

# Internship Handbook

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A Guide for Lay Committees

**Office of Contextual Education  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary**



Dear Members of the Lay Committee:

Thank you! We appreciate your service to the church and value the important work you do for the development of an intern's pastoral formation. The beginning of the year is a crucial time for getting the experience off to a good start. The student's year of hands-on, day-to-day life in a full-time ministry setting is a major change from previous years of academic work at the seminary. It is both thrilling and daunting to shift to this new style of learning. And, this is where the Lay Committee can uniquely be a help and support to the intern.

Welcome the intern and the intern's family. It is the Lay Committee's specific task to find a variety of ways to help the intern begin to integrate into your congregation as well as into the new role of intern pastor. Our hope is that you will "show them the ropes" of your community and the congregation. Introduce them to key people or places they should know. Invite them to lunch, dinner, or coffee. Relationships are key to successful ministry practices. As a committee member, you are in a perfect setting to build a trustworthy relationship with the intern.

Much of your role is to be support and encouragement to the intern. A goal of internship is for the intern to experience as many new and different aspects of ministry as possible. The Lay Committee is the support base for the intern to debrief how these experiences are going and to talk openly about the highs and lows of this new opportunity. The Committee can also offer encouragement and feedback so the intern continues to learn about their gifts and passion for serving God.

The internship year is a quarter of a student's seminary experience; many students report internship as being a fundamental and foundational year of their preparation for pastoral ministry. You are not in this venture alone. We are ready to assist you and the intern in any way we can. Please contact us if you need clarification or suggestions. Thank you for accompanying your intern on this significant journey.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Leslie Veen,  
Director of Contextual Education

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## Introduction

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### What is the purpose of the Lay Committee?

The Lay Committee is charged with supervisory responsibility on behalf of the whole congregation. The Committee is closely involved in the preparation of the intern for ordained ministry. Committee members develop a special relationship with the intern as they learn, grow, and struggle to help each other develop a unique ministry. The Lay Committee also sends evaluations to the intern's seminary three times a year.

### How should we use this handbook?

This handbook has been created for you as a reference for the ministry you have so graciously agreed to be a part of. We suggest looking over the entire handbook in order to get a more detailed overview of our expectations and the various areas the committee supports and advises the intern. Besides this handbook, Lay Committees have an excellent tool in the DVD, *Preparing a Pastor: The Lay Internship Committee's Role in a Holy Journey*. We hope you and the Supervising Pastor watch this DVD and set some goals for how you would like to enhance your intern's amazing year with you.

If you need a copy, please contact the Office of Contextual Education at [contexted@plts.edu](mailto:contexted@plts.edu) or 510-559-2713.

## Forming the Lay Committee

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### Selecting a Lay Committee

The Lay Committee is appointed by the Supervising Pastor. The Supervisor should choose 5-8 people who are able to meet monthly with the intern to give fair and open-minded consideration to the intern's experiences. It should be composed of a broad cross-section of the congregation. Some supervisors allow the intern to choose one or two members of the committee after they have arrived.

### Choosing a Chairperson

The Lay Committee chairperson is responsible for:

1. Convening all committee meetings.
2. Notifying everyone as to the time and place of meetings, and leading them.
3. Discussing the agenda with the intern.
4. Keeping the Supervising Pastor informed about any difficulties with convening regular Lay Committee meetings or any dysfunction of the committee
5. Filling in three (or possibly all) of the four quarterly evaluations.

## **Committee Member Term Limits**

If your site regularly has an intern, we suggest committee members serve three-year terms, with one-third of the committee in rotation each year. If not, members may remain on the Committee for multiple interns with an eye toward offering the Committee both stability as well as fresh energy and ideas.

## **Working Together: Serving as a Lay Committee**

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### **Expectations of the Lay Internship Committee Members**

#### ***Before the Intern Arrives...***

- Meet with the pastor to organize, study Lay Committee materials, and select the person who will serve as Chair. Exchange telephone numbers and addresses with the intern to establish contact before the intern arrives.
- Check on the physical arrangements for the intern. Is the housing adequate, clean, and ready? Does the intern need help unloading? Are there family members that need to be included in these arrangements?
- Send information to the intern about the home, community, and congregation.
- Inform the congregation of the intern's pending arrival.
- Plan a "Service of Beginning."
- Insure a good start for the intern and their family by planning a Welcome Celebration. First impressions are important.

