



## **PARISH MINISTRY ASSOCIATE HANDBOOK**

**Central States Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

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## PARISH MINISTRY ASSOCIATE HANDBOOK

### I. Introduction

The Parish Ministry Associate Program (PMAP) will identify and equip persons for service in congregations without full-time pastoral services and in congregations, institutions, or agencies as additional resources. After meeting preparation requirements, Parish Ministry Associates (PMAs) may be authorized for certain leadership functions in specific locations for a specified length of time where they will work with a local pastor as supervisor.

The Central States Synod (CSS) PMA Team (PMAT) includes the PMA Coordinators and designated Synod staff. The PMA Coordinators are appointed by, and accountable to, the CSS Bishop. Each Coordinator is responsible for designated Area Ministries.

The PMAT provides general oversight and administration for the ministry. The PMAT develops and administers policies and procedures for application into the PMAP and for study and preparation for this ministry. The PMAT provides recommendations to the Bishop for certification as PMAs.

The PMAT provides to the Bishop, on a continuing basis, recommendations for ministry appropriate for each PMA.

### II. Recruitment of Potential PMAs

- A. Pastors and congregations may identify and encourage individuals to consider this opportunity as a call to service.
- B. Persons may also indicate interest.
- C. The potential applicant's congregation is relied upon to evaluate the person's sense of call, spiritual maturity, leadership skills, and willingness to learn and serve. The congregation's endorsement of an applicant should reflect great care in this evaluation.

### III. General Requirements

- A. Application for PMA Candidacy is a two-step process. The first step in the PMA application process is to enroll in the PMA Discovery Phase and begin the educational process. During the Discovery Phase, the person will complete at least three of the six required courses, attend the annual PMA Convocations, and discern the calling to ministry. The PMA in the Discovery Phase will work closely with his/her mentor to discover his/her gifts and interests for ministry. An application for admission into the Discovery Phase is required. There is no fee for the application.. An endorsement by the individual's pastor and congregation is required.

Annual reports will be submitted by those in PMA Discovery Phase, which will include an indication of whether or not the individual is interested in continuing in PMA Discovery Phase. At any time, the Individual or the Synod may terminate the person's continuation in the program.

- B. Following successful completion of three of the six required courses ('Old Testament,' 'New Testament,' and 'Theology, Lutheran Confessions, and Polity,' Christian Ethics, Worship, or Spiritual Care/Ministry) the individual may apply for PMA Candidate Status. The application will include endorsement by the applicant's pastor and congregational council. The application fee will be \$100.
- C. Application forms are available from the CSS office and the PMAP Internet site at <http://www.csspma.org/>. The applications and a processing fee are submitted to the CSS office.
- D. Applicants for PMA Discovery Phase and for PMA Candidate Status are expected to demonstrate spiritual maturity and a willingness to serve. They should be familiar with and accept the expectations for those called to public ministry as stated in the ELCA document "Vision and Expectations," which may be viewed at [http://www.elca.org/candidacy/vision\\_aim.html](http://www.elca.org/candidacy/vision_aim.html) (This statement was developed specifically for Associates in Ministry, but it applies to Parish Ministry Associates.)
- E. The PMA training is a three-year curriculum, with six years allowed for completion.
- F. Candidates must complete required six core courses (seven if seeking authorization for preaching), three pre-approved elective credits (two if seeking authorization for preaching), and one convocation credit (1/3 credit per convocation).

- G. Each person accepted for the Discovery Phase will select a mentor for guidance and support. Those accepted as a candidate for PMA Certification will also select a mentor, who may be the same person as selected for the Discovery Phase.
- H. During the training period, the PMAT or designees will interview candidates, which may be prior to the completion of all the educational requirements. Following the interview, the PMAT may recommend that the CSS approve certification for the candidate when the educational requirements are met. The PMAT will also recommend to the Bishop appropriate authorizations for ministry for a newly certified PMA.
- I. The Bishop may authorize certified PMAs to serve outside of their home congregation in the CSS. Such authorization for ministry shall define the responsibilities and the specific period for the assignment.
- J. Continuing education is required to maintain certification. Twelve contact hours per year is the standard.

