

## **Report of the Implementation Task Force on Formation In the Lower Susquehanna Synod**

The Synod Council of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, at its February 20, 2010-scheduled meeting, adopted SC 10.02.15. appointing this task force. The task force met eight times and made numerous personal contacts and held numerous individual discussions concerning the areas presented in the original Task Force on Formation. The members are of one mind that "it seems logical that the formation of those called into servant leadership in the Church should be one of the highest priorities of the Church." With this as an understanding, we find that, due to the present conditions of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, it would be most effective to prioritize the individual recommendations of the original Task Force on Formation.

### **Spiritual Retreat**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "To help with the formation of pastoral/diaconal identity in our candidates for ministry and to help re-form these candidates in the cruciform way of life, we highly recommend an annual spiritual retreat be held for candidates, together with the Candidacy Committee."

This recommendation will be implemented this calendar year. The First Annual Spiritual Retreat will be held at Camp Hebron, the dates being Thursday, October 13, 2011, thru Saturday, October 15, 2011. The cost of the retreat will be assumed by the Lower Susquehanna Synod Candidacy Committee's budget. All candidates under the care of the Candidacy Committee of the L.S.S. must attend at least one spiritual retreat in order to be helped in their formation in the historic traditions and practices of the Church. It should be noted that spouses of candidates will also be invited to participate in this retreat. A sample brochure, along with the letter to be sent announcing this retreat, will be included in the Appendix of this report.

### **Endorsement Panels**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "Endorsement panels would use a common set of questions for the candidates in addition to the questions in the ELCA Candidacy Manual, candidates' answers would be judged by common parameters. The common set of questions would be sent to candidates ahead of time so that they can prepare well for their meeting with the committee."

The endorsement panel makes a recommendation to the Candidacy Committee that the Candidacy Committee then is given the responsibility to act upon. In an effort to make these actions by the Candidacy Committee more valid, it is recommended that that the entire Candidacy Committee has an opportunity to read the endorsement essays and to react to the members of the endorsement panel, bringing any questions or comments that they would like to share in the process before the endorsement panels take place.

The following questions were created to help the endorsement panels ask open ended questions related to individual discernment and sense of call to rostered leadership in the Church. By no means are these the only questions that will be or should be asked of each candidate. We believe that each candidate has their own unique personality and character; therefore questions should reflect their individual knowledge and understanding of the individual candidate.

Suggested questions:

Personal and Interpersonal Skills for Ministry

1. What are several important factors that make you an effective leader or co-worker in the Church?
2. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with the actions or decisions of your home congregation, local church, or national church. How did you approach this situation? Was the situation resolved to your satisfaction or did anything change?
3. How does the office of ministry (ordained, consecrated, or commissioned) set you apart from other Baptized Christians?
4. How would you describe your relationship with others in the Church, those with whom you work and those that you will lead, guide, and help?
5. How has your family or friends, your education or work setting, influenced your call to rostered leadership in the Church?

Education and Theological Ability

Tension between interpretation and Confessional traditions may necessitate that these questions be more objective, including the first two questions under "Faithfulness in the Church Confessions" found in the endorsement brochure.

1. Using your understanding of the Lutheran Confessions, how do you respond to James' words in 2:26: "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead?"
2. Using an elevator setting scenario; ask, "What sets you apart as a Lutheran?"
3. The Eucharist: discuss your understanding of only confirmed youth receiving communion as opposed to "open" communion.
4. The nature of Baptism: discuss your understanding of baptizing only members of your congregations as opposed to "open" baptism, for example an out-of-town family.
5. Sunday School: discuss the use of only Lutheran material as opposed to non-Lutheran material.

Spiritual Formation and Faith

1. What is the most disturbing/challenging passage you have read in the Scriptures? Why was it personally disturbing/challenging? How are you revisiting it on a periodic basis?
2. You meet a "not yet" believer who ask what difference being a Christian has made in your life? You have no more than five minutes to share what difference it has made in your life.

Understanding of call to ministry

**Financial Coaching**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "Stewardship is an important aspect of formation to the pastoral office and to other leadership positions in the Church." "Student debt and other family debts will need to be addressed in addition to planning and follow through."

Currently the Stewardship of Life Institute of the ELCA (SOLI) is working on this issue of financial debt and financial coaching. It is the hope of the ELCA that all seminaries will have financial coaching by 2011. Furthermore, three ELCA seminaries provide coaching (PLTS, Luther, and LTSG). The Lower Susquehanna Synod also has a small number of individuals who make themselves available to candidates who wish to make themselves available for their assistance.

