accepted that as a Christian, one does indeed have a call to ministry, whether that ministry is lay or ordained, and once one has discerned that he or she has particular gifts which may be appropriate for ordained ministry as well as a passion to follow the path to professional spiritual leadership\(^3\), then one seeks the guidance and affirmation of the larger body.

The faith Community (i.e. both the ministry setting and the denomination) will expect the potential candidate to be able to articulate her or his sense of call. The potential candidate will be expected to share how she or he is willing to give her/his life to service of the Divine in ways that will comfort the hurting or challenge the injustices of the world or help individuals realize and claim their sacred value. If the faith community accepts a person’s vocational call, helps the person prepare to answer that call, and finally agrees that the person is ready to answer the call, then ordination

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\(^3\) This passion may be described in a variety of ways, i.e., hearing an “inner voice” or experiencing an unquenchable “fire” in one’s “bones” or simply experiencing a sense that no other path would fulfill one’s life’s purpose. The language of feeling “called” may differ from culture to culture, tradition to tradition, and even individual to individual, but in any case, the person should indeed feel “called.”
may occur. If the process leads one away from ordination one can be sure that it has
not led one away from ministry. The process is meant to help clarify the call; but even if
the call isn’t to ordained ministry it is certainly, all the same, a call to another kind of ministry.

Once a candidate has fulfilled all the requirements outlined in this manual and the
specific National Protocol that applies to the candidate, then s/he is eligible to be
interviewed by an MCC Clergy Interview Team. If the candidate is recommended for
ordination by that team, then s/he is eligible for ordination after the final part of the
process is complete.

The process of affirming one’s call to ordained ministry is complete once, and not until,
the candidate accepts a call to an Authorized, Accountable, and Active ministry. This
is known as a “Triple A” (AAA) ministry. Regular attendance in worship is also very
important for the life of a spiritual leader. Being part of a local spiritual community is
important for the on-going spiritual formation of the Professional Spiritual Leader. This
will assure that the spiritual leader is nurtured so that s/he can continually nurture others.

Once a candidate has completed the formation, training, and academic
requirements and has been recommended by an MCC Clergy Interview Team, then
that candidate may seek a “Triple A” ministry. Once the candidate has secured a
AAA ministry, then the candidate may be ordained in MCC.

What is the Duration of One’s Ordination?

Ordination is a Rite of our denomination. Our theology of ordination includes the belief
that Professional Spiritual Leaders are to be engaged in active professional ministry.
Ordination in MCC is not considered a “state” but rather a continuing calling to which
the Professional Spiritual Leader responds each day by renewing the commitment to
serve wholeheartedly the people of God. Some people believe that, like the
Sacrament of Baptism, ordination is for life and cannot be revoked. That is a
theological question about which people of conscience and good faith can disagree,
but whether or not ordination is for life, ordained clergy should be aware that
Metropolitan Community Churches, as an entity, has the right to suspend, temporarily
or permanently, an ordained person’s License to Practice. Professional licenses are
renewed annually and one may not function in the role of clergy in MCC without a
current professional license. If a License to Practice is removed permanently,
Metropolitan Community Churches considers the ordained person to be “former
clergy.”
As you are discerning God's call to vocational ministry, please know the Office of Formation and Leadership Development is available to answer any questions you may have along the way.
Chapter 1: Protocols

Because Metropolitan Community Churches is a global movement, it is necessary to offer a variety of protocols to deal with cultural and contextual differences. This clergy manual is intended to apply to all ordained clergy in MCC. Separate Protocols address questions and processes that are particular to various nations or groups of nations. For example, we currently have protocols in place for Australasia, Iberoamerica, the United Kingdom, and the United States/Canada. As our movement grows throughout the globe, we will intentionally develop additional protocols as the need arises.

Persons who complete their ordination process under one protocol and exercise their License to Practice in a geographical context with a different protocol may be required by the OFLD to complete additional requirements to serve in that context. These requirements may include but not be limited to: language proficiency, cultural competency, additional theological education.
Chapter 2: Ministry Leader Code of Conduct

The following guidelines for professional ethics of ministry leaders apply to all persons who have received official status with MCC as a candidate seeking ordination and all ordained clergy with a license to practice. This code is acknowledged by signature when individuals attend a Readiness to Enter Vocational Ministry retreat and during the annual licensing process for active clergy.

Ethics of Professional Spiritual Leadership in Metropolitan Community Churches
(aka MCC Ministry Leader Code of Conduct)

All ministry leaders authorized by Metropolitan Community Churches use the guidelines that follow to hold ourselves accountable to each other and to a ministry of integrity. When we fall short, MCC provides systems whereby there is room for discipline and grace. We seek to restore, to rehabilitate and to make restitution whenever possible; to help people escape loneliness, despair, and degradation; and to contribute to the wholeness of the body – where we seek to do no harm, but rather to edify.

We recognize that there are certain violations of our covenant of ministry together. Some behaviors are implicitly illegal and/or immoral, which constitute ethical violations and may result in a judiciary process, the end result of which may be suspension, loss of licensure and/or removal from office. Some behaviors and attitudes are unethical by our standards and compromise our ability to perform and provide ministry. Other behaviors and attitudes harm us and interfere with our ministry and our own efforts toward wholeness. We seek to address these violations honestly within the framework of our commitment to restorative, when possible, rather than retributive justice.

Statement of Ethical Guidelines for Ministry Leaders

- **Honesty.** Ministry leaders strive to operate on the highest level of trust and integrity, which requires that we act honestly and fairly in our dealings with others. We strive to make all of our communication accurate, honest, and clear. We intentionally avoid misrepresenting the truth or misleading others. We strive to give appropriate credit to the originators of ideas or quotations that we utilize in our written or spoken communication, and will not knowingly present the material of others as our own.

- **Confidentiality.** Ministry leaders respect the integrity and protect the welfare of individuals as well as the communities we serve. We take seriously our obligation to safeguard information entrusted to us as professional ministers. If there is a
legitimate reason for the health and well-being of an individual or the community for us to divulge information that has been shared with us in confidence, we will actively seek permission for this disclosure from the person(s) providing us the information before doing so. We also recognize that it may occasionally be appropriate to disclose confidential information, e.g. if that information pertains to the immediate danger of bodily harm/loss of life or when applicable laws mandate reporting.

- **Nonviolence.** Ministry leaders respect the inherent worth and dignity of all people and actively work to counter the forces of violence that inflict harm to individuals and communities. Such forms of violence include, but are not limited to, bias or discrimination on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, age, class, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, and any other characteristic of human diversity. We strive to ensure that our words and deeds do not directly lead to physical, psychological, spiritual, or ritual abuse.

- **Responsible Fiscal Management.** Ministry leaders strive to be faithful stewards of the resources for which we are given responsibility, including financial resources. We conduct our fiscal affairs with appropriate regard to recognized business and accounting procedures, as well as applicable civil laws. We do not condone theft, fraud, or the misappropriation of church funds or property.

- **Sexual Responsibility.** Ministry leaders affirm sexuality as a gift from God and strive to honor this gift by conducting our own lives in accordance with responsible, positive sexual ethics and in accordance with the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy. A positive sexual ethic balances desire within the embodied framework of our emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual selves, while preserving and honoring mutuality and consent.

- **Responsible Use of Authority.** Ministry leaders strive to use our authority responsibly. We use our professional training, relationships, and practices for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage. We are mindful of the power differential that exists in our relationships with those we serve and supervise, and strive to structure these relationships in mutually respectful, mutually empowering, and non-exploitative ways.

