
Report of the NY Conference Commission on Ministry

Rev. Dr. Ann M. Van Cleef, Chair

The Commission on Ministry advocates for the New York Conference Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment in all settings. The Commission meets four times a year, although we occasionally have extra meetings to discuss specific topics. All meetings, with the exception of our May meeting, are accomplished via Zoom. We normally have a face-to-face meeting the morning of the Consultation for Committees on Church and Ministry. This year, we will once again be meeting in person on Tuesday, May 16, at the Homer Congregational Church in Homer, NY. Here is a summary of our responsibilities, as well as what we have accomplished in the past year.

New York School of Ministry. Known as NYSOM, Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine of the Conference Staff serves as Dean.

Fall 2022 courses included: Congregational Life, Rev. Mark Lawson, Ph.D., Instructor; Liturgy & Worship, Rev. Michael L. Sloan, D.Min., Instructor; and Introduction to Christian Theology, Rev. Steve Johnson, Ph.D., Instructor.

Spring, 2023 courses included: Congregational Life, Rev. J. Mark Lawson, Ph.D., instructor; American Church History, Rev. Steven Johnson, Ph.D., instructor.

In the Christian Leadership Program, there are four students from three Associations (Black River / St. Lawrence, Reformed, and Western). In the Word and Sacrament Program, there are nine students from five Associations (Black River / St. Lawrence, Genesee Valley, Metro, Oneida, and Western) and one student from the Fairfield East Association, Southern New England Conference.

The Fall Learning Event was called, “The Pastor as Teacher: Reclaiming a Neglected Call, led by Mark Lawson. Thanks to a generous grant from the Jeanine Heller Foundation, this event is free of charge for all MIDs.

Our Ministry Core Course Fees remain the same: 20-Hour Course Fees for NY Conference Participants: Credit \$250, Audit \$175, Repeat Course Audit \$100 20-Hour Course Fees for Non-NY Conference Participants: Credit \$275, Audit \$200. An additional \$70 will be charged for the Distance Learning Support Fee.

The Supply Preacher Certificate Program will be offered in 2023-2024.

The good news about NYSOM is spreading; not only are there students from New York and New England, but there have been inquiries from other parts of the country as well.

The Commission on Ministry would like to express its deep gratitude to Dr. Marjorie Purnine for her excellent leadership of NYSOM.

Boundary Awareness Training (BAT): Our BAT Coordinator and Curriculum writer is Rev. Gary Gossel.

Basic BAT is offered as needed via Zoom by the Conference, and Refresher Trainings are offered by the Conference and by Associations, who have the option to offer the class in-person or Zoom. Boundary Awareness Training is required every three years.

There will be a Zoom training for those trainers who did not get trained in 2022 All Boundary Awareness Training in the New York Conference must be taught by people who have received Conference training.

The Commission put special emphasis on retiree issues, as retirees face their own special set of boundary issues. A separate BAT curriculum has been developed by Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams; the first training took place on April 28, 2022, and subsequent trainings will be posted in *Happenings*. This training is for retirees and those who are considering retirement within the next few years.

Sexual Harassment Prevention Webinars: New York State Labor Law, section 201-G(1) and (2) requires all people employed in New York State to take a sexual harassment prevention training class each year. This includes clergy and church employees. Penny Cannon, and Charlaine Apsel, of Practical Resources for Churches, have developed a curriculum for this, which is offered as a 90-minute interactive Webinar. Although New York State has a PowerPoint presentation for this, PRC's on-line class offerings will make it easier for churches to comply with this law.

Scholarship Program: Rev. Susan Fast coordinates this program, with Lisa Delgado of the Conference Office and ACM Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine assisting. In the past, this was a scholarship-loan program, but several years ago, the Commission voted to eliminate the loan repayment component. Scholarship funds are available for Members in Discernment who are enrolled in seminary or in NYSOM.

This past year, we awarded five scholarships. Congratulations to the following recipients: Cydney Badger (GVA), Vanessa Pugh-Reefer (Metro), Jonathan Reidel (Hudson-Mohawk), Leo Wolters Tejera (Western), and Marcia Tolman (Western).

Compensation Guidelines. Rev. Dr. Ann Van Cleef works on the guidelines. The Commission updated them in 2014 so that people who pursue further theological education are compensated accordingly. In 2015, we added columns to accommodate people who had taken seminary classes beyond the M.Div level, but are not pursuing a Doctorate. For 2024, the suggested compensation will be raised by 4%. The new guidelines will be published on the Conference Website in August. People who need the guidelines prior to August should just add 4% to last year's numbers.

Consultation for Committees on Authorized Ministry. This Consultation is held every year, and is a training session for Association Committees on Authorized Ministry.

