

Instructions for Candidate Ministry Transitions Packet

You have decided it is time to consider new positions for ministry. Be assured that the denominational ministerial leadership offices and your area conference minister want to work with you!

1. Begin by making known your intent to your area conference minister. Talk to your area Conference minister about next steps. If you have never filled out the Ministerial Leadership Information form (MLI) then you can begin the process by filling out the [online MLI inquiry form](#) and submitting it to the denominational office. You will then be sent a secure username and password to access the online MLI form.

If you have filled out a Ministerial Leadership Information form in the past, then contact the denominational office to have your MLI reopened to begin the updating process at www.mennodata.org. The office can also give you your username and password, if you do not remember it. If possible, it is advisable to begin the process at least six to ten months in advance of the time when a new pastoral position is desired.

2. Read and study the online material carefully. We invite you to work at this task with a sense of discovery of new self-understanding and hope for the future. This process may result in one of the most important life commitments you will make.
3. Obtain copies of two booklets you'll need. On the Ministerial Leadership Information form, you are asked to respond to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. [Confession-of-Faith-in-a-Mennonite-Perspective](#). The other booklet is, *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership* which can be purchased at [A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership](#). This book describes our polity for ministerial leadership which includes credentialing understandings and procedures. There will also be a question on the Vision: Healing and Hope which you can find at <http://mennoniteusa.org/what-we-believe/>
4. Complete the **Ministerial Leadership Information form** (MLI). See instructions on the following page.

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Ministerial Leadership Office
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Instructions and friendly advice for filling out the Mennonite Leadership Information form (MLI)

1. Prepare an accurate and balanced portrait of yourself in the MLI. Furnish all answers to the best of your ability. Remember you are writing to congregational search committees, not seminary professors. Using readily accessible language is the best approach. Since the MLI is an introduction of you, there is a character limit on certain sections of the MLI to encourage short, precise answers. You can always expand on your answers in an interview process.
2. Key questions that tell a lot about you are the transition question (**Part I.B. Transition**) and your view of the role of a minister as a leader in the congregation (**Part III**).
4. You are free to indicate the amount of salary you think you need. An alternate approach is to state that you will accept the denominational guidelines (The guidelines are developed by the denominational offices, and posted on the website).
5. Be sure to furnish three names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers of reference persons who know you best and with whom you have had contact within the last year or two. Also provide either the name of your area conference minister or if in school, the name of the director of field education (the person who has an awareness of your whole academic experience).
 - If you are a student in training for ministerial leadership, include the director of field education (the person who has an awareness of your whole academic experience.)
 - If you are currently serving in ministerial leadership, include your area conference minister, a ministerial colleague, a lay leader within your congregation and one other person.
 - If you have not been a member of a Mennonite church previously, you will need to have an interview with the Mennonite area conference minister in your region prior to receiving a completed reference form from that person. The name, address and phone number of the area conference minister in your area is available by calling Leadership Development (574-523-3054) (Mennonite Church USA) or 204-888-6781 (Mennonite Church Canada).
6. A completed form indicates openness to considering a ministerial call. When you have completed the MLI, click the submit button and your MLI will immediately go to the country denominational ministerial leadership office you have been in contact with for the access to the form. This office will process your form including contacting your references. This office will forward your form to the other country ministerial leadership office (Canada or US) as well, if you requested that service on the MLI form.
7. Each country ministerial leadership office charges a processing fee and will bill you upon submission of the MLI. This is nonrefundable and does not guarantee a ministry position. The fee is only charged once for a submission of the MLI even when the form is sent to the other country ministerial leadership office. Mennonite Church USA also runs a background check on each person filling out an MLI.
8. The MLI is considered good for a two year period. Updates to references are required after two years and includes a processing fee for updating the form.

Steps in the Process

1. References:

The Denominational office will send out reference forms to the persons you have identified on your MLI to be returned back to the office. It greatly facilitates the process if the candidate checks with their references as to whether they have received and returned their completed form. It is good to contact persons to get their permission to be a reference for you.

When the reference forms have been returned, a verbatim composite of the reference information is created. Confidentiality of the references will be guarded by quoting from the references in random order without using any names.

