

Report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency

For years, General Synod has exercised oversight of ministerial formation through its two seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA). Like the RCA seminaries, the MFCA has possessed a deep commitment to developing faithful, educated, and Reformed leaders. Its purpose is the preparation of men and women for the ministries of Christ and his church, most specifically those called to the office of minister of Word and sacrament.

From its inception 23 years ago, the MFCA has been tasked with and has embraced a mandate to expand opportunities for RCA ordination to groups not previously served. This is clearly stated in the MFCA Board of Trustees' mission statement:

The Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA) exists to strengthen the ministry of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America by awarding Certificates of Fitness for Ministry to specific groups of candidates and working cooperatively with partners inside and outside the RCA to broaden opportunities for diverse ministerial formation.

As of July 2021, there were 60 candidates enrolled in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process; 11 (5.6 percent) of these are pursuing the Certificate of Fitness through the Approved Alternate Route (AAR), which did not exist until MFCA was officially established in 1999.

Over 28 percent (28.3 percent) of the candidates are female, with two enrolled in the AAR and 15 enrolled in Reformed Candidates' Supervision and Care (RCSC).

Thirty-five percent of the total candidates represent racial/ethnic minorities.

Budgets and Finances

In March 2020, the MFCA Board of Trustees was informed that the General Synod Council (GSC), in deliberating the budgets for 2021, decided to dissolve the agency and eliminate MFCA (and present recommendations to the General Synod in order to effect this) and cease its assessment funding for 2021. The MFCA Board of Trustees expressed its disappointment to the general secretary and requested that it be allowed to operate as long as possible from the reserves it had built up over the years, so current candidates could complete the process of seeking the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (CFM). The request was granted, and the decision was made to continue to operate using the reserve funds. The Pastoral Formation Oversight Board (PFOB) is working on a proposal for the General Synod regarding the future of MFCA and the CFM, but some aspects of that proposal are still being worked out, so it will not be brought to the 2021 General Synod. For further information, see the report of the PFOB.

Beginning in January 2021, the budget was cut in a number of ways. MFCA transitioned to one certification committee serving the candidates in both the AAR and RCSC programs instead of having two separate committees. The board and the certification committee both met via Zoom. All MFCA courses are being offered via distance learning, including RCA Worship and Seminar for Pastoral Formation.

With the retirement of the executive director, Cornelis Kors, in July 2020 and with the news of the MFCA being dissolved, the board hired an interim executive director, David Schutt, on a

part-time basis. The travel budget of the executive director was nearly eliminated, and the MFCA staff have utilized Zoom to meet one-on-one with candidates. Staff have offered group Zoom meetings to stay connected with candidates and answer questions.

Certificates of Fitness Awarded

The Board of Trustees awarded fourteen Certificates of Fitness for Ministry in 2020, ten through the RCSC process and four through the AAR process.

Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC)

Tim David Grade	Classis of Rocky Mountains
Shawn R. Johnson	Classis of Southwest Michigan
James R. Daniel Kirk	Classis of the City
Benjamin J. Martin	Classis of Delaware-Raritan
Susan Avery Mulholland	Classis of New Brunswick
Carl Joseph Pascual	Classis of the City
Christopher David Thompson	Classis of Great Lakes City
Donald Patrick Van Antwerpen	Classis of New Brunswick
Laura Kay Wessels	Classis of Illinois
Mark Richard Westerfield	Classis of Passaic Valley

Approved Alternate Route (AAR)

Richard Alejandro Caballero	Classis of Southwest
Anthony Joseph Ciaccio	Classis of Orange
Susan Lynn Rand Grade	Classis of Rocky Mountains
Brandon James Morrow	Classis of East Sioux

The Board of Trustees awarded twenty-four Certificates of Fitness for Ministry in 2021, eighteen through the RCSC process and six through the AAR process.

