

TRANSITION TO THE IN-MINISTRY YEAR

The Presbyterian College, Montreal

General Information

“The purpose of the Master of Divinity degree is to prepare women and men for ordained ministry and for general pastoral and religious leadership responsibilities in congregations and other settings” (Association of Theological Schools). Accordingly, the learning outcomes of the M.Div. focus on knowledge of religious heritage, understanding of cultural context, growth in spiritual life, and competencies for pastoral and public ministry. Within the Montreal School of Theology and The Presbyterian College, the first two years of the M.Div. program focus mainly on knowledge of religious heritage and understanding of cultural context, while the third year focuses mainly (though not exclusively) on competency in ministerial and public ministry and pastoral identity.

This change in focus in the third year of the program corresponds to a change in educational culture, also. The In-Ministry Year is less focused on intellectual and critical engagement with texts and theological traditions and more focused on a student’s formation in pastoral identity and on the development of professional competencies. As a result, there is also less concern with intellectual argumentation between students, or related critical exploration, and greater focus on respectful attention to the mature theological positions of colleagues and their particular formation for ministry. Evaluation in the In-Ministry Year is on a Pass/Fail basis (corresponding to the preoccupation with competencies for ministry) and there is also a greater focus on narrative evaluation, related to personal and pastoral formation.

Another dimension of the M.Div. program that should be highlighted is its orientation toward questions of *call* to ministry. In most cases this means a call to pastoral ministry, though other types of call may also be explored here. That is, the M.Div. is a degree oriented toward the student’s ongoing discernment of his or her call to ministry.

Transition Interview

Given the unique educational culture of the In-Ministry Year, and the focus on call and discernment, The Presbyterian College holds interviews with students at the point of transition to the third year of the program. The purpose of this meeting is for the college to highlight, with students, the programmatic and cultural questions indicated above. Further, its purpose is to explore with students how their sense of call has developed over the first years of the program. Finally, an additional goal of the interview is to help students discern growth areas that might become areas of focus (might become specific learning goals for the student) in the In-Ministry Year. Questions commonly explored at the interview include:

1. Has the student fulfilled all requirements of M.Div. 1 and 2?
2. What has the student found most beneficial in the first years of the program?
3. How has her or his sense of call been shaped over the first years of the program?
4. How has the student’s understanding of ministry developed through academic studies?

5. What does he or she perceive as a particular growth area moving forward?
6. Does the student have any questions about the IMY?

Note that the purpose of this interview is not for the college to take any decision concerning the admission of the student to the In-Ministry Year, since he or she is already admitted to the M.Div. program. However, there may be some instances in which this interview and transition process leads an individual student to reconsider his or her continuance in the program. Or, this process may result in a suggestion from the college that a student reconsider whether this is the best path of education and formation for him or her to pursue. Final decisions on these questions of discernment are left with the student, in the case of those who have fulfilled all programmatic requirements leading to the In-Ministry Year.

The transition interview is conducted by at least two faculty members – usually, the Director of Pastoral Studies and the Academic Dean. Following the interview, the student will receive a letter confirming the content of the conversation with particular attention to his or her particular path through the M.Div. program.

Students are encouraged to approach this transition period with confidence and grace, trusting that God is at work in their lives, and that God is faithful in providing direction and wisdom, by his Spirit.