

The Montana Synod

The Montana Synod is one of 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The ELCA was formed in 1988 as a merger of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The roots of the Montana Synod can be traced back to 1881 when three Norwegian-American families settled along Sweet Grass Creek near the community of Melville in south central Montana.

The Montana Synod with its 50,000 baptized members, is served by 199 Pastors, AIMs & Diaconal Ministers (active, retired, in congregations and in special ministries).

Our Mission:

*“Marked by the cross of Christ forever,
abundantly blessed, we faithfully
serve God and neighbor.”*

Our Vision:

*“Every person a witness,
Every minister equipping witness,
Every congregation and ministry,
empowered for witness
serving faithfully”*

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Web site: www.montanasynod.org

ELCA web site: www.elca.org

Montana Synod Lay Pastoral Associates Preparation Program



Handbook for Candidates and their Congregations

Rev. 7/09

What is the LPA program?

The Montana Synod established in 1997 a program of training and equipping qualified lay persons for congregational-based ministries of preaching, sacraments and worship leadership, and where appropriate, providing leadership for bible study, catechetical instruction, visitation and spiritual growth.

The ELCA, through its Vocation and Education Program Unit, recognizes that certain congregations are in situations where--by reason of geography or economics--they find it impossible to support the ministry of a full time or part time ordained pastor. Thus the church makes provision for training and approving "Synodically Authorized Ministers" or "Lay Pastoral Associates". In most instances these persons will already be members of the congregations to be served. But they also may be persons residing in areas adjacent to the communities where the ministry will be conducted. In either case, however, Lay Pastoral Associates serve at the request of the bishop and are under the supervision of an ordained pastor.

In addition, the Montana Synod encourages people to participate in the LPA training as preparation for lay preaching, teaching and leading.

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;
and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”
(1 Corinthians 12:4-7)*

2009-2011 Northeast Retreats: (Epping, ND)

**Sep. 25-27, 2009—Upper Missouri Ministries
April 16-18, 2010—Upper Missouri Ministries
October, 2010—Location to be determined
April, 2011—Location to be determined**

2010-2012 Great Falls Retreats:

**Oct. 1-3, 2010—Ursuline Centre
April 1-3, 2011—Ursuline Centre
Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2011—Ursuline Centre
April 20-22, 2012—Ursuline Centre**

For Textbook Orders

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2481 Como Avenue
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Phone (612) 641-3440
www.luthersem.edu/bookstore/
bookstore@luthersem.edu

For the University of Great Falls Telecom Program

Contact your local UFG Telecom site or:
The Admissions Office
University of Great Falls
1301 – 20th St. S.
Great Falls, MT 59405
Phone 1-800-342-9824 or 761-8210
<http://www.ugf.edu/academics/distPrograms.htm>
scroll down and click on the semester
scroll to the bottom of the page and look for the TRL
department
mmay@ugf.edu

Remember, an excellent source of books and materials is
Augsburg Fortress, the publications ministry of the ELCA.

Augsburg Fortress, Publishers

P.O. Box 1209
Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209
612-330-3300 or 800-426-0115
www.augsburgfortress.org

Qualifications & Accountabilities

Acceptance into the program of preparation

Prospective candidates are to be nominated in writing by their pastor and church council (or just the council if there is not a pastor currently serving their church). Qualifications for nomination are:

- (1) evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment;
- (2) membership in an ELCA congregation; and
- (3) a willingness to adhere to the standards and expectations for Lay Pastoral Associates as outlined in this handbook.

Evaluation during the program

The LPA program coordinators and the mentor will evaluate the progress of each candidate. The expectation at the end of each course is that the candidate will be able to articulate how the knowledge gained may be applied to ministry in the church. The evaluation will attest to the candidate's satisfactory fulfillment of the course expectations for the semester and will be the basis for recommending additional or supplemental work.

Certificate of Completion

The program coordinators working in conjunction with the Montana Synod staff will provide a certificate of completion to candidates who satisfactorily fulfill the requirements of the program. The certificate, however, does not guarantee that the candidate will be authorized by the synod for public ministry. Authorization comes only as there is a synodically recognized need for such ministry.

What is involved in the program?

The program, which follows, is designed in accord with guidelines established by the ELCA Vocation and Education Program Unit. Churchwide guidelines are provided so that there will be regularity to authorized lay ministry--as there is for the ministry of pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers--across the ELCA. ("No one should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call," Augsburg Confession, Art. 14) These guidelines, however, while specific in matters of curriculum and questions of accountability, permit each synod to tailor its program to local needs and circumstances.

Preparation

Areas of Study and Formation: The program of preparation for a Lay Pastoral Associate includes study in Bible, Lutheran theology, Lutheran polity and the Confessions, Worship, Spiritual Discernment and Faith Formation, Leadership Expectations, Contextual Understanding, and Skill Development.

Structure: The program will span four "semesters" over a period of two years. In each of the four semesters participants will:

- 1) attend & participate in the retreat offered;
- 2) complete a foundational course, as assigned; and
- 3) work with a designated mentor.

Associate to the Bishop Rev. John Allen

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For SELECT Course Information and Registration

SELECT Multimedia Resources
1568 Eustis Street
St. Paul, MN 55108
(toll free) 1-877-675-6275
<http://www.selectlearning.org>
info@selectlearning.org

The Montana Synod Office has one set of SELECT course tapes available. We encourage LPA Candidates to form a study group in order to more equitably share these copies.

