



# Ministry in Context Manual

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In Partnership with ELCA Congregations in the  
San Francisco Bay Area

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## Overview of the Ministry in Context Program

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The Ministry in Context Program is designed to expose Master of Divinity candidates to the basic, various, and complex areas of ministry in a congregation, through time-limited direct observation and hands-on practice.

Ministry in Context is different from Internship in both time and scope. Ministry in Context is only **6 hours per week**. Ministry in Context is more focused on providing opportunities for exposure to the broad and complex areas of ordained ministry than in perfection of skills in those areas. Pastoral skills will start to develop during Ministry in Context as students practice in the diverse areas of ministry in the congregation. Through the exposure that Ministry in Context provides and the reflection sessions with the supervising pastor and the Ministry in Context lay committee, the students will have the opportunity to reflect on their developing sense of God's call to the ordained role.

The Ministry in Context Program at PLTS extends over two academic years. The student is placed in a parish for 2 semesters. The student is strongly encouraged to enroll in the Reading Congregations course in a semester prior to that in which they begin the Ministry in Context program.

### Foci of the Two Semesters of the Ministry in Context Program

Over the course of the two semesters of the Ministry in Context Program, we hope that the students will have the opportunity to delve into the following areas with a little more depth while also getting a general understanding of all of the aspects of church life:

**PLTS Orientating Perspectives** (see the PLTS Student Handbook for more details)

- Nurturing a life-giving relationship with God
- Intellectual engagement with Scripture, faith traditions, and the world
- Faithful social transformation
- Learning through a socio-ecological lens that considers the nexus of race, class, gender, and earth

### Supervision and Reflection

Throughout the student's involvement with the local parish, time for supervision and reflection are vital. To aid in this process, we ask for the following commitments from the Supervising Pastor and Lay Committee:

- Supervising Pastor and student meeting **once per month**
- Lay Committee and student meet **twice per semester**

The student uses the reflection sessions with the supervising pastor and the lay committee to discern their sense of call and to integrate their academic and field learning.

## Allocation of Time

Knowing that no two weeks look the same in any ministry setting, our hope is that the following general outline for time allocation will assist the Pastor and the student in deciding where and how the student will engage with the community for the Ministry in Context Program. The weekly six hours should roughly be divided into this manner:

- 1 – 2 hours on Sunday (for worship, coffee hour, Sunday School, Adult Education, etc.)
- 1 – 2 hours during the week for administrative meetings (supervision with pastor or Lay Committee, staff meetings, any synodical meetings or gatherings that might be useful and appropriate, etc.)
- 1 – 2 hours for other church activities and preparation time (Bible studies, social gatherings, etc.)

Note: Travel time to and from the parish is not to be included in the hours counted toward the completion of the Ministry in Context requirement.

## Evaluation

At the end of each Semester, the Supervising Pastor, the Lay Committee, and the student are asked to complete evaluation forms, discuss them with each other, and submit them to the Office of Contextual Education at PLTS. (Evaluation Forms can be found on pages 14 – 21 of this Manual)

## Goals and Expectations

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### Goals of the Ministry in Context Program

- Offer time for the student to utilize the supervising pastor as a mentor
- Expose the student to the varied areas of pastoral ministry in the congregation
- Facilitate understanding of parish and community dynamics
- Integrate the academic disciplines with the practice of ministry

To successfully accomplish these goals, the supervising pastor, along with the lay committee, must be available and willing to mentor and support the student. This partnership is vital for the development of the student. The student is expected to be open to the learning process and draw on these partners for feedback and support.

The Contextual Education Office is always available to supervising pastors, lay committees, and students to assist in the implementation of the Ministry in Context Program. The Contextual Education Office appreciates the opportunity to be in dialogue with those who have concerns or joys to share regarding their involvement in the program.

In cases of conflict or other serious issues with students and supervising pastors, the Contextual Education Office should be informed, but will encourage the parties involved to bring about their own resolution if at all possible.

### Financial Compensation

The congregation is encouraged to reimburse the student for congregational business mileage and commuting mileage including, bridge tolls/public transportation to and from their home. The reimbursement rate should be the same as staff members of the congregation. No other financial compensation is expected.

Seminary and the Ministry in Context experience can bring times of economic hardship. While students are encouraged to share about their life experience and the fullness of their emotions with the congregation, they should be mindful to do so in a manner that does not unduly encourage community members to step up and help them financially. Congregations may decide to offer financial support through difficult times but students should not solicit or seek out such help intentionally. The student should never take a loan, advance, or credit from any member of the community in which they are serving. If such action is necessary, students should consult with financial aid personnel at California Lutheran University. Should supervisors notice such behaviors on the students' part, they are encouraged to contact the Director of Contextual Education to discuss appropriate steps for addressing the issue.