- **Professional Services.** Ministry leaders respect the various educational and vocational standards, as well as the systems of accreditation, affiliation, and mutual accountability that exist for our own and other professions. Therefore, as ministry leaders, we truthfully represent the facts of our professional qualifications and affiliations, and we limit our own professional practices to those for which we are equipped, authorized, and licensed. Regardless of our professional qualifications, ministry leaders, when acting in the course and scope of their functions and duties for MCC, must limit their activities to Biblically-based counseling or guidance. MCC is not authorized as a provider of psychological, psychiatric or other physical or mental healthcare services. UFMCC clergy allows ministry leaders to provide religiously-based counseling or guidance, not secular services.
• **Exercise of Professional Etiquette in Collegial Relationships.** Ministry leaders recognize that we do not do ministry on our own and we strive to honor and respect our network of colleagues in MCC. We mutually support our shared ministry by doing no harm through word or deed to the ministries or reputations of other colleagues or churches. We value the highest good of local churches over our own personal ambition or advantage. We commit ourselves to practicing professional courtesy with our colleagues and maintaining clear boundaries with former churches and parishioners. For example, we return to churches we have formerly served only with the invitation/agreement of the current pastor. Additionally, we honor the role of the current pastor in performing rites and sacraments and perform or participate in sacramental functions only with the invitation/agreement of the current pastor.

• **Ethical and Responsible Use of Social Media.** Understanding that we live in a world that is highly connected by social media and virtual technology, Ministry Leaders seek to maintain appropriate boundaries and behavior in the virtual world as in the physical world. We adhere to safe church practices in our use of digital communication as well as social media and networking sites. We maintain an awareness of best practices for social media as outlined in MCC’s Social Media Guidelines for Clergy and Congregations. We observe the same ethical boundaries and behaviors with regard to former churches or church members as we do in the physical world.

• **Commitment to Addiction Recovery.** Ministry leaders understand that addiction to alcohol, drugs, and other substances/practices can do us harm, impair our judgment, and seriously interfere with our ability to effectively minister in our communities. We strive for appropriate and responsible use of substances and affirm our intention to seek treatment and recovery for ourselves when necessary.

• **Covenant with MCC.** Ministry leaders recognize the MCC Bylaws as a reflection of the covenantal relationship that exists between MCC and its members, friends, groups, and affiliated churches. We will honor the Bylaws and will participate and encourage our churches to participate regularly in MCC Network Gatherings and General Conferences as primary avenues for our shared discernment, continuing education/formation, mutual edification, and relationship building.

**Sexual Misconduct Policy**
Since its founding, UFMCC has offered a counter voice to the sex negativity of Judeo Christian culture. Therefore, the UFMCC Sexual Misconduct Policy must, on the one hand, acknowledge the risk of sexual misconduct, while on the other hand avoid the risk of the disembodiment of leaders who are called to model health and wholeness, including sexual wholeness.
Let it be affirmed that sex is a gift from God. The divine value of sex includes but is not limited to pleasure, procreation, intimate communications, grace, and love. God’s gift of sexuality is to be responsibly embraced by all people, whether partnered or single, lay or clergy. A complete and responsible sexual ethic embraces the beauty of relationships among people of many sexual orientations and gender identities.

A positive sexual ethic balances desire within the embodied framework of our emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual selves, while preserving and honoring mutuality and consent.

Following are some examples of certain behaviors that constitute a sexual misconduct:

1. Sexual contact with a minor is sexual misconduct; or
2. Sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is legally incompetent or in any other way a vulnerable adult; or
3. Sexual harassment of any person, including those in relationships in which there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to sexually oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated requests for social engagements; or
4. Whether clergy or lay, using one’s position of privilege for sexual exploitation is sexual misconduct. A perpetrator who induces another person to undertake or endure a sexual act by serious abuse of that person’s position of dependency on the perpetrator, shall be guilty of sexual exploitation.
5. The attempt to develop a sexual relationship with a person with whom s/he has a pastoral or supervisory relationship.

A “pastoral relationship” is defined as a relationship between a clergy person, employee or volunteer and person receiving direct supervision, individual spiritual and/or pastoral counseling and providing confidential and/or privileged information to the clergy person, employee or volunteer.

At times, a clergy person, employee, or pastoral leader may develop an appropriate sexual relationship within the context of UFMCC ministry, including the congregation in which a person is serving, if there has been no direct supervision or individual spiritual counseling. Such relationships are to be entered into with extreme caution and a spirit of discernment.
Chapter 3: Preparing for Ordination in MCC

Readiness for Entering Vocational Ministry (REVM) Retreat

Entry by transfer clergy and by those seeking ordination for the first time into the process of preparing for ordination in Metropolitan Community Churches begins with participation in a Readiness for Entering Vocational Ministry (REVM Retreat). This guided REVM retreat opportunity provides the venue to meet with others who sense a similar calling to vocational ministry. REVM offers an explanation of the process for preparation for ministry, overview of the core characteristics of a ministry vocation in MCC, development of a personalized Ministry Action Plan (MAP) for ministry preparation, and a time of connection with mentors and others who have served in ministerial roles within MCC.

To apply for a REVM, individuals should consult their specific Protocol for the materials that are required as a part of the application process.

At the conclusion of the REVM retreat, a determination will be made as to whether or not a participant receives official status with MCC. This status is given to those who have been approved to begin the process of preparing for vocational ministry, whose MAPs have been finalized, and who have acknowledged and signed the Ministry Leader Code of Conduct. Various names are given to this status according to specific protocols. (e.g. “In Care” in the US and Canada; “Trainee” in the UK.) The MAP provides a clear, detailed covenant of mutual understanding that will be used for ongoing discernment and for review by the participant and the participant’s supervisor(s) and endorsing body. In some cases, a MAP may be modified given changes that may occur in an individual’s sense of calling or ministry context during their time of preparation and discernment. The Office of Formation and Leadership Development (OFLD) must approve all revisions to an individual MAP.

Elements of a Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

An individual MAP includes three areas of focus:

1. Relationship with MCC
2. Education
3. Spiritual Formation

Please consult the applicable Protocol for additional requirements or details for the individual’s specific context. Generally speaking, the following are the types of requirements included in each area of focus:
1. Relationship with MCC (the broader denomination)

People preparing for ministry in MCC should have a positive, ongoing relationship with the denomination. Some of the ways in which we encourage this include:

- **Local church.**
  The relationship with MCC begins, usually, in a local church or through a local church Pastor or Elder, both of whom endorse a candidate for REVM.

- **Attendance at REVM.**
  The relationship is deepened through participation in the REVM cohort at the retreat itself as well as in ongoing cohort communications.

- **Attendance at MCC Conferences, Meetings, and Events.**
  We encourage all students to attend General Conference, Network Gatherings, and other Conferences, Summits, or Meetings held by MCC. These are important gatherings for the opportunities they provide for continuing education, and connection with MCC colleagues.

- **Visit other MCC’s.**
  We further encourage all students to visit other MCC congregations beyond their home church to further understand, experience, and appreciate the diversity of MCC.

- **Supervised Ministry Experience.**
  Students are required to complete a one-year supervised ministry experience in an MCC ministry setting and to work with a Supervising Clergy throughout that time. This supervised ministry experience must be pre-approved by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development. Its purpose is to develop the characteristics of professional spiritual leaders in MCC. During this time, your supervisor will work with you to develop and implement your skills in practice of pastoral ministry and help you in your process of theological and personal reflection on the practice of ministry. The supervisor will be the one to endorse you and write a final narrative evaluation as part of your application for ordination. For Transfer Clergy, this supervised ministry experience serves to ground and apply your previous pastoral knowledge and experiences to the context of MCC ministry.

2. Education

We believe in having well educated and trained clergy. The terminal theological degree for ordination or its equivalent from an accredited school of theology (i.e. accredited by an agency that is part of The World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions - www.wocati.org) will be generally required as our minimum educational standard. However, we do understand that people come to MCC ordination from many different paths of ministry preparation and experience. In an effort to affirm this diversity, individuals without a terminal theological degree from an
accredited school can request to have their previous course of study and experience be accepted in full or in part toward meeting equivalency. The Office of Formation and Leadership Development may grant the equivalency or give partial equivalency with additional courses being required. This decision is most often made at the REVM in consultation with the REVM faculty as a part of the MAP requirements.