#### ***During the Internship Year...***

In regular monthly meetings, the Committee and the intern become mentors and teachers to each other. Give your monthly meetings high priority. The intern and the Committee should function as a team. When a team member is not available or fails to participate, the whole effort suffers.

The Committee should participate in developing and reviewing the Learning Service Agreement and filling out quarterly evaluation forms. These meetings should include discussion helpful to the intern's development and learning. The members are expected to be available to give constructive feedback to the intern regarding the many different areas of ministry. At these meetings, members can tell the intern about congregational life and how well he or she is equipping the members for ministry. With loving concern, tell the intern about his or her growing edges or weaknesses. We do not always perceive ourselves as others do and someone who honestly reflects our behavior can be invaluable. Share your story of faith and your style of ministry. Take time to ask the intern what he/she needs from the members of the committee. Similarly, the Committee can help the intern learn what the expectations of the congregation are and bring constructive comments from congregation members to the meetings.

Please see the Appendix for a calendar of suggested discussion topics for each month's meeting.

## Roles as a Committee

As a member of the Lay Committee, you will be playing several roles to support the intern in their work. Some of these roles are...

1. **Supporter**  
You provide counsel and encouragement for the intern and his/her family. You also provide support and honest feedback - something that everyone needs.
2. **Sponsor**  
You acquaint the intern with the members of the congregation and the issues and concerns of the people and community.
3. **Consultant**  
You provide information about the congregation – teach, guide, and introduce the intern to your community. You help make sure the intern knows the audience on Sunday morning and something of the history of your church and community.
4. **Christian Witness**  
You share your own religious background, experiences, and beliefs. Tell the intern how God has called you and what that has meant.
5. **Partner in Ministry**  
You assist the intern in developing a style of ministry that is a partnership. Pastors need to work in partnership with others. The intern must learn how the roles of a pastor and a lay person complement each other and how he/she can effectively function in partnership with others.
6. **Evaluator**  
You are a mirror, reflecting your perception of the intern's ministry. You will offer your impressions of sermons, personal presence, teaching skills, etc. Do not gloss over things; be honest as you speak the truth in gentleness and love. The *entire* committee is expected to participate in the evaluation process by giving their opinions on the evaluation questions. The Lay Committee Chair is responsible for *compiling* these opinions for the evaluation forms and providing the final drafts of the forms to the other members. The evaluations are required three times during the year.

## Serving Effectively: Observations from Experience

Our experience with Lay Committees has given us the opportunity to make some observations about how an effective committee functions. Here are some key points to remember:

1. The purpose of an internship is to enable students to learn from supervised experience and reflection. The needs of the congregation must be recognized, but interns are placed with the objective of learning. The Committee should always ask first, "What will the intern learn in this situation?"
2. Confidentiality is vital. No one will be frank if the committee members or the intern tell everything that happens at the committee meeting. However, committee members/intern may at any time consult with the Supervising Pastor.

3. Be concerned about the whole life of the intern. Is the apartment or home adequate? Does the intern have time for personal needs? Who will introduce the intern to congregation members? What feelings are coming to the surface in the intern? How is the family doing?
4. Be honest. It does not help to compliment a poor sermon or presentation. Interns want the Lay Committee to give them honest feedback. Speak the truth in gentleness and love. Holding back vital information to spare the intern's feelings is not helpful. At times, uncomfortable subjects may need to be discussed.
5. Respect differences. Your intern will be unique, not at all like the last intern or the present pastor.
6. Affirm your lay ministry. Your views are important and the intern can use your impressions to learn about effective ministry from you.
7. Be concerned about an ongoing internship program. Insure the future health of the program with some good long-range plans. Be an advocate for the internship program in your congregation and in the church.
8. The Lay Committee Chair needs to work closely with the intern to set meeting times. Preferably, set a fixed day of the month for regular meetings. Clarify how members will be informed about meeting times and places.
9. Remember that the intern is a *student*, not an experienced pastor.
10. Your relationship with the Supervising Pastor should be marked by cooperation and shared concerns, and the Lay Committee should complement the pastor's supervision. The committee should be supportive of the pastor and the intern.
11. Try to avoid:
  - a) one person dominating the discussion
  - b) talking about someone not present
  - c) criticizing the pastor, staff or congregation members
  - d) bemoaning a situation in the parish
  - e) complaining about things the intern or committee cannot change
  - f) sidetracking the agenda and discussing unrelated concerns
  - g) relating only on a superficial level

## **Sharing Constructive Feedback: Sermon Responses and Evaluations**

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### **Sermon Response Forms**

As part of the evaluation process, the Lay Committee is asked to comment on the intern's preaching ability, style, and delivery for the benefit of the intern. The Committee may want to give input to the intern after each of her/his sermons and discuss them in supervisory sessions. The Committee may also want to include congregation members who do not serve on the committee to be involved in this process. Some interns have had many opportunities to preach in a public setting while others

have very little. The intent of these Sermon Response Forms, over the course of the year, is to compare responses in order to note improvement and greater confidence in the intern's ability in the area of preaching. These forms are NOT to be sent to the seminary. These response forms are merely some recommended instruments to aid in the Committee's ability to provide feedback to the intern on her/his preaching.

