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MFC First Year Minister Emissary, September 2021

To all Candidates, Aspirants, seminarians, and anyone interested in the work of the MFC: ahoy there! I hope this report, along with the excellent reports written by FYMEs (First Year Minister Emissaries) before me, can offer a useful insight or two on the process. I saw the MFC in April of 2021, and served as a FYME in September of the same year. Both encounters came during a time of major changes within the MFC, such as shifting to a new category system. I'm happy to have witnessed those changes taking place, and to have the chance to share my perspective on them.

If you're thinking of scheduling an interview with the MFC, or currently have one on the calendar, you may be feeling somewhat nervous. Or perhaps massively, constantly nervous! I wouldn't blame you! From a distance, the MFC interview can seem like a terrifying crucible of pressure and judgment; the oral exam from hell, if that's something we believed in as UUs. To that fire and brimstone reputation, I have a gospel message in response: the MFC is not trying to trick you, surprise you, or otherwise put you through the wringer as you make your way towards ministry.

As I understand it, the MFC used to be more like an oral exam: questions could focus on all-or-nothing fact recall, e.g. "Tell me three important events in Universalism pre-merger." From my interview, and those I took part in as a FYME, I think we're very much moving away from that style of interview. The MFC won't be asking you history questions pulled out of a hat: they'll be asking you questions tailored specifically to you, thought up by real live humans who have carefully read your packet. Some of these questions will be opportunities to highlight your strengths, and talk about what you love in ministry; some of these questions will express curiosity about your growing edges, and ask how you're thinking about past challenges and future growth. In my experience as both a Candidate and a FYME, the MFC's goal is not to grill you, but to invite you into a conversation of issues that are vital to you, your calling, your professional development, and our shared faith. A handful of quick tips:

- I'd recommend against obsessing over lists of past interview questions you find online, as the style of questions has changed so much.
- I'd also advise against having a mock MFC interview, as the people who'd be on your panel likely haven't adapted to the MFC's recent shifts.
- A good portion of your questions may have follow up questions. That's not a bad thing; it doesn't mean your answer to the initial question was unsatisfactory, just that the questioner is eager to hear more from you on the subject.

- Your packet is a crucial part of the interview process, as most (if not all) of your questions will be inspired by it. It's a lot of work, the packet, so start as early as you can manage; you don't want to feel too rushed. Also, it's great to have a trusted reader or two to review your packet materials.
- MFC prep is definitely a challenge; in the midst of it all, try to be gentle with yourself. Getting a good night's sleep will help you more than an extra two hours of cramming.
- Read through your packet several times. If possible, ask your readers/mentors what areas they think you're most likely to get questions on.
- If you ever have questions about the MFC or the credentialing process, reach out to the Credentialing Office and ask! Jonipher Kwong and Marion Bell do a wonderful job of supporting folks on their road to ministry. The Ministerial Formation Network is a great help, too.
- Remember that everyone on the MFC is a volunteer; they all care deeply about Unitarian Universalism, and are rooting for you to succeed. No one on the MFC is Johnny Lawrence; no one is out to sweep the leg.

May your time with the MFC be warm, energizing, and leave you feeling supported by your colleagues in faith.