

Teaching Pastor Handbook

Changing Lives to Change the World



Meadville Lombard
Theological School

Academically Rigorous | Spiritually Grounded | Unapologetically Progressive

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Dedication

Our deepest gratitude to the Teaching Pastors Advisory Group for their wisdom, dedication and guidance in conceptualizing and working through the tedious details to bring to fruition the Teaching Pastors Program.

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Meadville Lombard Educational Model Master of Divinity Degree Program

In the fall of 2008, the Faculty and Board of Trustees approved a 21st century educational model for its Master of Divinity students, the Meadville Lombard Educational Model (MLEM). As a seminary committed to providing learning experiences for our students that prepare them to minister effectively to a multi-cultural, multi-racial and inter-religious world, this model was developed to enrich the learning conditions for seminarians in order to increase the possibilities of excellence in ministry. The model infuses field-based experiences from the first semester of study and continues throughout the educational experience. This approach allows students to learn first-hand – and in a variety of contexts – the multiple aspects of ministry as can be experienced in community settings and congregations of all sizes and diversity. Some of the theoretical assumptions that ground this work are:

- Students’ ministerial formation must be undertaken as a collaborative process, deeply rooted in a diverse range of communities.
- Foundational engagement in pluralism and diversity is crucial for ministerial competence.
- On-going integration of new experiences into one’s worldview deepens and promotes self-knowledge, growth and development.
- Engagement in robust intellectual discourse develops personal self-awareness, resilience, humor, good judgment, ethical and moral integrity, a well-tested seriousness of intent, and the ability to balance personal needs with the needs of ministry.
- Continuous opportunities to articulate and test thoughts and feelings in the company of others to develop public voice and leadership presence.
- Disciplined and integrated spiritual practices sustain ministers as they encounter the dynamic rhythms of life.

The Educational Model has five components (Signature Courses, Traditional Academic Courses, Rotations, Teaching Pastor, and the Master of Arts in Leadership Studies) described below:

Signature Courses

Students will enroll in three “signature courses” with annual themes of **Community Studies**, **Congregational Studies** and **Leadership Studies**. These courses fully integrate theories of ministry, religious work and leadership embedded in the realities of community and congregational life, using methods such as:

- Regular participation in seminars led by faculty and co-facilitated by peers.
- Supervised site work in community-based social service agencies, organizations and local congregations.

- Collaborative learning with a group of peers also dedicated to learning about religious work.
- Readings and experiential learning methods that broaden, critique and assess student assumptions and knowledge.
- Participation in an annual January Learning Convocation where seminarians form a learning community to share their experiences and lessons learned with peers, faculty, ministers, lay members and people from the local community.

Traditional Academic Courses

Alongside the Signature Courses, students will enroll in required and elective courses (in areas such as history, ethics, theology, religious education, polity, and world religions) that address academic and professional competencies for ministry.

Rotations

Over the course of study, students often wish to delve deeper into a field of study connected to their ministerial formation. Students with such an interest can enroll in a practical field experience – a rotation – that is paired with a traditional classroom course. For example, a student enrolled in a course on fundraising can enroll in a rotation in a non-profit development office to deepen their insights and skills. Or, a student may choose to volunteer in the library to archive the collections of Unitarian Universalist (UU) ministers in connection with a Unitarian Universalist history course. Each rotation contains three learning components: a supervised field site experience, a classroom seminar, and readings and a final project.

Teaching Pastors of Congregational Life

Research has shown that an effective ministerial formation is enhanced greatly when students form a strong, mentoring and learning relationship with practicing ministers.

Each student will be assigned to a Teaching Pastor who will sometimes be a mentor or coach, sometimes a confidant, and most frequently a translator of Unitarian Universalist values-in-action. Teaching Pastors carve out supportive spaces wherein seminarians can grapple with issues in the intersection of theology, pastoral care, social justice and congregational ministry. In addition, each student will engage with a congregation-based Lay Committee to add a valuable range of perspectives to the congregational experience.