Additional MCC specific courses are also required, including:

- MCC Polity
- LGBT/Queer History
- Sexuality Studies

These courses are offered online by the OFLD, and may also be offered at specific institutions as a part of your study. To petition for credit for courses not offered by MCC, you should send a course syllabus to the OFLD.

Additional courses may be required by the applicable National Protocol, or in review of your REVM application materials. These will always be specified on your MAP.

3. Spiritual Formation

In order to develop spiritual practices which will serve you for a lifetime of ministry, each year select one or two projects from the following list or develop your own with your supervisor. Document your journey. At the conclusion of each year you work on completing your MAP, you will submit a reflection paper about your Spiritual Practices to the OFLD, and outline what your focused Spiritual Practices will be in the coming year.

- Practice traditional spiritual disciplines: visit the sick and those in prison, serve the poor, feed the hungry, give faithfully of financial resources, observe a weekly Sabbath
- Engage in a program of spiritual direction
- Develop a program of spiritual reading (classes)
- Volunteer with community service organization and write spiritual reflections
- Actively engage a social justice cause and write spiritual reflections
- Participate in a silent or guided retreat
- Embodied spiritual practice – yoga, Dances of Universal Peace, body work
- Personal devotional practice: observing the liturgical year. Bible study/devotion, praying with ancient Christian mystics, construct and use a home altar, create and/or use music or art as spiritual expression
- Develop a regular meditation practice
- Explore other faith traditions
- Cultivate a regular prayer practice
- Engage with a prayer partner
- Learn to practice non-violence in daily living

Additional requirements may be required by your specific Protocol, or by the REVM faculty as they design your MAP.

Each year, you should submit a MAP progress report to the OFLD. The report form can be found on our website. Failure to make progress towards meeting the requirements of a MAP for more than a year may result in the removal of official status with MCC.

**Applying for Ordination**

After you have completed all of the requirements outlined in your MAP, you may apply for ordination. The OFLD website contains the application for ordination form, which you submit to the OFLD along with supporting documentation, including but not limited to:

- Completed application form
- Endorsements (as indicated)
- A 3-5 page Narrative Evaluation from the Supervisor of your supervised ministry experience
- A 10 page Statement of Faith
- A revised Call to Ministry detailing how your call has changed-or not- since you submitted the call to ministry for the REVM
- A copy of your Internship Learning Covenant
- A signed code of conduct
- The current fee for processing the application

Once all of your application materials have been received, The OFLD will verify that all requirements for ordination (in most cases the MAP) have been completed and make any additional notes on an Ordination Checklist that will be attached to a copy of the Ordination Packet and sent to Interview Team members. The Interview Team will consist of three clergy in good standing with MCC. Retired clergy may also serve on interview teams. The OFLD will schedule an ordination interview within reasonable traveling distance or at an appropriate conference or gathering within 90 days of receipt of the completed application. Before the interview takes place the OFLD will schedule a training of the team to cover issues of diversity and cultural competency.
The Ordination Interview

The interview with the candidate for ordination will last approximately one hour and consist of:

- Brief introductions and opening prayer
- Questions about the candidate’s call to ministry in MCC and any clarifying questions the Interview Team may have about the Ordination Packet (evaluations, Statement of Faith). The MCC Clergy Manual states: MCC does not ordain for specific functions, but rather ordains for professional ministry in general. Ordination may qualify one for such ministries as pastor, staff/support pastor, evangelistic ministry, prison ministry, and chaplaincy (hospital, military, etc.).
- A time for the ordinand to be excused so that the Interview Team can discuss their decision to approve or not approve for ordination. (Note: The decision to approve must be unanimous.)
- A time for the Interview Team to address questions to the ordinand’s supervising clergy if more information or clarification is needed. (The supervising clergy should be available by phone if they are not physically present during the time of the interview.)
- Completion of the Ordination Interview Form, which lists the names of the ordinand, the Interview Team and the decision of the team with any comments.
- An invitation to the ordinand back to the room to share results, discuss, close in prayer.

The Ordination Interview Form will be returned to the OFLD representative on-site. A copy will be filed and a copy mailed to the ordinand.

Appeals

In the event of a decision not to approve a person for ordination, detailed reasons will be written on the Ordination Interview Form and discussed with the ordinand and the OFLD. The ordinand has the right to appeal the decision within ten (10) business days.

Appeal Process

- The ordinand may submit a written appeal to the OFLD within ten (10) business days.
- An appeal on the basis of bias or procedural error will be immediately investigated by the OFLD, and if substantiated, result in a new interview.
- An appeal will not be granted purely on the basis that the ordinand disagrees with the interview team’s decision.
• The OFLD will have a maximum of 30 days to review the request for appeal. Upon review the OFLD may choose to (1) uphold the original decision of the interview team; (2) work with the ordinand on a process of addressing the concerns raised by the interview team and grant a second interview once that process has been satisfactorily completed; or (3) grant an appeal interview.

• In the event an appeal interview is granted, the Appeal Team shall have a copy of the decision by the original Interview Team, a copy of the request for appeal from the ordinand, and any other pertinent information supplied by the OFLD. The chair of the original interview team will be a non-voting member of the appeal team in order to provide background and clarification about the concerns of the original team. Participation by the chair may take place virtually.

• It is recommended that the ordinand engage in prayerful discussion and reflection with his or her pastor, supervising clergy, student colleagues, and other support systems during this time of appeal.

• The decision of the Appeal Team shall be final.

Verifying a AAA Ministry and Scheduling an Ordination Service

Ordination in MCC is granted pending a call to an Active, Authorized, and Accountable (AAA) ministry. This means that you must verify your AAA ministry (see Chapter 4 for more details) prior to scheduling an ordination service. Once you have verified your AAA ministry by completing the Clergy License Form, you may schedule your service of ordination. Please notify the OFLD with the details of this service, including the date and location, so that your Certificate of Ordination may be prepared and sent to you. After your ordination, the OFLD will issue your first License to Practice. There is no license fee for the remainder of your first year of ministry.

Transfer Clergy

Clergy who come to MCC having been ordained in other traditions are called “Transfer Clergy” and must meet the requirements for ordination outlined in their particular protocol. The first step towards MCC ordination for transfer clergy begins with the clergy becoming a member of a local MCC congregation. Transfer clergy should spend a minimum of 6 months as an active member of a congregation before an endorsement can be made to attend the Readiness for Entering Vocational Ministry (REVM) Retreat. At such time as they are ready to begin the transfer process, transfer clergy should apply to attend the REVM Retreat. In addition to other materials, a letter of good standing must be sent from the former denomination as a part of the REVM application process. Transfer clergy need to meet the educational requirements for ordination as outlined in this manual, including a terminal theological degree, and MCC required courses (i.e. MCC Polity, Sexuality Studies, and Queer History).
year supervised ministry experience with a trained supervising clergy is required for all transfer clergy. When all requirements specified on the MAP have been met, transfer clergy may apply for ordination.

**Extraordinary Credentialing**

The Moderator may recommend that the Office of Formation and Leadership Development grant extraordinary credentials under rare circumstances. This privilege is extended only to the Moderator and is rarely utilized. The Office of Formation and Leadership Development may require the applicant to fulfill any part of the credentialing process, including educational requirements for ministry.

**Re-Entry to Active Ministry**

Clergy who wish to re-enter active ministry who previously became inactive by resignation, retirement, or removal may file an application for Clergy Re-Entry, which is available on the Office of Formation and Leadership Development website. The Office of Formation and Leadership Development will consider applications for re-entry on a case-by-case basis. In consultation with the applicant, the OFLD will develop an individual plan in these circumstances which may address issues such as education, the reason for previously leaving, and changes in the denomination that have occurred during the person’s absence. Such plan may include requiring the applicant to complete the full requirements for ordination under the current system.
Chapter 4: Licensing for Ordained Clergy

Ordained MCC clergy must have a current License to Practice to exercise their credentials (i.e. function in the role of clergy). A License to Practice is good for a period of one year and must be renewed annually. Failure to renew one’s license can be considered a de facto resignation. Licensure forms are available on the OFLD website.

