



*Grace Changes Everything.*

## **The Seminary Internship Program (SIP) at Manoa Community Church**

### **WHY A SEMINARY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM?**

Our mission at Manoa Community Church is multiplying missional Christians and churches throughout Greater Philadelphia and the unreached world. To accomplish this, we have a three-fold strategy: Grow-Equip-Send. (1) GROW a healthy church: a loving and vibrant congregation that abides richly in God and His Word. (2) EQUIP disciple-makers, mobilizing every member to share Christ and His mercy, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and make disciples that go and do likewise. (3) SEND trained laborers, locally and globally, to revitalize and plant churches committed to repeating these three steps. To accomplish our mission and strategy, we've developed and generously funded our Seminary Internship Program to SEND rigorously educated and practically trained Ministers of the Gospel (Teaching Elders) to fulfill the Great Commission.

## **WHAT IS SIP?**

SIP is shorthand for “Seminary Internship Program” at Manoa Community Church. To remove the financial hurdle to get educated, approved SIP candidates receive tuition reimbursement towards their Master of Divinity while “Under Care” of our Presbytery, the Presbytery of the East ([www.epceast.org](http://www.epceast.org)). Additionally, this Under Care process provides a clear, rigorous, and impartial path to ordination within our denomination, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The EPC is a growing movement of reformed and missional ministers and congregations ([www.epc.org](http://www.epc.org)).

## **WHO CAN APPLY FOR SIP?**

- Applicants must already be enrolled in an accredited evangelical seminary, working towards the Master of Divinity.
- Applicants must be active members of Manoa Community Church (MCC) for a minimum of six months prior to becoming eligible for application to the program.
- Applicants must then be approved and commended by MCC Session for coming “Under Care” of the Presbytery of the East (POTE).
- Once the MCC Session approves the applicant, the candidate must attend the next POTE Meeting to share their testimony and sense of calling before the regional group of Teaching and Ruling Elders. This group will vote to receive the candidate as a “Candidate Under Care” of the Presbytery and assign a mentor from outside of Manoa Community Church.
- The candidate is automatically and instantly approved in the program as a “Seminary Intern” of Manoa after the Presbytery vote passes.

## **WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF SIP?**

- To successfully graduate from seminary with a Master of Divinity, preferably without school debt, allowing the intern to freely serve the Lord wherever He calls.
- To raise up the next generation of missional leaders in the EPC. This will require attendance at quarterly EPC gatherings called Presbytery and General Assembly. These quarterly trips afford essential times of mentoring from the Pastor, networking/training opportunities throughout the denomination, and in-person evaluation by the candidate to determine whether the EPC is a good fit.
- To wed rigorous academic study with practical ministry experience, especially in the areas of church leadership, pastoral care, preaching and evangelism.

Presbytery will assign a checklist of ministerial experience and goals it intends for the intern to complete prior to ordination. Manoa's faith community, especially the Pastor, will seek to help the intern fulfil these goals, but it is the intern's responsibility and may require pursuing preaching and ministry opportunities outside of Manoa.

- To connect the intern to other seminarians at Manoa for fellowship, support and guidance, there will be a monthly Candidate Care Cohort that meets together with the Pastor (eight annual Cohort meetings, excludes January, April, June, and September). This Cohort time especially seeks to cultivate best practices as preachers, that can help the intern proclaim the Gospel to a variety of audiences in engaging and effective ways.
- To serve as a volunteer at Manoa, preparing the intern for a lifetime of fruitful vocational ministry and providing the requisite field experience upon graduation to begin ministry more effectively.

## **SIP EXCLUSIONS**

- The goal of SIP is not employment at Manoa, but rather ordination in the EPC and deployment from Manoa into a fruitful vocational calling. SIP interns should not expect nor anticipate this program will open a position on staff at MCC.
- No active SIP intern may be nominated nor elected to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon at Manoa. Active Ruling Elders and Deacons may apply; but if approved as a Seminary candidate (Under Care), the intern must step off the board as a voting member while participating in the program.
- Currently employed staff of MCC may apply for SIP. Reimbursements will be reported annually on the employee's W2, excluding the maximum annual IRS allowance for employer tuition assistance. If the employee successfully graduates seminary and is ordained/installed by Presbytery as a Teaching Elder, they remain employed at MCC, but their church membership will transfer to Presbytery and their title will change from "Director" to "Assistant Pastor" of their existing sphere of responsibility.
- Any SIP intern that misses two Presbytery meetings consecutively or takes more than a one-semester break from seminary classes will automatically be removed from SIP at Manoa and must reapply. Likewise, any SIP intern that misses two consecutive Candidate Care Cohort gatherings will also be removed from SIP. While this will not remove the candidate from the Under Care process at Presbytery, it will terminate the recognized "Seminary Intern" position at Manoa and the opportunity for tuition reimbursement.