For the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology (NRIT)

Jenny Kunka, Director
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Phone (406) 453-1461
www.nrit.org
nrit@nrit.org

For MAC Ecumenical Lay Ministry Institute

Rev. Bill Hawk, MAC LMI Dean
3504 Flagstone Dr.
Billings, MT 59102
(406) 652-6570
www.montana-churches.org
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- Accountability and supervision for a Lay Pastoral Associate working in a congregational setting will be the direct responsibility of the church council. The mentor/supervising pastor will work with the council and the bishop in providing oversight for the authorized minister

For Questions about the Lay Pastoral Associate Program:

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or

Qualifying foundational courses may be:

- (1) designated SELECT videotape courses,
- (2) courses offered by the Montana Association of Churches Ecumenical Lay Ministry Institute;
- (3) foundational courses offered by the Montana Synod and the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology (NRIT),
- (4) offerings of the Religious Studies Department of the University of Great Falls (available on campus or through the UGF Telecom distance learning program), or
- (5) their equivalents on other campuses.

Other options are available. The candidate should check with the Bishop's office before substituting other programs.

The Montana Synod and NRIT will offer 4 retreats at the Ursuline Center in Great Falls and, as necessary, in other locations. The retreats serve as formation events and as short courses on relevant ministry areas.

Each LPA candidate will be responsible for finding an ELCA pastor to serve as a mentor/supervisor. The pastor/mentor should be geographically proximate to the LPA Candidate.

A. Retreats	(with your LPA class)
Year 1, fall	Faith Formation and Christian Spirituality
Year 1, spring	Theology and Practice of Christian Worship
Year 2, fall	The Art & Practice of Preaching
Year 2, spring	Congregational Life and Leadership

B. Foundation Courses (you take on your own)

Year 1, fall	Old Testament Introduction
Year 1, spring	New Testament Introduction
Year 2, fall	History of Christianity
Year 2, spring	Introduction to Lutheran Theology

C. Mentoring

Year 1, fall	Planning and leading bible study
Year 1, spring	Preparation for preaching
Year 2, fall	Visitation, prayer and the care of souls
Year 2, spring	Teaching of the catechism

What are the Congregations' Responsibilities?

- A request to the bishop is to be made by a congregation for the services of a Lay Pastoral Associate. The request may come in the form of a letter, an e-mail, or even a phone call.
- The bishop, upon receiving a congregation's request, will assess the missional value of authorized lay ministry in that setting.
- Congregations that call on LPAs for supply preaching and presiding need to secure permission in writing from the bishop's office.
- Lay Pastoral Associates will receive a stipend, the amount of which will be determined by the particular circumstances and expectations of the congregation being served.
- Congregations will cover any expenses incurred by the authorized minister in the service of the congregation. Such expenses would include: mileage driven on parish business, parish printing and office supply expenses, etc.
- Congregations are expected to make provision for authorized ministers to participate in regular programs of continuing theological education through the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology and other resources.

What can I do with an LPA Certificate of Completion?

The following quote was taken from an article written by a candidate for LPA service:

“As most of you know, I’m attending classes and doing homework to get my authorization to be a Lay Pastor in the Montana Synod of the ELCA. Let me explain first that I will not be ordained, nor will I have any kind of degree. When I complete this course of study, I will be recognized by the Synod as a lay person who is able to offer pulpit supply to this congregation or other congregations that need pastoral services such as: preaching, teaching, doing the sacraments of baptism and communion, and funerals. I will NOT have authorization to do weddings or offer pastoral counseling.”

Some candidates take the classes for spiritual enrichment. You are not required to provide pulpit supply when you complete the LPA course of study.

Placement and Authorization

- The authorization and placement of candidates for service within the synod is the responsibility of the office of the bishop.
- Montana Synod candidates are authorized for service only within this synod and their authorization is not transferable to other synods of the ELCA. Likewise, Lay Pastoral Associates or their equivalent trained and licensed in comparable programs in other synods have no automatic authority for such ministry in the Montana Synod.
- Transfer into the Montana Synod preparation program or to the synod's Lay Pastoral Associate roster is possible, but cases are considered on an individual basis.
- In the long term absence of an ordained pastor, authorization may be given for a term of one year, which may be renewed, if a demonstrated need continues for authorized ministry in that location. LPAs will NOT be given a one year term license when providing periodic or short term pulpit supply.
- A mentoring/supervisory relationship with an ordained pastor will be established for each Lay Pastoral Associate.

- It is expected that the Lay Pastoral Associate will engage in disciplined continuing theological education--using the resources of the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology and comparable programs--with a minimum commitment of 20 contact hours annually.
- Authorizations for such ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the bishop, after consultation with the associate to the bishop, the synod vice president and other appropriate representatives if needed. In the interest of confidentiality the reason for revocation need not be specified.
- Authorization will be documented by a license or letter describing terms and conditions. The description may also limit or prohibit activities on the part of the licensed minister. Because of liability considerations, for example, Lay Pastoral Associates are not to offer counseling as a part of their authorized ministry responsibilities. Also, outside of the alb which may be worn when presiding at worship, Lay Pastoral Associates have no distinctive symbols or garb associated with their calling, viz., the stoles, clerical collars, etc. are not worn by Lay Pastoral Associates nor by Associates in Ministry
- On-going programmatic support for the Lay Pastoral Associate will be the responsibility of the office of the synod bishop.

What does all of this cost?

- ❑ **Annual program fee:** \$200. This fee to be paid each fall while the candidate is in the training program, covers expenses associated with the retreats.
- ❑ **Course costs:** The candidate is responsible for the cost of tuition and fees for the foundational courses in bible, church history and theology-- e.g., the participant's fees for the SELECT courses--as well as the cost of books and other materials.

Cost assistance:

The Montana Synod Office has one set of SELECT course tapes available. We encourage LPA Candidates to form a study group in order to more equitably share these copies. LPAs who have completed the course may also have copies they have purchased that they would be willing to share.

- ❑ **Congregational responsibilities:** Congregations are encouraged to cover or assist with the expenses of those members who are candidates for licensed service in their communities.