In order to be eligible for a License to Practice, clergy must:

1. Be ordained;
2. Serve in an active, authorized, accountable, active (AAA) ministry;
   • Active: serving a minimum of 15 documentable hours per week, paid or volunteer
   • Authorized: authorized by a local church, the denomination, or Council of Elders for service as a pastor, staff clergy, chaplain, denominational staff, Elder, as the director of an educational or service ministry, or another ministry context. Ministry performed outside of a congregational context should receive approval from the OFLD by filing an Application for Chaplaincy, Ministry Outside the Local Church form, or other appropriate document.
   • Accountable: accountable to a local church administrative body or other administrative body or to a direct Supervisor within, or known to, MCC.
3. Maintain active MCC membership. Holding an active clergy license indicates official membership in MCC, denominationally. We also encourage all clergy who are able to maintain active membership in a local congregation. For those who are not doing AAA ministry in a local church it is important to maintain a spiritual home and faith community. Doing ministry is not the same as being in a worshiping community. Thus it is vital that clergy serving as a chaplain, MCC staff, or Elder, etc. have a local church that they regularly attend.
4. Fulfill requirements for continuing professional development each year; and
5. Return a completed Clergy License Renewal form annually.

Dual Standing and/or Credentials

Recognizing that a covenantal relationship exists between MCC and its ordained clergy, an MCC clergy person may not covenant or affiliate with another denomination without obtaining the written consent of the Office of Formation and Leadership Development.
A distinction is made between MCC clergy who:

1. Hold membership as clergy with ministerial associations, ecumenical and interfaith organizations, and any other organization that is ethically compatible with MCC's values, vision, and mission;
2. Have been granted standing by call to serve as MCC clergy in another denomination; and
3. Are ordained by and/or have been granted clergy credentials by another denomination.

Membership
MCC clergy are free to hold membership with ministerial associations, ecumenical and interfaith organizations, and any other organization that is ethically compatible with MCC’s values, vision, and mission.

Standing or Dual Credentials
We recognize that MCC clergy may have reasons for wanting or needing to have standing or active credentials in other denominations or bodies of affiliation, in addition to MCC. For example, some clergy come to MCC already ordained, licensed, or credentialed with another body and do not wish to sever this relationship or affiliation while also becoming licensed with MCC. Other clergy licensed by MCC may decide to pursue dual standing and/or credentials for a variety of reasons (e.g., they serve on staff in a non-MCC or multiply-affiliated setting that requires additional credentials, they wish to expand ministry opportunities in a location without a currently viable MCC AAA ministry, they desire to strategically expand MCC alliances or ministry partnerships, etc.). The Office of Formation and Leadership Development encourages clergy in MCC to intentionally and continually discern their vocational calling, and provides active support for clergy throughout their vocational careers. All clergy seeking dual credentials must schedule a conversation with the OFLD so that we can best understand your context and the various factors influencing your discernment, and offer appropriate support for you, including but not limited to official verification of your ecclesiastical standing in MCC. Our primary objective is to offer support and to ensure that the terms of the relationship covenant between MCC and licensed clergy (i.e. the requirements and processes for maintaining an active MCC clergy license) are clear and mutually understood.

Clergy must complete a Clergy Seeking Dual Credentials form and return it as indicated to schedule a conversation with the OFLD.
Standing by Call in Metropolitan Community Churches

Standing by Call is a status granted to clergy in other denominations who are called to serve in an MCC ministry setting.

In order to be granted Standing by Call, the following must be completed or verified:

- Completion of the Application for Standing by Call on the OFLD website.
- A letter from the clergy person’s denominational Office of Ministerial Protocol or Clergy Development indicating that the clergy applying for Standing by Call in MCC is in ‘good standing’ with his or her denomination.
- Submission of (1) a ministry position description to which the person is being called, (2) a criminal background check, and (3) a signed copy indicating acceptance of the MCC Ministry Leader Code of Conduct.
- Successful completion of MCC Polity, Sexuality Studies, LGBT History (offered online or in a tutorial format through MCC)

Once all supporting documentation has been received and reviewed by MCC’s Office of Formation and Leadership Development, the OFLD may consult with the calling body and will issue a final decision about whether or not to grant standing by call.

Standing by Call is granted to clergy ordained in another denomination by virtue of their calling to a specific MCC congregation or ministry and is not transferrable to another congregation/calling in MCC.

Clergy who are granted Standing by Call:

- are seated in the Clergy House of General Conference with voice but no vote.
- must file an annual clergy license renewal form along with the fee and complete the required number of continuing education units.
- are subject to the Ministry Leader Code of Conduct and the MCC Judicatory Process.
Clergy between Active, Authorized and Accountable (AAA) Ministries

Clergy between AAA ministries are granted a grace period to seek a new call until the end of the following calendar year. During this grace period the clergy person retains all rights and responsibilities of an Active License. At the end of this time, the clergy should do one of the following:

- File a Clergy License Renewal Form documenting their new AAA ministry
- Take a Leave of Absence from Active Ministry
- Retire, if eligible
- Resign from Active Ministry

Taking a Leave of Absence from Active Ministry

A Leave of Absence should be requested for planned absences from active ministry and when a clergy person is outside of an active, authorized, and accountable (AAA) ministry. A Leave of Absence is appropriate for clergy who need time for:

- A Search for an active, authorized and accountable Ministry: Clergy who anticipate that they will need or have needed more than one year in order to find an active, authorized and accountable ministry should request a Leave of Absence for the time of the search.
- Personal Reflection: A Leave of Absence can provide clergy with time for personal reflection and renewal between pastoral positions.
- Healing: A Leave of Absence can allow clergy to focus on physical or emotional healing until they are ready to return to active ministry.
- Education: A Leave of Absence can provide clergy with time to pursue additional theological education beyond what was required at the time of initial licensure.

A Leave of Absence lasts for one year and is renewable. The Office of Formation and Leadership Development will automatically grant the Leave of Absence. Any request for an extension of the Leave of Absence must include documented need and will be considered by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development.

The Application for a Leave of Absence must be submitted to the Office of Formation and Leadership Development. A Leave of Absence can be renewed for a second year by completing the same form (downloadable from the website); the renewal application should be submitted before the end of the current Leave. If a clergy person wishes to extend a Leave of Absence beyond two years, s/he must obtain permission from the Office of Formation and Leadership Development.
While on a Leave of Absence, a clergy person is expected to:

- Maintain contact with a local MCC congregation, pastor, and the OFLD.
- File an Annual Clergy License Renewal form. The form is signed by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development.

During a Leave of Absence, clergy do not:

- Exercise their credentials (i.e. function in the role of clergy) with the exception of the occasional performance of the Rites and Sacraments of the Church that do not constitute full- or part-time ministry.
- Vote at General Conferences or count toward the quorum.

**Sabbatical**

A Sabbatical is a time for study, renewal, travel or research by a clergy person while in a AAA ministry. It is arranged between a clergy person and the authorizing body. Clergy on sabbatical remain in active, authorized and accountable (AAA) ministry, with all of its rights and responsibilities, including voting at conferences. Clergy are encouraged to include provisions for a sabbatical in their contracts with congregations. The expectation when taking a sabbatical is that the clergy will be returning to the current position. It is inappropriate to use a sabbatical to delay/prolong the end of your AAA ministry or to seek a new ministry.