## Expectations of the Supervising Pastor

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1. Attend orientation and training session.
2. Be willing to work with the students as they grow personally, theologically, and as pastors.
3. Provide learning and leadership opportunities in the varied aspects of worship and parish life. This includes ministry beyond the congregation during the student's third semester.
4. Meet with the student at least once a month for reflection sessions.
5. Supervise the learning experience and offer feedback to the student.
6. Remain focused on the student's role as learner. The student is expected to be actively involved with the parish a maximum of 6 hours per week, excluding travel time to/from home.
7. Establish a Ministry in Context Lay Committee (3-6 members) and orient the committee to its responsibilities PRIOR to the student's arrival.
8. Complete student evaluations in a timely manner as requested by the Seminary.
9. Contact the Contextual Education Office at PLTS if you have questions or concerns.

These expectations outline the commitment made by the supervisor to PLTS and to the student. By using this outline the supervising pastor will provide the student the exposure to parish life that the Ministry in Context program is designed to do. The supervising pastor may choose to enhance a student's academic program by coordinating parish assignments with classes the student is enrolled in at PLTS, for instance preaching a sermon at the parish during or after the student's preaching class. Professors at the seminary may give assignments to the students to be completed at the Ministry in Context site.

### Gifts and Skills of Lay Committee Members:

*When establishing the Lay Committee, the supervising pastor may want to consider these traits.*

- Be faithful in worship attendance
- Be willing to pray for the student regularly and to show their care and support
- Be capable of giving articulate, honest, but constructive feedback regarding the student's ministry skills, especially worship leadership
- Be eager to share experiences and insights about their own ministry in daily life
- Be willing to set aside the necessary time for committee meetings (two meetings each semester)
- Be involved and knowledgeable of ministries beyond the congregation with which the congregation is involved or can develop

## Expectations of the Lay Committee

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1. Support the student as a learner, not a staff member.
2. Meet with the student two times each semester for feedback and support.
3. Help the student to work on his/her boundaries so he/she does not become entangled in congregational conflicts.
4. Support learning experiences assigned to the student by the supervising pastor.
5. Arrange for payment of travel expenses to the student, if provided. These would include mileage and tolls or public transportation fees.
6. Complete student evaluations in a timely manner as requested by the Seminary.

Possible topics for discussion during Lay Committee meetings:

- Share stories about your faith life
- Discuss what opportunities for learning you feel this congregation can give
- Talk about the congregation's history and how that influences the congregation today
- How does the congregation express its "Lutheranism"
- Review the seminarian's learning and performance in congregation's ministry
- Discuss classroom learning and how the student applies that to congregational ministry
- Discuss ministry beyond the congregation
- Review, discuss, and sign the Ministry in Context Report

## Expectations of the Student

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1. Spend six hours per week on Ministry in Context commitments. These hours include preparation time and time spent at the site (worship/coffee hour included) or off-site in ministry related to the congregation. They exclude travel time to and from home.
2. Identify learning goals with the supervising pastor within the first month.
3. Remain focused on role of learner.
4. Refuse involvement with internal conflicts of the congregation.
5. Meet with the lay committee chair to set agendas for meetings.
6. Meet twice during each semester with the Ministry in Context lay committee.
7. Submit mileage reimbursement request to the Lay Committee, if appropriate
8. Engage in online discussion with the cohort to reflect upon and learn from the Ministry in Context experience.
9. Complete student evaluation forms in a timely manner as requested by the Seminary.



## Installation Services for Ministry in Context Students

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*The following services are offered as suggestions only. The individual parish is welcome to design its own service for introducing and welcoming the Ministry in Context student.*

### Service #1

**President of the Council:** After prayerful deliberation, we of the Council of *(NAME OF CHURCH)*, appoint *(NAME)* to the position of Ministry in Context Student of *(NAME OF CHURCH)*.

**Pastor:** Our Lord, who came among us as a servant, calls us to faith and a life of loving service to our neighbor. You come to us as one who has been called to be among this community of the faithful as a student, as one who will test and examine *herself/himself* in relation to this body of Christ, to study and risk *herself/himself* in developing an openness to the leading of the Spirit, to receive and welcome the wisdom and faithfulness of members of this congregation, so that as you grow in your life's work our Lord Jesus will shape you according to his will.

A lesson from St. Paul's letter to his beloved Timothy:

You, Timothy, man of God: Run for your life... Pursue a righteous life - a life of wonder, faith, love, steadiness, and courtesy. Run hard and fast in the faith. Seize the eternal life, the life you were called to, the life you so fervently embraced in the presence of so many witnesses.

