



MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL of CHURCHES

JOB DESCRIPTION

Posted 01.18.2019

PROGRAM DIRECTOR: LYDIA FELLOWS

The Massachusetts Council of Churches exists to make the vibrant Church visible. In pursuit of our common Christian witness, we claim a theological foundation of the eternal nature of Christ's Church. Unity is not ours to create, but ours to make visible. In this holy ministry, we believe that we serve a God of abundance who will not fail nor abandon us, but longs for and cheers on the reconciliation of all God's people.

The Massachusetts Council of Churches builds relationships in pursuit of full, visible Christian unity. To serve this mission well, we need a strong, diverse, and dynamic staff. The Program Director will work together with the Director of External Relationships, the Director of Internal Relationships and the Executive Director in a highly collaborative team.

The Program Director will report to the Executive Director.

The Program Director will manage the Lydia Fellows Program, a grant-based program funded by the Lilly Endowment. Their responsibilities will include recruitment of participants, communication with denominational partners, design of annual retreats, implementation of the program, pastoral care of the participants, evaluation, and grant administration. More information on the Lydia Fellows is included in Appendix A.

The position is full time, based in our Boston office, with travel throughout the Commonwealth. Scheduling of work hours will occur under the supervision of the Executive Director, with the understanding that Sunday mornings are not required. This position is grant-based and fully funded for a period of five years. Salary is set at \$56,500, plus benefits.

Specific Responsibilities:

The Program Director is the primary designer, recruiter, implementer, leader, and reporter for the Lydia Fellows program. The Program Director is responsible for the successful creation and facilitation of this program. Most critically, the Program Director is responsible for regular reporting on the program to the Executive Director and Lilly Endowment. We anticipate the creation of a Lydia Fellow Advisory Board, for which the Program Director will serve as primary staff person.

Successful applicants for this position will be familiar with the program proposal in Appendix A.

Qualifications

The Program Director will be someone who is:

- Able to show demonstrated comfort and experience working among different church cultures
- An experienced program designer and implementer
- Culturally competent
- Passionate and convicted in the ministry of reconciliation
- Energized in collaborative working environment
- Enthused in meeting new people
- In love with the Church and identifies the marks of a vibrant, reconciling church around us
- Committed to ecumenical and pastoral sensitivity, including confidentiality as needed
- Able to work efficiently and flexibly, with multiple projects at once
- Committed to and interested in working in an intentionally Christian institution, with openness to working in interfaith collaborations
- Comfortable with ecumenical awkwardness of entering new settings and situations
- Clear in communication, with excellent phone, social media, and interpersonal skills
- Self-starting, highly motivated, and able to function dependably and independently
- Disciplined in documentation
- Attentive to evaluation and able to stay on schedule
- Devoted to the MCC values of Delight, Excellence, Diversity, Relationship and Gratitude

To Apply:

Please send a cover letter, including the names and phone numbers of two references, and resume to council@masscouncilofchurches.org. We will review all applications on a rolling basis.

APPENDIX A

Lydia Fellows Program for Thriving Part-Time Ministry

A. Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Council of Churches is a network of Christians convinced that what binds us together in Christ is stronger than anything that divides us. We nurture a network of relationships among individual Christians, local congregations and seventeen denominations, with the mission of making the vibrant Church visible. In recent years, we have heard more about the struggles of pastors serving part-time in ministry from both the leadership of our member denominations and through our regular visits to local congregations. We tell a story here of rocky soil and struggling congregations. As part-time positions are rapidly increasing in the New England and across the United States, we see three key barriers to thriving in part-time ministry: financial pressure, time, and pastoral identity. The Lydia Fellows program seeks to address these barriers by increasing connectivity, esteem, authenticity, and engagement through financially compensated fellowships. Each cohort of 10 part-time pastors will meet over the course of two years for retreats, dinner, and peer-coaching. Self-evaluations from the beginning and end of the cohort's two years will show how the fellows have grown in connectivity, esteem, authenticity, and engagement. We anticipate that hosting the Lydia Fellows program at the Massachusetts Council of Churches will support our continued efforts to uplift thriving ministries across the Church. This program will increase the points of contact that MCC can have with local churches, expanding the number of relationships and helping us hear more clearly which parts of the Body are suffering and need greater support. We believe this program to support thriving in part-time ministry will enrich the soil and change the story we tell about God's faithfulness even on this rocky ground.

B. Program Purpose and Goals

The goals of the Lydia Fellows program are to:

1. Increase the connectivity among part-time pastors, developing networks of support
2. Increase the esteem for the skills, creativity, and complexity involved in part-time ministry
3. Increase the sense of authenticity and engagement among pastors serving in part-time settings

We believe that increases in connection, esteem, authenticity, and engagement will contribute to the flourishing of pastors serving in part-time settings.

The Lydia Fellows program will attend particularly to the challenges posed by part-time ministry, which is an increasing norm in New England. This program will support pastors from a wide variety of denominations and traditions who work in the Church in less than full time positions. These pastors may identify as part-time, bi-vocational, underemployed, or as working multiple jobs out of economic necessity.