Master of Arts in Leadership Studies¹

Students who wish to explore a deep passion for a specific area of ministry are encouraged to earn a Master of Arts in Leadership Studies (MALS), which can be coupled with the Master of Divinity degree. MALS candidates commit to nine additional months of study, nested in a congregational or community-based internship site in order to expand their readiness for successful ministry. Students are assigned to a faculty member as an adviser and submit a thesis that integrates all aspects of their learning. Master of Arts in Leadership Studies are eligible for financial aid, and may apply to the dual program at any point in their course of study, prior to the completion of the Master of Divinity degree.

The Role of Teaching Pastors

During each year of study, Teaching Pastors will play the vitally important role of guiding students through a process to integrate their theological values and commitments into the daily practice of ministry. Thus, theological reflection is, borrowing from Hannah Arendt, to “think our doing.” As students move from one Signature Course Seminar to the next, the Teaching Pastor should be an abiding presence in the theological life of the student: asking clarifying questions, probing assumptions, pointing out contradictions and paradoxes, identifying appropriate resources and, of course, modeling one example of the minister’s role in the “doing” of religious work.

Benefits of Serving as a Teaching Pastor

As a Teaching Pastor you join the ranks of your ministerial colleagues that have given their time and expertise over the generations to guide others in their ministerial formation. Our Unitarian Universalist movement benefits from Teaching Pastors’ generous spirit of giving, which ensures the future of liberal religion. Furthermore, ministers speak most glowingly about the joy they experience when journeying with new colleagues as they deepen their own sense of ministry.

Added benefits in serving as a Teaching Pastor include complimentary enrollment in one course per year at Meadville Lombard, participation in the annual Learning Convocation, and the distinguished title of Adjunct Professor of Ministerial Formation that applies to all Teaching Pastors.

¹ Many ministers consulted in the development of this program strongly urged the completion of this fourth year Leadership Studies.

Qualities of an Effective Teaching Pastor

Criteria for Selecting Teaching Pastors

We work to ensure that Teaching Pastors will represent the present and future diversity of the Unitarian Universalist movement in terms of values, theological commitments, congregational and community settings, life experiences, and other forms of cultural expression. Specifically, we believe Teaching Pastors should be:

- In good standing with the Unitarian Universalist Association/Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) process, or their chosen denominational body.
- Settled in a congregation for at least three years (negotiable).
- Competent in the areas of ministerial education and formation.
- Committed to a process of orientation and ongoing professional development as a religious professional.
- Fully capable of modeling active leadership in all aspects of congregational life, religious rituals and worship, and church administration.

Criteria for Community and Retired Ministers to Serve as Teaching Pastors

Community and retired ministers interested in serving as Teaching Pastors must be able to demonstrate:

- The general criteria stated above.
- Formal affiliation with a Unitarian Universalist congregation.
- Regular participation in the life of a Unitarian Universalist congregation.

Selection Process for Teaching Pastors

Meadville Lombard's Director of Contextual Ministry is responsible for building a qualified pool of ministers capable of teaching and mentoring Meadville Lombard seminarians. Interested ministers who meet the criteria listed above should contact the Director of Contextual Ministry. Interested persons should:

- Visit with or participate in an informational phone call with the Director of Contextual Ministry (773-256-3000, x 242) to obtain a full understanding of the responsibilities, time commitment, and expectation of Teaching Pastors.

A process will begin to match students with a Teaching Pastor within close proximity of each other. It may happen that a minister is interested in serving as a Teaching Pastor but does not live within range of a currently-enrolled student. That person will be kept on the rolls until, hopefully, she or he can be matched.

