

Virginia Mennonite Conference

Growing in Ministry Journey

Of

Minister: _____

Bishop/Overseer: _____

Introduction

I. Reflecting

- Biographical, reflective material on home life
- Beginning spiritual formation
- Early congregational influences
- Educational and life experience
- Lay ministry training and experience

II. Growing in ministry

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Introduction

Welcome to the journey of growing ‘in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.’ (2 Pet 3:18) We rejoice in the affirmation of your call to ministry.

As caretaker of ministry credentialing for Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC), the Faith & Life Commission (FLC) offers this *Growing in Ministry Journey* as a tool for personal development and enhancement of your ministry. Pastoral interests are represented in the FLC by your bishop/overseer. This ‘pastor to pastors’ will be your guide along the way.

As followers of Jesus, we take one step at a time. Please observe that what is offered here is material for a lifetime – pace yourself, take your time with each section. You may be starting this journey with minimal educational experience, or you may be a seminary graduate. In any case, you have had some life experience and some gifting has been identified.

We invite you to document this journey as you go through it with your bishop/overseer. Let us walk together as we become ‘faithful minister(s) of Christ.’ (Col 1:7) ‘To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.’ (2 Pet 3:18)

I. Reflecting

Use the suggestions below to prompt your thinking. You will remember things as you go along, so leave space, insert pages, or include folder(s) to store significant records, pictures, etc. If you have done some of this work earlier, copy it or include

here a reference to where your material can be found. However, there can be new learnings as you reflect on this early material from different stages of your ministry

- Biographical, reflective material on home life
 - Do a genealogical chart for the past several generations and reflect on the issues that emerge.
 - Mine your childhood (favorite things, childhood memorabilia, early likes/dislikes, relationship with parents, siblings, peers) for connections between childhood interests, aspirations and your current life.
 - Describe competitive and cooperative relationships that formed you.
 - Did you 'play church' as a child? What were your preferred roles?
 - What were the family Bible-reading and/or family worship practices?
 - What attitude toward pastors did you experience in your home?
- Beginning spiritual formation
 - Describe your earliest spiritual experiences – when did you first encounter God?
 - What Bible-reading practices did you develop?
 - Note what led to your baptism and describe your early discipleship journey.
- Early congregational influences
 - What image of a pastor do you take from your early pastor(s)?
 - Describe how you came to see different leadership personalities.
 - What were the beginning affirmations of your gifts?
 - Were there situations that made you think negatively about ministry?
- Educational and life experience
 - Describe yourself as a student.
 - What caught your attention?
 - What bored you?
 - What were the extra-curricular things that invited you to leadership or teamwork?
 - How has your educational and life experience prepared you for ministry?
- Lay ministry training and experience
 - Who would you consider mentors? What did you learn from them?
 - What roles were you given in church – Sunday school, youth group, sponsor, elder, ...
 - What are learnings from your first pastorate/ministry assignment?
 - What were the affirmations along the way?
 - Were you given freedom to fail?

