

# MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the Bishop, the National Ministry Team, and National Conference for their confidence in appointing me to the position of Ministerial Development Associate. I have enjoyed working this past year with Les Cool, Kevin Henry, Gary Kuehner, Randy Sizemore, and the District Field Directors. I have also enjoyed the challenge of designing, implementing, and integrating the various segments within the Ministerial Development Community (MDC). This new structure is designed to help carry applicants along the process from beginning to end and into healthy, lifelong ministry. As a result, I have met some enthusiastic emerging leaders during this process. I have been inspired by their humble, passionate, and thoughtful response to God's calling. These are truly exciting times for the Evangelical Congregational Church.

As we consider the main tasks of the MDC, our chief aim is to foster vibrant, healthy pastoral ministry. As Ephesians 4:11-16 highlights, the leadership roles for the church are vital in helping the body be more and more like Christ and to be fit together perfectly in him. The MDC has been creating an integrated process that brings together pastoral readiness and calling, theological agreement, and spiritual formation to produce commissioned and ordained ministry in the EC Church.

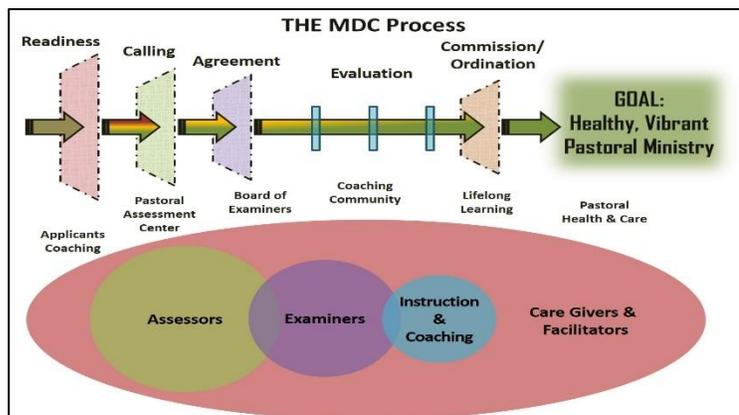
In order to accomplish these tasks, we have considered more seriously how to engage this process as a community. As I have personally considered this newly defined role, I see the value in empowering several subgroups of leaders, who can help men and women fulfill their ministry callings – this is not a solo act. As I have enlisted people for the MDC Executive Team, I have considered those who were already qualified and experienced in the various areas critical to the community, and who were able to populate the many subgroups of the MDC – please refer to the diagram here.

The goal is to involve large numbers of pastors and leaders as assessors, examiners, instructors, coaches, and facilitators. In so doing, applicants for ministry are guided toward the completion of their credentials in a way that helps to embed a disciple-making DNA into each candidate's approach to ministry.

When pastors, deacons, deaconesses, and preachers are commissioned or ordained, our hope is that they will be able to stand before the members of the National Conference and state: "I am a contributor to God's mission through the Evangelical Congregational Church, because I have felt the loving, supportive, accountable touch throughout the MDC process – shaping me into one prepared to minister with my EC brothers and sisters for God's kingdom in our generation and the ones to follow." It is a "community thing" with a disciple-making approach!

Please let me further describe this approach and the individuals involved.

**Objective:** As simple as it may sound, the MDC has been tasked with the development of ministerial personnel in order for them to effectively lead our churches to fulfill God's mission within their local contexts. Ultimately, we must answer an important question: What kind of pastors do we wish to develop? In his book, *Resident Aliens*, Stanley Hauerwas answers this question with a broader challenge: "The greatest challenge facing the church in any age is the creation of a living, breathing, witnessing colony of truth, and because of this, we must have pastors and leaders with training and gifts to help form a community." This is primarily the very thing that we as a denomination have been working to resolve among ourselves.



Over the past few decades, we have been emphasizing mission and disciple-making. But most times we speak about these things without any clear-cut models that help us understand these terms any better. So why not begin with a process focused on these critical elements regarding our future? Below is a simple explanation that defines the process toward healthy, vibrant pastoral ministry.

**Orientation to the Process:** Over my many years in ministry, I have had the privilege to meet many young men and women seeking credentials in the EC Church. Because this path toward completion of one's credential has been evolving, we must do a better job of clarifying those next steps for our applicants. One of my primary roles is to meet with individuals before they begin the process, so that I can explain the most appropriate course of study and training to assist them in accomplishing their particular callings.

When a person senses a ministry calling, it is critical that the lead pastor contacts me to assist in helping his disciple to become a candidate for ministry. It is at this juncture (before Bible school or seminary) that a lead pastor should invite me to meet with the applicant. At this point, I will be able to guide him or her toward the various options for ministry, the approved educational paths, and some clearly defined next steps toward credentials.

Pastors, please do not leave these decisions to your ministry candidate to discern for themselves. We can help them in the process – and the earlier the better. For example, I am finding candidates for ministry enrolling in seminaries that are not approved by the EC Church. These unadvised decisions by the candidates make their paths more difficult and costly for them to correct. The bottom line is that I can assist them much better in the earliest stages of their calling before lots of time, energy, and money are invested in a less-than-acceptable approach.

