

Western Synods First Call Program

The Western Synods *First Call Programme* involves rostered ministers in the ELCIC (ordained and diaconal) who are part of an intentional continuing education programme for a three year period during their first call to ministry serving in the western synods of the ELCIC. When congregations/Agencies call a rostered minister to serve in their congregation/Agency, they make a commitment to fund his/her participation in the *First Call Programme*. The fee, which is the responsibility of the congregation/agency is \$1500 per rostered minister per year for a three year period (as outlined in the Letter of Call) and includes costs for travel, registration, accommodation and meal expenses at the western synods sponsored annual event.

Program goals relating to ministerial identity, skills and context include:

- Successfully retaining newly rostered leaders in ministry
- developing habits of sustainability i.e. preventing burnout
- addressing expectations for ministry of rostered leaders, congregations and judicatory bodies
- recognition of public vs. private roles for rostered leaders
- strengthening collegial relationships among rostered leaders i.e. support, accountability and respect
- foster appreciation for continuing education
- sharpening skills for congregational development
- reinforcing skills in equipping the saints in leadership for ministry
- gaining tools for and recognizing importance of understanding the context of ministry
- strengthening faith commitments of members
- live into a larger understanding of their work and life as one of continuous teaching and learning
- develop opportunities to provide leadership in their local community
- develop skills for being practitioners in their community & seeing themselves as part of a larger community of practice
- build relationships that enable members to learn from each other
- understanding the context in which they are practitioners of ministry
- creating strong, well-resourced communities
- facilitate the development of accurate congregation mission profiles
- address expectations for ministry of rostered leaders, congregations and judicatory bodies (proactively)
- strengthening collegial relationships among rostered leaders
- learning to identify, prepare, and support first call congregations recognizing signature ministries
- learning to identify, prepare, and support first call congregations

General components of the process include mentorship (all years), annual western synod events, spiritual direction, theological reflection, structured reading, peer-to-peer (cohort) learning, development of an education plan including goal setting and accountability in the context of Mutual Ministry Committee, as well as evaluation by stakeholders.

Specific components of the *First Call Programme* include:

- 25 hours in an annual western synods sponsored learning event to be funded by the calling congregation or agency. Course offerings will include training in practical ministry subjects such as evangelism, stewardship and conflict management, as well as historical/biblical theology and doctrinal theology.

- A further 25 hours in a learning event or events in an area appropriate to the call of the pastor/lay diaconal minister. It is recommended that the REFLECTIONS AND DIRECTIONS DOCUMENT in the Mutual Ministry Handbook be used to determine appropriate areas of study. The expectation is that the rostered minister should sit down with their Mutual Ministry Committee and take a look at what areas of ministry could be strengthened through continuing education and then look for appropriate opportunities to address those needs. The costs for continuing education are the rostered minister's responsibility. It is appropriate to use your continuing education allowance (ELCIC-CEP) and book allowance included in the rostered minister's Letter of Call, compensation package. The ELCIC Continuing Education Plan is mandatory for all First Call Candidates. Enrollment and remittance forms are available on the ELCIC website (see "What we do"/GSI/members/Continuing Education Plan/forms)
- An intentional mentoring relationship with a pastor/lay diaconal minister. Documents supporting this relationship include GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS AND CANDIDATES; SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF A MENTOR; AND SAMPLE MENTORING AGREEMENT. At the end of the three year mentoring process, it is expected that the rostered minister will be available to mentor a new rostered minister through the process.
- Generation and completion of a reading list which would encompass the three disciplines of historical/biblical theology, doctrinal theology and practical theology. It is anticipated that this reading list would be developed after using the REFLECTIONS AND DIRECTIONS document from the ELCIC Mutual Ministry Handbook or a comparable tool. It is fair to expect that the candidate would read at least 5 books over the course of one year.
- A *First Call Reporting Form* which needs to be completed and returned to the synod bishop by June 1 of each year. The form provides a template for outlining continuing education plans, mentoring, and the reading list.