Mentor Conferences

NOTE: In each semester there are 9 conference sessions with the teaching parish mentor. These can be scheduled at the parish, or at another location. Some flexibility in scheduling is provided because there are stresses and strains in a seminary student's schedule. Please schedule these sessions *early in the semester*—you need to complete at least 9 allowing for a few [2-3] absences when needed during the term.

Some suggestions for these conferences are:

MODULE ONE **Conference #1**

Orientation to the parish and the context

Review of Teaching Parish schedule & strategies

Is the schedule for lunches in place?

Look ahead to schedule fall and spring teaching times, and related preaching times.

Beginning Observation:

> How does it feel to be a newcomer in this place? Look for the public sources of information that disclose clues about congregational life: What's on the bulletin boards? What materials do you see in the Sunday School classrooms? Are there any obviously hallowed spaces or symbols? Are there signs? How did you find your way?

Vocational Reflection

Share memories of one another's "home congregation:" how did that congregation shape you?

Share with one another your present understanding of your vocation. What are your expectations for growing in understanding of your vocation throughout the coming year?

MODULE ONE Conference #2

Learn about the congregation's neighborhood and discuss the various means the congregation uses to communicate its ministry to the community. How is the congregation known in this area?

Vocational Reflection

What does a public ministry mean in today's world?

MODULE ONE Conference #3

How is Scripture 'heard' and studied in the congregation? If you are ready to begin planning a sermon or lesson, look at the "Exegetical Beginnings,", (found on-line at www.ltsg.edu; Field Education; Teaching Parish), to discuss how to listen to the text as well as to the congregation.

Vocational Reflection

Alvin Rogness, a Midwestern Lutheran leader in the 70's & 80's, gave this advice: There are two kinds of calls, one is clear and obvious. The other is a call more subtle, but you find that you can't do anything else until you respond to it"

How is your vocation to public ministry in the church related to the vocation of all the baptized in the world?

MODULE ONE Conference #4

Jesus talked about being 'in but not of the world.' How is the congregation in the world and in tension with the world? Is there any such tension in the mission statement of the congregation?

Vocational Reflection

How is your vocation preserved, and shaped by the words and gestures of the people of God in the congregation?

MODULE TWO Conference #1

Talk about the congregation's worship forms—i.e. liturgy, use of hymns, images displayed in the worship space, movement and actions of the assembly. How do the worshipers sense God's presence – is a vertical [transcendent] or horizontal [immanent in the community] dimension prominent?

Vocational Reflection

How is my sense of vocation affected by the knowledge that God is present in the most ordinary things?

MODULE TWO Conference #2

Focus on Worship forms-especially hymns. How are images of Jesus, Sin & Redemption portrayed? What do the hymn choices reveal about the congregations understanding of our relationships with each other and our accountability to God?

Vocational Reflection

What devotional practices help us keep anxiety and confusion at a minimum?

MODULE TWO Conference #3

Are the congregation's relationships with the synod [Lutheran] presbytery or conference, healthy? What is the congregation's understanding of the wider church? How is this communicated?

Vocational Reflection

Discuss what kind of "ideal" might be operating in your vocation, and explore what it means to "depend entirely on the grace of God."

MODULE TWO Conference #4

How does congregational life and worship express local, congregational traditions? How does congregational life as a whole express the denomination or confessional tradition?

Vocational Reflection

What does it mean to be faithful to a confessional tradition?

MODULE TWO Conference #5

Discuss student's teaching experience: How did it go? What surprised you? What will you do differently next time?

Discuss fall semester, mid-year appraisal in the Teaching Parish Reference Book.

Vocational Reflection

"In my vocational self-understanding, where am I now in comparison to where I was at the beginning of Teaching Parish?"

How has the Teaching Parish shaped you?

MODULE THREE Conference #1

How do outsiders view the congregation?

Vocational Reflection

What does it mean to have a ‘Public’ role as a congregation, or a minister, or rostered leader?

MODULE THREE Conference #2

Describe the religious ecology of your congregational neighborhood.

What are the other significant religious traditions in the area your parish serves? Does the congregation have any ecumenical relationships of note?

Vocational Reflection

Reflect on the liturgical season and the many changes emphasized during this time of year. Does ministry change its focus in these transitions? Are there new opportunities for service in the community?

MODULE THREE Conference #3

Who holds us accountable in our ministry?

Identify local community leaders, denominational structures; public awareness & other aspects of accountability.

Vocational Reflection

How does public accountability contribute to one's spiritual growth and faith commitment?

MODULE THREE Conference #4

Does the town/neighborhood have a way to interact with the congregation to work together for the good of the whole community? Are the community leaders – political, commercial, voluntary – involved in the congregation or friends of the congregation? How can better relationships be established?

Vocational Reflection

How do you relate the rostered leaders' sense of call to ministry with the congregations' own vision for ministry?

MODULE THREE Conference #5

What are the congregation's/ agency's greatest assets for leadership in the community?

Vocational Reflection

What new leadership skills have emerged for the student during this year of study? How can these skills be used to address needs in a community?

MODULE FOUR Conference #1

How does the congregation understand itself in relation to the mission of God? How does the congregation understand itself in relation to the wider church & ecumenical partners?

Vocational Reflection

How does the reading of scripture open our hearts to sense the needs of the world and deepen our attachments to each other?

MODULE FOUR Conference #2

How does the congregation and the leadership sense that God is calling them into the future? Where do they look for guidance?

Vocational Reflection

How does preaching in the parish relate to the vocation of members?

MODULE FOUR Conference #3

What is the congregation's understanding of the nature and purpose of the church? How does the congregation see its relationship to the rest of society?
For example: Refer to the ELCA Constitution, chapter 3.
www.elca.org/os/constitution/cwo3.html

Vocational Reflection

What “practices” of leadership can promote health within a congregation?

MODULE FOUR Conference #4

Discuss Appraisals

Vocational Reflection

Where am I now in vocational self-understanding as compared to the beginning of Teaching Parish?

What are the next steps/next stages for continued growth?