Our plan to remunerate fellows for their time will make learning and peer consultations possible for a new group of pastors who previously have not had access to collegial groups. The preciousness of this opportunity, along with the shared experience of the Fellows, will create the context for new collegial relationships. Based on the “Flourishing in Ministry” research, we trust that “the best mentoring relationships developed organically”(34). Our design, with sufficient retreat time and fellowship meals, gives space for “informal interactions” where “individuals can really get to know each other and thereby discover the deep similarities they share.”

The mission of the Massachusetts Council of Churches is to make the vibrant Church visible. We seek to nurture a non-competitive, mutually affirming religious ecology in our setting, sharing wisdom and resources in ways that make visible God’s continuing work in this place. As part-time ministers become an increasing number of our constituents, investing in their thriving pastoral ministry nurtures the vibrant Church, and helps to rewrite a narrative of mere decline. We believe investing in part-time ministers can help others reimagine what constitutes thriving Christian ministry in New England.

C. Program Activities

The Lydia Fellows program is specifically designed to achieve the goals of increased connectivity, esteem, authenticity, and engagement of part-time pastors through retreat time, dinners, peer-to-peer mentoring, and site visits. To ensure the feasibility of participation for part-time, bi-vocational and ministers employed for supplemental income, the design thinking prioritizes financially compensating participants for participation.

Each 10-pastor cohort of Lydia Fellows will commit to stay together for 2 years. Upon acceptance, each fellow will complete a self-evaluation survey based on the research in Flourishing in Ministry: Emerging Research Insights on the Well-Being of Pastors. This will serve as the baseline for analysis of the quality of life, professional identity, and perception of vitality in ministry of the pastors before entering the fellowship. Year 1 begins with a retreat to name the proficiencies, resources and shared experiences of these pastors serving part time. The content of the retreat will include writing a personal narrative of the bivocational/part time ministry. Fellows will also be trained in peer coaching, to equip them for the “Open Office Hours” calls.

Each cohort of Lydia Fellows will gather 3 additional times a year for an evening meal, with time for fellowship, ministry updates, and prayer. The design mix of in-person and online support is calibrated to the complex realities of life for bivocational pastors and the value of face to face meetings.

Between these times of in-person gatherings, Lydia Fellows will offer one another peer coaching 6 times during the year. We will borrow from a model of “Open Office Hours” (as seen in the peer coaching for women in digital journalism <https://www.digitalwomenleaders.com/about/> here using the platform <https://calendly.com>). This model of peer coaching allows fellows to ask for a call at times

specifically available from their colleagues, and based on the stated proficiencies of that peer. As Lydia Fellows name and then share their own “areas of expertise” they develop professional confidence in this nimble, creative, complex pastoral identity.

To support the local pastor and help translate the shared-ministry model into congregational life, the Program Coordinator will visit each pastor and his/her congregation. This second year site visit will serve as a public affirmation back to the congregation and pastor of the esteem and gratitude of the wider Church for their work in a shared ministry. The educational portion of the visit will also allow the Program Coordinator to share what we are learning in other part-time settings, and to gather information about what, from the congregation’s end, makes part-time ministry flourishing.

The Year 2 retreat serves to gather the wisdom, skills, and resources garnered among the network. This retreat has a strong evaluative function to assess how participation in the cohort has enhanced a sense of thriving in ministry. Fellows will participate in a re-write of their pastoral narrative from Year 1, noticing the ways that their ministry has changed over the course of the fellowship so far.

D. Evaluation

Success of the Lydia Fellowship for the participating pastors will be indicated by increases in the goals established: increased connection, esteem, authenticity, and engagement in a majority of the pastors. Success from the institutional side will be shown by increased communication and change in narrative about the nature and viability of flourishing in part-time ministry.

Our initial design for the Lydia Fellowship includes evaluation at multiple points through the two-year cohort, and a larger, more comprehensive evaluation at the end. Additionally, the Massachusetts Council of Churches already has a process of regular evaluation based on our stated core values: Delight, Excellence, Diversity, Relationship and Gratitude. At each step in finalizing, recruiting, running and supporting the Lydia Fellows program, we would pause as a staff team to evaluate the program based on our own institutional values. As a Christian institution, MCC believes in and practices mid-course correction.

In evaluating the faithfulness and efficacy of the Lydia Fellows program, we will use a mix of personal narrative, self-evaluation, and congregational survey. Results will be shared annually with the Massachusetts Council of Churches Working Board and Heads of Church to notice trends and insights.

Upon nomination and selection into a cohort, pastors will be asked to complete pre-work of a self-evaluation survey based on the research in *Flourishing in Ministry: Emerging Research Insights on the Well-Being of Pastors*. Lydia Fellows will complete a similar self-evaluation at the end of Year 2.

With the retreat model of writing a narrative of ministry and then rewriting the narrative in Year 2 (a process borrowed from colleagues running the Foundations of Christian Leadership program), we will be able to compare how the pastors themselves tell and then retell their story of flourishing in part-time ministry.

We will be disappointed if, even with the support for participation, pastors are too overwhelmed to participate. We will be disappointed if pastors and congregations are wedded to a model of overworking at odds with our trust in God's provisions. We will be disappointed if the expertise of newer immigrant and historic black churches is not seen and harnessed. We will be disappointed if the denominational clergy convenings still operate with a presumption of full-time ministry.