**Applicants' Coaching:** Once a candidate commits to an approach, they enter preparation for the assessment process. Al Giles has developed a simple disciple-making process that will help each applicant for ministry be better prepared for their Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC) experience. Al helped to coach nine men to enter PAC this past January. He also worked with their lead pastors to help them understand the expectations being communicated to their applicants, and to extend these concepts for disciple-making into every part of their churches.

As a result of this disciple-making experience, the applicants reported a supportive connection with the others entering PAC with them, and that the guidance that Al offered was extremely helpful. We are hoping to repeat this process again for the 2018 PAC with a similar number of individuals already seeking credentials. We will also be providing opportunities to better help the spouses to connect prior to the PAC.

**Pastoral Assessment Center:** Kirk Marks has effectively guided the PAC process for over a decade now. He does a fabulous job of not only directing the process for the applicants through PAC, but also in building an effective team of assessors by outlining their expectations and goals. This year Kirk expanded his list of assessors – composed of pastors and pastors' wives. Each year, Kirk gathers feedback to continue shaping the assessment process.

After numerous years of doing PAC, we are still learning new lessons. Kirk Marks points to three objectives that the PAC process fulfills: 1) Evaluation, which assesses the applicants' calling, gifts, graces, and alignment with the EC Church, 2) inculcation, which plants within the applicants an understanding of our approaches, attitudes, and resources for effective ministry, and 3) enculturation, which provides applicants the opportunity to experience the culture of the EC Church, and how her leaders live out the wonderful blessings of community within the body life of the denomination.

**Board of Examiners:** Pat Teaford has served on the Susquehanna and National Conference Relations Committees for several years. Therefore, he was a great prospect to lead the new Board of Examiners, which continues the work of interviewing applicants for ministry. As we discussed the benefits of having one combined Board of Examiners, we realized the difficult load this would cause for just one group to undertake. Therefore, we established two levels of examiners – one focused on ordained pastoral ministry and itinerancy, and the other for local and specialized ministry. We are excited to announce the following members for the Itinerancy Board of Examiners – Kirby Keller, Kirk Marks, Bob Mavis, Ken Miller, and Tim Seiger, and the following members for the Local & Specialized Board of Examiners – Dan Blank, Margie Miller, Dick Reigle, Adam Roberts, and Mike Sigman.

The Board of Examiners have also put together a document that helps to define our expected outcomes for EC pastoral ministry – please refer to the Pastoral Profile document following this report. Likewise, this group is

beginning to create internal working documents to better define what educational “equivalency” means, and to clarify the way forward for many candidates and pastors previously caught without clear and direct guidance over the years. This group has improved the organization and layout of the applications used in our interviewing processes. The Board of Examiner teams were scheduled to conduct fifteen interviews this Spring.

**Coaching Community:** Charles Walker serves as the chairman for our part of the community that oversees the long-term coaching process for all our candidates and pastors. After forming a list of possible coaches, Charles contacted them, and currently, we have about 25 coaches enlisted for coach training, of which about 15 were trained on September 15 by Tim Roehl. Our hope is to provide a coach for every new applicant to ministry starting with those completing PAC with green or yellow lights, and for everyone entering Evangelical Seminary. As I write this report, Charles and I will be helping this last piece of the MDC airplane to lift from the ground and take flight before National Conference.

**Lifelong Learning:** With the appointment of Jim Ehrman as the interim Academic Dean of Evangelical Seminary, I realized he was the natural fit for helping the MDC to foster better learning opportunities. Some initial discussions have led to the formation of a Center for EC Studies under the Pense Center at the seminary. This development will be critical for helping the Board of Examiners to advance, teach, and recommend courses for applicants and transfers for ministry. These same offerings can be used for lifelong education opportunities that are relevant and less expensive for our current pastors as well.

Due to the promotion of the Center, we were able to rejuvenate the Institute for Church Leadership program at Evangelical with two new courses: 1) *The History of Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, which has replaced *EC Polity & History*, and 2) *Spiritual Disciplines*, which has replaced the course on *Prayer*. As we provide this new venue for EC-specific education, we relocated the course for *EC Polity & History* under the Center. Additionally, we are looking to provide new offerings, such as *Exegesis, Worldview, Mission, Christian Posture, Cultural Studies, The Gospel, Arminian Theology, Evangelicalism, Ecclesiology, Covenant Theology, and Eschatology* that are taught from an EC perspective.

**Pastoral Care, Health, and Restoration Team:** Gary Brown is currently building a team of compassionate individuals who are focused on the importance of pastoral care, health, and restoration. Once this team is formed, they will communicate opportunities for pastors and their families – related to health, retreats, respite care, counseling, congregational relations, restoration, and other topics.

The members of this team are busy clarifying the definitions and objectives for preventative and crisis care in order to promote resiliency in pastoral ministry. The team is also looking at ways to “provide space” to allow pastors to become lifelong learners and strengthen healthy collegial relationships. Ultimately, we are learning that there is a tricky balance between organizational and organic care.