**Pastor:** Will you assume this position in the confidence that God has led you to a place here among us?

**Candidate:** I will, and I ask God to help me.

**Pastor:** Will you carry out the responsibilities of this position in accordance with the teachings and practice of the Lutheran Church?

**Candidate:** I will, and I ask God to help me.

**Pastor:** Will you be diligent in your study of the Holy Scripture and faithful in your use of the means of grace and in prayer?

**Candidate:** I will, and I ask God to help me.

**Pastor:** Will you trust in God's care, seek to grow in love for those among whom you learn, strive for excellence in your skills, and adorn the Gospel of God with a godly life?

**Candidate:** I will, and I ask God to help me.

**Pastor:** *(NAME)*, I install you as the Ministry in Context Student of *(NAME OF CHURCH)*, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Congregation:** Amen.

**Pastor:** Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, graciously give you the strength and compassion to do them. Amen.

*The candidate may kneel.*

**Pastor:** Gracious God, as you called disciples through the compelling word of your Son, Jesus Christ, and provided for them abundant opportunity to learn and develop and deepen in the new life of the Kingdom which your Son embodied, so now grant to *(NAME)* wisdom to learn, courage to risk, strength to act, humility to grow, and mercy to lay hold of your grace; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God, our heavenly Father, guide, bless and keep you faithful in the way to which you have been called. Amen

*The liturgy continues with the prayers*

## Service #2

**Pastor:** Dear Christian friends: Baptized into the priesthood of Christ, we all are called to offer ourselves to the Lord of the Church in thanksgiving for what God has done for us. It is our privilege to recognize and support those who are engaged in the work of this congregation, and especially today *(NAME)* who will serve with us and among us as a Ministry in Context student. The Ministry in Context experience, whereby a student devotes six hours per week to learning and service in a congregation, is a required element in the Master of Divinity program at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley.

*(NAME)*, having declared your desire to learn and serve within this congregation, will you follow Christ's own example of humble service?

**Student:** Yes, with God's help.

**Pastor:** Let us pray...Gracious God, source of all wisdom, whose Spirit empowers our service, accompany and bless *(NAME)* in *her/his* listening, learning, questioning, and serving. May *s/he* grow in your love and in *her/his* understanding of the role of Pastor. Give *her/him* health and strength to do faithfully all that you ask of *her/him*; through Jesus the Christ.

**Congregation:** Amen.

**Pastor:** And you, people of God, will you support *(NAME)*? Will you pray for *her/him*, speak well of *her/him*? Will you offer *her/him* your gifts and your guidance so that *s/he* might be and become a full member of this community of faith and be strengthened for *her/his* work?

**Congregation:** We will.

**Pastor:** Let us pray...For all who offer themselves in your name, we give thanks, O God. Give them the joy of service and the promise of your constant care and guidance. Help us all to be willing servants and thankful recipients of ministry, that your name be glorified, your people live in peace, and your will be done; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Friend.

**Congregation:** Amen.

*The student remains at the altar rail for the Prayer of the Church and joins the pastor in sharing the peace with the congregation.*

## Prayers for Ministry in Context Students

As student begins serving:

**Pastor:** Look with love, O God, upon your servant (*NAME*), as *s/he* begins this term of ministering in our parish. Let it be for *her/him* a time of learning even as it is for us an opportunity to partner with our seminary in the preparation of future pastors.

As *s/he* shares *her/his* time and skill and faith with us, move us to prayers of blessing for *her/his* work. Lead us to graciously receive *her/his* ministry, so that together we might grow in your grace and in our servant calling. This we pray through Jesus the Christ.

**Congregation:** Amen.

As student completes service:

**Pastor:** Gracious Shepherd, we bless you for the ministry of your servant, (*NAME*) and for all that *s/he* has learned and accomplished these past months. We also bless you for what we have learned and experienced together. Your Word has been fruitful, your mercy abundant, and so we offer you our thanks and our praise.

Continue to strengthen (*NAME*) by your Holy Spirit for faithful living and future ministry. May what *s/he* has learned and experienced here make *her/him* confident and eager for service in your Church. Bless *her/him* and give *her/him* joy in what is past and hope for what is yet to be, whether internship or further study. All this we pray through our Savior Jesus Christ.

