



**MEADVILLE LOMBARD**  
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

# Community Studies Teaching Pastor Handbook

Academically Rigorous | Spiritually Grounded | Unapologetically Progressive

Revised August 2015

## **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.

Members: Reverend Brian Covell, Reverend Emmy Lou Belcher, Reverend Jennifer Owen-O'Quill, Reverend Alan Taylor and Reverend Qiyamah A. Rahman.

## Table of Contents

Letter from the Director .....	1
Meadville Lombard Master of Divinity Degree Program.....	2
Community Studies Overview .....	2
Faculty.....	2
The Role of Teaching Pastors .....	3
Benefits of Serving as a Teaching Pastor .....	3
Rhythm of Mentoring and Learning .....	3
Confidentiality .....	4
Teaching Pastor Learning Agreement .....	4
Theological Reflections .....	4
Monthly Meeting .....	4
Reflections: Linking Theory and Praxis .....	4
Role of Reflection.....	5
Assumptions and Definitions.....	5
Evaluation and Assessment.....	6
Policies, Procedures and Legal Issues .....	6
Compensation Guideline.....	6
Travel and Expense Guidelines .....	7
Equal Employment Opportunity Policy.....	7
Unlawful Harassment.....	7
EOP Complaint Procedure.....	8
Support.....	9
Glossary of Meadville Terms.....	10
Appendix.....	12

## Letter from the Director

August 2016

Dear Teaching Pastor,

Thank you so much for your willingness to work with our students. Your involvement is central to the success of our program. Together, we are changing lives and shaping the future of Unitarian Universalist Ministry.

This handbook is meant to be a resource for you as you work with our students. I hope that it will provide the tools that you need, and answer many of the questions that you may have. And I hope that it serves as a bridge for further connection and conversation as we work together to support our students. Please contact me if you have questions or need support.

Thank you for your service.

Blessings,



Darrick Jackson  
Director of Contextual Ministry

[djackson@meadville.edu](mailto:djackson@meadville.edu)

312-546-6482

## **Meadville Lombard Master of Divinity Degree Program**

Meadville Lombard offers a unique model for theological education, designed to prepare ministers for our theologically diverse, multicultural, multiracial world. Built into this model is a web of support where students learn the theory and practice of religious leadership and border crossing with and from academics, clergy, community leaders, and each other. Our educational model is based on insights from Engaged Buddhism, Native American traditions, and feminist theory is encapsulated in a maxim by Paul Fitzgerald, “We are more likely to **act** ourselves into new ways of thinking than **think** ourselves into new ways of acting.” This model and this maxim help us to inspire leaders who will have the skills to cross borders and change lives in order to change the world.

The M.Div Program is anchored by three Signature Courses: Community Studies, Congregational Studies, and Leadership Studies. These seminars are infused with field-based experiences from the first semester of study and 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.

Each student is assigned to a Teaching Pastor who is sometimes 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 engages with a congregation-based Lay Committee to add a valuable range of perspectives to the congregational experience.

### **Community Studies Overview**

In this year-long course, students volunteer eight hours a week at a community service organization in the student’s home community. The coursework engages students in reflection on issues of community, border-crossing and ministerial formation through the lens of their community site.

Each semester of the seminar is designed to provide space and structure for (1) student exploration of the tasks, challenges, and possibilities of community partnership within liberal religious ministry and also for the (2) negotiation of vocational identity, theological voice, and forms of religious community through reflection on the variety and range of human experiences in diverse social contexts (religious and otherwise).

The fall semester will focus on exploring, analyzing, and sustaining community. The spring semester will focus on the meanings of religion and religious community, public theology, and vocation. In sum, the course is designed to encourage student development of a *hermeneutical praxis of solidary service* (about which more will be said through the course) for liberal theology and liberal religious ministry.