#### IV. Evaluations and Expectations During Preparation

- A. Assessment of each Discovery Phase/Candidate's progress will include:
  - 1) Evaluations regarding course work and attendance by each facilitator, sent to the coordinator and made available to the individual and PMAT.
  - 2) Annual consultation with Discovery Phase/Candidate and coordinator or designee.
  - 3) Annual questionnaire on progress and service to be completed by the Discovery Phase/Candidate, mentor, and the congregational council.
- B. Persons who are considered for a synodically authorized ministry must meet the criteria for public ministry with a congregation or other ministry of this church:
  - 1) Evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ.
  - 2) Satisfactory preparation in accordance with PMA training requirements and demonstration of appropriate ministry skills.
  - 3) Knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church.

- 4) Willingness to meet this church's expectations regarding personal conduct and behavior of persons serving in public ministry. (Please refer to "Visions and Expectations for Parish Ministry Associates" available on the PMA Web site.)

#### V. Courses

The program includes core courses, electives, and one PMA Convocation credit. For those seeking certification for preaching in the Synod, the course requirements include seven core courses and two electives. The course requirements for PMAs that choose not to be certified for preaching include six core courses and three electives. A variety of course styles and formats will be used: SELECT courses with an appointed facilitator, classroom settings with college or seminary professors, retreat settings, pre-approved workshops, distance learning, individual instruction, etc. The subject areas to be covered include:

##### A. Core Courses

- 1) **Old Testament:** This course will be an overview/survey of the entire Old Testament. The student will gain an understanding of the Old Testament writings including its forms of literature.
- 2) **New Testament:** This course will be an overview of the entire New Testament. The student will gain an understanding of the New Testament writings.
- 3) **Theology, Lutheran Confessions, and Polity:** This course provides the student with an understanding of the confessions of the Lutheran Church, including the history and theological basis of our core beliefs. The course will include a review of Luther and the Reformation, the Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Smalcald Articles. The required text for the course is The Book of Concord.
- 4) **Christian Ethics:** This course provides the student with a theological understanding of ethical decision-making based upon the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. Material that presents Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ethical theology is suggested as the core for this course. The suggested text for the course is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book Ethics.
- 5) **Spiritual Care/Ministry:** This course provides the student with an overview of the theology and practice of pastoral care. A practicum will be included in this course.
- 6) **Worship:** This course provides the student with a background for planning and conducting worship. The content covers the parts of worship – both essential and optional – worship

planning, and resources available for those planning and conducting worship.

The student will learn the content of key materials that must include The Lutheran Book of Worship, The Lutheran Book of Worship Manual on the Liturgy, The Lutheran Book of Worship Ministers' Desk Edition, and other appropriate resources.

- 7) **Preaching:** This course is required for authorization for preaching in the Central States Synod and may be used as an elective for other PMA candidates. A preaching course is periodically offered for PMAs. The student will gain an understanding of forms and methods of preaching. The student will prepare and present sermons as a course requirement. Prerequisites for the preaching course are core courses 1, 2 & 3.
- B. It is the responsibility of the PMA to seek out, select, and enroll in elective courses (with pre-approval from Coordinator). Elective and special courses may be in the following areas:
  - 1) **Church Administration:** Recommend courses/workshops offered by the National Association of Church Business Administration (NACBA) or an equivalent program.
  - 2) **Church History:** Courses and workshops that provide grounding in theological and doctrinal issues from a historical perspective.
  - 3) **Clinical Pastoral Education:** Recommend courses and training offered by a hospital or other institution with CPE training program. Application and acceptance by the institution is ordinarily required.
  - 4) **Education Ministry:** Courses and workshops that provide tools for leading or performing a teaching ministry of adults, youth, children. Recommend theology courses from a seminary or completion of training through established programs such as Crossways International, Bethel Institute, or other appropriate institutions.
  - 5) **Intentional Interim Ministry:** Preparation to serve as an interim pastor. Prior approval of Office of Central States Synod Bishop required. Recommended training is the program offered through Interim Ministry Network.
  - 6) **Mission Development:** Preparation for service as a Mission Developer. Information on the application process and standards, as well as training requirements, is available from the Mission Developer for the Synod.
  - 7) **Parish Nursing:** Recommend participation in training programs of a parish nursing program.

