

## MCEC Learning Commons – 2022 Guide

### **Theme: “Building up Leaders – Courageous Imagination for a “next normal”**




Welcome to this year’s learning journey! This is your Guide to some of the events and signposts along the winding way toward the fall of 2022. At the heart of the [MCEC Learning Commons](#) and this Guide are beliefs that:

1. God is moving and at work in our world and church with the goal of restoration, reconciliation and of course the growth of both church and individual into the likeness of Christ.
2. It is a unique opportunity to be attentive and aligned with what God is doing within our life together and the world around us. The ability to align with God’s work is a reflection of our openness of mind, heart and will.

**A Word of Thanks!** On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 a group of 14 people gathered to work together at this year’s guide. The ideas, conversation and spirit of these individuals have been instrumental in formulating this year’s theme. Please consider whether you can share in building the guide for next year. A core value of the Learning Commons is the collaboration that comes through this conversation and the subsequent work of focusing and sharpening the guiding questions.

The challenge following this workshop was to take the many great ideas and questions and then sift them through the 6 core competencies<sup>1</sup> which form the foundation of the lifelong journey of learning and growing in ministry.

### Guiding Questions for this year are:

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1. Consultants and mediators are sharing with us that tensions usually manageable are needing attention in different ways. The pace of change, the depth of divisions and fatigue with our experience during COVID-19 highlight a leadership need to participate in conversations where tensions are higher. What kind of theological grounding do I need in order to minister with a church that is both tired by these recent experiences and looking at what comes “next?”
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2. A courageous imagination will invite us to discern what the “next” normal will be. What is the definition of discernment? What spiritual practices will shape my work of discernment and encourage that character of courage?
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3. On a personal level, which voices am I not hearing to shape who I am, how I see my life and live my faith? Do I live in an echo chamber? What’s my plan for allowing God’s Spirit to direct my learning?

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<sup>1</sup> While we speak of 6 core competencies we actually are looking at 7 with the addition of the intercultural competency that the wider church hopes to foster among us as a reflection of our growing appreciation for how we form God’s presence in the world as a church.



**Signposts** – these can be placed as indicators of key questions, key themes, and important reminders throughout the Guide

As the world opens up we will need to be flexible with how the next “normal” impacts our planning. Tending our relationships virtually is not only difficult, it has been energy draining for many. Margaret Wheatley in her book, “Finding our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time” notes,

*Many organizations have learned from experience that if they want productive teams, they must bring people together in the same space several times a year. They’re learning that in the absence of face-to-face meetings, people have a hard time sharing knowledge. It’s important to remember that technology does not connect us. Our relationships connect us, and once we know the person or team, then we use technology to stay connected. We share knowledge because we are in relationship, not because we have broader bandwidth available.<sup>2</sup>*

She wrote this more than 10 years ago, and it seems so very true as we now exit this pandemic experience. So effort will be made to do much in person while valuing what we can do virtually in the times ahead.

## Events for 2021 – 2022

At the time of this posting, there is certainly much more hope for opportunities to gather in person in the fall and winter seasons. The pandemic continues to teach us to be flexible as conditions and public health measures change. Please keep checking the website for updates and opportunities as these are planned going forward.

### What’s in the works?



Learning to Value Each Other: InterCultural Church Competency – Fanosie Legesse

Join the conversation on growing our curiosity and lifting our capacity for appreciating each other. Leaders will share their knowledge on what it means to become an inter-culturally competent Church leader. There will be opportunity to exchange practical and positive experiences of their interaction with people of different cultures. We also want to learn from experiences that have not been positive. Finally, leaders will discuss ways to overcome and hopefully more often eliminate challenges of Christ’s body of believers living the vision of being a diverse and united inter-cultural group. Ultimately, leaders will be able to answer questions like...

*“What do competent inter-cultural leaders naturally do?”*

*“How do we speak about and to each other that reflects our values of appreciating diversity within Christ’s body?”*


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<sup>2</sup> Wheatley, Margaret. [Finding our Way: Leadership in Uncertain Times](#) . (Berrett-Koehler Pub, 2007) p. 153

*“How do we create space for diverse perspectives to enter and be valued by everyone in our leadership?”*

Congregational Vision Work: Entering a Liminal Space of Opportunities – Al Rempel

In this workshop, the participants will review tools developed with MCEC for congregational processes like “The Congregational Lifecycle,” “Informed Conversations,” and “Appreciative Inquiry.” We will ask practical questions around how, when and by whom these processes can best be used for congregational processes. In addition, the group will work at questions of planning and conducting a vision exercise with a congregation looking carefully at what discernment means for faith communities in this work.

 Agreeing and Disagreeing - Managing Polarities in Congregational Life

 Speaking of God – Anthony Siegrist


So what kind of leader are you? – Norm Dyck

This workshop will explore how God has gifted you for leadership in ministry. Learning about your style helps you not to be like someone else but to appreciate how your gifts are meant to be a blessing for your context at this time. As part of the experience, you will take an assessment in advance that will give you direct feedback on your leadership style. During the workshop we will have an opportunity to learn together how we can use the positives and drawbacks of these styles best.

Guide Process for 2022-2023

**Pastoral Conversations** will continue next fall with a monthly meeting online. We value the opportunity to regularly gather for pastoral conversations regardless of geography.

September 21, 2021

 Next Normal – Marilyn Rudy-Froese

In the last year, we as leaders found ourselves in the wilderness of Covid. With the Psalmist, we asked, “How can we sing the Lord’s songs in a strange land?” As the pandemic continued, we, like the Israelites in exile, began to “build houses and plant gardens”, making a home in virtual spaces. As more people get vaccinated, we are in a time when we can see the end of this pandemic exile, even while we are still in the midst of pandemic restrictions. We are in the pivotal time of Isaiah 40, where we are hearing words of comfort and hope, that this time is almost over. Do we hear the prophet’s words, “Comfort, O comfort my people”, spoken to us? Can we, along with the prophet, proclaim that there is a way through the wilderness? How do we place ourselves “on a high mountain”, so that we can see and say, “Here is your God”?

This workshop will offer an opportunity to reflect together on how we can learn to see God in new ways, and what it looks like to see God in this new place. What are congregational practices that help us live into God’s time. What are the visual reminders for us that God has been here and will lead us home?

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021



A Focus on Discernment – Betty Pries

This will be an event where the participants will have a “group coaching” experience. Following the review of a “Ted Talk” kind of input, the group will explore the concept and implementation of discernment in their congregational situation.

## **Keep in your Calendar**

Pastor’s Retreat April 19 – 21, 2022

Transition into Ministry (TiM) plans

November 8-10, 2021, Hidden Acres if possible

March 28-30, 2022, Hidden Acres

Healthy Boundaries Workshop: dates TBA

Fall 1 day refresher

Spring 2 day

Pastors, Chaplains, & Church Leaders Event

TBA