

MFC September 2025 Week Agenda

Wednesday, September 24

Executive Committee only

Co-Chairs: Alison ALG McLeod and Michael Tino. Shirley Lange, Amanda Poppei, Cindy Malley. UUA Staff: Cecilia Kingman, Marta Valentin, Darrick Jackson, Marion Bell

Thursday, September 25

Co-Chairs: Michael Tino, Alison ALG McLeod. Amanda Poppei, Nathalie Edmond, DC Fortune, Shirley Lange, Cindy Malley, Beth Norton, Kären Rasmussen, Lindasusan Ulrich, , Laura Shennum, Paul Langston-Daley, Karen LoBracco, Linda Thomson. Ken Reeves, De Thorne. UUA Staff: Cecilia Kingman, Darrick Jackson, Marta Valentin, Marion Bell. Absent: Takiyah Amin, Maria Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa

Business Meeting

Affirming Our Covenant

Motion to Approve the April 2025 MFC Business Meeting Minutes.
Approved.

Working Groups Meet

PANELS MEET FOR CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Friday, September 26

PANELS MEET FOR CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Saturday, September 27

PANELS MEET FOR CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Co-Chairs: Michael Tino, Alison ALG McLeod. Nathalie Edmond, DC Fortune, Shirley Lange, Cindy Malley, Amanda Poppei, Beth Norton, Kären Rasmussen, Lindasusan Ulrich, Burgoa, Laura Shennum, Paul Langston-Daley, Karen LoBracco, Ken Reeves, D Thorne. UUA Staff: Darrick Jackson, Marion Bell, Aastha Poudel, Sarah Gettie McNeill, Nathan Ryan. **Absent:** Takiyah Amin, Maria Cristina Vlassidis, Linda Thomson, Staff: Cecilia Kingman, Marta Valentin.

Caucus Time

- BIPOC Caucus
- White Caucus

Memorial Service

Open Meeting:

Michael and Alison shared the letter about working with/educating Internship Supervisors (Addendum #1)

Theme: How can the MFC become more transparent — to candidates and to our seminaries — by clarifying expectations, communicating changes more clearly, and embedding openness into our processes?

- Alison and Michael have been working with Michelle Favreault, Director of the Ministerial Formation Network. On October 7, 2025, at 7 pm ET, the MFC will meet with aspirants, mentors, and supervisors to discuss trends, share insights, and practice radical transparency. The MFC was among the first UUA committees to pioneer ARAOMC “widening the path” work, and this session will highlight how that has been integrated into panels, interviews, and expectations, as well as the changes and future direction. Karen, Paul, Cindy, and Beth are especially invited.
- A follow-up session will be held on November 5, 2025, focused on newer candidates and those just joining the Ministerial Formation Network. This session will emphasize the shift in educational and competency work, the move to an open-ended resource list, and strategies for setting oneself up for success.
- Alison and Michael have shared a letter with UUMA members and the Internship Supervisors Facebook group. The letter appreciates the vital work of intern supervisors and offers guidance for supporting interns. It emphasizes the importance of fostering coherent, intentional conversations and ensuring that interns engage in real accountability to marginalized communities they are not part of, rather than treating Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multiculturalism (ARAOMC) as a check box. Candidates are called to integrate ARAOMC knowledge across all ministerial competencies, recognizing that this work is lived and urgent, as illustrated by instances such as administrators of color experiencing microaggressions from board members.
- The letter can be shared with the faculty members who are not UUMA members.
- Michael and Alison have been informally acting as liaisons to the seminarians. They will discuss who the liaison will be.
- Dr. Elias Ortega (guest) noted that since many ministers do not attend UU-identified seminaries, broadening the circle of colleagues is essential. Concerns were raised about the lack of a clearly articulated UU theology—particularly around suffering—and the need for robust theological engagement, accountability to people of color, and stronger preparation in areas like worship, liturgy, social justice, and leadership.

- MFC works hard to craft contingencies for the candidates. Michael has reviewed requests from UUA co-moderators and found that the largest set of competencies involves integrating ARAOMC, using IDI, or seeking coaching in this area. Many colleagues have been asked to serve as allies for racial equity, raising the question of what specific work white people need to take on in anti-racism spaces. We also noted that the understanding of cultural appropriation and misappropriation has lost.
- Contingencies often cause fear of delays in search or fellowship, but most simply involve conversations or participation in programs that can move at the candidate's own pace. While we recognize that not being able to go in search can create hardship, contingencies are designed to be reasonable and achievable, with return visits required only in rare cases.
- When candidates feel anxious, writing a short paper and engaging in conversation can give them space to reflect, rearticulate, and return with deeper insight. This process often helps them do meaningful work and strengthens their ministry. MFC tries to make contingencies as relational as possible.
- The MFC has tried to decolonize the MFC process by stripping away elements of white supremacy culture and moving away from rigid rules.
- The MFC has checks and balances in place, including process observers and peer accountability, to ensure interviews are fair and as non-traumatic as possible. Contingencies rely on judgment informed by the full relationship built through the packet, interview, feedback, and counsel, with multiple points along the way to monitor and address bias.