- 8) **Spiritual Discernment and Faith Formation:** Suggested training – Souljourners Program.
- 9) **Worship and Music Leadership:** Recommend courses/workshops selected from offerings by Lutheran Program for Musicians Serving Small Congregations (LPM) or an equivalent program.
- 10) **Youth Ministry:** Recommend courses/workshops through Wartburg Seminary, Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College, or an equivalent program.

- C. Many of the core courses and some electives will be offered through the Lifelong Learning Centers of the Synod (Lutheran School of Theology, Lutheran House of Studies, and Bethany House of Studies). The PMAT will coordinate with these Centers in arranging course offerings. Meeting places and schedules will vary according to geographical areas, facilitators, and Discovery Phase/Candidates. The frequency and location of courses will depend upon participation and need.

## VI. Cost and Scholarships

- A. Financial responsibilities may be shared by the CSS, Discovery Phase/Candidates, congregation, and area ministries.
- B. Tuition varies depending on facilitator, format, and location of courses. The cost for each core course is approximately \$135, plus the cost of books and travel expenses. Costs for electives and workshops vary.
- C. Scholarships may be available through application.
  1. Applications should be sent to coordinator.
  2. Scholarships are funded through designated gifts to the scholarship fund.

## VII. Credits

- A. Each core course is one credit.
- B. Credit guidelines for electives involve contact hours, plus a required reflective paper\* which shows integration of the material into the ministry objective of the Discovery Phase/Candidate.
  - 1) 1/3 credit – 6 contact hours plus a three-page paper
  - 2) 1/2 credit – 12 contact hours plus a six-page paper
  - 3) 1 credit – 24 contact hours plus a nine-page paper

*\* Papers are to be typed with one-inch margins, normal font size, double spaced and submitted to Coordinator.*

- C. The Coordinator may waive the requirement for a separate paper if the course requirement includes the submission of an equivalent paper.
- D. To be assured of credit, courses/workshops must be pre-approved by Coordinator.
- E. One-third (1/3) Convocation credit is given for each PMAP Convocation attended.
- F. No credit will be given for the following:
  - 1) CSS Assembly
  - 2) Ministeria
  - 3) Pericope study groups
- G. College or seminary courses must have been completed within the past six years to be considered.
- H. Equivalency and exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **VIII. Certification, Authorization, Installation**

- A. Candidates who satisfactorily complete the PMA requirements may be certified by the CSS. Recognition of Certification may take place in a public ritual.
- B. Those who are certified may be authorized by the Bishop to serve in a specific location for a specified time where need exists as identified by the congregation and the CSS. The authorization will be effected in writing describing the terms, conditions, and scope of the authorization. The ministry description may also limit or prohibit activities to be conducted.
- C. Parish Ministry Associates may be commissioned by the Bishop or designee for authorized ministries in the congregation or setting in which their ministry is taking place.
- D. Candidates working toward their certification may function in approved ways as identified by the congregation and the CSS, so

long as they have the Bishop's approval and are supervised by a pastor appointed by the CSS.

- E. The PMAT of the CSS will provide the Bishop with recommendations concerning the authorization, suitability, and accountability for service within the CSS. **Authorization for Word and Sacrament Ministry will be determined by and issued by the Bishop.**

### **IX. Compensation**

Compensation will be determined in consultation with the PMA, CSS staff, and the congregation council, agency, or institution.