Clergy between active, authorized, accountable and active (AAA) ministries are not eligible for a sabbatical.
Chapter 5: Leaving Active Ministry

Retirement from Active Ministry

MCC recognizes as honorably retired those clergy who have one of the following:

- a minimum of 25 years of active MCC ministry; or
- reached the legal age of retirement for his/her country; or
- a disabling illness; or
- other extenuating circumstances as approved by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development

Clergy who wish to end active ministry and who do not meet these criteria are classified as resigned.

Retired clergy:

- are not engaged in active ministry with the exception of the occasional performance of the Rites and Sacraments of the Church that do not constitute full- or part-time ministry;
- are eligible to vote at General Conferences;
- are not required to work a minimum number of hours; and
- do not need to file an annual status form

Applying for Retirement

Clergy who wish to retire from active ministry should submit an application (see form on website) to the Office of Formation and Leadership Development. If the clergy person meets the retirement criteria, the Office of Formation and Leadership Development will inform the clergy person in writing that his/her MCC credentials have been retired.

Resignation

The Bible teaches us that there are seasons to every life. While ordained ministry is a call to life long service, there are times when a person realizes a call to a different ministry other than ordained ministry. At that point, it is appropriate for that individual to resign her/his credentials. A letter of resignation should be sent to the Office of Formation and Leadership Development and, if applicable, the Board of Pensions (USA). If the clergy person is resigning from his/her ministerial position as well as resigning clergy credentials, a separate letter should be sent to the church or institution from which the person is resigning.
Inactive Status
An MCC clergy person may be placed on Inactive Status by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development while a judiciary matter is pending. When placed on Inactive Status by the Director of the OFLD, the inactive status remains in effect until the judicial matter is resolved.

Inactive clergy do not:

- vote at General Conferences and are not counted toward the quorum
- have the right to exercise their credentials (i.e. function in the role of clergy)

De Facto Resignation
A clergy person may be considered a de facto resignation in the following situations. When a clergy person:

- violates the conditions of inactive status
- has been outside of a AAA ministry beyond the grace period and has not verified new AAA ministry, filed for a leave of absence, retired, or resigned
- has failed to submit an annual Clergy License Renewal form
- has used her/his credentials (i.e. functioned in the role of clergy) during a leave of absence
- knowingly provided false information on the annual Clergy License Renewal form or other MCC documents
- engaged in ministry in a non-MCC congregation that has not been authorized by MCC
- served as pastor or started an MCC or non-MCC congregation that has not been authorized by MCC

Within 10 days of becoming aware that his or her congregation is considering disaffiliation from MCC, a clergy person must contact the OFLD to determine the status of their credentials.

The Office of Formation and Leadership Development shall inform the clergy person of the de facto resignation; however, the status is not dependent on this notification.
Chapter 6: Continuing Professional Development

The process of ministry is one that requires continual growth and learning. It is vital to the success of ministry for clergy to deepen their spiritual lives and increase their professional skills throughout the course of their ministries. To maintain an active license MCC clergy are required to complete 9 hours of CEU each year. Each must be relevant for professional ministry development. In consultation with the Council of Elders, the OFLD will designate for each licensure cycle a specific subject area in which 3 of the 9 CEU’s must be completed. (Areas will include but not be limited to: Worship and Preaching, Risk Management, Church Administration, Professional Boundaries, Cross-cultural Competencies [racial, gender justice, anti-oppression, language, etc.]) The Office of Formation and Leadership Development will develop and offer curriculum to meet required CEU topics.

Many seminaries offer continuing education programs that are specifically designed for clergy. Additionally, these could include therapy/spiritual direction, participating in a spiritual retreat, the NGLTF Creating Change conference or a Spiritual Activism conference. For further ideas or clarification of whether or not a practice meets these guidelines please contact the Office of Formation and Leadership Development.

Clergy who are currently pursuing additional education, or who are considering doing so, are encouraged to contact the Office of Formation and Leadership Development. If a local church or MCC body authorizes a clergy person to participate in further professional education, the hours spent pursuing that education may be considered by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development as applicable to the requirements for active, authorized and accountable AAA ministry.

Clergy may also want to fulfill the continuing professional development requirement by obtaining the next professional degree.

Studies have demonstrated that there is a correlation between a clergy person’s professional education and the person’s clergy compensation and professional mobility.
Introduction

The Asia Protocol for MCC Ordination applies to:

- Residents of Asia who are preparing for ordination by MCC into vocational ministry; and
- Residents of Asia who are ordained by another denomination and seeking to gain professional standing in MCC (Transfer Clergy).

The process of becoming a professional clergyperson in Metropolitan Community Churches is managed by the MCC Office of Formation & Leadership Development. The MCC Clergy Manual contains a full explanation of the global ordination process, requirements, and expectations. The Asia Protocol for MCC Ordination is a supplement to the MCC Clergy Manual (see Chapter 1 of the MCC Clergy Manual) and addresses questions and processes that are particular to the context of ministry in Asia.

Preparing for Ordination in MCC (supplements Chapter 3 of the MCC Clergy Manual)

Readiness for Entering Vocational Ministry (REVM) Retreat

To apply for a REVM, individuals should:

- Have been an active Christian in a local church or Christian organization for at least three (3) years; and
- Submit the following:
  - Three (3) personal references from people who have known you for at least three (3) years (excluding family members)
  - A Letter of Endorsement from an MCC clergy person, Network Leader, Elder, or the Director of the MCC Office of Emerging Ministries
  - Official transcripts verifying any university and/or seminary education
  - A psychological and/or medical report to verify fitness for ministry, when possible
  - A current resume/curriculum vitae that includes both employment and educational history
  - A digital photo of yourself
  - A 1500-word paper detailing your Call to Ministry, specifically to MCC ministry
  - A 1500-word paper describing your Spiritual Journey
    - How did you come to faith in Christ?
    - Which other churches (if any) were you involved in prior to MCC?
    - What did you like about them?
    - What did you not like about them?
• Describe your involvement in the other church(es).
• Why did you leave?
• What made you feel drawn to MCC as a denomination?
• A 1500-word paper on your Sense of Vocation
  • Why do you believe God is calling you to ordained ministry?
  • How have you perceived that calling?
  • What ministry do you feel called to perform that cannot be done as a lay person?
  • What skills and experience do you have that makes you believe that ordained ministry is where your talents will be best used?

The application will be reviewed by the Asia Ministry Development Team and the Director of the Office of Formation and Leadership Development; only approved applicants may participate in a REVM Retreat.

Elements of a Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

Relationship with MCC (the broader denomination)

People preparing for ministry in MCC should have a positive, ongoing relationship with the denomination. Some of the ways in which we encourage this include:

• **Local church.** The relationship with MCC can begin in a local church; through a local church Pastor, Network Leader, Elder, or MCC staff member; or through a virtual connection with MCC through the MCC Office of Emerging Ministries or Office of Formation and Leadership Development. A local church Pastor, Network Leader, Elder, or the Director of the MCC Office of Emerging Ministries may endorse a candidate for REVM.

• **Attendance at REVM.** A potential ordination candidate may participate in either a virtual or face-to-face REVM Retreat. Upon acceptance into the MCC ordination process, the participant is considered to be In Care with MCC and becomes part of the Asia In-Care Cohort.

• **Attendance at MCC Conferences, Meetings, and Events.** We encourage all students in Asia to attend General Conference, Network Gatherings, trainings, events, and meetings held by MCC. All students are also encouraged to attend events that are sponsored by Amplify.

• **Visit other MCC’s.** We further encourage all students to visit other MCC congregations beyond their home church to further understand, experience, and appreciate the diversity of MCC. Such visits can include exploring the websites of other MCC congregations, watching sermon videos, and participating in the congregation’s virtual worship experiences.

