



THE SEARCH FOR THE NEXT MODERATOR OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

**Unanswered Moderator Candidate Questions from the 3 Moderator Candidate Town Halls
and links to the recordings of the individual forums.**

Forum Links:

Ms. Elizabeth (Liz) Bisordi, 23 April 2019

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/ycrxqFUsyDk>

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/332260997>

Rev. Elder Tony Freeman, 30 April 2019

YouTube: https://youtu.be/3HRK_62v1nc

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/333864114>

Rev. Elder Cecilia Eggleston, 7 May 2019

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/hD9sNxGI6gs>

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/334938620>

Save the Date for the Last Webinar to Meet the Candidates

There will be one final “Meet the Candidates” webinar in English at the following time:

05 June at 8pm UK time (3pm EDT / 19:00 UTC)

mccchurch.adobeconnect.com/mnc

The webinar will be recorded and made available on the MNC website.

Questions start on next page.

Ms. Elizabeth (Liz) Bisordi questions that were not answered in the webinar due to running out of time.

Question 1: “How, in your view, could the denomination work better with local churches, providing resources and being efficient at communication? Do you have any proposals on how denominational leadership can particularly provide timely and useful information to assist lay delegates in handling the “tough questions” from their congregations?”

First, I know the denomination wants to be in relationship with the local church but believe the mistrust that has developed over the past years has helped create this situation. I am sure if we were to ask any MCC staff member, they would echo this desire to be in relationship. There is a delicate balance between providing too much and too little information that is meaningful to people. I always ask, when we push out info in my job, who is the intended audience and how will this information help them? If it won't help them make a decision or improve a situation, why are we sending it.

I believe we have several possibilities on how the denomination can work with local churches and help resource them. At a high level, this begins with soliciting feedback from the local churches on what types of resources they are looking for and taking that information and prioritizing it to reach the most churches and people. And prioritizing how to solution the asks.

An area of opportunity is to ensure we have a real communication flow that is **two way**. Our Network structure worked well in some places and not as well in others, so we need to understand what best practices are – where and what is working well – and see how and if we can adapt portions of that model here. Of utmost importance is ensuring that we have regular, **meaningful** communications and not just push information for the sake of pushing out information. This is a quality vs quantity opportunity.

As I've mentioned before, I have a plan to create Advisory Councils to assist in having these dialogues. We need to bring various viewpoints together, determine what we need and want to get done and then go do it. If it works, great, if not then we say so, learn from it and retool together (i.e., not a tops down approach but a “we together” approach).

In my opinion based on what I have observed, we have underutilized and under communicated with our lay delegates around issues and concerns. They are a great resource, and I would propose setting up regular vehicles for discussion and training, the same way I have said I would do monthly calls that are open to all MCCers to come and have discussions and listening sessions with me. Also, if we are going to announce something major, perhaps we “pre-announce” to our lay delegates and provide them with FAQ's, etc. so that they can be prepared to respond.

I am a strong believer that there is tremendous untapped potential in our lay delegates and lay leadership around MCC and would love to hear suggestions from others on how to tap in to that amazing resource. We need as MCC leadership to stop and listen to our laity in more intentional ways. As Moderator I would commit to do that as we are the priesthood of all believers.

Question 2: “Can you please say more about encouraging youth to experience MCC, what would it be, and how?”

We need to raise up our next group of MCCers and MCC leaders, and it is incumbent upon us to ensure we hold space for the next generation of MCCers. What will drive them or be important to them may be different from where we are today. I think this is an area where we really need to ask the Gen X, Y, Z population what it means to be church and a movement for justice. Then we must lean in to what they recommend and suggest. Our youth needs to be empowered and supported by us to do that. And to those of us who may be a little older, if what they wish to do makes us uncomfortable, we need to get over it and make space for them - - let's remember we once were them!

We need to make real space for families of all kind within MCC so that children and young adults feel connected. This will take work and intentionality but we have some congregations that do this well today and we need to lean in to them for assistance and guidance.

I have spoken of my plan to implement Leadership programs and one of those is to purposefully and intentionally engage our young leaders. We must identify them, mentor them, help build their skills and engage them in supporting each other. These are essential tools in building the next generation of leaders. We used to do much of this, but I haven't heard much about it over the past couple of years, and I want us to resume that. It is an essential tenant of our ability to grow MCC for the future. I believe the next Troy and Nancy are there and we need to find ways to raise them up!

I also would look to some of our wonderful young leaders and ask them to join me at the table so we can find ways to move forward. They are our future!!

Question 3: “How sure you about what cuts need to be made right now?”