Process for Matching Students and Teaching Pastors

The following process will be used to match students with Teaching Pastors:

- Identification of Teaching Pastors working within close proximity to registered students.
- Director of Contextual Ministry will compile a list of eligible Teaching Pastors after inviting students to submit their top three preferences.
- The DCM will contact the first minister to begin the conversation. If agreeable to the minister, the DCM will send a letter to the minister confirming next steps and that further conversation would be useful and cc the student. The Teaching Pastor and student will set up a meeting and determine if they are well matched.
- No later than two weeks after meeting, either the minister or the student will inform the DCM about the final decision.
- The Teaching Pastor and student should begin to design a personalized process for building a relationship, and establishing a learning service agreement.
- Teaching Pastors can work with no more than two students at any single time.

Theological Reflections

Reflections: Linking Theory and Praxis

Learning requires more than experience, and so one cannot assume that student involvement in the community automatically yields learning. Harvesting academic and/or field education requires purposeful and intentional efforts. This harvesting process is often referred to as “reflection” in service-learning literature.² Reflection is the process by which students think critically about their site experiences using an array of reflection techniques.

Role of Reflection

Reflection has been called the “hyphen” that links theory and praxis in field education. It provides the time and opportunity for students and faculty to grow and evolve as a result of their experiences. Reflection is the most effective forum for students to link what they learn in the classroom with what transpires in the community environment, and vice versa. In other words, reflection is the intentional consideration of the experience in light of a particular learning objective. Reflection also provides the opportunity to practice and enhance one’s capacity for critical thinking. Lastly, reflection can function as a means to celebrate oneself and the accomplishments of a site experience.

Reflection can also provide a channel for professional development. While reflection may not necessarily make someone more knowledgeable, it can certainly help someone reach a better understanding and make

² Service-Learning Course Design Workbook. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Summer 2001.

connections more clearly. Furthermore, reflection can be a way for students to associate in different ways with the larger community and make crucial observations, analyses and connections. Reflection also helps students step away from the proverbial “ivory tower” syndrome and engage with their communities and to think more clearly about some of their beliefs.

Teaching Pastors will engage students around the following kinds of questions, which will be addressed concurrently by faculty in Signature courses:

- Where, how, and when do you see hope most alive in this community? congregation? your own life and ministry?
- Where, how, and when is love alive in this community? congregation? your own life and ministry?
- Where, how, when, and what is holy in this community? congregation? your own life and ministry?
- Where, how, and when do you see brokenness in this community? congregation? your own life and ministry?
- Where, how, and when do you see faith most active in this community? congregation? your own life and ministry?
- Where, how, and when does worship happen in this community? congregation? your own life and ministry?
- What do we believe? Whom do we serve? To whom are we accountable?

Rhythm of Mentoring and Learning

The Teaching Pastor will be working in conjunction with full-time Meadville Lombard faculty in service to the ministerial formation of the student. As noted in the Overview section of the Handbook, the Teaching Pastor should have a general awareness of the Master of Divinity curriculum aims and methods, and should be ready to support student learning as it unfolds. We expect that every student will present a different set of issues and challenges in terms of how their ministerial identity evolves and we encourage the Teaching Pastor to be attuned and ready to respond appropriately.

We do not expect that students will be involved with Teaching Pastors and the congregation when Meadville Lombard is not in session.

Part-time students are encouraged to continue to meet with their Teaching Pastor for one hour a month.

We expect that each Signature Course seminar will bring forth opportunities for robust discussion and discernment on a wide array of topics. Thus, during each of the Signature Courses, we expect Teaching Pastors to be available to:

Community Studies Seminar

- Meet **one hour per month** to get to know each other, and engage in theological reflections on issues that emerge in the community site placement, review of UUMA Guidelines and issues that generally confront new seminarians.

- In consultation with the student, complete and submit an end-of-year evaluation by **April 1** that summarizes student learning and the relationship between the Teaching Pastor and student (see link in Appendix).
- The Learning Service Agreement is due on the last day of October (a copy is available in the Appendix).
- The student will devote eight hours a week at their community site.