Additionally, due to some needs in crisis care, the Bishop and I have realized the value of the Committee of Concern from the former regional Conference Relations Committee. Within our newly formed structure, we had not fully or properly considered the strategy for how to provide restoration to pastors under accountability, discipline, or suspension. As we thought through this process more clearly, we are recommending the specific ministry of restoration be added to the MDC under Pastoral Care, Health (and now) Restoration – please refer to the recommended changes to the rules. With the addition of restoration to this section of the MDC, we feel that this team is best equipped to provide direction to the important ministry of healing and restoration of pastors and their families.

That completes my initial tour of the MDC. All in all, over 50 people are involved in some capacity of ministry within the MDC. It’s definitely a community thing! Now allow me to describe some things to keep watch for in the coming year.

**COMMUNICATION:** We are looking to broaden our communication and your ability to learn about answers to commonly asked questions by expanding the MDC section of the website. We hope to provide answers that pertain to pursuing a pastoral calling, understanding our credentialing system, PAC enrollment, coaching and learning community opportunities, and pastoral care and health resources. Our goal is that each team above will provide answers and resources on their own individual pages.

**ALIGNMENT:** We have a small number of pastors who have become stuck in our pipeline. Perhaps they have gotten in over their heads in the educational process, with financial debt, or some other matter. This coming year, I will be connecting with these individuals to better understand their situations and develop a renewed timeframe, develop a proactive plan to move past their obstacles, or perhaps take another available route with acceptable goals. Likewise, I will be communicating the expectations and outcomes more clearly for pastoral ministry in the EC Church.

**LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:** Our theological framework is mining new depths that are surrounded by some resurging biblical concepts – discipleship, missionality, gospel, kingdom, ecclesiology, etc. These terms carry definitions that are helpful to providing ministry in our present circumstances, and they are not going away. Our whole system from denominational leadership to pastor to congregation is working through a significant learning curve. Some might be inclined to tune out the dissonance caused by the arrival of these terms and their developing understandings. Some have wondered what is so significant about these concepts. Others may have wondered if there will ever be a place to explore these and move in the same direction that the EC Church is going. As the MDC works with Evangelical Seminary to create a Center for EC Studies, we will be providing offerings to help anyone seeking to understand, catch up, or refine his or her understandings about our EC culture and language.

**FINANCIAL RELIEF:** One of the greatest challenges for our candidates and pastors involved in theological studies is to support their families, while managing large levels of debt. None of us wants to see the challenge of money become an obstacle for these students. However, the cost of education has swamped many of our students into an endless bog of financial debt. Recently, one EC Church has stepped forward to commit a sizable contribution to help with this issue. With this seed funding, we will be seeking to redesign the student aid approach to education and working to provide financial assistance from some additional streams. In addition, I will be challenging your churches, districts, business leaders, and yourselves to consider your commitment to invest in the future ministry of EC leadership.

This has been a challenging and exciting time for me as I have worked with the Bishop and those above to develop a very meaningful disciple-making track for our applicants to ministry. Pray for me as I juggle these community responsibilities with my local church ministry. Pray for our continued progress and ongoing solutions.

Lastly, I wish to thank Bethesda Church for being a “healing community” and making this transition very easy. Bethesda has great leadership and support staff. When I announced this opportunity for appointment, the leadership embraced it and considered me as their missionary sent to cultivate pastoral and local leadership in the EC Church. Pastors Mark Brooks and Stewart MacDonald have excelled during our transition, and continue to provide ministry that surpasses my expectations. It is their passion, skill, and investment that has helped the Bethesda congregation to experience a seamless transition.

As I continue to say, “It’s a community thing!”

Blessings,

**Rev. Jeffrey Byerly**  
**Ministerial Development Associate**

## PROFILE OF AN EC PASTOR

Pastors in the EC Church must understand their own identity in Christ, as well as their calling and gifts in relation to the body of believers so that the church is engaged for the work of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. **They must know** how to interpret their cultural setting and properly communicate kingdom values and instructions from God's Word in order to form and lead a healthy community of believers.

They must **be** shaped by a character that reflects God's love in their lives through authenticity, patience, compassion, integrity, and spiritual fervor. They must participate in a disciplined lifelong pursuit that reveals teachability, hospitality, forgiveness, and most of all how to disciple others into these same Christ-like character traits.

They must be able to effectively communicate the faith—what it looks like and how it works—within and beyond their community of believers, while also recognizing and discerning false claims to the Gospel. They must demonstrate a disciple's life through their own ways of living the faith—serving, directing, giving, listening, and laughing with others in order to cultivate and empower flourishing among the community of believers and make an impact on the greater community.

They must see God at work around them, enabling others to grasp hold of God's intentional love for them, and each person's own individual potential for ministry. They must not neglect the opportunities and threats in their midst, but rather reveal how God's kingdom intersects with the life of the church and their surrounding community.