Honestly, I am not sure what cuts, if any would need to be made. I have not yet been briefed by the Governing Board on the full extent of MCC's financial situation and only know what I have been able to glean from the financial reports, when they are posted (which are always in arrears vs. forward looking). What I do know, based on my long-time financial experience, is that cutting our way to solvency is a going out of business strategy. I also have observed that the denominational staff are a group of dedicated individuals who clearly are not in their position for the money they make but due to a passion to be part of MCC.

I think our focus and strategy should be first on how to grow the top line (income) and look for alternate streams beyond just assessments. We need to be focused on how we shift the paradigm to ensure we are a denomination focused on providing resourcing assistance between churches and developing best practices to share with local churches, in areas that are important to them. MCC has some amazing congregations and brilliant individuals that we need to tap in to in new and different ways.

Additional question: “There are several churches within MCC (between 10-20) that have no leadership due to the inability to pay a pastor full-time or even part-time. Many of our pastors are in need of a pastorate that can help them pay their bills, especially student loans and can’t afford to help these churches. What are your plans for working with the churches who are in need of pastoral leadership and unable to afford even a part-time pastor?”

Let me first say, I believe this is complex question and there is no quick answer or fix. We certainly need to look at churches that are unable to afford a pastor and understand WHY they can’t. The answer to that could be varied – a new church, is it a healthy church, etc. I believe this is an area that OFLD and Emerging Ministry need provide input and collaboration.

OFLD has been exploring different paths of ministry and church leadership. We are also seeing more lay pastoral leaders in MCC, as well as more clergy that are bi-vocational. We need to remember that MCC is only 50 years old! I recall MCC had a grant a few years ago where clergy would have their schooling paid for if they agreed to pastor in more rural, “less popular” locations. We should revisit that and other grant options that may be available.

As well, we need to look at Stewardship as an area for opportunity for our churches to grow in generosity to help alleviate some of the monetary concerns.

Overall, I don’t believe there is a one-size fits all answer to this question. It is an area we will need to continue to explore and come up with recommendations on potential solutions to this critical question.

Rev. Elder Tony Freeman questions that were not answered in the webinar due to running out of time.

Question 1: “What is your personal style of leadership?”

Since there are many definitions and models of leadership types and styles, hopefully the following chart will enhance the conversation by offering a common vocabulary.

Goleman’s 6 Leadership Styles

Visionary	Motivates people towards a vision	“Come with me”	Self-confidence, empathy, change catalyst
Coaching	Developing people for the future	“Try this”	Developing others, self awareness, empathy
Affiliative	Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds	“People come first”	Empathy, building relationships, communication
Democratic	Forges consensus through participation	“What do you think?”	Collaboration, team leadership, communication
Pacesetting	Sets high standards for performance	“Do as I do now!”	Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative
Commanding	Demands immediate compliance	“Do what I tell you”	Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control

Based on **Primal Leadership** by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee

Using Robert Greenleaf’s definitions, “servant-leader” would best describe my overall style. I believe effective servant-leadership is transformational and is largely about serving the mission and the people.

In reviewing Goleman’s matrix above, I would say that I lean heavily on the first four: visionary, coaching, affiliative and democratic, all of which are important elements of the “servant-leader” model. Since leadership is also situational (e.g. a building is on fire versus ending homelessness), the last two listed, pacesetting and commanding, are sometimes necessary.

I truly believe that “none of us is as smart as all of us.” This philosophy significantly impacts my leadership style: whenever appropriate, I try to convene apt stakeholders to address thorny issues and guide the process towards consensus.

Question 2: “There are several churches within MCC (between 10-20) that have no leadership due to the inability to pay a pastor full-time or even part-time. Many of our pastors are in need of a pastorate that can help them pay their bills, especially student loans and cannot afford to help these churches. What are your plans for working with the churches who are in need of pastoral leadership and unable to afford even a part-time pastor?”

First, let me say that I hear your concern and care for our churches and leaders in the question. While I was the Director of the Office of Church and Ministry Development, this was one of the many ongoing and growing challenges; one that goes beyond any easy answers or technical fixes. This begs us to address the challenge as an adaptive issue, one that requires new learning. Convening a team of individuals with applicable experience and who are invested in learning together is an appropriate first step.

There are several factors contributing to this challenge, some internal, some external. Internally, let's face the facts, MCC has less denominational staff to guide these types of often very intensive ministries. This tells us that we will have to be creative when it comes to how an effective program is developed, supported and maintained.

Research shows that by providing churches with coaching and some type of external accountability partner, the chances of them making successful changes increases by more than 45%.

