

Congregational Studies Seminar
Overview of Roles and Responsibilities
for Teaching Pastors and Student Ministers
September 2011 – May 2012

Faculty

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Overview

The Congregational Studies Seminar provides a **Student Minister** with a unique experience to learn about ministry through the lens of real interaction with an actual congregation. Students are expected to be involved in the life of the congregation an average of 20 hours per week. During this process, the student is “learning by doing,” that is, exploring how to enter into the life of a congregation, understand its people and values and, ultimately, learn how to minister to the spiritual and advocacy needs of a congregation (we intend for this year to model the first year of called ministry). Cast in the role of an apprentice, Student Ministers will build on these learning experiences during the Leadership Studies Seminar the following year. Student ministers will be encouraged to learn from observation as well as dialogue with you as Teaching Pastor (TP) and their lay committees. In addition, they will obtain experience through hands-on engagement as it fits and meets their levels of preparation and the needs of the congregation. Student Ministers will explore the on-going functions of congregational life*, such as:

- Preaching
- Worship
- Pastoral care/CPE Integration
- Administration and finances
- Religious Education
- Multicultural Congregations
- Conflict Resolution
- Meaning and purposes of “church”
- Governance/Polity
- Social Justice
- Financial Stewardship
- Ministerial identity
- Systems of personal and organization change
- Interfaith engagement

*all areas of congregational life will be set in the context of a 21st century, multi-racial, multicultural world

Individual Learning Objectives

Students will be expected to complete the official UUA “learning service” agreement as they begin their fall studies. This completed form is housed both at the UUA and at Meadville (students can find the document in LiveText). We expect that a student will cover each of the areas of competence expected by the UUA and Meadville, and will also incorporate opportunities for growth and development as noted in the Career Assessment as well as by the Regional Sub-committee on Candidacy (RSCC).

As a way to visualize the “learning agenda” for a Student Minister, we have included a sample one-month agenda in this document that shows how a student might formulate a wide array of learning objectives over 30 days. We expect that Student Ministers and Teaching Pastors will explore the activities and opportunities for growth and development in the Teaching Congregation setting, and craft a plan that meets particular learning needs.

It is also our experience that each student comes with both gifts and growing edges. For example, if a Student Minister has a lot of experience with religious education, it might be wise to limit attention to RE and devote more time and discernment toward administration. Likewise, if a Student Minister has considerable skills in public speaking, the TP may want to encourage more of that activity early on, or, if the opposite is true, you may want to wait until that student has enrolled in a formal preaching course at Meadville. At bottom, we expect that Teaching Pastors will rely upon their own wise counsel when shaping students’ learning trajectory. Please contact us, of course, if there are questions about that schedule.

Congregational Studies Seminar

While Student Ministers are working 20 hours per week in the Teaching Congregation, they will be simultaneously enrolled in a graduate seminar, taught by members of the Meadville Lombard faculty. Seminars meet weekly and will both frame and drive the learning/reflection agenda of the Student Minister. Each week, students will conduct congregation-based analysis (observing, asking questions, problem-posing, etc.) that helps the Student Minister interpret and integrate theoretical frameworks into the reality of congregational life and its people. These learning activities are intended to engage the student in the on-going programs and projects that unfold over the course of the church year. Working in tandem with the Teaching Pastor, Student Ministers should expect to spend an average of 20 hours per week, exploring the list of topics listed above.

During the Spring semester (February-May), Student Ministers will begin a deliberative, guided process of identifying an aspect of congregational life that might benefit from special attention. We call this a “Focused Initiative.” Students are expected to negotiate this project first with Teaching Pastors, their Congregational Lay Committee, and also with appropriate leaders in the congregation. Students will present their final ideas by May, which includes sign-off on the general design by both the Teaching Pastor and Lay Committee. The Initiative itself will be launched during the Leadership Studies year.

The Teaching Pastor

The congregation's minister is considered a "Teaching Pastor" whose purpose is to be a supervisor, mentor, coach, translator, confidant and model for how to be effective in Unitarian Universalist ministry. The Teaching Pastor and Student Minister are expected to meet weekly for approximately one hour. As a supervisor, the Teaching Pastor should help the Student Minister design a schedule of activity that gives insights into diverse roles and expectations of ministry. As a coach, the Teaching Pastor should help the student learn to navigate the interpersonal and group dynamics of congregational life. As a translator, the Teaching Pastor should help the Student Minister learn to listen to and articulate values, mystified assumptions, and other factors that impede effective communication. As a confidant, the Teaching Pastor ministers to the psychological and spiritual awakenings and growing edges the Student Minister presents. And, as role model, the Teaching Pastor models how to preach, lead worship, educate, negotiate, and generally live into the diverse, and often competing roles a minister must play.