### **The Role of Community**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "The Church is embodied in community."  
"Accountability to the community/communities/ministerium is essential to formation and to ongoing life and ministry." "Relators need to invest time and effort on behalf of the candidates assigned to them, in part, as nurturers."

The brochure, "Relators-Relatee Program" should be made available to all candidates at the time of Entrance. This brochure discusses the relator-relatee relationship, responsibilities of the relator/synod staff, responsibilities of the candidate, and an understanding of the candidacy process. The brochure also shares the contact information of the relator. Since the relator/relatee relationship will at times place the relator in a position of measuring the progress of their relatee, it would be beneficial to develop a Mentoring Program of Lay and Rostered Leaders. This list of volunteer mentors, made up of rostered and lay leaders, should be developed to journey with candidates throughout their candidacy process and through the first call process. The volunteers of such a mentoring relationship would present a nurturing community that has a vested interest in the support of the candidate.

### **First Call Theological Education (FCTE)**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "FCTE Colleague Groups are an important community/ministerium for continuing formation during the first three years after ordination/consecration/commissioning."

It is recommended that a more unified structure with leadership orientation, at the synod level, be instituted to provide well qualified FCTE Colleague Group leaders.

Suggestions for the FCTE gatherings:

1. Meet every month
2. Visit each site of ministry at least once each of the three years.

Possible themes throughout the three years:

1. Personal Spirituality
2. Personal Needs

Questions to center discussions around:

1. What skills are still needed?
2. What experiences are needed?
3. What common areas of need do you share?
4. What specific themes need attention?
5. Who in the colleague group can facilitate each area?

Extra: Visit Wittel Farm, Camp Nawakwa, Camp Kirchenwald.

Have an Assistant to the Bishop be assigned to facilitate the ongoing works of the FCTE colleague groups.

In addition to the four components that the ELCA requires each participant to complete I FCTE, the following additional requirements need to be completed by each participant:

1. Attend core events sponsored by synod or region
2. Participate in a colleague group on a regular basis
3. Work with congregational committee (Mutual Ministry, Parish Support, and Executive) to develop a "learning covenant" and selecting continuing education

electives. These should benefit the congregation's ministry goals as well as one's own professional development goals.

4. Commit to sharing with the congregation one's learning for FCTE
5. Set aside some personal continuing education funds

### **Funding Internship Sites**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "Each year the synodical ministry plan (budget) should include at least \$10,000 for funding specific internship sites."

This Task Force was not of one mind on this recommendation. Due to the present financial challenges facing the Lower Susquehanna Synod, one thought was that this funding recommendation should be considered at a later date. A second thought was that this funding recommendation was not a synod ministry, but a seminary responsibility. A final thought was that the funding recommendation is a valid recommendation. Due to the lack of agreement, no recommendation is being suggested.

### **Spiritual Direction/Directors**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "The Candidacy Committee should maintain a list of recommended spiritual directors for use by the committee..."

The Task Force contacted both LTSG and LTSP to discuss with each institution how they responded to the request for spiritual direction from their candidates. LTSP explained that they keep a list of available spiritual directors that is shared with candidates. LTSG explained that they no longer keep such a list. When spiritual direction is required they direct candidates to [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org). The list kept by LTSP and a web page from [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org) is included in the Appendix.

### **Sense of Stewardship**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "Competencies in a Well-Formed Stewardship Leader" "Candidates use this ELCA pamphlet in seminary; we can use it in our synodical candidacy formation process."

This pamphlet should be part of the Annual Spiritual Retreat. The pamphlet is included in the Appendix.

### **Spouses**

From the original Task Force on Formation: "The Candidacy Committee and/or its designator should have conversations with spouses of candidates under the care of the committee, encouraging spouses, who themselves become public persons by virtue of their marriage to one who is preparing for rostered ministry within the Church, to have a voice and to know how to be heard and when to be quiet."

The spouse of any candidate, when the candidate begins entrance discussions, should meet with the designated synod staff to begin the discussion of the role of a spouse of a rostered leader within the Church. This discussion should continue at planned times though out the process of candidacy, with the designated synod staff ensuring that such discussions take place.

Recognizing the unique dynamics and exceptional opportunities that clergy couples may present, it is recommended that opportunities be structured whereby candidates in such a situation have interaction with ordained clergy couples. The Candidacy Committee should schedule these

opportunities for interaction on a regular basis, the Annual Spiritual Retreat being one such opportunity.

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