## SIP TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

- Reimbursements are for successfully completed credit hours (see the reimbursement rate below). An MDIV program may be completed in as little as three years of full-time study. Students must normally complete the program within nine years, unless approved by Session for an extension. Students who already possess a Master of Arts in Theological Studies or Practical Ministry (MATS or MAPM degree) or equivalent degree from an accredited seminary or graduate school may use most if not all those courses toward an MDIV degree at Erskine or another seminary. Students should consult with the desired seminary to discover if this may be an option.<sup>1</sup>
- Tuition reimbursements are distributed quarterly, only after the intern attends Presbytery in January, April, and September (dates at [www.epceast.org](http://www.epceast.org)) and General Assembly (dates at [www.epc.org](http://www.epc.org)) in June. Unless approved by the MCC Session, SIP candidates who miss Presbytery or General Assembly forfeit reimbursement for classes completed during that quarter.
- To receive tuition reimbursement, after attending the quarterly meeting, the SIP Intern must email [reimbursement@manoa.org](mailto:reimbursement@manoa.org) and submit receipts of the total price paid for the class(es) completed during the quarter, proof of class completion, including the final grade received.
- Manoa's reimbursement rates dynamically increase, based on the EPC rate for the MDIV credit hour at Erskine Seminary ([seminary.erskine.edu/epc](http://seminary.erskine.edu/epc)). This seminary provides a fully online option to pursue an MDIV with a 50% discount for EPC students. As of this printing, an EPC student would presently pay \$252.50 per credit hour (\$505 normally). Therefore, the current reimbursement rates per credit hour are the lower of the following:

A	100%	or	\$252.50
B	75%	or	\$189.38
C	50%	or	\$126.25
D	25%	or	\$63.13

---

<sup>1</sup> The EPC also has a "Candidates Educational Equivalency Program" (CEEP) designed to help non-traditional candidates for ministry satisfy the educational requirements for ordination as a Teaching Elder. Candidates may discuss this option with the POTE Ministerial Committee if they are unable to successfully transfer their existing ministerial education towards an accredited MDIV degree.

- The SIP intern may apply this seminary reimbursement toward any approved seminary (e.g., Westminster, Missio, Fuller, Gordon-Conwell, Trinity, Knox, Reformed Theological Seminary, etc.). Erskine simply sets our reimbursement rates. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 to remain eligible for tuition reimbursement. No prior school bills or student loans may be submitted to Manoa for reimbursement, however, once enrolled in the SIP, candidates are eligible for reimbursement for current and future classes.
- All travel, room, and food expenses are fully covered by Manoa Community Church when attending Presbytery and General Assembly.
- Book receipts may be submitted for partial reimbursement as follows. Required class textbooks are sold to the Manoa church library at 75% of their original purchase price (receipts required, excludes shipping and tax). These books then become property of the Manoa church library. Any required textbooks, already available in the church library, may be checked out for free. The church will not buy any books that it already possesses, unless it is an updated version the student was required to buy. SIP interns may not be reimbursed for any other school fees, including room, board, internet fees, etc.
- Finally, since SIP interns are not employed by Manoa Community Church, all annual reimbursements will be reported as 1099 income for contract work. Essentially, the church is paying interns to successfully complete schooling.

## **THE ORDINATION PROCESS**

In EPC polity, the Presbytery, not the local congregation (nor Session) ordains “Teaching Elders” (vocational Ministers of the Gospel). Presbytery holds their credentials, seminary transcripts, background checks, etc. Therefore, if the SIP intern desires ordination upon graduation, participation in the “Under Care” process is required. Think of it like a student who graduates from Medical School. Graduation doesn’t automatically make them a licensed doctor. They must pass their board exams and Once Under Care, the intern will be assigned an ordained mentor, not the Pastor, to guide the ordination process within the EPC. The ordination process will culminate with four proctored exams and an oral examination on the floor of Presbytery. To learn more about the Under Care process and practical ministry experience gained while under care, please visit:

**[www.epceast.org/candidates](http://www.epceast.org/candidates)**

## **TYPES OF VOCATIONAL MINISTRY CALLINGS**

There are a variety of callings that require ordination in the EPC and not all callings are to the office of Pastor. For example, as a vocational Minister of the Gospel (Teaching Elder) the SIP Candidate may be called to serve the Church as a(n)...

