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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.