

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

What a blessing to work with so many gifted people within the Ministerial Development Community. This community involves around 70 leaders, who are helping to walk with credentialed individuals in their development toward healthy ministry. Many of us realize the importance of such leadership when we consider the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:11-16. We read: “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service ...”

But there is more! So much more!

... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

When we consider this passage, we should ask the question: *Who doesn't want that for the church?* But there is another question we need to ask: *Why don't we see this more readily in the life of the church?*

At the 2017 National Conference, we passed the following profile for pastoral ministry in the EC Church.

Pastors in the EC Church must understand their own identity in Christ, as well as their calling and gifts in relation to the greater body of believers so that the church is engaged for the work of ministry in the 21st 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 healthy communities 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 life 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.

This new profile raises the bar on pastoral ministry. The process toward ordination should no longer be viewed as simply jumping through hoops—completing a degree and continuing three years in a church. We are taking the words stated in this profile with regard to knowledge, character, skill, and vision seriously. In other words, we are going to do as much as we can to provide our ministry applicants, candidates, pastors, deacons, and preachers with

helpful training, constructive collaboration, and collegial support in order for them to strive for and reach their greatest potential in ministry. Ultimately, we will help them to meet the expectations found within this profile so that they can be ALL IN.

As the MDC and each of its component committees meet together, this profile will help to guide our thoughts and discussions around an agenda. We will do our best to hold to previous standards, while reaching upward toward the ideals generated from the profile. In order to accomplish these goals, we may face challenging and difficult decisions about our future in regard to some applicants' former expectations. But we will be gracious, yet firm in our allegiance to God's kingdom and his principles for ministry. We are ultimately doing this for the sake of our churches and for the kingdom of God.

Every time I meet with new applicants for ministry, I am excited to hear the stories of how God has been moving in their hearts and fashioning their thoughts. As I listen to their stories, I realize that I can only see the tip of the iceberg. I can't help but to think that there's lots of potential that has yet to be realized. I think of a tank that is ready for ministry, but still needs fuel. As the applicants apply themselves to the process as empty vessels, looking to be filled, their pursuit of ministry begins with proper preparation, investment, training, and connection in community. Each phase of the MDC process helps to fulfill the applicants' potential for ministry.



We are wrapping up our second season of the MDC, and we have good things to report. Here are some updates:

Applicants Coaching and PAC: Al Giles continues to hold disciple-oriented online huddles with applicants for ministry as they prepare for the Pastoral Assessment Center experience. This past year, Al worked with nine men to prepare them for the 2018 PAC. Al utilized Cameron Smith from last year's PAC to help with this year's huddles in an effort to multiply the discipleship process. Additionally, we provided an introductory experience for the applicant couples.

As Al prepares individuals for PAC, he provides a background profile to the assessment teams that describes each applicant. Meanwhile, Kirk Marks enlisted about 20 assessors with vast experience in healthy pastoral ministry, including, but not limited to, men and women who are trained counselors, administrators, and leaders who oversee and participate in healthy pastoral restoration teams, to participate in the overall process. It is a well-seasoned team, whose core has worked well together for nearly two decades.

We make every effort for spouses to be present, because pastoral ministry does not possess normal boundaries that can be compartmentalized from our personal, family, and social relationships. Therefore, our view of pastoral ministry must examine the whole person (calling, character, and competency), in addition to such things as one's relationships, use of time, activities, trust, expectations, responsibilities, credibility, relational intelligence, and other criteria.

This year, we were faced with a new challenge due to the language barrier of the spouse of a Latino applicant. We provided an interpreter specifically for their interviews and evening program. We are pleased to report that this was a very helpful adjustment. Lastly, we are working to resolve issues surrounding a wife's absence due to work restrictions by using technology to include them in interviews and other important experiences at PAC. Although, this may help, there is no substitute for the applicant couple both being present and functioning together throughout the PAC process.

Board of Examiners: The Board of Examiners continues the work of interviewing applicants for ministry. We have held discussions around critical areas of Spanish-speaking applicants, candidates, and pastors, looking at educational discrepancies in order to solve them, clarifying our positions in terms of Gospel and Mission for our applications, and reviewing credentialing issues such as rules surrounding weddings, the process of restoration for surrendered credentials, and pastors serving non-EC churches.