### **Faculty**

Dr. Sharon Welch, Provost, Professor of Religion and Society

Dr. Michael Hogue, Associate Professor of Theology

John Crestwell, Affiliated Faculty, Associate Minister, UU Church of Annapolis

Nato Hollister, Affiliated Faculty, Minister, Sacred Fire Unitarian Universalist

(*ex officio*) The Rev. Darrick Jackson, Director of Contextual Ministry

## **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.

All Teaching Pastors are invited to attend the January Learning Convocation. This two-day conference is the only time when the entire student body is in residence in Chicago. An issue relevant to professional ministry – and also speaks across levels of study – frames each Convocation. Special workshops are devoted to the needs of Teaching Pastors around how to best challenge and support their Student Ministers/Intern Ministers. Expenses for attending the Convocation will be mostly covered by Meadville Lombard. We ask Teaching Pastors to help us defray the cost by paying a \$125 Travel Equalization. *Save the dates: January 5-6, 2016.* Expect details in early fall.

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.

## **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. 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 who are not in a signature course 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 Community Studies Seminar, we expect Teaching Pastors to be available to:

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

### **Confidentiality**

Officially, Teaching Pastors are considered “adjunct faculty” of Meadville Lombard. As such, we will ask them to evaluate the Student Minister annually; this evaluation will be part of the Signature Course faculty’s deliberations on issues of “appropriate progress” in the course (and toward professional ministry). As concerns about student performance surface, we may contact Teaching Pastors directly for consultation and insight. However, feel free to contact faculty with concerns as you see them. Students will be informed of the evaluative function of Teaching Pastors, and that they are an active part of our deliberations on student formation.

### **Teaching Pastor Learning Agreement**

The Learning 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.

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 organizational agency work is carried out.”

The Learning Agreement should be signed and dated by the student, the Teaching Pastor and posted by the student to Populi by October 31.

The Learning Agreement Form is available in the appendix.

### **Theological Reflections**

#### **Semi-Monthly Meetings**

Part of the role of a Teaching Pastor during the Community Studies year is to meet with your student twice each month. We recommend that you schedule a regular time and place throughout the year to help maintain consistency of appointments. Plan to meet for an hour. The focus of this time is theological reflection, however leave space for answering questions, and processing issues generated from the community site, class discussions, and ongoing discernment.

#### **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.<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

### **Assumptions and Definitions**

Theological reflection involves scrutinizing ones motives and assumptions of action. This in turn pushes students and faculty to look beyond the action itself and to investigate the accuracy and validity of their assumptions and motives. This disciplined approach helps students make sense of their ministry by examining their faith in light of their actions.

Theological reflection means many different things to different people. In this context it means:

- Focusing on what one believes and how one lives out that belief.
- Presenting questions about where the Sacred and Holy is present in one’s life and the implications of that Presence.
- Bringing the narratives of the Sacred and Holy along with the narratives of human experiences in order to discern the values and principles out of which we live our lives and express our ministries.
- Facilitating the assessment of the experience.
- Calling upon historical, psychological, sociological, and theological resources to understand the human social condition and to discern the power, action, and will of the Sacred and Holy in the world and in the student’s ministerial identity.
- Examining one’s faith in the context of experience and experience in the context of faith – what are the implications of this sustained faith and the consequences on one’s spiritual practices?

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Service-Learning Course Design Workbook. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Summer 2001.

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

## **Evaluation and Assessment**

An important part of the student's learning is the feedback they receive from others. In your role as Teaching Pastor, we ask that you evaluate the student. We expect that you will use your monthly meetings with the student to go over issues and concerns as they arise. The first time an issue is raised should not be in the evaluation. The evaluation will be due May 1, using the form in the appendix of this handbook.

## **Policies, Procedures and Legal Issues**

### **Compensation Guideline**

Meadville Lombard recognize that not all congregations have the financial wherewithal to compensate students for their parish work. We do encourage, but do not require, congregations to provide other types of financial assistance (i.e. mileage, preaching fee) to their interns. Internships that require a move for a student should seriously consider providing financial support for their student. *Teaching Pastors should initiate a compensation conversation with their student no later than the Spring before the start of the internship.*

This guideline only pertains to Meadville Lombard's part time internships. It is not a reflection of a new denominational understanding of internship compensation, but a reflection of the needs of our students and our program.