At the outset of the fall term, Teaching Pastors will receive a sketch of the seminar topics that will guide student learning in the seminar so as to be informed of the trajectory of his/her student's learning. Teaching Pastors are also eligible to enroll in one MLTS course per year free of charge.

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. Students will be informed of the evaluative function of Teaching Pastors, and that they are an active part of our deliberations on student formation.

Compensation for Interns

The Meadville Lombard faculty has modified the policy (in June 2011) regarding paid internships, as follows: *Meadville Lombard does not require or expect interns to be paid directly for their work in congregations. Congregations may, however, compensate interns for their work, if they wish.*

The policy to not require compensation is fundamental to the ministerial formation of our students. This is the reason: As we all realize, not all congregations have the financial wherewithal to compensate students for their parish work. And yet one element of ML's innovative formation process is dependent on students being placed in a variety of differently-sized congregations 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.

We understand that the Teaching Pastor and the Board of each congregation will determine their own policy regarding internship compensation to student ministers. *Student Ministers should not*

initiate any conversation with the Teaching Pastor, Board, or Lay Committee around this matter.

The Congregational Lay Committee

By **October 1**, the Teaching Pastor and Student Minister should have identified and selected a group of five members from the congregation/community who will serve in an advisory role for the Student Minister (faculty will coach you through this process). This group should mirror the diversity of the congregation along the lines such as race/ethnicity, age, theological diversity, class, sexual orientation and, (strongly encouraged!) the community in which the congregation is located. The Lay Committee should plan to meet with the Student Minister once per month to check-in on the student's experience, celebrate achievements, identify areas of growth, and provide insight into congregational systems, values, and practices. The Lay Committee is expected to evaluate the Student Minister at two points during the year, roughly December and May. A special digital podcast will be available for the first meeting of the Congregational Lay Committee that outlines expectations and ways to support the Student Ministers' formation process.

January Learning Convocation

All Teaching Pastors are invited to attend the January Learning Convocation. This three-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. Thanks to the generosity of the Luce Foundation, the expenses for attending the Convocation will be covered by Meadville Lombard. *Save the dates: January 4-6, 2012.* Expect details in early fall.

The Leadership Studies Seminar

During The Leadership Studies Year, the Student Minister becomes the **Intern Minister**. In that role, s/he will build on insights gained and lessons learned during the Congregational Studies year. The Intern Minister will continue on-going reflections with the Lay Committee, Teaching Pastor, classmates, and faculty. The focus shifts, however, from observation and meaning-making toward expressions of leadership. Collaborating with the Lay Committee, Teaching Pastor, congregational lay leadership, and Meadville Lombard faculty, the Student Intern will lead a "Focused Initiative" that addresses an appropriate congregational issue. Still present in the congregation an average of 20 hours per week, the Intern Minister is expected to continue and deepen levels of ministry to the congregation.

Schedule for Congregational Work

Congregational Studies:	Late August-December; February-June
Leadership Studies:	September-December; February May 15

A Fictional Sample Month of a Student Minister's Activities

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 ■ 10:00 a.m. Plan music with minister of music for Wednesday vespers	2	3 ■ 9:00 a.m. – noon Attend UUMA Chapter Meeting ■ 2:00 p.m. Weekly meeting with TP*	4 ■ 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Church staff meeting ■ 5:15 p.m. Preach Wednesday vespers service	5 ■ 10:00 a.m. Shadow teaching pastor in pre-marital counseling	6 ■ 6:00 p.m. Attend high school group's overnight	7 ■ Till noon, high school overnight
8 ■ 10:00 a.m. Attend middle school RE class	9 ■ 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Shadow church administrator	10 ■ 2:00 p.m. Weekly meeting with TP ■ 7:00 p.m. Attend worship committee meeting	11 ■ 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Church staff meeting ■ 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Shadow TP in hospital and home visits	12	13 ■ 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Attend interfaith clergy luncheon ■ 6:00 p.m. Attend Sabbath service at neighboring temple	14
15 ■ 11:00 a.m. Serve as liturgist at Sunday service	16	17 ■ 2:00 p.m. Weekly meeting with TP ■ 7:00 p.m. Attend church board meeting	18 ■ 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Church staff meeting ■ 7:00 p.m. Attend Finance meeting of Board	19 ■ 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Meet with student's lay support committee	20	21 ■ 7:00 p.m. Serve as usher for church talent show fundraiser
22 ■ 10:00 a.m. Attend adult RE class on wills and powers of attorney	23 ■ 7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Shadow church sexton	24 ■ 11:00 a.m. Shadow TP in memorial service interview and preparation ■ 2:00 p.m. Weekly meeting with TP	25 ■ 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Church staff meeting	26	27 ■ 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Breakfast with Director of RE ■ 1:00 p.m. Attend Juma at local mosque	28 ■ 1:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Shadow TP for wedding and memorial service