Nondiscrimination laws appropriately require that we do not ask questions of candidates regarding age, gender, family, health or disabilities, nor do we include information about family in the reference summary. Information needed to plan for a pastor and family regarding housing, etc., may be given during oral interviews.

All references are the property of the denominational ministerial leadership office.

When the Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) form is completed, the composite of references completed, background check run (for US office) and you have paid the processing fee, your candidating file is ready for circulation to area conference ministers who work with congregational search committees.

2. **The National List:**

A list of pastoral candidates with brief biographical information is compiled and posted on a secure site for area conference ministers to view, from which they can request a person's MLI. This list only includes names of persons who request to be on the list and are open to considering a wide geographical range.

The purpose of such a list is intended to introduce potential candidates to area conference ministers over a wide geographic area. However, the appearance of a candidate's name on the list cannot promise the person any ministry position.

Once you have your MLI completed, we encourage you to take initiative to become acquainted with area conference ministers in the geographical areas in which you are interested in serving. A list of area conference ministers is posted on the denominational websites.

The denominational office reserves the right to exclude persons from the list: a) if one or more references raises serious negative issues, or b) if a reference refuses to submit a reference, or c) if an area conference minister or field education supervisor cannot provide a positive recommendation for ministry, or d) if the candidate shows theological incompatibility with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

A candidate's name will be maintained on the list for up to two years. At that point we recommend a discussion take place between the person and the area conference ministers to evaluate some of the candidate's previous experience in ministry and/or recent experiences of candidating in potential congregations. The intent is for the candidate to receive counsel concerning the future. If you wish to be re-listed after being off of the list for a period of time, your MLI form will need to be revised if it is more than two years old.

3. **Contacts:**

An area conference minister is your best ally in searching for a placement; you have an advocate in area conference minister who knows the congregation. Hard, honest questions can be asked of an area conference ministers without compromising your first impression on the search committee.

The most reliable contacts with you as a candidate will come from the area conference ministers. If contacted first by a congregational leader, we strongly recommend that you ask whether the congregation is working with their area conference ministers.

4. **What to do if no one is calling:**

Sometimes your best efforts will not result in making the sought for pastor-congregation connection as quickly as hoped. Sometimes pastoral search committees act too slowly; at other times they seem too hasty and impatient. Do your best to act as responsibly as possible. Pray for God's guidance as you act. And maintain close communication with an area conference minister who is working with the search committee for appropriate counsel. .

5. **Leave-taking:**

There is no exact point of time when resignation from your present position is required or appropriate. During the candidating process, it is wise to consult with your area conference minister to determine the best time to announce your resignation from the congregation you currently serve. Please do not resign hastily without prior thought and outside counsel. We generally advise that candidates retain their current position during the "exploration" phase of the candidating process. However, once you are "negotiating" with one congregation or are introduced publicly to the congregation, it is also time to be announcing your resignation from your present congregation. The Alban Institute has a number of very helpful publications on healthy transitions and goodbyes. See www.alban.org.

Other Resources:

- Denominational offices provide **Salary and Benefits Guidelines** for local congregations to use in preparing the pastor's compensation package. These are also available online on their website.
- A sample **Covenant of Understanding** can be found the denominational website within the pastor salary guidelines. It isn't an attempt to be comprehensive. Almost no pastor receives every possible benefit mentioned. Sometimes there are trade-offs, and you must decide which are important to you. These are areas for negotiation rather than assumed expectations, and congregations will differ in what they can or are willing to offer. The area conference minister can be a good resource during the development of the covenant.
- **Interview Guides** (both for you and for the search committee) are provided online as well. It is our hope that they will help you prepare for the important face-to-face meeting with a potential congregation's search committee as well as conference credentialing committees.

A few additional notes:

The registration of a person with the denominational office and the appearance of a person's name on the periodic list of candidates do not constitute an official endorsement of the individual. Neither does it promise the person any ministry position. The basis for evaluation of any particular person or congregation includes the information given on their respective forms, the information given by references both written and verbal, and the interviewing process between a candidate and a congregation.