### **X. Supervision and Accountability**

- A. In all cases, a PMA is to be under the direct supervision of an ordained minister appointed by the Bishop.
  - 1) The ministry of a PMA to a congregation (other than service as Authorized Pastoral Leader [serving in the role as an Interim Lay Pastor]) will be under the direct supervision of a pastor of that congregation.
  - 2) A PMA conducting pulpit supply will be under the supervision of the pastor of the congregation he/she is serving. If the congregation does not have a pastor, then the PMA Coordinator responsible for the Area Ministry of the congregation may provide supervision for this ministry.
  - 3) A PMA acting as an Authorized Pastoral Leader (serving in the role as an Interim Lay Pastor) will be under the supervision of a pastor designated by the Office of the Synod Bishop. This designation will be made in a Covenant Agreement or other written document.
  - 4) The ministry of a PMA to a CSS Area Ministry, Synod Team, or the CSS will be under the supervision of a pastor with responsibility for this ministry (such as the Area Ministry Dean or leader of the Team). If no pastor serves in such a role, the supervision will be by a pastor or other such person designated by the Office of the Synod Bishop. A recommendation will be made by the PMA Coordinator responsible for the Area Ministry in which the primary ministry of the PMA will reside.
  - 5) The ministry of a PMA to an agency or institution will be under the supervision of a person approved by the Office of the Synod Bishop. A recommendation will be made by the PMA Coordinator responsible for the Area Ministry in which the Institution or Agency is located. The supervisor may be the

Director (Executive Officer) of that organization, a local pastor, or other person designated and approved by the Office of the Bishop.

- 6) The Office of the Bishop retains authority in all cases to approve administration of the sacraments by a PMA. For PMAs serving as Authorized Pastoral Leaders, any authorization for administration of the sacraments will be indicated in a covenant agreement approving this ministry. In all other situations, the congregation should request approval for the PMA to administer the sacrament through a request to the Office of the Bishop (e-mail is the preferred method of communication, with a copy to the PMA Coordinator for the Area Ministry in which the congregation is located). The PMA should confirm that the approval has been requested and granted and may, if necessary, request such approval on behalf of the congregation.
- B. The responsibilities of the supervisor shall include:
  - 1) Monthly consultation with the PMA; any concerns/issues should be reported by the Supervisor to the PMA Coordinator for that Area Ministry.
  - 2) Annual review of ELCA Guidelines for Authorized Ministry.
  - 3) Annual review of appointment and report to the Bishop.
- C. Each certified PMA will annually complete and have approved by the Supervisor a Ministry Plan and Agreement for each place of regular service, using the appropriate form.
- D. Parish Ministry Associates will be subject to discipline by the Bishop the same as clergy, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses.
- B. The titles "Pastor," "Associate in Ministry," "Diaconal Minister," and "Deaconess" are not to be used by PMAs.
- C. PMAs may officiate at weddings for members of congregations in which authorized to serve providing:
  1. Authorized by state statute to so preside.
  2. Approval of the congregation in which authorized to serve to officiate at the wedding.
  3. Approval of the Central States Synod Bishop.
- D. PMAs will not offer counseling (this is not the same as spiritual care giving) as part of their ministries, unless they hold the appropriate credentials.
- E. At those points where matters have not been addressed, the Parish Ministry Associate Program will follow ELCA Guidelines for Synodically Authorized Ministries, available from the CSS office or the ELCA Distribution Center.

## **XI. Renewal and Revocation**

- A. The Bishop may annually review an authorization for ministry when performance has been satisfactory and a need is demonstrated for its continuation.
- B. Authorization to provide ministry with the CSS may be revoked at any time by the Bishop, who need not specify the reason.

## **XII. Other Matters**

- A. Persons serving as PMAs will not wear clerical attire – e.g., clerical collars or clerical stoles.