What can the MFC do for the seminaries:

Meg Richardson (guest)-I have a bunch of things: examples of contingencies, SMART goals as benchmarks for contingencies (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound), and the opportunity to ask questions anonymously as they can feel like they are in the "hot seat" when they meet members of the MFC and be reluctant to ask what might be perceived as a "stupid" question. Also creating an 8th competency of Theology also placed more emphasis on worship/liturgy because that's where Theology was.

It might be useful to create "meet the MFC" meetings around particular milestones like moving from Aspirant to Candidate so that the group would be more or less in a similar phase

ADDENDUM #1

2025 Letter from MFC Co-chairs to Internship Supervisors

September 2025

Dear Internship Supervisors,

Greetings from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee!

As part of our move to more transparency in the processes of the MFC, we wanted to write to you to give you some updates on the ways in which the MFC process has changed since you met with our committee (whether that was four or forty years ago). We hope that this communication is welcome, and will help you best serve your intern in their ministerial formation.

First, allow us to introduce ourselves as the newly-elected co-chairs of the MFC. We are Alison Aguilar López Gutierrez McLeod and Michael Tino. Alison (she/her) is a restorative justice/ restorative conflict facilitator for a non-profit in San Diego, CA. She has been a UU religious educator for 17 years and has served in a variety of roles within LREDA and the UUA. Michael (they/them) is part of the Lead Ministry Team of the Church of the Larger Fellowship. They have been a UU religious professional for 27 years, and have been an ordained and fellowshipped minister for 18, during which time they have supervised six interns. They live in Peekskill, NY.

We are especially glad to be able to thank you for your service to Unitarian Universalism. We hope that being a teaching minister is invigorating for your ministry. We hope that it helps inject new ideas and perspectives into the life of your congregation, and that it keeps you in touch with the leading edges of our faith.

Part of your role as intern supervisors is to help prepare your intern for the professional ministry as well as for their interview with the MFC. To these ends, we hope that you are paying attention to the areas in which we ask interns to demonstrate competency. We've recently added a new one—theology—which we hope gives you the green light to engage in deep theological conversations with your intern. Adding this competency was a long time in coming, and in direct response to what we felt was a lack of preparation in this area among many candidates. Please make sure your interns can have coherent conversations about theology!

We are also aware that our expectations around anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism have shifted somewhat, especially as we have worked to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Institutional Change. The major shift in this is that we expect anti-racism and anti-oppression consciousness to be fully integrated into the candidate's understanding of ministry. We expect that candidates with dominant identities will have lived experiences of accountability to marginalized communities—more than an academic understanding of this work, we seek a real-life application of it. We hope that candidates will understand concepts such as accountability, power, cultural appropriation, and what it means to center the voices of the oppressed.

Perhaps you have heard about the ways in which the processes of the MFC interviews themselves have changed and are changing. We hope that our interviews are more deeply rooted in the candidates' packet and less about checking the boxes of our competencies. We ask candidates to make connections between and among competency areas, and with their varied experiences. Some might say that these questions are, in fact, harder than the old ones! Instead of, for example, asking to tell us about the Edict of Torda and its place in UU history, we might begin by asking a candidate to identify things in UU history that illustrate our value of pluralism. Where we go from there would be based on our sense of the candidate's strengths and growing edges. For example, we might then ask how the candidate might weave those things into worship, or how they would talk about pluralism with an elementary school RE class. Perhaps we would ask about providing pastoral care to someone whose theology is very different from theirs, or about the role pluralism plays in building multiracial communities.

Even with these changes, we are aware that our interviews are still high-stakes, stressful encounters. The decisions we make after the interviews are complicated and based on many factors, including the interview but also the sermon preached to us and the hundreds of pages of packet information and evaluations submitted to us. We try hard to craft counsel for every candidate that witnesses their ministry and helps point them in a healthy direction in their personal and professional development. Sometimes, we feel that counsel is enough, and we affirm candidates into fellowship. In those moments, we celebrate together.

Sometimes, though, we find we need to craft contingencies for our candidates that must be fulfilled before being admitted to preliminary fellowship. We try to be clear about the reasons for each contingency. We try to make them doable in a reasonable period of time. We try to make them financially accessible. This is hard, and we don't always do it in a way that candidates find easy to absorb. On each panel, there is a UUA staff member who can help candidates process what we are asking of them; in addition, Rev. Darrick Jackson is available to support deeper work on the contingencies. We hope that in these moments you might be a source of support as your intern integrates our counsel and contingencies into their ministry, even as you provide care for any natural disappointment and natural defensiveness that may arise.

We hope that you will feel free to contact us directly if you have questions about our processes or expectations. We are aware that neither our processes nor our members are perfect, and we are always striving to be and do better. Please know, however, that we do not discuss individual candidates with anyone other than the candidates themselves. We hope that you can help us foster a culture in which candidates can bring us (and the appropriate UUA staff people) their questions, concerns, and frustrations and not fear any sort of reprisal. We sincerely mean that this is not your mentor's MFC anymore—we trust and pray it is for the better.

Thank you again for your dedication to moving our faith into the future. We are so glad you are supervising a ministerial intern this year.

Yours in faith,

Alison Aguilar López Gutierrez McLeod, M.Ed.
Rev. Dr. Michael Tino
MFC Co-Chairpeople