The 2022 Consultation took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 10 – 11, and was hosted by the good people of Homer Congregational Church in Homer, NY. MESA Staff members Rev. Renee Jackson, Minister for Ministerial Formation were with us in person, and Rev. Tara Barber, Minister for Ministerial Support and Accountability joined us on Zoom. In addition, several Conference Staff members led sessions. Conference Minister Rev. David Gaewski gave a final talk as Conference Minister, and was applauded enthusiastically by all in attendance.

Conflict Mediation Team and Training. We had several people Conference-wide trained in conflict mediation and restorative circles. However, churches have not been using these people, so the Conference Staff recommended (and the Commission affirmed the recommendation with a vote) to suspend the program.

Response Team and Training. The purpose of the Response Team is to conduct interviews when a Fitness Review takes place. At the present time, 14 people in the Conference have been trained as members of the Response Team. Transitional Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Marsha

Williams oversees the Response Team and conducts the training. New members are needed.

Unified Fitness Review Board (UFRB). As it is very difficult for members of an Association Committee on Authorized Ministry to conduct a Fitness Review for a colleague, the Conference-wide UFRB allows for people from other Associations to be trained to conduct a Fitness Review. Rev. Valerie Meyer chairs the UFRB. Various Conference Staff members are assigned to this Board, depending on the situation. New members are needed.

Continuing Education. Our Associations now require 25 hours of Continuing Education per year. (The Western Association requires 75 hours every three years.) The Commission on Ministry urges the Associations and Conference to distribute CE certificates that state the number of hours earned at the conclusion of workshops and BAT sessions. Continuing Education opportunities are published each week in Happenings, as well as on the drop-down menu under Ministries on the NY Conference website. In addition, Practical Resources for Churches offers many opportunities for CE credit through their webinars.]

A Continuing Education Institute will be held on Thursday, June 15, as part of the Conference Annual Meeting in Niagara Falls. Participants may choose one of three course offerings: *Culturally Responsive Ministry Training*, *The New Face of Grief*, or *Forming a 21st Century Christian Religious Imagination*. On Friday, June 16, an additional course called *Liberation Listening – A Spiritual Practice and A Model for Ministry*.

Culturally Responsive Ministry Training for Authorized Ministers: All of our Association Committees on Ministry have voted to make this training mandatory for all Authorized Ministers, and, for Metro Association Clergy, Module 1, *Race and Culture*, will fulfill the Anti-Racism training requirement. 65 participants Conference-wide took this class in 2002.

Guidelines for Pastors Leaving a Call. These written guidelines clarify boundaries for clergy as well as congregations when a Pastor leaves a call. Rev. John Werley and Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams worked on this project for two years. The guidelines are available as a resource on the Conference website.

Commission on Ministry Personnel. New member: Rev. Barbara Toll is our new Hudson-Mohawk Liaison. Many thanks to Rev. Hafidah Saadiqah for representing Hudson-Mohawk on the Commission.

Rev. John Hottenstein served as Scholarship Chair for many years, and has now retired. Thank you, John, for all of your hard work and organizing. Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Rev. Susan Fast, who formerly served the Commission as the NYSOM Student Representative has stepped into the position of Scholarship Chair. Thank you, Susan, for taking on this important calling. And, congratulations on your new position at The First Congregational Church of Ithaca!

I want to take this opportunity to thank Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams for her years of service as Conference Staff Liaison to our Commission. She brought leadership, encouragement, fresh ideas, and a lot of energy to the table. It has been a real pleasure to work with her as Conference Staff Liaison; she has brought those same gifts to her new position as Transitional Conference Minister.

Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine has stepped in as our Conference Staff Liaison. Her knowledge, energy, and organizational skills are incredible, and I love working with her.

I would also like to thank each and every member of the Commission for their service. It is a joy to work with this outstanding group of people.

The members of the Commission on Ministry include:

+John Werley	Black River / St. Lawrence Association
+Valerie Meyer	Genesee Valley Association
+Barbara Toll	Hudson-Mohawk Association
+Ruth Shaffer	Metropolitan Association
+Lynn Sullivan	Metropolitan Association
+Mike Grinnals	Oneida Association
+Julia Turner	Reformed Association
+Ann Van Cleef	Suffolk Association; COM Chair
Susan (Sue) Frost	Susquehanna Association
+Jeremy Lopez	Western Association
+Rev. Gary Gossel	BAT Coordinator
+Marjorie Purnine	NYSOM Dean and Conference Staff
Joanne Nugent-Ward	COM Secretary
+Susan Fast	Scholarship Chair

(+ Denotes Authorized Clergy)

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Dr. Ann M. Van Cleef,
Chair, Commission on Ministry