Congregational Studies Seminar

- Teaching Pastor and student meet **once per week** for no less than one hour to consider issues at the heart of congregational life, its theology and practice, and personal connections and challenges.
- Lay Committee will be formed by **November 1** and will begin to meet with the student on a **monthly** basis. In consultation with the student, the Committee will complete and submit evaluation(s) that summarize student learning and the relationship between the Committee and student.
- At the conclusion of the Congregational Studies Seminar, the Teaching Pastor and the congregation will formally commission the student for Leadership Studies.
- The student will devote up to 20 hours per week in the congregational setting.

Leadership Studies Seminar

- Teaching Pastor and student meet **once per week** for no less than one hour each week to consider issues at the heart of leadership in congregational life, its theology and practice, and personal connections and challenges therein.
- In consultation with the student, complete and submit evaluation(s) that summarize student learning and the relationship between the Teaching Pastor and student.
- In consultation with the student, the Lay Committee will complete and submit evaluation(s) that summarize student learning and the relationship between the Committee and student.
- The student will devote up to 20 hours per week in the congregational setting.

Dual Master of Arts in Leadership Studies

- Students assigned to an internship or community placement will have a site supervisor/Internship Supervisor in lieu of a Teaching Pastor. An Internship Committee will be assembled by the student following the guidelines of the UUA Internship Clearinghouse (see website www.uua.org/programs/ministry/credentialing/internship).

Lay Committee

The Congregational Lay Committee should be viewed as an advisory body for the student as s/he grapples with issues of ministerial formation. Committee membership should be intentional in breadth and scope, considering issues such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, years in the Unitarian Universalist movement and theological diversity. The committee should meet no less than once per month through the end of the Leadership Studies seminar.

In situations where more than one student is assigned to a single Teaching Pastor, the committee should meet simultaneously with all students unless issues of evaluation, privacy or confidentiality are germane. However, Teaching Pastors assigned more than one student should meet individually with each student no less than once per month.

Details about responsibilities and roles are available in the **Lay Committee Handbook**.

Evaluation and Assessment

Core to the success of the Master of Divinity student in a praxis-style of learning is the ability to reflect deeply on his or her learning and make adjustments when the lessons learned are not generative for future growth and development. As such we believe:

- Learning is most powerful – and **transformative** – when it is nested in the “doing;” we become what we habitually do.
- Learning is intertwined (often subconsciously) at every phase of the formation experience.
- Students need a cadre of advisers (such as coaches and peers) to help them move through dissonance, paradoxes, and affirmations in order to help them move into more sophisticated ways of thinking about their learning and formation.
- Students need to become comfortable giving public witness to their thoughts, feelings, convictions, questions, and puzzlements.
- Students are socialized into patterns and expectations that are antithetical to Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values (dominant-group supremacy, individualism, etc.), as such, they need practice and skills-building in inclusive habits of mind and practice.
- Students’ ministerial formation is enhanced from diverse feedback and thus they should have a wealth of information about themselves and from credentialing agents to make informed decisions.

The Meadville Lombard faculty and UUA accrediting bodies are in thoughtful dialogue about how best to create an environment that supports and promotes a type of reflection that represents what we believe is effective ministry in a multicultural, multi-racial, global world.

Of particular importance to students enrolled in the Meadville Lombard Educational Model Master of Divinity degree program is the need to demonstrate ministerial competence by the completion of the Congregational Studies seminar. For students hoping to see the Ministerial Fellowship Committee in the

fall after completing the Congregational Studies Seminar they should prepare themselves with an eye toward submitting their application by March of that year. The educational focus of the faculty (e.g., use of tools such as pedagogy, evaluation, assessment, advising, mentoring, etc.) will support students on such a journey. For example, a new evaluative opportunity of the curriculum will be the **January Learning Convocation**, a seminary-wide conference in which students share lessons learned in courses, rotations, and in site placements. Teaching Pastors, area ministers and religious professionals are invited to attend this annual gathering. Students should expect to engage in open discussions about their successes and challenges in ways that undergird their growth and development. They will hear guest lecturers, experience new innovations in worship, hear about new trends in religious life, participate in workshops on important issues such as anti-racism, ministerial boundaries, sexuality, etc. They will conduct and observe mock interviews for the Regional Subcommittee on Candidacy (RSCC) and Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC). Teaching Pastors will be invited to attend this conference (with expenses paid) for orientation and introduction to protocols for supervising students in formation.

