

Report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency

For years, the General Synod has exercised oversight of ministerial formation through its two seminaries and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA). Like the Reformed Church in America (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.

Given the authority delegated to it by General Synod, the MFCA board, its certification committee members, and its staff continue to accomplish this mission by:

- Awarding the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry to RCA candidates graduating from non-RCA seminaries (via Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care, RCSC) or pursuing an approved alternate route (AAR).
- Through the certification committee and staff, evaluating the progress of candidates and their continuation in and completion of the process leading to the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry, as their achievements dictate.
- Periodically ensuring that the RCA Standards for Preparation for Ministry are upheld in the oversight of the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry and are reviewed, with recommendations made to the appropriate RCA body if the MFCA board believes changes would be appropriate.
- Providing graduate level courses designed to meet the standards for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry.
- Collaborating with and providing counsel to congregations and classes in the care and nurture of candidates for the ministry who are seeking the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through the MFCA.
- Interpreting and advocating for the work of the MFCA to the larger church.

As of March 2022, there were 55 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 25 percent (25.4 percent) of the candidates are female, with 2 women enrolled in the AAR and 12 enrolled in the RCSC.

Thirty-eight percent (38.1 percent) of the total candidates represent racial/ethnic minorities.

How the MFCA Board Operates

By permission and approval of the General Synod Council (GSC), the MFCA Board of Trustees operates under Policy Governance. In accordance with the tenets of Policy Governance, the board intentionally focuses on visioning and policy development. It sets clear goals for the agency by delegating the means of achieving them to the executive director and staff, subject only to explicit executive limitations. The board stays abreast of the MFCA program through the monitoring reports of the director.

Budgets and Finances

Following the October 2021 meeting of General Synod, MFCA was no longer required to operate off its reserves and began to receive assessment funds again. MFCA staff have continued to operate at a reduced budget.

The staff, board, and certification committee utilize Zoom, which reduces if not eliminates the cost of travel in the budget.

All MFCA courses are offered via distance learning, which reduces the cost of in-person intensive courses.

In January 2022, the chief financial officer requested that the MFCA consider the option of working remotely in order to eliminate the cost of office space from the budget. Steps are being taken to make this an operational possibility for the staff.

The MFCA operates under the leadership of an interim executive director, the Rev. David Schutt, on a part-time basis. MFCA staff utilize Zoom to meet one on one for the care and direction of candidates and offer group Zoom meetings as another option for maintaining connection with candidates and to answer questions.

Certificates of Fitness Awarded

The Board of Trustees awarded seven Certificates of Fitness for Ministry since the last reporting in October 2021, all seven through the RCSC process.

Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC)

Jane Isabelle Carlson	Classis of Wisconsin
Richard M. Downey	Classis of Mid-Hudson
Andrew Michael Garbarino	Classis of the City
Peter Lawrence Kolb	Classis of West Sioux
Ryan Matthew McCormick	Classis of the City
Evan Paul Meester	Classis of Pleasant Prairie
Tara Ann Woodward	Classis of East Sioux

Alternate Means and Petitions

Reduction in 24-Month Requirement: The Classis of Holland request, on behalf of Anna Lynn Langholz, to reduce the length of enrollment was approved by the MFCA Board of Trustees at its October 2021 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 (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 11, Section 3 [2021 edition, p. 47]).