

The Role of Deans in the Montana Synod

Background: The Deans of the 12 clusters have served an important leadership role in the Montana Synod. The Deans serve both as an extension of the Bishop's Office, and as leaders in their cluster. Unlike some synods, the Montana Synod does not have any constitutional language about Deans. Over the years, Bishops in the Montana Synod have made use of Deans in different ways (eyes and ears, conflict intervention, support to colleagues, representing the Bishop at events in the cluster.) And over the years, the Deans have been brought together from time to time. At a recent gathering of Deans, the Deans requested some more clarity on their role and expectations. This document is a draft for consideration and feedback by the Deans.

Cluster Deans are appointed by the Bishop, in consultation with the rostered leaders of the cluster. Terms are four years, renewable. At the completion of each four-year term the Dean and the Bishop will debrief the insights the Dean has received during the term. If a Dean accepts a call outside the cluster where s/he is Dean, the position will be vacant. If the Dean resigns or moves before the completion of a term, the Dean and Bishop will still debrief.

What Deans Can Expect from the Bishop's Office:

- An annual half-day meeting for continued communication
- Regular e-mail contact from the Synod Office
- An annual personal meeting with the Bishop

Role of the Dean:

Communication: The Deans play a major role being the pastoral "eyes and ears" for the Bishop out in the field. Communication goes both ways.

1. Keep track of rostered persons in the clusters and communicate any concerns to the Bishop's office.
2. Communicate synod and churchwide concerns to the congregations and rostered persons of the cluster.

Pastoral Care: The Deans serve as an extension of the Office of Bishop in the Pastoral Care of rostered persons and congregations. At the request of and/or with the consent of the Bishop, Deans may:

1. Provide pastoral guidance to colleagues on behalf of the Bishop's office
2. Make referrals of colleagues to the Bishop's office.
3. Visit annually, on behalf of the Bishop's office, with retired rostered persons residing in the cluster.

Administration: Deans may be called on from time to time on behalf of the Bishop's office, to perform various functions. They include:

1. Contact and welcome new rostered persons in the cluster.
2. Have follow-up check in 6 months after arrival.
3. Assist first-call persons in establishing mentor relationships.

4. Serve as resource, in consultation with the Bishop's office, for congregations facing transition.

5. Promote/convene meetings of the ministerium of the cluster, and opportunities for lay and clergy members of the cluster to gather for fellowship, learning and service.

What Clusters Can Expect from the Deans:

Congregations, ministries, lay persons and colleagues can expect that the Dean will be a faithful representative of the Church and of the Bishop's office, and that the Dean will, on behalf of the Church, express an interest in the ministries and colleagues of the cluster, while observing appropriate boundaries.

Colleagues can expect:

1. A respected colleague who will listen and advise confidentially, in consultation with the Bishop's office.

2. Someone knowledgeable about the Synod who will welcome and help orient newcomers.

3. Contact.

4. Someone who knows resources and how to refer.

Congregations/ministries may expect:

1. A neighboring pastor who may offer guidance, in consultation with the Bishop's office, especially in times of transition or conflict.

2. A representative of the church familiar with resources and able to refer.

3. Someone who can help build trust, and serve as liaison, if necessary with the Bishop's office.

Approved by the Montana Synod Council, June 6, 2008.