Not requiring compensation supports Meadville Lombard's innovative formation process by allowing students to be placed in a variety of differently-sized congregations with differing financial means and with Teaching Pastors who have diverse skills. Students learn from each other's experiences and reflections, a process that is all the richer when that variety and diversity is included.

Internships in our program function more like a practicum. The work in the congregation serves to deepen and integrate the lessons students are learning in the accompanying Signature Course. As such, the internship is more of an extension of the classroom than an independent learning experience as found in other seminary internship programs.

On a practical level, one of the reasons students select our program is the ability to complete their education without having to move. This means that they need to be able to complete their internship within commuting distance, which becomes difficult if financial expectations are made of the teaching congregations.

## **Travel and Expense Guidelines**

As you plan your travel to Meadville for January Convocation, please follow these guidelines for travel and expenses:

### **Travel**

- Air travel must be reserved at least 14 days in advance at the lowest rates possible. Reimbursement for airline travel purchased with less than 14 days advance booking must be approved by the Director of Contextual Ministry.
- Every effort should be made to use low cost transportation. Use of public transportation is encouraged.
- Personal car usage is reimbursable at the current IRS rate. Reimbursement will be made at the lower of the mileage reimbursement rate or airfare. Parking expenses will also be reimbursed
- Parking tickets or fines for traffic violations are not reimbursable expenses.

### **Reimbursements**

- Original receipts need to be returned to the Office Administrator within two weeks of the event. Reimbursements submitted after two weeks will be approved by the Director of Contextual Ministry on a case by case basis.
- If receipt includes people not covered by these guidelines, please break down expenses by who is covered and who is not.
- Receipts not properly notated will result in a delay in reimbursements.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity Policy**

Meadville Lombard Theological School is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of the School that employment shall be based on individual merit, qualification and competence and to treat all job applicants and employees in a fair and non-discriminatory manner without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, marital status, sex, affectional orientation, age or any other basis protected by law. This applies to the recruiting, hiring, training, compensation and promotion of all persons in every job classification. Additionally, it has always been our policy that all employees should be able to enjoy a work environment free from all forms of discrimination or harassment, and any conduct contrary to this policy is prohibited. Any employee who violates this policy shall be subject to immediate discipline, up to, and including, discharge. The Vice President for Finance and Administration is our equal employment opportunity officer and is available to answer any question or deal with any problem you may have with regard to our equal employment opportunity policy.

## **Unlawful Harassment**

The School is committed to providing a workplace free of sexual harassment, as well as harassment based on such factors as an individual's sex, race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, affectional orientation, physical or mental disability or any other legally-protected characteristic. The School's anti-harassment policy applies to all persons employed by the School and prohibits unlawful harassment by any employee or supervisor. The School will not tolerate harassment of employees by faculty, supervisors or coworkers. The School will also protect employees from harassment by officers, students, or constituents of the School.

For purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome or unwanted advances, requests for sexual favors or any other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to or rejection of this conduct by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting hiring, evaluation, retention, promotion or other aspects of employment; or this conduct substantially interferes with an individual's employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Prohibited harassment includes, but is not limited to the following behavior:

1. Verbal conduct such as epithets, pervasive or repeated demands or threats, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs, or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or;
2. Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, electronic material, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
3. Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement or interference with work;
4. Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests in order to keep your job or avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors; and
5. Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment.

### **EOP Complaint Procedure**

*MLTS Employee Handbook – Adopted June 4, 2005 Revised February 2008*

If you believe that the School's equal opportunity policy has been violated or that you have been harassed, it is your responsibility to provide a written complaint to your supervisor, who will be responsible for investigating the matter. If the alleged harasser is the supervisor, the employee should report the facts to the Vice President for Finance and Administration who will undertake an investigation. Your complaint should include details of the incident or incidents, names of the individuals involved and names of any witnesses. Supervisors will refer all harassment complaints to the Vice President for Finance and Administration. If the Vice President for Finance and Administration is unavailable or is the source of the complaint, you should report the problem to the President of the School. The School will promptly investigate the equal employment opportunity complaint or harassment allegations. The School expects your full cooperation and truthfulness during any investigation. All such complaints and all investigations of complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible and consistent with the School's need to conduct an appropriate investigation.

