

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES



Clergy Manual

2020

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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 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.

¹ Acts 14.23

² Exodus 28.41

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 leadership³, 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 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.

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."

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 VLC 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 Africa, Asia, 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 VLC 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 Formation" 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 Vocational Leadership Coordinator (VLC) 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 VLC. 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 VLC 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 VLC, 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 VLC.

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 VLC, 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 VLC. 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 VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC. 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 VLC within ten (10) business days.
- An appeal on the basis of bias or procedural error will be immediately investigated by the VLC, 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 VLC will have a maximum of 30 days to review the request for appeal. Upon review the VLC 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 VLC. 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/her/their 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 VLC 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 VLC 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). A one 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 VLC grant extraordinary credentials under rare circumstances. This privilege is extended only to the Moderator and is rarely utilized. The VLC 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 OFLD website. The VLC will consider applications for re-entry on a case-by-case basis. In consultation with the applicant, the VLC 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 a 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 Vocational Leadership Coordinator (VLC) 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 VLC.

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 VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC.

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/her/their 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 on-line or in a tutorial format through MCC)

Once all supporting documentation has been received and reviewed by MCC's Vocational Leadership Coordinator, the VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC.

The Application for a Leave of Absence must be submitted to the VLC. 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 VLC.

While on a Leave of Absence, a clergy person is expected to:

- Maintain contact with a local MCC congregation, pastor, and the VLC.
- File an Annual Clergy License Renewal form. The form is signed by the VLC.

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 VLC

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 VLC. If the clergy person meets the retirement criteria, the VLC 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 VLC 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 VLC while a judiciary matter is pending. When placed on Inactive Status by the VLC, 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

- disaffiliates an affiliated MCC congregation without prior arrangements for credentials with the Vocational Leadership Coordinator

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

The VLC 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.

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 VLC.

Clergy who are currently pursuing additional education, or who are considering doing so, are encouraged to contact the VLC. 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 VLC 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.