Students go on internship hoping to improve their preaching, and they look forward to suggestions from the members of their congregations. How can you help? Listen carefully to their sermons, and consider the following questions:

1. What insights did I gain from the biblical text?
2. How did the message from the Bible relate to the world, the community, my family, my life?
3. Are there ways the intern could improve his or her speaking style?

Additionally, you will find sermon response forms for offering feedback in the Appendix of this handbook. You are welcome to copy these forms – use them to organize your thoughts, and give them to the intern in response to their sermon. Thank you for your commitment to help your intern become a better preacher!

### **Internship Evaluation Forms**

Lay Committees are required to submit three quarterly evaluations to the seminary over the course of the year. Occasionally, the Supervising Pastor invites the Lay Committee to complete all four of the quarterly evaluations, but this is not required by the seminary. The evaluation includes an assessment of skills for pastoral leadership and personal characteristics for pastoral ministry. It is the responsibility of the Committee Chair to collate the group's responses and share the final draft with the committee members and the intern. The intern is responsible to send a signed copy to the seminary.

The questions are the same on all quarterly evaluation forms. In addition to the final quarterly evaluation form, you are also asked to complete the final evaluation form from the ELCA that has an additional part, that of a summary recommendation and paragraph. There are three options for recommendations for pastoral ministry in the ELCA: unconditional, conditional and not recommended. The summary paragraph should support the recommendation. The summary paragraph for a conditional recommendation should include suggestions for the student's development/growth. The summary paragraph will be shared with appropriate synodical/church-wide personnel as part of the approval and assignment process.

The summary paragraph is more helpful to the seminary and synodical staff members when pastoral and theological competence, commitment to gospel justice issues, teaching abilities, and personal characteristics suited for ministry are included as they pertain to the candidate. Try to provide as much substantive detail as possible noting strengths, weaknesses and growth edges. A statement affirming only strengths is not as helpful.

The ELCA requires the summary paragraph be limited to **500 characters including spaces!** This is quite a challenge, so it is important to be clear and concise when drafting the summary paragraph.

Below are examples of summary paragraphs:

- *The intern shows a distinct desire to serve God's people as an ordained pastor in the ELCA as evidenced in preaching, teaching, leading worship, etc. Her ministry is shaped by a clear understanding & application of basic Lutheran theology. Some areas of growth include: challenging people beyond their comfort level, develop a personal conflict management style & increase familiarity with OT. Strengths include a positive & energetic personality & she's very welcoming & inviting of strangers*
- *The intern is a person of deep faith and clear call. She has great skills in listening and being present with people. Her preaching has become more engaging and gospel centered. She has developed confidence in worship leadership. She works well on a team. Growth areas: stewardship and evangelism.*
- *We highly recommend the intern for pastoral ministry. His sermons are excellent; speaking style clear, relates well with congregation members of all ages, he has good listening skills, and has the discipline necessary to multi-task. We found no weaknesses in him and would be happy to have him return.*

The PLTS Quarterly Evaluation (under “Contextual Education: Internship”) and ELCA Final Evaluation form (under the “Internship & Seminary” tab) are available here:

PLTS Quarterly: [http://plts.edu/students\\_forms.html#intern](http://plts.edu/students_forms.html#intern)

ELCA Final: <http://www.elca.org/Resources/Candidacy>

Whenever an intern receives a conditional or failing evaluation from the Supervising Pastor and/or Lay Committee, the intern may ask The Director of Contextual Education at PLTS to initiate a process of review that will result in the formation of a panel to review the intern’s evaluation. The Director of Contextual Education may also initiate the formation of a panel to review an internship and/or evaluation.

## Appendix

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- i. Suggested Meeting Agendas
  - ii. Sermon Response Forms
  - iii. Service Suggestions for the Starting and Ending Internship
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### Suggested Meeting Agendas

The committee/intern may choose different topics of discussion that may be more appropriate to the setting.