The reality is several of the churches fitting into this category are reticent to making any changes to the current way they are operating. They'll say they want change, but their actions say otherwise. So, in these cases, how do we work with them to be effective as possible in fulfilling their mission considering their current context (i.e., resistive to change)?

We cannot talk about these types of congregational challenges without acknowledging the external factors affecting all of Christianity. For example, when you have 4,000 churches in the United States closing their doors every year, and when the fastest growing groups in religion are the “Nones” (those claiming no religious affiliation) and the “Dones” (those who are done with religion), there's no question that MCC is also going to be affected. While we can't control the external factors, we also can't ignore them. Together we are confronted with identifying what opportunities exist within these external challenges.

Thanks again for the question and for your care and concern for our churches and leaders.

Rev. Elder Cecilia Eggleston questions that were not answered in the webinar due to running out of time.

Question 1: *“How will you repair the lack of trust within the denomination. There are so many of our congregations who are quite concerned and apprehensive?”*

Trust is rebuilt, step by step, action by action. It requires good communication, stating this is what is going to get done, when and why. There then needs to be follow-through and an explanation if, for some reason, the activity doesn't happen as planned. It is also useful to know what the other person expects. How can I say or do something reassuring, if I don't know specifically what you are concerned about? Sometimes, we make up our minds about a person and then only see the evidence that supports our view. Confirmation bias works both ways, deciding someone is trustworthy, even when they are not, as well as the other way round.

Finally, it is worth remembering that the denomination is made up of lots and lots of individuals. Most folk are absolutely doing the best they can, where they are, with what they have got. Most people do not go around deliberately hurting others. Sometimes we make decisions or act with the best of intention, without thinking of the impact that it might have on others. Or the impact is just very different from what we had anticipated. It is important then for both sides to take stock, to understand the other viewpoint and to seek a better solution.

If I am elected Moderator, I will ensure that communication is frequent, open and honest. I will work with other bodies within MCC to set standards, to also engage in communicating in this way.

Question 2: *“What resources will you turn to in an effort to strengthen so many of our Churches which are small and struggling?”*

It is always worth asking the question “What have we got?” All of our churches have assets – the time, talents and finances of the congregation. They may have regular access to a building where they can host all sorts of events, as well as worship. It may be possible to use particular areas of strength to bolster areas where there is a lack of confidence or skill. For example, a church may not have any natural evangelists, but they may have great musicians - how might they use music to engage and interact with the community they serve? Sometimes, we need someone from the outside to help us to see things in a different way and find the potential in what is already there. “The Soul of Money” by Lynne Twist is a great book for helping us look at our mindset about what we have and what we can do with it.

At a denominational level, we can support by helping churches to form partnerships with each other, for example, mentoring pastors, board members and other leaders, if it is needed. Having some clear goals and a sense of purpose going forward also builds confidence when congregations work together to achieve something tangible. This sort of planning is something that the denominational staff or other church leaders can help with. The MCC Networks of churches may be a good place to start make these sorts of connections.

As we review our structure and staff roles, it is important to me that we continue to provide support and resources to local congregations, including online opportunities, and this will be one of the priority areas for us as a denomination. This will include working with individual congregations to develop a plan which reflects their resourcing needs and opportunities for growth, including mentoring leaders, looking at income possibilities and seeing what areas need developing for the church to move from surviving to thriving.

Question 3: “What qualifications do you have to lead the business aspects of the fellowship?”

For most of my working life, I have been employed in the not for profit sector. I have also served on the Board of a charity, making budgetary and staffing decisions, including hiring and firing staff. I have been an active fundraiser, successfully applying for grants to fund a capital project, (£30,000) salaries for two workers and running costs. I have developed and maintained balanced budgets in my secular work, as well as MCC District Co-ordinator and as Regional Elder. As District Co-ordinator, I secured funding from the MCC Pilot Projects fund to develop the position being from part-time to becoming fulltime. During my time as Pastor at Northern Lights MCC, church income increased from £15,596 in March 2007 to £50,107 in March 2016. Part of this was due to increased membership and also due to encouraging a culture of generosity, through active preaching and teaching about giving as a spiritual practice. During my tenure, I also secured a grant of £7000 to employ an outreach worker for our ministry with LGBT asylum seekers.

I have been Chair of several boards, including Newcastle City Centre Churches, South Tyneside College Multifaith Chaplaincy, Rainbow Home project Steering Group and Samaritan Education in Europe, as well as chairing the European District Committee and District Business meetings. I have written policies and procedures for a variety of different organisations, such the grant application guidelines for Bath and North Somerset Council, Complaints policy and staff procedure for my current work place, policies and procedures relating to European data protection regulations (GDPR) and the protocol for official languages within UFMCC, when serving on the Board of Elders.