* TP = Teaching Pastor

To Teaching Pastors: The above table represents a month of possible activities for a student in Meadville Lombard's Congregational Studies Sequence. The activities are truly "fictional," and would vary widely depending on the opportunities of both the site congregation and its community. However, we hope this might be a visual aid to suggest ways in which the student's time working in the congregation up to twenty hours per week might be spent. Some of the faculty's underlying assumptions include:

- Students are expected to complete the UUA's "Learning & Service Agreement" form during the fall of the Congregational Studies Year. Students should use the form to guide their weekly activities. So, for example, if they list a need to "develop more skills in pastoral care," their schedule of activity should reflect that need. *Again, we strongly encourage students to use the internship to address head-on areas of concern and growing edges that are noted in Career Assessment and/or by the RSCC panel.*
- Students will be in a Teaching Congregation after only one full year of seminary study, so in most cases will have less church experience than traditional interns in years past. Consequently, we understand this first year in the church site to be one primarily of observation, reflection and learning. More hands-on engagement, activity and leadership are expected to take place in the student's second year in the site (e.g., in the Leadership Studies course). We intend the student to be in the mix of congregational life, and if their skills warrant, to take on small leadership roles.
- Having stated that, we also understand that the student's primary relationship is with you, the Teaching Pastor. *We encourage you to set the agenda with the student and if you perceive that your student is ready for deeper engagement, feel free to create that opportunity.* All students will be different and bring different life experiences. If you as the student's primary mentor feel the need to step up with counsel, please do so. If you feel your student may be more advanced and you could step back and allow them greater flexibility, then trust your instincts. The faculty will be available to discuss such dynamics with you when needed, as well as share with you the curriculum topics your student will be engaging each week through her or his class work here at school.
- Our expectation is that Student Ministers and TPs will meet once a week for a one-hour reflection. Topics should include discussion of the week's activities, engagement with the curriculum ideas presented in the Meadville Lombard course work of the week, and work on the student's personal goals as articulated in his or her learning/serving agreement created with you at the beginning of the Congregational Studies year. The subtext of this time will be the student's evolving appreciation of your ministerial identity and the foundation of your professional authority as she or he perceives the parallels and differences to her or his own growing identity as a minister.

Here are some "sample" questions that might guide the weekly discussion in the "sample" month above:

Week One:

- What is your theology of worship and what is the aesthetic through-line of the service you are preparing for Wednesday?
- What was your impression of the UUMA monthly meeting and how do you see those ministers supporting each other?

- What questions might you have for the couple with whom I will hold a pre-marital counseling session on Friday?
- Was there any portion of your Meadville Lombard class work this week that informed your activities here at church?
- Name one thing you learned about yourself that relates to your personal goals for the year.

Week Two:

- What was the topic for the Middle School RE class on Sunday and how was it received by the students?
- What new idea did you learn about church management while shadowing the administrator on Tuesday?
- How did the advisors of the high school group engage the students and their interests on Friday's overnight?
- Was there any portion of your Meadville Lombard class work this week that informed your activities here at church?
- Name one thing you learned about yourself that relates to your personal goals for the year.

Week Three:

- What did your observation in the Worship Committee meeting last week show you about the congregation's theological diversity?
- Now that you have witnessed some hospital and home pastoral care visits, how would you define "non-anxious presence?"
- How does the support system of the interfaith clergy group differ from that you experienced in the UUMA meeting?
- Name some similarities and differences in the liturgies of the Jewish service you attended and our Sunday morning service.
- How would you critique your performance as liturgist in our worship service last Sunday morning?
- Was there any portion of your Meadville Lombard class work this week that informed your activities here at church?
- Name one thing you learned about yourself that relates to your personal goals for the year.

Week Four:

- How did the work of the Church Board of Trustees and the Finance Committee influence your understanding of ecclesiology?
- What dynamics do you see at work in our weekly staff meetings? Do certain people take on certain roles each week?
- Report to me on your meeting with your Lay Committee? What questions did they have? What observations did they make?
- What is your "theology of fellowship?" Did you see any of it in action during Saturday night's talent show?
- How is the sexton's role at the church different from the janitor's role at a school?

- As you prepare for your breakfast with the Director of Religious Education, how do you understand the role of RE in the church?
- Prepare to name some similarities and differences in the liturgies of the Muslim service you will attend on Friday and our worship.
- Was there any portion of your Meadville Lombard class work this week that informed your activities here at church?
- Name one thing you learned about yourself that relates to your personal goals for the year.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

Qiyamah Rahman

Assignment and selection of congregations, Teaching Pastors, and Lay Committees – all matters before the beginning of the seminar.

Mark Hicks

Seminar assignments, including scope and type of learning activities, for both students and Teaching Pastors and Lay Committees

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