#### Month One

- Welcome the intern, help him/her get settled and acquainted. Perhaps arrange for a guided tour of the parish and community. Include the intern's family.
- Schedule the first committee meeting at which you begin introducing the committee members, asking each to share their story of faith; discuss learning experiences available and the needs of the congregation and student.
- Review and formalize with the pastor and intern the Learning Service Agreement. Interns are to send a copy to the seminary. The internship project can also be discussed at this time.
- A time for sharing joys and concerns. This should become a monthly routine.

#### Month Two

- Check on housing and personal needs, including family's concerns.
- Discuss the transition from seminary to church institution.
- Talk about the agenda for the rest of the year.

#### Month Three

- Develop a process for evaluating the intern's preaching and public scripture reading. Agree on when to use it and how.
- Allow time for committee members to discuss what they gain from sermons and what is helpful to them.
- If the intern is married/partnered, discuss how congregational members relate to the pastor's spouse/partner.
- Begin looking at each of the areas of the midterm evaluation, and discuss what/how the intern is doing and feeling in each of them.

## **Month Four**

- Evaluate the intern's sermon and worship leadership.
- Discuss ways of evaluating the intern's teaching. Will you talk to students or participate in a class? The group should discuss the teaching role and the importance of the teaching ministry. Plan an evaluation for the next meeting.
- You may be in the holiday season now. Will the intern be alone for Thanksgiving and Christmas? How can you be mindful of them as they spend the holidays away from family and friends?
- Discuss progress with Project Plan.
- Continue looking at the areas of the midterm evaluation.

## **Month Five**

- Evaluate the teaching ministry.
- Review final Project Plan.
- Finish reviewing the quarterly evaluation forms and offer explanations in preparation for completing the forms.

## **Month Six**

- Fill out the quarterly evaluation forms.
- Check the Learning Service Agreement. Does it need to be updated?
- Discuss, reflect and evaluate your relationship to the other congregations in your area and your response to social concerns of the community, the country and the world.
- Plan an evaluation of the pastoral visitation activity of the intern. Why is it important? How can both lay and clergy minister to the shut-in, the sick, and the troubled? Plan to evaluate this aspect of ministry at your next meeting.

## **Month Seven**

- Discuss the feedback from the quarterly evaluation forms.
- Evaluate pastoral visitation, ministry to the elderly, the sick, etc.
- Plan ways to explore the role of office manager. Become acquainted with day-to-day office administration.
- Make any necessary adjustments to the Learning Service Agreement.

## **Month Eight**

- Discuss the role of the clergy in the broader Christian community. What is your congregation's relationship to the other churches in the community? How does your congregation relate to the Synod and Region? Examine social ministry opportunities in your community. What is the congregation doing in terms of justice, advocacy, community involvement, etc?

- Finish reviewing the quarterly evaluation forms and offer explanations in preparation for completing the forms.

### **Month Nine**

- Fill out the quarterly evaluation forms.
- Discuss, reflect, and evaluate your relationship to the other congregations in your area and your response to social concerns.
- Review the past months. Summer plans are likely being made and the pastor may schedule vacation. Will the intern have additional responsibilities when the pastor is on vacation? Will there be retreats? Will you cover the full range of ministry areas by the end of the year?
- By now, the intern will be fairly free to organize work and to operate independently. Discuss how one plans work, sets priorities, and operates under great freedom.
- Review a sermon or discuss the ministry of lay people as it relates to the ordained minister.

### **Month Ten**

- Discuss how the presence of the intern has impacted the congregation.
- Make plans for next month.
- Look at the final evaluation forms.

### **Month Eleven**

- Plan a "Service of Ending" for the intern. Talk about "going away" issues.
- You may want to give each member a copy of the final evaluation form to fill in so you can combine comments for the copy sent to the seminary.

### **Month Twelve**

- Discuss the final evaluation forms with the intern and draft a committee "consensus report".
- Evaluate the committee. How did the committee respond to the presence of the intern? What could be improved? Were any issues not addressed? Do you have advice for the next internship committee or advice for the contextual education staff of the seminary? Overall, how well did the committee function?
- Say goodbye in a personal way and participate in the "Service of Ending".
- You may want to suggest/coordinate a farewell event for the intern and family.

## Sermon Response Forms

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### Sermon Response Form #1:

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Hearer: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Summarize the content of the sermon as you heard it. If the content was not clear, please say so.

2. What good news did you hear in the sermon? Please make it clear why it is good news to you – what was or what might be the result of the sermon in your feeling and/or action?