**Congregation:** Amen.

# Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary Ministry in Context – Supervisor/Student Agreement

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This agreement certifies that \_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Name)

has been assigned \_\_\_\_\_  
(Congregation, City)

as a Teaching Parish site, supervised by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Supervisor)

Students work **6 hours** a week during:

Semester	Year

*Note: Teaching Parish excludes both January and summer intersessions*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature Date

**Instructions:**

Please send completed form to:  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Contextual Education Office  
2000 Center Street, Suite 200  
Berkeley, CA 94704



### Instructions

Please indicate in the appropriate box where you rate the student/yourself. "I.E." represents "Insufficient Evidence." If you mark "Concerns," please be sure to indicate them in the space provided below each table. In the number ranking, "1" is the lowest rating while a "4" is the highest rating. The space below each table may also be used to highlight accolades if you so choose.

### Professional Demeanor

	I.E.	Concerns	1	2	3	4
Shows up when expected to:						
Supervisory Meetings						
Meeting with Lay Committee						
Activities with the church community						
Dresses Appropriately						
Engages with others in an appropriate manner						
Demonstrates good professional boundaries						
Completes projects in a timely manner						

<b>Comments:</b>

### Demonstrates Openness to Learning

	I.E.	Concerns	1	2	3	4
Overall attitude in this area						
Active engagement in supervisory sessions						
Active engagement with the Lay Committee						
Approaches worship/small groups/meetings with an inquisitive attitude						
Seeks ways to be connected with and learning from the congregation						

<b>Comments:</b>

<b>Areas of special concern?</b>
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**Student's Response**

- I have read my supervisor's/lay committee's assessment and agree that it is a fair evaluation of me and my internship experience.
  
- I have read my supervisor's/lay committee's assessment and agree with the evaluation with the following exceptions or additions:

**Signatures:**

*Please print and discuss this evaluation before you sign it.*

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Student's Signature Date

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Supervisor's Signature Date

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Lay Committee Chairperson's Signature Date

**Instructions for submitting evaluation:**

Please mail completed, signed evaluations to:  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Contextual Education Office  
2000 Center Street, Suite 200  
Berkeley, CA 94704

OR, please save and email completed evaluations to: [contexted@plts.edu](mailto:contexted@plts.edu)  
\*Signature Page must be mailed separately\*



# Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

## Ministry in Context – Second Semester Evaluation

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Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor (*i.e.* Student, Supervisor, Committee): \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions

*In the space provided below, please give an overall assessment of the student's/your strengths and areas for growth at this point in the Ministry in Context experience.*

**Please list 2 – 3 areas of strength:**

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**Please list 2 – 3 areas for growth in continued studies at PLTS:**

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### Instructions

Please indicate in the appropriate box where you rate the student/yourself. "I.E." represents "Insufficient Evidence." If you mark "Concerns," please be sure to indicate them in the space provided below each table. In the number ranking, "1" is the lowest rating while a "4" is the highest rating. The space below each table may also be used to highlight accolades if you so choose.

### Professional Demeanor

	I.E.	Concerns	1	2	3	4
Shows up when expected to:						
Supervisory Meetings						
Meeting with Lay Committee						
Activities with the church community						
Dresses Appropriately						
Engages with others in an appropriate manner						
Demonstrates good professional boundaries						
Completes projects in a timely manner						

<b>Comments:</b>

### Demonstrates Openness to Learning

	I.E.	Concerns	1	2	3	4
Overall attitude in this area						
Active engagement in supervisory sessions						
Active engagement with the Lay Committee						
Approaches worship/small groups/meetings with an inquisitive attitude						
Seeks ways to be connected with and learning from the congregation						

<b>Comments:</b>

## Worship Leadership and Preaching

	I.E.	Concerns	1	2	3	4
Informed by a clear theology of worship and the sacraments						
Interprets biblical texts faithfully in sermons						
Effective in leading public prayer						
Demonstrates poise and presence in his/her role as worship leader/preacher						
Uses effective voice in leading worship and preaching (e.g., volume, clarity, inflection)						
Pays attention to congregational/community context in preaching/worship leadership						
Organizes sermons with clarity						

### Comments:

### What areas of ministry need to be given highest priority during internship?

Areas of special concern?

**Student's Response**

- I have read my supervisor's/lay committee's assessment and agree that it is a fair evaluation of me and my internship experience.
- I have read my supervisor's/lay committee's assessment and agree with the evaluation with the following exceptions or additions:

**Signatures:**

*Please print and discuss this evaluation before you sign it.*

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Student's Signature Date

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Supervisor's Signature Date

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Lay Committee Chairperson's Signature Date

***Instructions for submitting evaluation:***

Please mail completed, signed evaluations to:  
 Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
 Contextual Education Office  
 2000 Center Street, Suite 200  
 Berkeley, CA 94704

OR, please save and email completed evaluations to: [contexted@plts.edu](mailto:contexted@plts.edu)

\*Signature Page must be mailed separately\*