

First-Year Minister Emissary Report, April 2021

by Lane Fisher

Both my CPE supervisor (Congregational) and the person who led my career assessment (Episcopal) told me that the Unitarian Universalists are one of the most rigorous denominations in what they require of ministers in formation. While I am proud that our denomination is seen this way, I know how daunting its rigor can feel when one is hoping to be found worthy. Hearing ministers in fellowship tell you the most challenging question their MFC panel put to them might not be encouraging, either.

So let me say in my own words what other first-year emissaries have said: You will be ministered to when you go before the MFC—meaning that you will be seen and heard fully and respectfully. You will be greeted openly, warmly, kindly, and with a good measure of joy. Meet your interviewers on that ground!

Everyone on your MFC panel will read every sentence of your packet with care and caring. Their questions will flow largely from this reading—and so, while what someone else was asked last year might shed light on the *kinds* of questions you can expect, they are not likely to be repeated in your interview. You will be asked good, thought-provoking questions, and at least one will relate to each of the competencies. Know that the MFC does expect that you will have read every title you check on the reading list *before you sign and date it*; with that signature, you are putting your integrity on the line.

You will be imperfect, but be authentically imperfect. Although you need not be brilliant, you do need to demonstrate competence—and also commitment to anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multi-cultural work. If the honest answer to a question is “I don’t know,” share how or where you would seek an answer. Stay grounded in yourself and your source of meaning. Show them a calm, thoughtful, compassionate minister.

The MFC members who meet with you are hungry to be stirred and challenged by your sermon. Don’t treat it like a demo—i.e., “This is a typical sermon I would give a congregation”—but as an opportunity to minister to these hard-working volunteers.

The MFC is committed to the principle that good ministers are always growing. As a body and as individuals, they hold themselves accountable to this standard. Members monitor their questions, thoughts, and feelings for fairness, balance, and any bias. At the end of your interview, they will ask if you have any feedback for them, and they are truly open to it.

You will receive astute counsel about your growing edges. Your panel will bless you. And, if you're ready, they will welcome you as a colleague. Take it all in as fully as you possibly can.

Then the real work begins!