

## **Jamie Dingus October 2020 MFC First-Year Minister Emissary Report**

Working with the whole MFC and particularly the loving, amazing folks on my panel was a gift to me and an experience that has really renewed me in my own call and commitment to our ministry, in ways I didn't know I needed.

Based on my experience, I am going to rank the MFC as a category 1. Here is what I observed:

- I experienced the MFC as joyful, dedicated, thoughtful, collaborative, deeply rooted in covenant, and aware of the places where it is too narrow to fully appreciate the gifts and experiences of the ministers we need most right now.
- I experienced the whole MFC as holding collective grief, and able to make space and honor that grief and also live into our purpose.
- I experienced my panel as holding in delicate balance love, support, and hope for our candidates and accountability to the requirements of our process and the health and safety of our congregations. I am truly blown away by the hard work the MFC does and the brave and conscientious way in which it does this hard work.
- In my experience here this week, I saw the places where our desire to give category, feedback, and contingencies were hampered by the rigidity of our ranking system.
- Similarly, I saw moments where the information we most needed, like "What specifically is your call or what are your exact vocational goals?" didn't come through in the packets because of the open-endedness of the packet essays.
- And finally, I consistently saw our panelist wrestle with the influences of white supremacy culture and privilege both on the process itself and the ways that we as individuals communicated with each other and experienced our candidates.

So, here is my counsel: (And it's not a contingency because I know and trust that you are already engaging in this work)

- Our faith and ministers deserve better than a process rooted in white supremacy culture, so continue in the work of widening the path to ministry, as has been lifted up in the Commission on Institutional Change Report.
- Continue and maybe even more deeply, engage with the MFC covenant, particularly the pieces that ask MFC members to "examine our own biases and internalized oppressions," and asks the whole committee to "co-create brave space with those from marginalized identities."
- Continue to allow for curiosity, wondering and innovation in this process.
- And finally, both in future meetings of the MFC, and also in the coming conversations about widening the path to ministry, prioritize time for self-care.

Let's have better scheduled food breaks and bio breaks, and also intentionally bring in more time for prayer, singing and silence in this work.

Here are some insights when preparing to see the MFC in the future:

- The MFC has no interest in punishing, tricking, testing or failing anyone. We would all be happiest, if after our conversations all 20 of our candidates blew us away with their competency, passion and ministerial authority and we could give 20 category 1s.
- The MFC really is human in all the ways that our candidates are. We are tired, and over-functioning, we are hungry and cranky, we get nervous and get frustrated and all the human experiences of this life. Candidates know this when you show up, and minister to us.
- MFC questions are not designed to prove incompetence but are formulated out of genuine curiosity for how the particular candidate would answer and are based on our lived experiences of the challenges and joys of our UU ministry.
- The candidates who did the best were not necessarily smarter or more experienced than others. But they entered the Zoom room with joy, confidence and authority. They were honest about who they were, what they believed, and they had a vision of where they were taking their ministry.
- And lastly, I learned that a category 3 really does mean that you have all the promise of ministry. We don't give it lightly and we don't give it to turn you away, but because we genuinely believe that if you take our feedback and do some more work, we will see you again and both you as a minister and our movement experiencing your ministry will be all the better for this work.