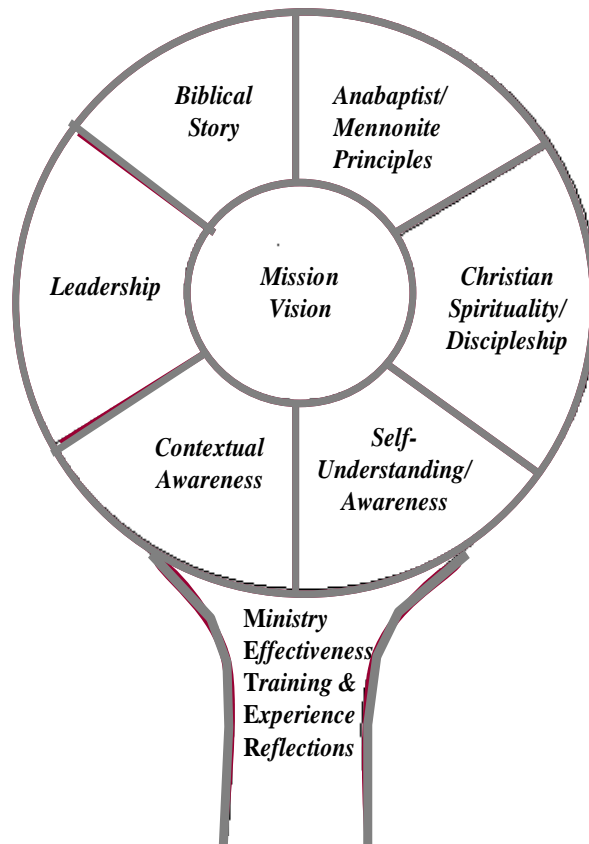
II. Growing in Ministry

A. *Reflecting with bishop/overseer*

The relationship between the pastor and the bishop/overseer is significant in the leadership system of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Envisioned here is a time of careful discernment in which the pastor and the bishop/overseer (or designate) review the areas of growth together. The pastor then chooses several areas to work with for a time (e.g., one per quarter or three for the year). After a year they will review the areas and renew the plan.

B. Introduction of *METER* (Ministry Effectiveness Training & Experience Reflection)

The Faith & Life Commission of Virginia Mennonite Conference offers the Ministry Effectiveness Training and Experience Reflection (*METER*) as a guide for growth for all credentialed leaders. Designed primarily as a tool for interaction between the Bishop/Overseer and Pastor, it will serve also as a guide for those serving in other-than-congregational ministries.



Mission Vision

Participating in the mission of God in the world is the core value of leaders in the church. All of our learning – whether through reflecting on life experience or through deliberate study – is guided by our passion to participate in what God is doing in the world.

Mennonite Church USA has **VISION: HEALING AND HOPE** as its vision statement:

***God calls us
to be followers of Jesus Christ and,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace, so that
God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.***

In *METER* we invite you to reflect on the growth areas, how your mission vision is shaping each area, and how your development in each area is shaping your mission vision.

C. Mission/Vision projection

Project a personal mission/vision statement. (Attachment 1)

D. Growth areas and affirmations

1. **Biblical Story:** As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to be **deeply and firmly grounded in the Biblical story and text.** (Attachment 2)
2. **Anabaptist/Mennonite Story, Theology and Principles:** As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to **understand and embody core Anabaptist principles.** (Attachment 3)
3. **Christian Spirituality/Discipleship**
As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to grow in a **spirituality that is continually being shaped by the everlasting love of God the Father, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.** (Attachment 4)
4. **Self-understanding and Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence**
As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I seek a **healthy sense of self and a capacity to enter into and maintain healthy relationships with others.** (Attachment 5)
5. **Contextual Awareness**
As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to grow in my ability to **recognize, interpret, and creatively engage** the natural, cultural, ecclesial and global environments of **my ministry context.** (Attachment 6)
6. **Leadership**
As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to grow in my **capacity for leadership.** I will tend the position (office) of minister, my ministering self, and the tasks of ministry. (Attachment 7)

E. Owning the Growth Journey

While it may be helpful to respond to the initial discernment questions in each area, it will likely be more productive to focus on one or two areas for a period of time. As you and your bishop/overseer reflect together, make a note of your intentions for the next quarter/six months/year and set a time to reflect on the journey. (Attachment 8)

I Thessalonians 5: ²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. (NIV)

This document and the attachments can be downloaded. From www.vmconf.org/faith-life, go to 'METER (Ministry Effectiveness Training & Enhancement Reflection)' – 'Growing in Ministry Journey (With Attachments).'

Attachment 1

II. Growing in Ministry

Mission/Vision Worksheet

Mission/Vision projection

Project an initial personal mission/vision statement.

(An example: *“Having received the love of God, I am called to be an instrument of the love of Jesus in my home, church, and the world. I seek to be formed by the Holy Spirit as I am biblically and culturally informed for leadership in my context.”*)

What difference does this make?

- How will this affect how I prioritize the use of my time?
- What gifts do I bring to this vision/mission?
- What are the resources I need to move forward?

Amended/edited/revised after first year.