If the School determines that an equal employment opportunity policy violation or unlawful harassment has occurred, appropriate remedial action will be taken in accordance with the circumstances involved. Any employee determined by the School to be responsible for unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. With regard to harassment by non-employees, any appropriate corrective action will be taken after investigation by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees.

A School representative will advise all parties concerned of the results of the investigation. The School will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint and will not knowingly tolerate or permit retaliation by management, employees or co-workers. Any person found to have retaliated against another individual for reporting an equal employment opportunity policy violation or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

The School encourages all employees to report any violations of its equal employment opportunity policy and any incidents of harassment forbidden by this policy immediately so that complaints can be quickly and fairly resolved. You should also be aware that the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission and the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) investigate and prosecute complaints of prohibited harassment in employment. If you think you have been harassed or that you have been retaliated against for resisting or complaining, you may file a complaint with the appropriate agency. The nearest IDHR office is listed in the telephone book and may be contacted by phone at (312) 814-6200.

## **Support**

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

Rev. Darrick Jackson  
Director of Contextual Ministry  
Meadville Lombard Theological School  
610 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60605  
312-546-6482  
djackson@meadville.edu

## Glossary of Meadville Terms

**Affiliated Faculty** – Faculty with multi-year teaching responsibilities and renewable contracts.

**Contextual Ministry** – Contextual ministry aka field education is a practical learning approach to ministry in which seminarian's/participants are exposed to varied aspects of learning in approved/structured contexts that integrate praxis and theory – experiential learning and classroom or site environment. Contextual ministry provides an opportunity for reflection on the theology of practice of ministry during the participants' ministerial formation.

**Dialogue Triads** – Three-person student groups enrolled in Signature Courses that process and synthesize weekly assignments about their learning sites.

**Discernment** – Listening to the sacred for clarity about a question or issue.

**Focused Initiative** – A participant-observer research and action project that moves the congregation closer to the inclusive ideals inherent in progressive liberal religion in general, and specifically within Unitarian Universalism.

**Formation** – Developing the skills and temperament for ministry.

**Intensive Courses** – Courses where research and writing occur throughout the semester and in-person class time is concentrated within a week or a weekend.

**Jaminars** – Weekly faculty-generated teaching podcast for students

**Learning Community** – A community of people who covenant to learn with and from each other.

**Learning Convocations (January and August)** – Residential portion of the Signature Courses wherein students engage with the “big ideas” and challenges of ministry and Signature Course content.

**Low Residency** – Students have low residency in Chicago, but full residency in the world. Students come to Chicago four times a year, and connect with students and faculty throughout the year, to share and explore what they're leaning in their local context

**Podcasts** – Digital audio or video files that can be downloaded and used on portable devices. Signature Course faculty use podcasts for the weekly Jaminars responses.

**Populi**– The web-based Student and classroom management software where class assignments, feedback and formational evaluations are uploaded and archived for historical purposes

**Rotation** – A practical field experience that is paired with a traditional classroom course for the purpose of deeper learning.

**Signature Courses** – The anchor of the M.Div program. These three multcredit courses (Community Studies, Congregational Studies, and Leadership Studies) provide students the opportunity to integrate their academic learning with fieldwork in community and congregational settings.

**Teaching Pastor** – An experienced minister assigned to students at the beginning of their matriculation who remains with the student until completion. The pastor serves as a mentor, coach and supervisor who helps the student grapple with ministerial formation through theological reflections.

**Teaching Team** – Group of Full-time and Affiliated faculty who bring their expertise together to co-teach our signature courses.

## Appendix

Here are some links to helpful forms and resources in word format.

- [Teaching Pastor Learning Agreement](#)
- [Final Evaluation for Community Studies Students](#)