• **Supervised Ministry Experience.** Students are required to complete a supervised ministry experience (internship) for at least one (1) year in an approved setting under the supervision of an approved supervisor appointed by the Office of
Formation and Leadership Development. This supervised ministry experience must be pre-approved by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development. Its purpose is to develop the characteristics of professional spiritual leaders in MCC. During this time, your supervisor will work with you to develop and implement your skills in the practice of pastoral ministry and help you in your process of theological and personal reflection on the practice of ministry. The supervisor will be the one to endorse you and write a final narrative evaluation as part of your application for ordination. For Transfer Clergy, this supervised ministry experience serves to ground and apply your previous pastoral knowledge and experience to the context of MCC ministry.

Education
The Bachelor of Theology or a three- to five-year degree in a theological discipline is the minimum requirement for educational preparation for vocational ministry in Asia.

MCC-specific courses are also required, including:
- Sexuality Studies
- LGBTI/Queer History
- MCC Polity and History
These courses are offered online by the OFLD.

Spiritual Formation
This part of the MAP is designed to assist the ordination candidate to cultivate a lifetime of spiritual practice for ongoing spiritual formation. The candidate will:
- Work with a mentor or spiritual director
- Engage in a variety of spiritual practices
- Write a spiritual reflection paper on the formation experience at the end of each year

Applying for Ordination

After you have completed all of the requirements outlined in your MAP, you may apply for ordination. The OFLD website contains the application for ordination form, which you submit to the OFLD along with supporting documentation, including:
- Completed application form
- Endorsement from the Director of the Office of Emerging Ministries
- Other endorsements as indicated in the application form
- A 3- to 5-page Narrative Evaluation from the Supervisor of your supervised ministry experience
- Submission of a 1500-word Statement of Faith, including a description of what you feel called by God to do in ministry after ordination.
Summary: Major Aspects of Preparing for MCC Ordained Clergy in Australasia

The requirements for Ordination to become a professional clergyperson in Metropolitan Community Churches is managed by MCC’s Office of Formation & Leadership Development and is outlined in detail in the denomination’s Clergy Manual. However, there are some ‘modifications’ within Australasia to take into consideration educational and cultural differences. The following is a summary of the “Australasian Protocol” for Ordination within MCC.

Requirements:

1. Active MCC Membership in a local church for at least 6 months.
2. Endorsement by local MCC Pastor and Board of Directors to attend a REVM [Readiness to Enter Vocational Ministry] Program.
3. Psychological Testing at an approved centre or with an approved practitioner [2 months before the REVM] [Cost is about AU$1,000].
4. Police Check.
5. Submission of a paper (4-5 A4 pages) on “My Call to MCC Ordained Ministry”.
6. Attendance at a REVM Program.
7. Recommendation (or otherwise) by REVM Facilitators to “proceed towards Ordination in MCC.”
8. When entering “Formation” the candidate must sign the MCC “Code of Conduct” on-line.
9. Appropriate academic qualifications – a minimum of a Bachelor of Theology (or Divinity or Ministry) from a Theological Institute accredited by the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools: http://www.anzats.edu.au/members
11. MCC core courses: UFMCC Polity, Sexuality Studies, and QGLBTI History. [These are available on-line.]
12. Internship – one year in an approved setting under the supervision of an approved ‘Supervising Clergy’. As most churches in Australasia are small, some experience in a different setting will possibly be required.
13. Ordination Interview.

14. AAA ministry – Ordination takes place when a person approved for Ordination secures a AAA Ministry (Active, Approved and Accountable) and a ‘Licence to Practice’ is issued – renewable annually on the basis of a AAA Ministry and completed Continuing Education Units.

15. MCC does not ordain for specific functions, but rather ordains for professional ministry in general. Ordination may qualify for such ministries as:
   - Pastor
   - Staff/Associate Pastor
   - Evangelistic Ministry
   - Prison Ministry
   - Youth Ministry
   - Chaplaincy (hospital, defence forces, etc.)
Ibero-American Protocol
2014

Office of Formation and Leadership Development
E-Mail: OFLD@MCCchurch.net  Web: ofld.mccchurch.org
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Chapter 1: Introduction to Ibero-American Protocol

Metropolitan Community Churches is a global movement with churches in various countries around the world. The MCC Clergy Manual applies to all MCC Clergy, regardless of where they are located. The Ibero-American Protocol contains additional details that apply specifically to those who provide and who are preparing themselves to provide spiritual leadership in Mexico, Central, South America, Spain and Portugal. This protocol may also apply to those who are preparing themselves to provide spiritual leadership in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

The Office of the Elder that serves Ibero-America is responsible for the certification of Lay Pastors and works in cooperation with the MCC Office of Clergy Development to oversee the process of ordination for clergy who serve and who wish to serve congregations in Ibero-America. If a clergy person who is ordained under the Ibero-American Protocol wishes to serve in MCC ministry outside of Ibero-America, the MCC Office of Clergy Development might require that clergy person to fulfill the ordination requirements as presented in the applicable Protocol. If a clergy person who is ordained under another Protocol wishes to serve in MCC ministry within Ibero-America, the Office of the Elder that serves Ibero-America might require that clergy person to fulfill the ordination requirements as presented in the Ibero-American Protocol.

All MCC churches in Ibero-America are led by ordained clergy or by certified lay pastors. Certified lay pastors are those who have successfully prepared themselves to provide spiritual leadership to an MCC congregation (mission or church), have been recommended by that MCC congregation for appointment, and have been appointed by the Elder to serve as the spiritual leader of that MCC congregation. The appointment of a Lay Pastor is made for a period of one (1) year at a time.

It is necessary to follow the procedures outlined in the MCC Clergy Manual and the protocol that follows in order to prepare for certification as a Lay Pastor or to enter the process of preparation for ordained ministry with Metropolitan Community Churches. Those who are in the process of certification and those who are in the process of ordination are considered to be “In Care.” Being “In Care” applies to all individuals who wish to become either certified lay pastors or ordained clergy in MCC, including to those who have been ordained by another Christian denomination.
Chapter 2: Assessing Readiness to Enter Vocational Ministry (Entry Retreat)

The process of preparation for spiritual leadership in MCC begins with participation in a guided spiritual retreat. The Entry Retreat provides an opportunity to meet with others who sense a similar calling to vocational ministry. Participation in an Entry Retreat is required of all individuals who wish to become certified Lay Pastors and to all individuals who seek ordination by MCC.

The Entry Retreat offers an explanation of the process for preparation for spiritual leadership, an overview of the core characteristics of a ministry vocation in MCC, initial psychological testing, development of a written plan for ministry preparation, and a time of connection with mentors and others who have served in ministerial roles within MCC.

The Entry Retreat staff will provide each participant with an assessment of readiness to begin the process of preparation for lay pastoral ministry and for ordained ministry in MCC. This assessment will be used for ongoing discernment and for review by the participant, the participant’s supervisor, the participant’s endorsing body, and the Elder.

The written plan for ministry preparation includes requirements in the following areas:

- Personal Spiritual Formation
- Education
- Relationship with the Denomination

In addition to the details about each of these areas contained in the MCC Clergy Manual, this protocol includes relevant details to the formation process in Ibero-America.

Transfer Clergy

Clergy who have been duly ordained in another Christian denomination are eligible and welcome to apply to MCC as Transfer Clergy. We also accept as transfers women who have attained the highest level of preparation and credentialing possible in their denomination but who were denied ordination because that tradition does not ordain women. Those who served in lay orders in another denomination are not eligible to be Transfer Clergy. Contact the OFLD in Ibero-America for more information.
Chapter 3: Minimum Educational Requirements

We believe in having well educated and trained spiritual leaders. People come to leadership in MCC from many different paths of ministry preparation and experience. In an effort to affirm this diversity, each person who is in care will develop an individual plan for education and training. Individuals with a terminal theological degree or its equivalent from an accredited school (accredited by an agency that is part of The World Conference of Association of Theological Institutions www.wocati.org) and those who have served as ordained clergy for a minimum of five (5) years can request to have their previous course of study and/or experience accepted in full or in part toward meeting the educational requirement. An Equivalency Team of the OFLD in Ibero-America may grant the equivalency or give partial equivalency with additional courses and experiential training being required.

