
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 be meeting in person on Wednesday, May 29, at the First Congregational Church in Binghamton, 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 2023 courses included: UCC (Post 1957) History & Polity, Rev. Marjorie Purnine, Ph.D., and Rev. Eric Jackson, D.Min., instructors; and Foundations and Practice of Pastoral Counseling, Rev. Wayne Gustafson, D.Min., instructor.

Spring, 2024 courses included: New Testament I, Rev. J. Mark Lawson, Ph.D., instructor; Introduction to Christian Ethics, Rev. Steven Johnson, Ph.D., instructor; and New Testament II, Rev. J. Mark Lawson, Ph.D., instructor.

Timeline for Revision of Path to Ordination through NYSOM:

- May 16, 2023: Introduced program revision at Consultation for discussion and adjustment
- June 7, 2023: Discussed program revision at NYSOM Faculty meeting (adjustments recommended)
- June 27, 2023: Discussed newly revised program revision at NYSOM Curriculum Committee meeting (adjustments recommended)
- March 20, 2024: Final revision came to the NYSOM Curriculum Committee.

NY Conference MIDs on NYSOM's educational and formational path toward ordination:

Eric Kelly – GVA
Jaime Hodge – Western
Michelle Ledesma Baer – Reformed
Jen Mazur – Western
Kathleen Hyde – North Country
Craig Zeller – Oneida
Cydney Badger – GVA
Vicky Kellner-Landers – North Country
Vanessa Pugh-Reefer – Metro
Tina Bacon – Western
Andy Hinman – Oneida
Rosann Lowder - Western

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 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.

Cost: Basic BAT (\$50 NY; \$75 non-NY), BAT Refreshers (\$75 NY, \$95 non-NY), and Retiree BAT (We applied some scholarship funds so that the cost is \$10 for NY Retirees and \$20 for non-NY Retirees). We have scholarship money for any who ask.

Culturally Responsive Ministry Training (CRMT) \$55 fee

Module 1, Culture and Race will end in June, 2024, and Module 2, Culture and Sexuality/Gender, will begin in late summer, 2024, and run until June, 2026. 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.

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 Charlene Apse, 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), Michelle Baer (Reformed), Kalee Mielke (Western), Jonathan Reidel (Hudson-Mohawk), and Craig Zellar (Oneida).

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 2025, the suggested compensation will be raised by 3%. The new guidelines will be published on the Conference Website in August. People who need the guidelines prior to August should just add 3% 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 2023 Consultation took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 16 – 17, and was hosted by the good people of Homer Congregational Church in Homer, NY. MESA Staff member, Rev. Melanie Oommen, Minister for Committee on Ministry Development and Leadership, was our featured speaker. In addition, several Conference Staff members led sessions. Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams gave her first talk as Transitional Conference Minister and was applauded enthusiastically by all in attendance.

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.

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, May 30, as part of the Conference Annual Meeting in Binghamton. Participants may choose one of three course offerings: *Culturally Responsive Ministry Training: Module 1 – Culture and Race*; *The Progressive Church in a Divided and Anxious Country*; and *Soil and Souls: Grounding the Church in a New Climate of Creation Justice*. On Friday, May 31, an additional course called *Befriending Loneliness: Tools of Transformation in the Pulpit and Pew* is being offered.

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 Members: Rev. Dr. Martha Jacobs is our new Hudson-Mohawk Liaison. Many thanks to Rev. Barbara Toll, who had to vacate this position when she was appointed Associate Conference Minister. Rev. Chris Xenakis is now a member-at-large of the Commission. Both these people bring a wealth of experience to the table.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Rev. Dr. Marjorie Purnine for serving as Conference Staff Liaison to the Commission during the transitional period. She already served (and still serves) the Commission as NYSOM Dean, and added this responsibility to her already-full plate. She brings leadership, encouragement, fresh ideas, and a lot of energy to the table. It has been and

is a real pleasure to work with her.

Rev. Barbara Toll, who likes to be called Barb, is our newest Associate Conference Minister, and our Conference Staff Liaison. She is no stranger to the Commission, as she served as Hudson-Mohawk Liaison on two separate occasions. Welcome back in this new capacity, Barb!

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	North Country Association
+Valerie Meyer	Genesee Valley Association
+Martha Jacobs	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
+Chris Xenakis	Member at Large
+Rev. Gary Gossel	BAT Coordinator
+Marjorie Purnine	NYSOM Dean and Conference Staff
Joanne Nugent-Ward	COM Secretary
+Susan Fast	Scholarship Chair
+Barbara Toll	Conference Staff
<i>Vacant</i>	NYSOM Student

(+ Denotes Authorized Clergy)

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