Learning/Service Agreement

The Learning/Service Agreement is designed to be the plan of action by which the student, Teaching Pastor, and faculty articulate their vision and expectations for the outcomes of the learning process. It is a holistic statement of goals and objectives that defines the entire experience. It makes explicit what is to be learned and how, what skills are to be developed and how they are to be measured, and how progress and/or expected outcomes are to be assessed and evaluated.

Because it is an educational tool, the Learning/Service Agreement is fluid in its design. It is a framework within which the student, Teaching Pastor, student and faculty can establish some basic criteria for the site and participation for all the partners involved. Yet within the framework there is room for negotiation, adjustment and change as is deemed appropriate and necessary by the partners involved.

Goals of the Agreement

- The relationship shall primarily be one of learning for the student in order to facilitate the student's development and professional identity.
- Both the Teaching Pastor and student are expected to learn and grow as a result of their relationship.

Elements of the Agreement

The Learning/Service Agreement includes, but is not limited to, several essential elements:

- learning goals of the student;
- process (objectives) by which those goals will be achieved;
- basis for assessment and evaluation of the student's progress.

A **goal** is a quantitative statement of an end result to be accomplished. It is meaningful, understandable, actionable, measurable, and attainable. For example, in the area of site discernment a goal might be: “to gain an understanding of how congregational/organizational agency work is carried out.”

The Learning/Service Agreement contains clear statements of goals for learning and ministerial formation, for the acquisition and appropriation of knowledge and skills, for personal growth and spiritual development, and for reflection and integration.

An **objective** is often defined as a strategy that is developed to accomplish a goal. Well-written objectives are observable and measurable and give direction to the “how to” of achieving a goal.

For example, objectives for the above goal in the area of discernment might be:

- To observe different staff meetings.
- To attend Board of Directors meetings.
- Read minutes of Board meetings and know the mission statement and what projects are currently underway.

A plan for implementation of the goals is then developed. It is possible that more than one goal will be identified in each area.

General Guidelines for Writing the Learning/Service Agreement

- The process of developing a Learning/Service Agreement moves from the general to the specific. That is, goals are developed from the areas identified in the covenant in which the student will work, objectives formulated, and then a plan created.
- Goals and objectives should be consistent with the level of leadership which is also identified through the Learning/Service Agreement.
- Evaluate the usefulness of an objective for a goal by asking questions such as: is it meaningful? Understandable? Actionable? Measurable? Attainable? If answers to these questions are not forthcoming, either the objective needs more work or the goal needs to be redefined.
- The Learning/Service Agreement is a resource for interaction between the student, Teaching Pastor and faculty. It is the role of these partners to discuss, negotiate, and give approval.
- The Learning/Service Agreement should be signed and dated by the student, the Teaching Pastor and posted by the student to LiveText.
- The Learning/Service Agreement is an organic document that can be revised in consultation with the Teaching Pastor.

Learning Service Agreement Forms are available as links in the appendix.

Logistical Support

For questions about Teaching Pastor recruitment, selection and matching, student evaluation and assessment, contact:

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Appendix

Please follow these links to the appropriate forms, offered here in Word format so that you may fill them out directly and send to your student intern.

- [Final Evaluation for Community Studies Students](#)
- [Learning Service Agreement \(Community Studies\)](#)
- [Learning Service Agreement \(Congregational Studies\)](#)
- [Learning Service Agreement \(Leadership Studies\)](#)