I have extensive experience in leading groups and churches through a strategic planning process, as well as then ensuring that the plan was acted upon and goals achieved. The largest exercise on this was developing the Local Agenda 21 plan for Bath and N.E. Somerset Council. I worked with a Steering Group of local leaders, including the Vice Chancellor of Bath Spa University, local business leaders, community activists and environmental campaigners. We also held consultation events with local voluntary organisations and I organized a conference of over 100 delegates. We developed sustainable development goals for the region and developed an action plan to achieve these.

My current position is Supporter Relationship Manager for an international development charity with an income of £7 million. As Manager, I recruit, train and manage both staff and volunteers, as well as overseeing the flow of work for the team. I am responsible for ensuring excellent

customer service for individuals and organisations who support our charity. My team provides the frontline response to questions, concerns and complaints. We build relationships with our 15,000 supporters by responding swiftly, making our interactions as personalized as possible and by taking seriously the comments and questions that we receive – even responding to small notes sent in on donation forms. We know that by building loyalty and satisfaction, and by understanding and responding to the interests and concerns of our supporters, these individuals will continue to donate to our work. I am also responsible for looking after supporters in our legacy programme and respond to enquiries about how to leave a gift to the charity.

I recognize the financial and organizational challenges that face MCC and have secured the services of a mentor, to support me, should I have the honour of being elected Moderator. This person is a CEO of a not for profit organization with over 250 staff in 7 different countries, who led the organization from a deficit of £330,000 to financial health and strategic clarity.

Question 4: “As a person of color and considering the of events from 2016 to present, what are your plans to address those POC [People of Color] who feel they do not have a voice in MCC?”

I attended the listening post at General Conference, which was so majestically facilitated by Rev. Cathy Alexander, where I heard stories of great pain and anger from many People of Color within MCC. The racism that individuals and their families were experiencing, particularly in U.S. society, appeared to be magnified through experiences at Conference. I was saddened and angered by what I heard in that room that day. I want to be part of a movement, a denomination where all God’s people feel safe, valued and heard. There is more listening to be done, to give time for healing and restoration, and I am willing and ready to do that. I also want to learn what “safe, valued and heard” looks like to People of Color within MCC.

It is important to remember that the experience of being a Person of Color will differ in the many countries and cultures that we have in MCC. When I first worked alongside our churches in South Africa, I addressed the issue of apartheid with one of our all white congregations and suggested that they started to meet, even informally, with the pastor of the nearby all Black MCC congregation. Countries like the USA and South Africa had racism written into their laws. This adds a whole new dimension to what needs to be addressed.

In her book “Why I am No Longer Talking to White People about Race”, Reni Eddo-Lodge discusses how being Black in the UK has a different history and flavour to being a Person of Color in the USA, even though many of the oppressions are similar. Even within one community, there may be differences that cause separation. Michelle Obama writes about being teased by her cousins because she spoke like a white person. My godchildren live in a very white part of England. Their experience of being Black is different from if they lived in a diverse city. I also have People of Color in my family, some of whom are also Muslim. The racism that my great-niece experiences at school is overlaid with accusations of being a terrorist.

One thing is certain, we need our denomination to reflect the full diversity of our denomination. MCC needs excellent leaders, who have character, competency and reflect who we are. The

OFLD has a document, which sets out 10 characteristics or “Marks for Faithful and Effective Leadership”, including attributes such as trustworthiness, being culturally competent, being spiritually grounded in the Way and embodying the mission, vision, values of MCC. I will be actively seeking out competent leaders and potential leaders who display these Marks and who actively aspire to grow in them. I trust that attendance at the PAD conference (which needs to continue, in my opinion), recommendations from other leaders and opportunities for listening posts will enable me to find and raise up such leaders, who are also People of Color. I do not wish to set anyone up to fail. Just as with developing our young leaders, there must be intention to mentor and develop leaders from our diverse communities, so that they feel ready, equipped and confident to step into their call. I want to work alongside gifted mentors from within the POC communities to support and grow new leaders.

I recognise that there are societal and institutional barriers which stop gifted and talented People of Color stepping into positions. I want to listen and to understand what institutional barriers that there are within our denominational structure, which prevent some People of Color from fully taking their place at the table. This will be an ongoing piece of work, and I am committed to listening, learning and leading us to a place where all feel welcomed, heard and valued.