3. In what ways did the preacher's delivery – demeanor, language, style, illustrations, etc. – help or hinder communicating the message?

4. What, generally, would you like to tell the preacher about his/her communicating the gospel?



### Sermon Response Form #3:

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hearer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### PULPIT PRESENCE

- Was the preacher caught up in the message? Speaking from genuine feelings and conviction?
- Was the preacher speaking to you, eye-to-eye, person-to-person?

#### DELIVERY

- Rate: (varied, effective use of pause, rushed, monotonous, hesitant?)
- Volume: (strong, well directed, varied, monotonous, too soft, too loud?)
- Inflection: (varied pitch, monotonous pitch, enthusiastic, overly somber?)
- Articulation: (distinct, slurred, mumbled, affected precision, endings dropped?)
- Voice Quality: (clear, muffled, nasal, breathy, not enough breath, stained glass tone?)
- Eye Contact: (direct, sustained, varied, lacking, eyes glued to notes?)
- Posture: (relaxed, tense, swaying, leaning, distracting foot movement?)
- Gestures: (smooth, full, rigid, awkward, distracting, limited, nonexistent?)



## Service Suggestions for Beginning and Ending Internship

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There is no official order of service for the beginning or ending of an internship. You may adapt these sample services, write your own, or adapt a service from the ELW Occasional Services book. It is important that some public recognition of the beginning/ completion of the internship year be made. It may or may not be appropriate to include the partner and/or family in this service. The arrangements should be made by mutual agreement. It would be appropriate to arrange for an informal reception for the intern in order to encourage congregational members to welcome/say good-bye in a personal way.

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### A Service of Beginning

**Congregation leader:** Let us pray:

O God, through the Holy Spirit you illumine the minds and sanctify the lives of those who are called to be pastors and teachers. Look with favor upon the seminaries of the ELCA as they seek to instruct those preparing to serve in the ministry of your Church. Bless your people in this congregation who by word and example aid your servant, \_\_\_\_\_, in learning to do the ministry for which she/he is being prepared. As we diligently work together, grant that our lives may be enriched and our ministries fulfilled with joy, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." (I Cor. 12:4-6 NSV) In the coming year, the intern will work with the supervising pastor, lay committee and this congregation to be formed as a pastor and develop skills for pastoral ministry.

**Congregation leader:** I ask you, \_\_\_\_\_, are you willing to assume your partnership in ministry here, and will you seek to engage in that ministry to God's glory? If so, answer, "I am ready, and I ask God to guide and help me."

**Intern:** I am ready, and I ask God to guide and help me.

*(The congregation will rise.)*

**Congregation leader:** The members of this congregation and the supervising pastor are asked to accept this intern as a partner in ministry: welcoming her/him into our homes, sharing in his/her learning and growth and encouraging, supporting and praying for her/him.

Now I ask you, will you receive as a partner in ministry and uphold and support her/him in every way? If so, answer, "Yes, by God's help."

**Congregation:** Yes, by God's help.

**Congregation leader:** Almighty God, by whose call we are at work, bless us in our labors together.

Let us pray.

God, we ask you to bless this congregation and this intern, make us faithful to your word; empower us to show one another and all creation your justice and love; and bring all at last to your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(If not used elsewhere in the service, the Lord's Prayer may be used here)*

**Congregation leader:**

May God  
Go before you to show you the way;  
Be behind you to encourage and inspire you;  
Be beside you as your Faithful Friend;  
Be above you to watch over you;  
Be within you to give you peace;

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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**A Sending Liturgy**

God's grace and peace be with you. Amen.

**Congregation leader:**

When we welcomed you last year to *Congregation's name*, it was our joy and privilege to welcome you as a partner in ministry. Today, we wish you Godspeed as you return [to PLTS in Berkeley, California OR a new calling].

*Intern's name*, God has blessed you, and God has blessed us through you.

*(Other personal remarks may be added.)*

**Congregation leader:**

May you be blessed to be a blessing, glorifying God in all things.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, we thank you for your presence in all our days, and we ask you to be with us especially this day as we say good-bye. We thank you for our year together, which is now ending. We thank you for the work of our pastor, for the guidance of our lay committee, and for the encouragement and prayers of this congregation for the intern. Bring our intern (and family) safely back to his/her seminary; bless his/her preparations for ministry, and bless the seminary where

he/she will learn. Keep those of us who remain behind safe in your loving arms: bless our continued ministry. And bring us all at last safely to your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.