

Report of the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency

General Synod, for years, has exercised oversight of ministerial formation through its agents: Western Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA). Like the two 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 24 years ago, the MFCA has been tasked with and has embraced a mandate to expand opportunities for Reformed Church in America (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 who are 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; and
- Interpreting and advocating for the work of the MFCA to the larger church.

As of March 2023, there were 42 candidates enrolled in the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry process; 5 of these candidates (12 percent) are pursuing the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry through the Approved Alternate Route (AAR), which did not exist until the MFCA was officially established in 1999.

Over 33 percent (33.3 percent) of the MFCA's candidates are female; of these, 2 are enrolled in the AAR, and 12 are enrolled in the RCSC.

Forty-three percent (42.9 percent) of the total number of MFCA candidates represent racial and 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

The 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.

This past year, all MFCA courses were offered via distance learning, which reduces the cost of in-person intensive courses. The MFCA staff have been meeting with New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary, and beginning this fall, MFCA candidates will likely be directed to take the RCA core courses at one of the two seminaries, which will help further reduce the MFCA budget.

In January 2022, the GSC's chief financial officer requested that the MFCA staff consider the option of working remotely in order to eliminate the cost of office space from the budget. This transition is complete, and the staff now operates remotely.

The MFCA operates under the leadership of a part-time interim executive director, Rev. David Schutt. The MFCA staff met in-person once, but all other staff meetings were conducted via Zoom communication for the year 2022. The MFCA staff also utilize Zoom to meet one-on-one with candidates for care and direction.

Certificates of Fitness Awarded

The Board of Trustees awarded ten Certificates of Fitness for Ministry since the last reporting in June 2022, all ten through the RCSC process.

Reformed Candidates Supervision and Care (RCSC)

Eric Burrows-Stone	Classis of the City
Nicole Contreras	Classis of Greater Palisades
Zachariah Alexander DeWitt	Classis of Minnesota
Gent Richard Grush	Classis of the City

Grant William Hoekstra	Classis of Minnesota
Joshua Caleb Jalandoon	Classis of the City
Shang Kang	Classis of British Columbia
Anna Lynn Langholz	Classis of Holland
Shelly-Ann Nathalee Richmond	Classis of Brooklyn
Ciro W. Romero	Classis of Greater Palisades