Reformed Candidates Supervision & Care (RCSC)

William Gerard Barlow	Classis of Queens
Jonathan L. Bassett	Classis of the City
Jonathan Amos Caley	Classis of New Brunswick
Susan H. Converse	Classis of Nassau-Suffolk
James Kenton Earley	Classis of Minnesota
Jesse Henkle	Classis of Pleasant Prairie
Grant William Hoekstra	Classis of Minnesota
Shen Chyung (Joseph) Jou	Classis of British Columbia
Yunna Kim	Classis of Delaware-Raritan
Hui Fung (Kelvin) Kong	Classis of Queens
Benjamin Jin Yong Lee	Classis of Greater Palisades
Chih-Ying Pearl Liao	Classis of Queens
Brogan Allen Mohlenkamp	Classis of Dakota
Zachary Kim Pearce	Classis of Orange
Riana Richelle Shaw Robinson	Classis of the City
Keith Michael Sietstra	Classis of West Sioux

Toby O'Brien Thomack
Frederick Henry Wezeman

Classis of Wisconsin
Classis of Chicago

Approved Alternate Route (AAR)

Kelli Lynn Glasgo
Chao-Jui Huang
Eric Lester Mitchell
Kevin Paul Platte
Nicholas A. Rama
Akiko Fujita Van Antwerpen

Classis of West Sioux
Classis of Queens
Classis of the City
Classis of Southwest Michigan
Classis of Mid-Hudson
Classis of New Brunswick

Alternate Means and Petitions

1) *Reduction in 24-Month Requirement:* The Classis of New Brunswick request, on behalf of Donald Patrick Van Antwerpen, to reduce the length of enrollment was approved by the MFCA Board of Trustees at its June 2019 meeting. The board was able to identify a sufficient period of supervised ministry experience to substitute for deficiencies, thus determining the candidate is qualified to earn the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Section 3 [2019 edition, p. 45]).

2) *Alternate Means for the Hebrew Biblical Language:* The Classis of Mid-Hudson request, on behalf of Richard Downey, to substitute ten years of utilizing Logos Bible Study tools, extensive use of vocabulary resources, along with reading a number of related texts, was approved by the board (*BCO*, Chapter I, Part II, Article 12, Section 3 [2019 edition, pp. 47-48]).

Other Transitions

Before learning of the GSC decision to dissolve the agency, the executive director, Cornelis Kors, submitted his resignation in order to retire. The board accepted his resignation and celebrates his 29 years of service. The board declared Kors "Executive Director Emeritus." This took effect at his retirement.

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WHEREAS the Rev. Dr. Cornelis G. Kors, who was ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America in 1991 and served in a variety of ways throughout his years of ministry; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kors has served as the director of the Theological Education Agency (TEA), the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency (MFCA), and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA), leading ministerial formation into a new era in its short and distinguished history; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kors served Fuller Theological Seminary as ecclesiastical faculty since 1991; and

WHEREAS he has served the Reformed Church in America as a General Synod professor since 2013; and

WHEREAS during his tenure, almost 600 people have embarked into gospel ministry after earning the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry (CFM); and

WHEREAS Dr. Kors has taught courses and served as dean of the agency's program, working in close relationship with faculty and certification committees; and

WHEREAS he has served the Reformed Church in America faithfully on its boards, committees, and commissions alongside the presidents and faculty of the RCA seminaries; and

WHEREAS under Dr. Kors's leadership, numerous innovative movements and practices were implemented in the formation and credentialing of ministerial candidates, including the Approved Alternate Route; and

WHEREAS he has worked diligently at reducing costs for candidates in the CFM process; and

WHEREAS Dr. Kors has streamlined the CFM process, developing RCA courses, many offered exclusively online; and

WHEREAS he has been not only a faithful and supportive mentor to candidates, traveling hundreds of thousands of miles, but also a friend whose care and concern have touched those who have walked with him in the CFM process:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, in its 214th regular session, meeting October 14–19, 2021, in Tucson, Arizona, expresses its deepest gratitude to Dr. Kors for his service to the agency and its church, and offers its prayers for a fulfilling retirement along with his wife, Jane.

AND BE IT RESOLVED that Dr. Cornelis G. Kors be declared a General Synod professor emeritus as of October 19, 2021.