The Darlene Garner Institute for Ibero-American Leadership Formation (DGIILF) will be the entity that provides formation and education to people seeking to become pastors or lay pastors at MCC and that at present, as determined by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development, don’t have access to a seminary or a university for their theological formation. Also the Darlene Garner Institute will be responsible for provision of those courses of special interest to MCC and compulsory for all seeking to become an ordained pastor or certified lay pastor. The DGIILF will provide a diploma to certify that a candidate has completed all the educational requirements to become an ordained pastor or certified lay pastor. Those courses will be provided on line, face to face or in an alliance with a friendly Seminary or Institute.

Students should consult the Manual for the Darlene Garner Institute for Ibero-American Leadership Formation for a complete list of requirements for ordination or lay pastor certification, as well as course offerings and additional information about teaching methods and grading.
Chapter 4: Entering Vocational Ministry

Certification as Lay Pastor

Lay Pastors may not use the title “Pastor” until they have completed the educational and training requirements and have been appointed by the Elder to serve a congregation. Completion of the educational and training requirements does not automatically mean that certification will be granted.

Upon completion of the appropriate educational and training requirements, those “In Care” who are seeking certification may apply to the Office of the Elder for certification as Lay Pastor. The Elder will consider the application and will seek an endorsement of the applicant from the supervisor and from the congregation where the applicant might be appointed to serve. A certificate will not be granted without the approval of the Elder and the endorsement of the congregation where the applicant would serve. The decision of the Elder is final.

Ordination as Clergy

Ordained clergy may not exercise their credentials until they receive a License to Practice. Completion of the educational and training requirements does not automatically mean that ordination will be granted.

Upon completion of the appropriate educational and training requirements, those in care who are seeking ordination as clergy may apply to the Office of Formation and Leadership Development. The applicant will be interviewed by an Interview Team consisting of three (3) persons selected by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development in consultation with the Elder serving Ibero-America.

If the applicant is approved for ordination by the Interview Team, the Rite of Ordination may not occur until the approved applicant has entered into an active, authorized, and accountable ministry and has been granted a License to Practice.
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Chapter 1: Discerning a Vocation

The Metropolitan Community Church is unique in its shared ministry between lay people and clergy. There are no areas of ministry which are not equally shared amongst God’s people. Lay people as well as clergy preach, lead worship, design liturgy, celebrate the Sacraments, and serve in leadership. There is, therefore, a particular task of discernment that MCC enters into when it has to consider affirming a vocation to ordained ministry.

All Christian churches have a process of discernment as they consider whether or not to affirm an individual’s sense of being called to ordered ministry. Within Catholic and Anglican traditions this discernment happens under the direction of a Bishop, within the Free Churches this discernment process happens through elected or appointed panels or committees. Regardless of the process, the Church has always needed to find a way to work out if a person who feels that God is calling them to ministry is ready to start the training, might be ready in the future or is mistaken in their sense of call.

In MCC this discernment process happens in a number of ways.

Firstly the local church through its pastor and Board of Directors decide whether or not to recommend a person for training and, later, for ordination. This endorsement must be received first by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development before the student can proceed through the remainder of the discernment process.

Secondly the REVM faculty gather information and each member reads and reviews the information. Questions they have are passed to a panel of two members who meet with the applicant and consider their application which consists of structured references from the Board, personal and professional references, a report from their general practitioner and from a psychologist. The REVM panel, and faculty, will also consider various papers written by the applicant. The panel feed back to the faculty and a decision is made about the applicant’s suitability to attend a REVM and pursue a vocation to ordained ministry at this time.

Thirdly, the applicant attends a REVM retreat where they have the opportunity for conversations with REVM faculty, take part in group exercises and continue their own process of discernment.

It is possible that the pastor, board or REVM panel/faculty may

- affirm a call
- say that the person needs more time to develop before entering training for ministry (in which case a recommendation will be made on when the person can reapply) or
• say that they are mistaken in their sense of calling and should be encouraged to look at other forms of ministry amongst God’s people.

The discernment process continues as the student undertakes their training. Their supervisor and teaching church have their part to play in the process of training and development and will also be asked to recommend, or not, the person for ordination. Tutors on various MCC courses share their perceptions with the supervisors and with the Office of Formation and Leadership Development – especially when there are concerns and, finally, an ordination panel will have the final opportunity to discern the person’s sense of vocation.

This is a thorough and ongoing process which takes a significant amount of time and helps the person better understand their own spirituality, perception of God’s call and sense of vocation. It is not easy, but neither is the task to serve as an ordained minister of God’s people.

Helping Us Discern Your Sense of Vocation

In order for us to start to understand you, your motivations and your sense of vocation better as well as to discern your suitability to start to prepare for ordained ministry we need the following:

• A letter from your GP. We have a standard letter which goes to the GP and a release form that allows the GP to write to us. The letter simply asks the GP for any information about your physical or mental health which may effect training for ordained Christian ministry.
• A report from a Chartered Psychologist. We require you to contact a chartered psychologist. Details of those in private practice are found on the British Psychological Association website. We have a standard letter for them so they know what we’re asking for. They will meet with you and then write a report for us.
• References from your MCC pastor(s) and Board of Directors for the last five years, as well as a list of current Board members certified by the secretary of your church. These reports will help us understand how long you’ve been active in your MCC (and any other MCC) and the different roles you’ve undertaken there.
• If you’ve been in MCC for less than five years we will also need contact details of the minister of any previous church you’ve been involved in during that time so that references can be taken up.
• Personal references from people who have known you for over five years together with a professional reference from your employers going back five years. (Excluding family members and anyone previously listed.)
We also require some written papers from you. These help both you and us understand your sense of calling and your faith background each paper is expected to be between 1000 and 1500 words.

1: Spiritual Journey – paper one

Describe your spiritual journey.

How did you come to faith in Christ?
Which other churches (if any) were you involved in prior to MCC?
What did you like about them?
What didn’t you like about them?
Describe that involvement?
Why did you leave?
What made you feel drawn to MCC as a denomination?
What did you like and dislike about MCC when you first attended?
What do you like and dislike now?

2: Involvement with MCC – paper two

How long have you been attending your current MCC?
Have you been involved in other MCCs? If so for how long?
Describe how you are involved in the life of your local MCC – ie small groups, worship leadership, background tasks etc.
Include a list of ministries (eg. greeting, reading, background tasks) you’ve been involved in (if any), dates you were involved in them, areas that were successes and areas you found difficult.

3: Sense of Vocation – paper three

Why do you believe God is calling you to ordained ministry? How have you perceived that calling?
What ministry do you feel you feel called to perform that can’t be done as a lay person?
What skills and experience do you have that makes you think that ordained ministry is where your talents will be best used?

4: Ministry Ideas – paper four

Describe what you feel called to do (A general idea is fine!).
Given that most MCC Ministers are bi-vocational, how will you manage that and what do you perceive will be the implications? How do you envisage funding your ministry?

Given that many MCC ministers move as a result of undertaking ministry, reflect on whether or not you are willing to relocate.

**All letters, reports, references and papers (The Discernment Package, which can be downloaded from the OFLD website) must be sent to the Office of Formation and Leadership Development via fax 310-388-1252 or email attachment OFLD@MCCchurch.net.**
Chapter 2: Readiness for Entering Vocational Ministry (REVM) Retreat

The MCC Clergy Manual provides detailed information about the REVM retreat, its goals and objectives, and what can be expected. In addition to the information contained in that document, those seeking ordination in the UK should be aware of the following:

Participation in REVM is dependent upon the successful completion of the components of 'Discerning a Vocation' (see Chapter 1) and the pre-approval of an interview panel to attend.

