

**Online Ministry Reflection Seminar (MRS)**  
**MF 1A03, 2A03, 3A03**

**Class Time:** The class is held online throughout both the fall and winter semesters. There is no set meeting time other than one Saturday gathering; Saturday Sept. 15 (9:30-3:00). Also, in early January (exact time and date TBD) there will be one further class gathering via an online platform (exact information will be given prior to this meeting).

**Location:** Online in an avenue to Learn course shell

**Instructor(s):** Dr. Lee Beach (beachl@mcmaster.ca, ext. 23502, Rm #237)

MRS advisors (each group includes a faculty member and local practitioner)

**First Class:** September 15<sup>th</sup> in person plenary session at McMaster Divinity College (Attendance is mandatory).

Group activities begin the week of Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Course Description:**

Ministry Reflection Seminar (MRS) is a small group based learning experience that is designed to provide a place for interactive discussion and group theological reflection on the lived experiences of ministry. MRS groups occur in connection with the student's field placement.

The seminars are rooted in an action-reflection learning model designed to cultivate theologically reflective practitioners. The seminars provide a forum for integrating the academic, spiritual, relational and vocational dimensions of ministry through a guided process of group reflection. The seminars also are intended to provide a safe space for exploring and clarifying one's gifts, graces, and growing edges in ministry within a corporate, caring community context.

In the online MRS students will be expected to participate in the group by engaging in group discussion by posting assignments and interaction with classmates posts several times per week throughout the full academic year (Sept.-Apr.). Ministry Reflection Seminars differ from many other kinds of courses in that the starting point for discussion is the lived experiences of ministry. On a rotational basis, students take turns presenting to the group a written *Theological Reflection Report* (details will be provided) that provides the focal point for guided group reflection. Students also take turns being the group facilitator. The reflective process draws on many kinds of knowledge including scripture, theology, Christian tradition, culture, other disciplinary knowledge, as well as personal, experiential and spiritual insights. Through the collective struggle to "think theologically" about the puzzles, dilemmas and uncertainties encountered in ministry practice and lived experience, the hoped-for outcome is new insight and creative responses that can be taken directly back into the placement context.

**Objectives:**

**Knowing:**

MRS will help students to develop their own theology and the skill to reflect on ministry theologically drawing from personal experience as a resource for theological development. Further it should offer to students the opportunity to integrate theological thought with ministry practice. This includes a focus on the following:

- a. Significance of Theological Reflection on Experience
- b. Integration of Theological resources with ministry practice
- c. Articulation of Theological understanding

### **Being:**

Spiritual formation is the cornerstone of effective ministry. Formation for ministry must introduce basic spiritual practices for spiritual growth and long term inner health. These include:

- a. Understanding and cultivating self care in ministry
- b. Understanding and cultivating the practice of spiritual disciplines in ministry
- c. Understanding and cultivating a vision for ministry as discipleship

Ministry formation should help students get in touch with who they are as a ministering person, both strengths and growing edges. It should help them gain an honest understanding of the potential baggage that they bring to ministry. Further, it needs to provide them with the opportunity to explore and identify their sense of personal calling to ministry. Including:

- a. Understanding ones particular personality.
- b. Understanding your Family of Origin
- c. Discerning your Calling to ministry
- d. Identifying your Gifts and Leadership Aptitudes

### **Doing:**

MRS help students to focus on the development of ministry skills with a view to skill discovery and enhancement. Including:

- a. Identification of key skills required for Christian ministry
- b. Reflection on vital ministry skills with feedback from a others
- c. Development as self-directed, collaborative learner through engagement in a learning network of peer group members and experienced practitioners.

## **Requirements**

### **1. The Placement Context**

Students must secure, in consultation with the Director of Ministry Formation (Dr. Lee Beach) a field placement that will provide them with 240 hours of ministry experience throughout the academic year (aprox. 8-10 hrs. per week). This placement is designed to be a supervised placement, therefore a qualified supervisor/mentor must be identified who will agree to meet with the student on a weekly (or at least bi-weekly) basis for support and mutual

reflection on ministry experience. This can be a new placement, or it may be the students place of employment or current volunteer ministry.

## **PLACEMENT OPTIONS**

The Ministry Formation office has an extensive list of approved field placement sites, including churches of various denominations, para-church organizations, healthcare facilities, campus ministries, correctional institutions, and community service agencies. All of these placement sites have indicated their willingness to welcome and mentor student interns. Student-initiated placement proposals, however, are also considered. Placement selection is a collaborative process involving the student, the proposed supervisor, the placement site, and the Director of Ministry Formation. Every effort is made to match students with a placement setting that is consonant with their vocational goals, denominational affiliations, geographic preferences, and ministry interests.