We recently reviewed the anticipated applicants for ministerial credentials in early February, before interviewing them in April. We were able to segue information from the PAC process directly to all board of examiner personnel. We also reviewed some of the most recent disciplinary situations that involved the bishop and my intermediary actions. As a result of some experiences this year, we are recommending changes in regard to privileges of assignment, applying for credentials following successful completion of the PAC process, and clarification to the sequence of the disciplinary and restorative sections in the Rules of Conference. Please take some time to review them.

Learning Community/Life Long Learning: We hope to provide some traction this year in our development of a Center for EC Studies at Evangelical Seminary. Our whole church and her leaders are experiencing a large learning curve with the theological and practical implications of missional ministry. Each of our own pastors and applicants transferring credentials find themselves at differing points along that learning curve. It is in our best interest to educate and create dialogue about the importance of these concepts within our churches.

In light of this importance and due to some constraints that limit me personally to accomplish this goal, we have added a Learning Community Director, Rev. Joel Kime, to help launch and then oversee our courses within the Center for EC Studies. Joel will help to create and provide educational and training opportunities for new (and transferring) pastors. These courses would be developed to integrate pastors into our EC context regarding posture, ministry, and theological perspective. In other words, we would be helping to get our pastors onto the same page with us and moving them through the learning curve to do effective ministry in the 21st century. Joel will coordinate new class offerings with Evangelical Seminary personnel, select and resource EC instructors, and provide information to the greater EC world about these special offerings.

Coaching Community: We are in the process of assigning coaches to all newly credentialed candidates and pastors. We are hoping to provide regular prompts to our coaches to promote frequency and flexibility in our coaching community. We are also realizing some oversights from previous years, where coaching assignments were not made. We hope to follow up with many of these individuals who may need coaching.

After this year's PAC experience, Rev. Charles Walker resigned as the Coaching Assistant. We want to thank Charles for his assistance in helping to provide training with Dr. Tim Roehl in 2016, to work as a Grip-Birkman coach during PAC, and to make coaching assignments over the past year-and-a-half. I am presently contemplating the assignment of a new Coaching Assistant in the near future as the Bishop and I prayerfully consider this long-term assignment.

We plan to provide another coaching training exercise this coming Fall with Dr. Tim Roehl. We are always looking for coaches to be trained and to walk with our newly credentialed individuals. If this is a ministry that you would consider, please contact me. I would love to hear your heart for helping in this area.

Pastoral Health, Care & Restoration: The work of health, care & restoration is critical within the overall culture for pastoral ministry in the EC Church. We are pleased to continue the conversation about these elements for helping our pastors experience rest, refreshment, and vitality in ministry. Rev. Gary Brown and I will be developing a regular schedule for meetings, which will help establish guidelines and create opportunities for education and training in restoration ministries so that we are seeing those requiring restoration finding help in their times of need.

CRITICAL ITEMS:

1. **EDUCATION:** I am continuing to bring conformity to the educational requirements. The challenge is helping individuals to understand that conversations are better to hold earlier in their credentialing process rather than after financially-impacting decisions are made. The greatest frustration is having individuals make unilateral decisions without seeking counsel to understand the available resources, and thus experience the poor consequences of their decisions. More education and awareness needs to occur for pastors, DFDs, and other church leaders to understand the overall process.

2. **COMMUNICATION:** Our goal is to provide several answers to burning questions within the credentialing process—such as pursuing a pastoral calling, understanding our credentialing system, PAC enrollment, coaching and learning community opportunities, and pastoral care resources.
3. **DIVERSITY IN CALLINGS:** We are beginning to hold discussions about the diversity of callings for ministry. When we look at the five-fold ministry of APEST (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers), we see a diversity of gifts that are not easily categorized into our current pastoral structure. As we observe how God is working in the midst of our churches and fields of ministry, we may need to consider how to expand our view of ministry and categories for ministerial credentials.



I look forward to the fruit that God's Spirit is bearing in our midst. God continues to call men and women for ministry in the EC Church. What a privilege to assist in the callings of these individuals as they produce their full potential for ministry in our midst in the decades to follow. As a denominational leader, I am ALL IN on helping everyone entrusted to my care to be ALL IN too!

On a personal note, I appreciate the support of the Bishop, the Associates, District Field Directors, and those on the MDC, as we implement changes for the improvement of ministerial credentialing. I also continue to ask for your support as leaders of the EC Church. May we see God's blessings in the days ahead for the faithful work we encounter now.

Blessings,

Rev. Jeffrey Byerly
Ministerial Development Associate