- **Church-Planter (Evangelist):** A Teaching Elder may be called by a court of the church or by some organization approved by the Presbytery to serve as a Church-Planter. Church-Planters are typically called as an Evangelist until the church particularizes as a local congregation with its own Session. There is a network of regional and national support for Church-Planters in the EPC.
- **Missionary (Evangelist):** A Teaching Elder may be called by a court of the church or by some organization approved by the Presbytery to serve as a Missionary. Missionaries are typically called as an Evangelist and the EPC partners with various sending agencies as well as staffs a national support team called World Outreach in Orlando, FL. There is a network of regional and national support for Missionaries in the EPC and missionaries are commissioned annually at General Assembly.
- **Teacher:** A Teaching Elder may be called to teach in an institution deemed appropriate by Presbytery that has as a primary purpose the preparation of people for ministry or entrance into seminary. Such calling shall ordinarily include the responsibility for preaching the Word and administration of the Sacraments. As a Teacher, the Teaching Elder is also to serve as a pastor, caring for the spiritual wellbeing of others.
- **Administrator:** A court of the Church or one of its agencies may call a Teaching Elder to serve in some administrative capacity. An organization deemed proper by the Presbytery may also issue a similar call. In such cases, it is always the responsibility of the Administrator to seek opportunity to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments.
- **Chaplain:** A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. There is national support for chaplains in the EPC.

- **Transitional Pastor:** The Church Health Team, as part of the General Assembly court (Office of General Assembly) may train and call a Teaching Elder as a Transitional Pastor. Transitional Pastors are contracted by a Session for 12 to 36 months to guide a congregation without a Pastor through a process of Church Health assessment and alignment. Transitional Pastors may serve nationally across Presbytery lines.
- **Stated Supply Pastor (or Occasional Supply Pastor):** Presbytery may approve itinerant preachers as Stated Supply Pastors. These Pastors travel and fill pulpit vacancies as needed.
- **Pastor:** A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor. Pastors shepherd the church, moderate the Session and serve as the Chief of Staff. If there are multiple Pastors at the church, the Pastor is lead or senior pastor. The EPC does not recognize the office of Co-Pastor.
- **Assistant/Associate Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_:** Assistant Pastors are called by the Session of the church and do not sit on Session. Associate Pastors are called by the congregation and do sit on Session. Both callings are to a particular ministry, such as Worship, Youth, Small Groups, Discipleship, etc. These callings are to churches that already have a Pastor. Normally an Assistant/Associate Pastor may not become the next lead Pastor at the congregation to which they are called - but must apply elsewhere.
- **Out of Bounds:** Teaching Elders may also serve outside of Presbytery bounds by an agency that is outside the jurisdiction of a court of the Church and after being fully satisfied that the ministry is consistent with the calling to the ministry of the Word. Including various parachurch ministries, this may include serving as a Pastor outside of the EPC, while retaining your credentials, ordination, and membership within the EPC.

All SIP applicants are required to state up-front what calling they feel led to pursue, as this will shape the volunteer opportunities and discipleship and mentorship goals prior to graduation from seminary. This stated goal may be changed along the way. SIP interns are required to report changes to original stated goal.

## **SIP REQUIREMENTS**

By way of review, Seminary Interns at Manoa are required to:

1. Remain active members of Manoa Community Church and volunteer in ministry opportunities that develop essential ministry experiences prior to ordination.
2. Remain an active seminary student, working towards the successful completion of the Master of Divinity (MDIV).
3. Remain Under Care of Presbytery, communicating with assigned Presbytery mentors to complete the Under Care Process.
4. Attend all Presbytery gatherings, three times a year, and General Assembly annually with the Pastor.
5. Attend eight Candidate Care Cohort meetings annually with the Pastor and other SIP interns.

## **APPLYING TO SIP**

To apply to the Seminary Internship Program at Manoa, please turn in the completed application on the next page to the Pastor. Once received, the Pastor will invite you to come to Session to share your testimony, current seminary experience, and sense of calling to vocational ministry. Session must approve you as a potential "Candidate Under Care" which will initiate the process to have you attend the upcoming Presbytery to formally come Under Care. The Seminary Internship at MCC, with reimbursement, is automatically approved upon the Presbytery receiving you as a Candidate Under Care. You are eligible to apply for seminary reimbursements after the next Presbytery or General Assembly, and henceforth until graduation, as outlined above.



# SIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Start Date at Manoa: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Seminary: \_\_\_\_\_ Current GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Program:  MDIV  MATS  MAPM  Other \_\_\_\_\_

How many credits do you presently have completed? \_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_

At your present rate, when do you anticipate graduating? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the vocational ministry calling you are pursuing upon graduation and why?

---

---

---

If approved by Session and POTE, I agree to the following (please initial each).

\_\_\_\_\_ Remain an active member of Manoa Community Church and volunteer in ministry opportunities that develop essential ministry experiences prior to ordination.

\_\_\_\_\_ Remain an active seminary student, working towards the successful completion of the Master of Divinity (MDIV).

\_\_\_\_\_ Remain Under Care of Presbytery, communicating with assigned Presbytery mentors to complete the Under Care Process.

\_\_\_\_\_ Attend all Presbytery gatherings, three times a year, and General Assembly annually with the Pastor.

\_\_\_\_\_ Attend eight Candidate Care Cohort meetings annually with the Pastor and other SIP interns.

\_\_\_\_\_ For non-employees, never apply for employment at MCC nor inquire about the possibility of future MCC employment.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Application