Program
MDiv Formation Group (non-credit)
Knox College
Winter 2026

Facilitator Information

Facilitator:	Christine Mitchell, PhD, Knox Academic Dean & Director of Basic Degree Studies
Office Location:	Upper corridor, Library wing, Knox College
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Office Hours:	By appointment

Activity Identification

Course Number:	No number – **register through Knox Registrar's Office**
Format:	*Online*
Name:	MDiv Formation Group
Location:	by Zoom
Group Times:	Thursdays, 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Prerequisites:	Registration in the MDiv program

Description

This is a non-credit activity required of all MDiv program students. In weekly online meetings, students will engage in facilitated activities designed to help them form a community of learning with other students also preparing for ministry in congregational and related contexts. Students will also develop skills for learning in the hybrid MDiv program, which combines online and in-person courses, and for finding and sustaining their own contextual community/ies outside of their studies. The formation group is designed to build a good foundation for success both in studies and in students' vocations.

This formation group engages with the theme of Ministry in the post-Christendom Context in the Knox MDiv.

Resources

Required Readings

None. Some "handouts" may be circulated by email or in a [shared folder](). You will receive the link to the folder in an email; keep that email so you can return to the folder.

Course Website

None. All communication will be through email with documents hosted in a [shared folder]().

DRAFT – June 16, 2025

Proposed schedule (subject to negotiation and change)

Each group meeting will begin with an opening prayer or other centering action. Participants will take turns to offer the prayer/centering action.

After the opening, participants will have the opportunity to share a joy or struggle from the previous week – if desired – there is no obligation to share.

The meeting will then turn to an exploration of a question, issue, topic, or skill. The schedule below is only a proposal, and participants are encouraged to suggest other areas of interest, and to take initiative in leading a session.

Each group meeting will close with a brief suggestion from the facilitator (or from group participants) of something the participants should take with them into the next week.

Week 1
Thurs., Jan. 8   Introductions, goals, schedule
                        Question: "What brought you here?"

Week 2
Thurs., Jan. 15   What is theological education?
                        Skill: Action-reflection

Week 3
Thurs., Jan. 22   Managing time

Week 4
Thurs., Jan. 29   Managing tasks

Week 5
Thurs., Feb. 5   Inclusive language for study and ministry

Week 6
Thurs., Feb. 12   Spiritual direction
                        Questions: "What is spiritual direction? Should I do it? Where? How?"

Reading Week – No meeting
Thurs., Feb. 19

Week 7
Thurs., Feb. 26   Journalling

Week 8
Thurs., Mar. 5   Communities of Learning/Practice
                        Skills: Liberating structures

Week 9

Thurs., Mar. 12   Mentors
                        Questions: "Do I need a mentor? How do I find one?"

Week 10

Thurs., Mar. 19   Student generated topic

Week 11

Thurs., Mar. 26   Vocation in community
                        Question: "How do I deal with people who treat me differently now?"

Week 12

Thurs., Apr. 2   Closing, evaluation
                        Question: "What keeps you here?"

Evaluation

Requirements

This is a pass/fail MDiv program requirement that will **not** be recorded on students' ACORN accounts or transcripts. Passing the requirement will be based on evaluation by the facilitator of the student's active and appropriate engagement in the activities. Attendance will be recorded, and missing three or more meetings without adequate explanation will lead to failure to meet the program requirement and the necessity to re-take the formation group.

Policies

A note about "trigger" warnings: As you prepare for your vocation, you will encounter situations in this group and in the real world that stretch the limits of your emotional capacity. If you are struggling with your emotions, please reach out to the facilitator. In this group, you are welcome to turn off your screen for a couple of minutes, or take a walk if you need time to pull yourself together. If your distress continues, please reach out to the Registrar's office whose staff will be ready to assist you. In your practice of ministry, you will not necessarily have an opportunity to collect yourself before responding to uncomfortable emotions. It is vital that you learn coping skills and strategies for caring for yourself.

Attendance. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner congruent with the vocation they are seeking to enter and in which they desire to give leadership. To that end, it is a regulation of Knox College that a minimum of approximately 80% attendance at courses (10 of 12 weeks) is required for credit; 100% attendance is expected at seminar courses. Habitual lateness for class will be counted as absence.

Teaching and learning are interactive, not passive, activities. Therefore, students may not "attend" an in-person class through unauthorized audio or video streaming or by watching or listening to a recording; instructors are not obligated to record or permitted to stream their in-person classes. Online classes that include a synchronous video component require the same level of attendance as an in-person course, and students may not "attend" by watching or listening to a recording. Online classes that include an asynchronous component require participation in all the activities for each week or module to meet the attendance requirement. Students requiring accommodations to attend class must

present medical and/or Accessibility Services documentation that outlines the type and duration of accommodation(s) required.

Recording. No recording will be permitted unless a student has an approved accommodation. Personal recordings may be used only by the student who made the recording; no recording may be reproduced, posted, or distributed.

Inclusive Language*.* Knox College has an [inclusive language policy](#), and we will be talking about this policy over the course of the semester.

Accessibility*.* Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's [Accessibility Services offices](#). The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Obligation to check email*.* At times, the facilitator will send out important group information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The facilitator will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the group. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from me may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Email communication with the facilitator*.* The facilitator aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address*.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the facilitator cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs.

Formation Group Learning Objectives/Outcomes

A student successfully completing this formation group has made progress towards the following Knox College MDiv degree program learning outcomes:	
☐	Interprets Scripture and Christian tradition (Reformed), using a variety of methods, sources, and norms, to preach, teach, write, and to provide care and witness.
☒	Demonstrates skills in creative, faith-centred, adaptive, and innovative leadership for current and emerging communities of faith.
☒	Enhances the vocational and spiritual development, practices, and well-being of self and others. (See Professional and Critical Competencies.)
☒	Analyzes and evaluates social, cultural, and community contexts to enable communities of faith to participate in God's work and justice in a diverse and changing world.