

**Office of Contextual Formation
Ministerial Fieldwork Guidelines**

(First Two Semesters' Congregational or Agency Fieldwork)

WEBSITE: <http://my.uls.edu/contextual-formation/>

“Ministerial Fieldwork” (congregational or agency fieldwork) is the name of the first of three Contextual Formation components. It precedes “Critical Reflection on Praxes of Ministry”(CPE) and the third component “Ministerial Immersion” (internship).

In Ministerial Fieldwork, the congregation and the supervisor share their congregational life with the student, and review and discuss the student's skills and gifts for ministry. Reflection on vocation – both the sense of purpose for the student in ministry, but also the corporate vocation, or ‘call’ that the congregation or ministry setting has received and faithfully engages - frames the Ministerial Fieldwork experience and themes throughout the year. In this way, Ministerial Leadership helps to prepare candidates for public offices of ministry, and particularly the endorsement stage of the second year of candidacy for ELCA students.

Ministerial Fieldwork students spend 7-10 hours at their placements per week for 12 weeks during each of two semesters. This is normally on Sunday morning during which time they will worship with the congregation. Congregations with services offered at times not on a Sunday morning may have students visit these services but not expect regular attendance. Some MAML students may be assigned to an agency; they participate in that work at a mutually agreed upon time.

1. **Establishing a professional relationship with a supervisor, the student** learns how to encourage others to articulate their faith in daily life, to take responsibility for worship, fellowship and decision-making in a particular context.
2. **Exploring their skills in teaching (and perhaps preaching),** the student begins the process of communicating to others how the Word of God has moved them, and how it is relevant to contemporary needs. They will face the challenge of relating their own testimony to scripture, creeds and confessional traditions. (M.Div. & MAML students teach two times.) The supervisor is to take students on three parish visits (i.e.: homebound, hospital, visitor) during the academic year.

What to do in the Congregation/agency

- Participate and assist in worship; education; & service ministries
- Initiate conversations with a wide variety of members/staff;
- Teach (and possibly preach in second semester) as arranged, make public presentations
- Interview congregational leaders/staff;
- Study the congregation and its neighborhood
- At least once a month, have lunch with members of the congregation/agency; and,
- Meet 6 times each semester with Supervisor for guided conversation around both the sense of purpose for the student in ministry, but also the corporate vocation, or ‘call’ that the congregation or ministry setting has received and faithfully engages.

Ministerial Fieldwork sites are normally within one hour's drive from Gettysburg/Philadelphia

- Mileage Compensation: Congregations reimburse the students for all mileage pertaining to Ministerial Fieldwork at the current IRS standard rate. Mileage calculated is either the distance between the Seminary and the congregation OR the student's residence to the congregation - whichever is less. OR reimbursement for public transportation between the Seminary and the congregation.
- Student's family: Families are welcome, with permission from the site, to visit occasionally but are not expected to participate in the Ministerial Fieldwork program. Students should arrive for work-times free of child-care responsibilities.
- Good Friday and Easter Day: Students are welcome to participate in the parish celebration; but when the seminary is not in session, students are not required to be at Ministerial Fieldwork site

Note: Students are expected to be present every Sunday of the term, up to 12 weeks (grace is offered when circumstances beyond the students control occur that prevent attendance), and they must complete six supervisor conferences each semester. The Supervisor and student need to decide on a schedule for conferences and visitation that best suits them. Lunches with members in the parish should be arranged at least once a month. These lunches provide the occasion for learning about the daily discipleship of members, and also provide information about specific aspects of ministry that will form the basis for the student's learnings.

Supervisor and Student

An important aspect of the 7-10 hours that the student will spend in the parish or institution during the selected weeks of the term is the development of an intentional professional relationship with the Ministerial Fieldwork supervisor. Each parish is different, and each supervisor is different, but a professional relationship can only be effective if there is clear communication of expectations, a real desire to understand the gifts and strengths of the student and the supervisor, as well as prompt attention to areas where new learning is necessary.

The conferences between supervisor and student may begin with scripture reading and prayer, as a way to integrate various learning tasks with the life of the parish, or agency. Using a form of *lectio divina* - a way of concentrating the mind on a particular expression or experience of God's Word and linking the fruits of that concentration to daily life – may be a helpful way to open the supervising sessions. Biblical reflection done in this way can deeply enrich a discussion of:

- a) theology, context, and mission or the student's preparations and experiences in teaching (and possibly preaching in the second semester) in the Ministerial Fieldwork context.
- b) reflections upon vocation,
- c) the way that an experienced pastor discerns the time and opportunity to lead a congregation/agency forward in mission and ministry

Appraisals

Students are responsible for getting the appraisal forms to the Contextual Formation Office by the deadline. Please refer to each form for deadlines and the various questions for appraisal and evaluation. The final appraisal of the year should be shared with synodical candidacy committees. These forms are posted on the Contextual Formation webpage: www.my.uls.edu/contextual-formation/

For the first semester, a one-page mid-year appraisal completed and signed by student and supervisor; during the second semester, a final appraisal is due from the supervisor. Students in Master of Arts in Ministerial Leadership have the option of a service ministry component. **Preaching, teaching, and lay person evaluation forms are provided as tools for discussion and assessment for students and supervisors. **They should not be returned to Contextual Formation.**

Ministerial Fieldwork and the ELCA Deacon Candidate

Field work plays a vital role in the preparation and formation of deacon candidates. The diaconate serves on the boundaries where church and society interface. Regardless of the particular ministry setting in which they serve, deacon candidates will be expected to understand the dynamic relationships within and between congregational

and societal systems and to provide leadership in connecting these systems. The process of contextualization, reflection, integration, and evaluation will be given particular attention throughout the field work experience.

The goals of field experience for diaconate:

- develop a vision and understanding of the ministry of Word and Service rooted in the Word of God and bring it forth as a witness to the Gospel;
- understand relationships within and between congregations and societal agencies; and,
- provide ministry at particular interfaces of church and society;

During the year in the Ministerial Fieldwork site, the student should begin to plan a diaconal project designed to engage the congregation's attention to ministry of the baptized in the world. Such a project also shall make clear how the student articulates the Lutheran tradition's theology in relationship to vocation in daily life.

While most deacons are not called to settings that include regular worship leadership, there are obvious places within the liturgy where deacons have traditionally served, and which ritually point to the nexus of church and world: receiving the bread and wine, preparing the altar, distributing Holy Communion, caring for the altar and vessels, reading the Gospel. Roles that flow from the heart of the deacon roster include leadership of intercessory prayer, distribution of Holy Communion to the homebound, preaching, and oversight of the 'frontiers' in the coming and going of people to worship— the gathering and the sending.

The opportunities for visitation and interviews with congregational members, Sunday lunches with members of the congregation, and observation and study of the community might be structured to include individuals who provide entrée to the area of specialization of the deacon candidate: chaplaincy, social work, pastoral care, community organizing, parish nursing, etc.

NOTE TO STUDENTS: You must notify the Contextual Formation Office on your campus of any important changes that might affect your placement or enrollment status.

Questions: Email Contextual Formation Office
contextualformation@uls.edu