Amended/edited/revised after second year.

Amended/edited/revised after third year.

Attachment 2

II. Growing in Ministry

D. Growth areas and affirmations

1. Biblical Story Worksheet

Biblical Story: As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to be **deeply and firmly grounded in the Biblical story and text.**

I. Initial discernment

- How have you acquired your knowledge of the Bible?
- What questions do you have about how the Bible was formed?
- How are you letting the Biblical text and story form you?
- What new discoveries about the Bible have you made recently?
- What new questions are emerging?
- Reflect on the importance of interpreting the Bible through the lens of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Evaluate how you communicate the message of the Bible through preaching and teaching.
- How are you helping your congregation become a community that ‘searches the scriptures?’

II. Plan for growth [see Attachment 8]

Resources I intend to explore ... (books, seminars, case studies, webinars, subscriptions, course work – online or on location, ...) [See METER, ‘Resources for the Journey’ at www.vmconf.org/faith-life]

In addition to consultations with my overseer, I would like to be in touch with... (mentor, spiritual director, ministry peer group, ...)

Attachment 3

II. Growing in Ministry

D. Growth areas and affirmations

2. Anabaptist/Mennonite Story, Theology and Principles Worksheet

Anabaptist/Mennonite Story, Theology and Principles: As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to **understand and embody core Anabaptist principles.**

I. Initial Discernment

- How have you come to embrace the Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective as a holistic foundation for faith in Christ?

- Review your awareness of the origins of Anabaptism and the various historical streams that have been shaped by it.

- Reflect on *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and on how it informs your ministry.

- Evaluate your commitment to practice and teach the Anabaptist values of discipleship, community, and mission (e.g., joining evangelism and peacemaking).

- How are you leading your congregation to embrace and share the love of Jesus for all?

II. Plan for Growth [see Attachment 8]

Resources I intend to explore ... (books, seminars, case studies, study group on *Confession of Faith*, webinars, subscriptions, course work – online or on location, ...) [See METER, ‘Resources for the Journey’ at www.vnconf.org/faith-life]

In addition to consultations with my overseer, I would like to be in touch with... (mentor, spiritual director, ministry peer group, ...)

Attachment 4

II. Growing in Ministry

D. Growth areas and affirmations

3. Christian Spirituality/Discipleship Worksheet

Christian Spirituality/Discipleship: As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to grow in a **spirituality that is continually being shaped by the everlasting love of God the Father, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.**

I. Initial Discernment

- How have you been shaped by your understanding and response to God's love as expressed fully in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?

- Reflect on your spiritual formation practices and your openness to discover what God is doing in the world.

- Evaluate your willingness and capacity to incarnate/live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed (I Peter 3) and to equip others to do the same.

- In what ways are you able to provide healthy pastoral care and counsel that leads in the spiritual formation of others?

II. Plan for Growth [see Attachment 8]

Resources I intend to explore ... (books, seminars, case studies, webinars, subscriptions, course work – online or on location, ...) [See METER, 'Resources for the Journey' at www.vmconf.org/faith-life]

In addition to consultations with my overseer, I would like to be in touch with... (mentor, spiritual director, ministry peer group, ...)

Attachment 5

II. Growing in Ministry

D. Growth areas and affirmations

4. Self-understanding and Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence Worksheet

Self-understanding and Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence: As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I seek a **healthy sense of self and a capacity to enter into and maintain healthy relationships with others.**

I. Initial Discernment

- Reflect on your call to ministry and continuing discernment of your spiritual gifts, ministry capacities and roles.

- Which roles do you enjoy best?

- What have you learned about yourself from examining your family of origin?

- Give examples of how you have been able to work with your own responsiveness/reactivity.

- Under what circumstances would you consider counseling or therapy for yourself?

- Evaluate your own practice of counseling. Think through when you would plan to refer others for further professional help.

- Evaluate your ability to follow your own convictions, disagree with others without malice, and live creatively with differences and conflict.
(Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love)

- Consider your commitment to life-long learning about life, self, and others.

