

Lay Pastoral Associate (LPA) Program 2016 Synod Assembly Report

It has been said that “Necessity is the mother of Invention.” This could be the motto for the Montana Synod Lay Pastoral Associate program, because this curriculum was born, and continues to thrive out of the great need for trained lay leaders in our Synod and within our congregations. It is a reality that we are not the church we once were, and the way that we provide worship leadership and pastoral care in this changing climate depends on the success of this program.

In 1997 the Montana Synod established the Lay Pastoral Associate (LPA) program to train and equip qualified lay persons for a congregational-based ministry of preaching, administration of the sacraments, worship leadership, and where appropriate, leadership for Bible study, catechetical instruction, visitation and spiritual growth. Once completed, Lay Pastoral Associates are licensed by the Bishop to serve our synod as interims, pulpit supply, and in other capacities.

Lay Pastoral Associate trainees follow a two-year curriculum that includes intensive coursework in Old and New Testament, Church History, Lutheran Theology, Preaching, Worship, Prayer and Spirituality, and Pastoral Care. LPA candidates are mentored by an ordained ELCA clergy person in their own or a nearby congregation.

Our current LPA class of students meets at the Ursuline Centre in Great Falls. In the fall of 2014 our largest class began with a course on prayer with Pr. Dan Heskett and in the spring of that year they learned about worship and worship leadership from Pr. Sandy Van Zyl. Last fall they engaged in a Preaching course with Prs. Lindean Barnett Christenson and Steven Loy and this spring received training in Pastoral Care with Pr. Karl Guhn. With their mentors they are expected to be engaged in other activities like teaching a Bible Study or confirmation class, pastoral care and nursing home visits, and monthly times for check-in and conversation.

If your congregation is interested in having a member train to become an LPA, the next class cycle will begin in fall of 2016 in Great Falls. Please contact the Synod office for more information. Candidates need to be recommended by their Pastor.

And remember, if your congregation needs a supply preacher you can go to the Synod website and go to [resources>>pulpit supply](#) and access the list of Lay Pastoral Associates who are available for pulpit supply.

Thank you to our course instructors Prs. Dan Heskett, Sandy Van Zyl, Lindean Barnett Christenson, Steven Loy, and Karl Guhn, for your valuable time and expertise. Also, thanks to Colter McCarty from the Synod office. He is responsible for keeping track of the progress of each LPA student and organizing the retreats. His time and talent makes the program run smoothly.

In Christ's Service,
Jason Asselstine, Associate to the Bishop

Current LPA Candidates: 32

Active LPAs: 71