

For all those called to explore their vocation,

It was a humbling and empowering experience to serve as a First Year Minister Emissary with the MFC during September, 2021. I found my colleagues to be deeply invested in compassionate discernment over the applications they received. I was amazed at how much time and work they put into combing over hundreds of pages of story and struggle, triumph and transformation. And I was asked, even without a vote, to participate fully in the process of raising up our candidates' ministry in the world.

My experience of the MFC was as a kind (however, not nice!) and empathetic group committed to welcoming into our faith the very best ministers they can. All those I worked with took our Faith's challenges of working on bias and systemic oppression seriously. They handled this heavy emotional and spiritual work with care and covenant. I witnessed people who are more focused on "getting it right" than "being right." They want you to succeed!

Reflecting on my two experiences with the MFC; as a candidate and then as emissary, I could see the ongoing transformation in the fellowshiping process. My colleagues are people who love our faith along with us. Are committed to our principles and sources. And want our ministerial formation process to be an open and welcoming experience. They ask you to come with your whole self; gifts and challenges, and to minister with and to them.

As you come to this point of your ministerial journey:

- Know your packet inside and out, read the questions carefully, and answer simply with vulnerability. Your document is the MFC's first impression. More is not always better. It is quality over quantity.
- Be your whole self; the MFC does not want "perfect" ministers, they want authentic ones who know their pastoral identity and call, their strengths and their challenges.
- Have fun! Laugh! Ask for help. Be open to saying "I don't know, and I have an idea of where I can find out..." Collegiality is key.

Blessings of Life and Love to all who find themselves on this journey of ministry!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Almeida". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "J".

Rev. Justin Almeida, MDiv – community minister & chaplain