Upon successful completion of the REVM, one is granted Trainee status with MCC and enters a time of ministerial Formation. The period of formation is comprised of three primary elements included in a MAP:

- Personal Spiritual Formation
- Education for Vocational Ministry
- Relationship with the Denomination

The period of Formation is guided by a trained, certified MCC clergyperson who meets at least monthly with the student to guide, supervise, and evaluate the student in the above elements of Formation.

During the year preceding application for ordination, the student shall complete (minimally) a year-long Apprenticeship in a Teaching Church with the guidance of a trained, certified Supervisor who is an MCC Clergyperson. The Apprentice meets weekly with the Supervisor, who guides, supervises, and evaluates the work of the Apprentice and, ultimately, approves the Apprentice for ordination. This is a time of practice in the components of ministry and is guided by the student’s MAP and a learning covenant created by the Supervisor and the trainee.

Each of the above elements are further described in the following chapter.

Transfer Clergy

Clergy from other Christian denominations often ask to transfer their credentials to MCC. The REVM faculty welcomes such applications. They will assess the educational training and experience of such applicants and make specific recommendations about addressing the MCC competencies listed above. Transfer clergy should have been in membership of MCC for one year before making such an application and must complete the apprenticeship as outlined below. This entire process helps the applicant understand their calling to MCC ministry more fully and gives them time and emotional distance from their previous denomination.
Chapter 3: Preparation and Formation for Vocational Ministry in MCC

**Personal Spiritual Formation:**

In order to develop spiritual practices which will serve you for a life-time of ministry, each year during your Formation and Apprenticeship, engage in one or two projects from the following list or develop your own with your Supervisor and/or REVM faculty. Document your journey. Some suggestions are:

- Practice traditional spiritual disciplines: visit the sick and those in prison, serve the poor, feed the hungry, give faithfully of financial resources, observe a weekly Sabbath
- Engage in a programme of spiritual direction
- Develop a programme of spiritual reading (classes)
- Volunteer with a community service organization and write spiritual reflections
- Actively engage a social justice cause and write spiritual reflections
- Participate in a silent or guided retreat
- Embodied spiritual practice – yoga, body work
- Personal devotional practice: observing the liturgical year. Bible study/devotion, praying with ancient Christian mystics, construct and use a home altar, create and/or use music or art
- Develop a regular meditation practice
- Explore other faith traditions
- Cultivate a regular prayer practice
- Engage with a prayer partner
- Learn to practice non-violence in daily living
- Engage in a personal worship practice

**Education for Vocational Ministry:**

We believe in having well educated and trained professional clergy in MCC. For those pursuing ordination in MCC in the UK an **Honours Degree in Christian Theology** is the foundation for your educational preparation.

Competencies in the following areas must also be demonstrated:

- Christian Education
- Pastoral Care
- Worship, Rites and Sacraments
- Church Administration and Management
- Church Growth Studies
- Sexuality Studies
The Office of Formation and Leadership Development in the UK will offer courses in summer school programmes and/or on-line to teach the skills required to master these competencies.

If possible, students may complete these competencies in their Christian Theology programme. In this case the OFLD would evaluate the work and grant exemption from the taught course they offer. There are also some institutions which offer a degree with a focus in Pastoral Studies which may cover these competency areas.

For those people entering the ordination process in MCC with a degree in another academic discipline, the REVM faculty will assess academic transcripts and make recommendations about possible Theology programmes that will meet the educational requirements for ordained ministry in MCC in the UK.

**RELSHIP WITH THE DENOMINATION:**

In addition to maintaining Trainee status with the denomination, continue to educate yourself in the culture of MCC. With your Supervisor and/or REVM faculty, choose 2 – 3 of the following:

- Attend worship in eight congregations (some MCC, some other) and write an analysis or reflection from each visit
- Attend MCC Conferences and other regional and denominational events
- View DVDs of conferences and other video archive pieces
- Establish a twinning programme with a congregation in a different culture
- Spend two weeks of your Internship in a congregation outside the UK
- Have a conversation with someone who has been involved with MCC for over ten years about their experience of MCC. Write an account of your conversation.
- Participate in a cross-cultural mission project in conjunction with the MCC Global Justice Team

**APPRENTICESHIP**

A minimum of one year apprenticeship with a trained and approved Supervising Clergy is also required for ordained ministry in MCC. Typically this apprenticeship is completed at the end of one’s educational preparation. As a general practice, students may not complete their apprenticeship in the same congregation they began their training process.
The components of Apprenticeship are:

- A Learning Covenant which spells out the specific goals for the student as well as the means by which the goals will be accomplished and a plan for how the student will be supervised for each goal. The Learning Covenant must include goals for Self Care and Preaching as well as reflection on the competency areas of pastoral practice listed above.
- Weekly supervisory meetings.
- The establishment of an Apprenticeship Committee made up of lay people from the local congregation for the purpose of feedback and support to the apprentice.
- A final evaluation by the Supervising Clergy, Apprenticeship Committee and Board of Directors which will become part of the apprentice’s ordination application.
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Chapter 1: Applying for the REVM Retreat

Application forms for the Readiness to Enter Vocational Ministry (REVM) Retreat are available on the Office of Formation and Leadership Development (OFLD) Website (www.ofld.mccchurch.org). For applicants in the United States and Canada, the following materials are required:

- Completed Application Form
- Official Transcripts from all university/seminary education
- For Transfer Clergy Only, documentation of ordination/credentials in former denomination, and a letter of good standing
- A letter of recommendation from an MCC Pastor or Elder
- A detailed (3-5 page) statement of your Call to Ministry, specifically MCC ministry
- A current resume/curriculum vitae, which includes both employment and educational history
- An Endorsement from a Local Church Board of Directors
- Digital photo of yourself
- Psychological Testing Results
  A list of approved Psychological Testing Centers is available on our website (www.ofld.mccchurch.org). Be advised that it can take 8 weeks for testing to be completed. You should work with an approved testing center in advance to ensure that your materials arrive in time.
- Your full legal name and date of birth to authorize the OFLD to run a criminal background check for you.
Chapter 2: Requirements for Vocational Ministry

The MCC Clergy Manual provides detailed information about the requirements to become ordained clergy in MCC, including the general requirements included on the MAP of anyone receiving “In-Care” status. In addition to the information contained in that document, those seeking ordination in the US and Canada should be aware of the following information:

Minimum Educational Requirements:

• An M.Div. or equivalent is the required professional degree. This degree should be obtained by a school that is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada (ATS).
• One Unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is required. This may be completed as a part of your M.Div. program, depending on the requirements/offerings of the institution.
• Core MCC courses can be completed during your M.Div. program and we strongly encourage you to do so, if possible. These courses (e.g. MCC Polity, Sexuality Studies, and LGBT/Queer History) are often offered by seminaries. To confirm that a course meets our requirements, please submit a syllabus to the OFLD before you take the course. You may also take the online courses offered by MCC and petition your seminary for credit, if you so desire.
Chapter 3: Board of Pensions (USA)

Retirement and the Board of Pensions (USA)

For clergy in the United States, retiring one’s clergy credentials is not the same as accessing pension benefits that are available through the MCC Board of Pensions (USA). Clergy who meet the requirements for retirement and who submit the retirement application are applying only to retire their credentials.

To access pension benefits, clergy should contact the Board of Pensions. To receive the full, normal pension benefits, clergy must have attained the age of 65 years. Clergy may be eligible for pension benefits without retiring from active ministry. Clergy must take their pension when they reach the age of 70½.

Please see the Defined Benefits Plan and Trust: A Question and Answer Guide for Clergy and Lay Persons available from the Board of Pensions.

Clergy who are granted Standing by Call are not eligible to participate in the UFMCC Pension Plan. Additionally, participants in the pension plan do not accrue pension benefits while on inactive status.

For information about the Board of Pensions, contact BOP@MCCchurch.net.