**\*\*For further information on placements and the role of the supervisor please see the appendix of this syllabus.**

## **2. Course Assignments**

1. First Ministry Reflection Report (Fall semester)
2. Second Ministry Reflection Report (Winter semester)
3. First Group Facilitation Report (Fall semester)
4. Second Group Facilitation Report (Winter semester)
5. Ministry Learning Covenant (due Oct. 3rd)
6. MRS group participation
7. Ministry Portfolio (due at the end of Winter semester)

\* Each of these assignments will be thoroughly explained and extensive guidelines given during the Saturday class gathering on Sept. 15. Advanced information can be obtained from the Director of Ministry Formation (Dr. Lee Beach). Due dates for assignments will be available on the first day of class when a schedule is developed for the group. Each week students will be expected to offer a minimum of two substantial interactions with the group report being discussed that week as well as a minimum of two short interactions. A clear rubric and examples of expectations will be provided at the class meeting Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **3. Grading**

1. Placement - Pass or Fail
2. First Ministry Reflection Report - 15%
3. Second Ministry Reflection Report - 15 %
4. First Group Facilitation Report - 15%
5. Second Group Facilitation Report - 15%

6. MRS group participation- 20%
6. Ministry Learning Covenant - 10%
7. Ministry Portfolio - 10%

\*specific details on how grades are assessed will be provided. Late Reflection reports will be subject to a penalty of up to half a grade for every day late. Late facilitation reports will be subject to a penalty of a full grade if late. Portfolio's and covenants may receive a grade of "0" if not submitted on time.

## **Appendix: Further Information on Placements**

### **MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR**

Selecting and arranging a placement is a collaborative process. Students begin by arranging to meet individually with the Director of Ministry Formation to discuss their ministry interests, vocational goals, and learning objectives. This consultation meeting with the Director must take place before any arrangements are negotiated with a particular placement setting or supervisor.

A listing and description of current placement options is available for students' perusal in the Ministry Formation office. Student-initiated placement proposals are also considered. After meeting with the Director of Ministry Formation, the student arranges a site visit and an inquiry interview with a prospective supervisor to determine if there is a mutually agreeable fit. The student, the supervisor, and the Director of Ministry Formation must all be in agreement before the placement is finalized.

### **GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING A PLACEMENT**

- Students are encouraged to select placements that provide them with a *broad* exposure to the tasks, responsibilities, and challenges of Christian ministry within their chosen field.
- Students are expected to be self-directed adult learners who are proactive in pursuing the kinds of experiential learning opportunities that meet their individual learning needs and vocational goals.
- Students in the M.Div. and Dip.Min. Programs are encouraged to have at least one placement in a church setting. Students heading towards ordained congregational ministry should have at least two out of the three placements in a church.
- Students are encouraged to select at least one placement in a cross-cultural setting in order to prepare for ministry in the contemporary context of diversity.
- To maximize new learning experiences, students should seek at least one placement in a church where they do not currently attend or hold membership. If, however, the student is in a paid ministry position, he or she may arrange to fulfill their ministry formation requirements in that setting provided that a placement supervisor is appointed and objectives for new learning and development are set and met.
- MDiv and Dip Min Students may remain in a placement for three consecutive years only if deemed appropriate to the attainment of new learning goals.

## **GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL INTERVIEWS BETWEEN STUDENTS & PROSPECTIVE SUPERVISORS**

The following are useful questions to consider when students and prospective supervisors are meeting for an initial inquiry interview:

- What personal learning goals does the student hope to meet in this placement?
- What ministry opportunities, learning experiences, and resources can the placement provide?
- What knowledge, experience, and skill does the student bring from previous experience and training?
- What does the supervisor consider to be his/her ministry strengths and supervision style?
- What is the student's preferred learning style and how does this fit with the supervisor's approach?
- What are the supervisor's expectations of the student's participation in the placement in terms of roles, responsibilities, level of independence, etc.?
- Is there a match between what the student expects and what the supervisor and placement can offer?

## **THE ROLE OF THE PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR**

Placement Supervisors are qualified, experienced ministry practitioners who serve as ministry mentors and engage the student in the process of theological reflection and ministry formation. They are responsible for coordinating, facilitating and assessing the student's learning in the placement. The placement supervisor may function at various times as a mentor, role model, coach, accountability partner, colleague, and consultant, but the primary focus is on education for ministry. In special circumstances, arrangements may be made for co-supervisors or for an off-site supervisor.

Specific responsibilities of the placement supervisor include:

- Submit a *Placement Information Form* to the College (supplied by the Director of Ministry Formation upon request).
- Interview prospective student(s) and collaborate with the Director of Ministry Formation in discerning a good match.
- Collaborate with the student in developing a learning plan outlined in the *Learning/Ministry Covenant*.
- Facilitate learning and ministry opportunities that will foster the student's growth.
- Encourage independent yet supervised experience.
- Meet with the student weekly (or at least bi-weekly) for supervision focused on theological reflection on the student's ministry experiences.
- Provide continuous feedback to the student throughout the placement in addition to a formal written evaluation at the end of the placement.
- Participate in orientation and training workshops offered by the College (in person or online).
- Liaise with the College through the Director of Ministry Formation.

## **QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT AS A PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR**

Supervisors are considered as field instructors working in partnership with the faculty of McMaster Divinity College in educating students for ministry. They are selected and approved on the basis of the following criteria:

- Agreement with the mission and purpose of McMaster Divinity College.
- Theologically trained with a proven record of effective ministry.
- Engaged in a ministry setting that is supportive of educating students for ministry.
- Well-established in their current ministry context for a minimum of one year.
- Committed to facilitating the student's identified learning and ministry goals.
- Desire to learn and engage in the process of theological reflection on ministry experiences.
- Willing to follow the Ministry Formation Program objectives, expectations and evaluation methods as outlined in the *Ministry Formation Manual*.
- Completed the Ministry Formation component of their own personal program at McMaster Divinity College, if a current student. (A current student cannot be supervised by another student if they do not meet this criterion).