- How are you managing sexual boundaries and dealing with the general stresses of ministry?

II. Plan for Growth [see Attachment 8]

Resources I intend to explore ... (books, seminars, case studies, webinars, subscriptions, course work – online or on location, ...) [See METER, 'Resources for the Journey' at www.vmconf.org/faith-life]

In addition to consultations with my overseer, I would like to be in touch with... (mentor, spiritual director, ministry peer group, ...)

Attachment 6

II. Growing in Ministry

D. Growth areas and affirmations

5. Contextual Awareness Worksheet

Contextual Awareness: As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to grow in my ability to **recognize, interpret, and creatively engage** the natural, cultural, ecclesial and global environments of **my ministry context**.

I. Initial Discernment

- Describe the various influences in your life up until now. What has been your cross cultural experience?

- Describe the natural, cultural, religious and world influences that are shaping your current ministry context.

- Evaluate your commitment to listen deeply in your ministry context – to bridge across the theological spectrum, and to engage cross-culturally.

- Reflect on how you can lead the church to be a sign of God’s reign in your context.

- How do you plan to cultivate ecumenical and inter-religious connections?

II. Plan for Growth [see Attachment 8]

Resources I intend to explore ... (books, seminars, case studies, webinars, subscriptions, course work – online or on location, ...) [See METER, ‘Resources for the Journey’ at www.vmconf.org/faith-life]

In addition to consultations with my overseer, I would like to be in touch with... (mentor, spiritual director, ministry peer group, ...)

Attachment 7

II. Growing in Ministry

D. Growth areas and affirmations

6. Leadership Worksheet

Leadership: As a minister ordained in Mennonite Church USA, I want to grow in my **capacity for leadership**. I will tend the position (office) of minister, my ministering self, and the tasks of ministry.

I. Initial Discernment

- Describe your leadership style and the factors that have shaped it.

- How does the way you are leading affect your congregation?

- Consider these affirmations and how these values intersect with your context.
Leadership that is consistent with Anabaptist values will:
 - a. be rooted and grounded in one's relationship with Jesus.
 - b. aspire to lead as Jesus led.
 - c. cultivate an environment of trust and confidence where the gifts and ministry capacities of others are collaboratively evoked and empowered.
 - d. be clear about one's own gifts and calling.
 - e. recognize that one does not have all the gifts needed by the church (Eph 4) and will respect, welcome and enhance the leadership of those with other gifts.
 - f. be accountable to the church that grants authority for ministry.
 - g. have the capacity to competently lead the church in its public rituals.
 - h. be able to speak for the church in its ecumenical relationships.
 - i. have a basic understanding and appreciation for systemic and organizational dynamics.
 - j. be able to help lead in organizational change.
 - k. help lead the church in fulfilling its missional calling.

II. Plan for Growth [see Attachment 8]

Resources I intend to explore ... (books, seminars, case studies, webinars, subscriptions, course work – online or on location, ...) [See METER, 'Resources for the Journey' at www.vmconf.org/faith-life]

In addition to consultations with my overseer, I would like to be in touch with... (mentor, spiritual director, ministry peer group, ...)

Attachment 8

II. Growing in Ministry

E. Owing the Growth Journey

1. Annual Growth Plan Worksheet

Based on your reflections, identify two or three areas of potential growth and note specific plans the next year.

1. **Biblical Story** (Attachment 2)
2. **Anabaptist/Mennonite Story, Theology and Principles** (Attachment 3)
3. **Christian Spirituality/Discipleship** (Attachment 4)
4. **Self-understanding and Self-awareness, Emotional Intelligence** (Attachment 5)
5. **Contextual Awareness** (Attachment 6)
6. **Leadership** (Attachment 7)

The areas I have chosen to work with in this next year (ending month/year) _____ are:

1. _____ which I will work at in the following ways:

2. _____ which I will work at in the following ways:

3. _____ which I will work at in the following ways:

After a year of reflecting,

➤ Reaffirm or revise your mission/vision statement (Attachment 1):

➤ Choose 2 or 3 areas of potential growth for the next year: