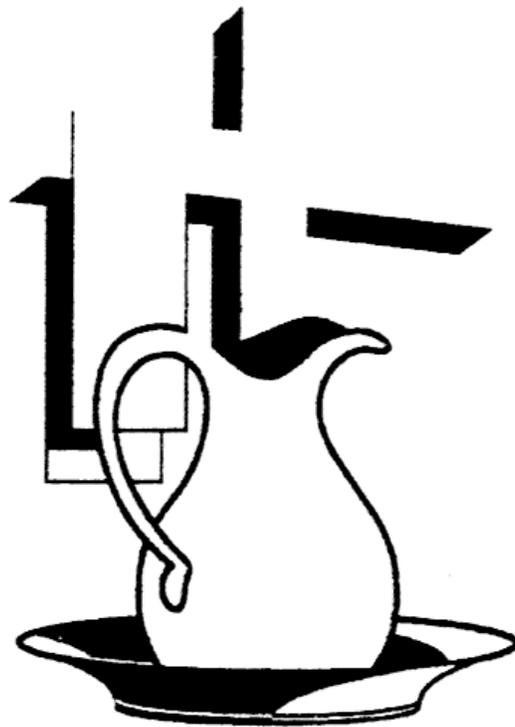


CERTIFIED PMA HANDBOOK



Parish Ministry Associate Program

Nebraska Synod, ELCA

January 2018

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VISION STATEMENT

The Parish Ministry Associate (PMA) Program of the Nebraska Synod seeks to help identify the gifts God has given God’s people and to help equip those people for the ministry of sharing the Good News among all people.

INTRODUCTION

The Parish Ministry Associate Program will identify and equip persons for service in congregations and synod-related ministries. Parish Ministry Associates may be assigned by the Nebraska Synod bishop and authorized for certain leadership functions in specific synod-related locations for a specified length of time where they will work with a local ordained pastor as supervisor. PMAs always serve in partnership with ordained pastors, not independent of ordained pastors.

The Parish Ministry Associate Program is administered by the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in harmony with the guidelines established by the ELCA and its Conference of Bishops. The PMA Steering Committee is involved in determining the process of application and program of preparation, and has general oversight of the program, with accountability to the bishop of the Nebraska Synod.

CHART OF SUPERVISION AND REPORTS DUE

| PMA Type | Has a Mentor | Has a Supervisor | Annual Report from Mentor | Annual Report from Supervisor | Annual Report from Council | Deadline for Reports |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Student ¹ | X | | X | | | April 15 |
| Unassigned | X | | X | | | April 15 |
| On Staff | | X ² | | X | X | April 15 |
| Assigned ² | | X | | X | X | April 15 |

¹ A student serving on a congregation's staff will follow the On Staff reporting pattern

² The supervisor is the ordained pastor who is head of staff where the PMA serves on staff.

I. CERTIFICATION

- A. PMA Students who satisfactorily complete the PMA Program requirements may be certified in Word and Service ministry by the Nebraska Synod upon successful completion of the certification interview with the PMA Steering Committee and approval of the Synod Council.
 - 1. Those to be certified may be recognized at the Nebraska Synod Assembly.
 - 2. Recognition of Certification may also take place in a public ritual in the participant's congregation.
 - 3. A PMA Program participant may be asked to go through a psychological evaluation at any time.
- B. The PMA Steering Committee will provide the bishop with recommendations concerning authorization, suitability, and accountability for service within the synod.
- C. Certified PMAs are encouraged to submit the Ministry Interests Form to the PMA Office.

2. INSTALLATION

Parish Ministry Associates may be installed by the bishop or his/her designee for authorized ministries in the congregation or setting in which their ministry is taking place.

3. RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATION

- A. The Application for Renewal of Certification must be submitted annually by any PMA wanting to renew their certification as a Parish Ministry Associate in the Nebraska Synod. Applications for renewal are due June 1st. Certification is for July 1st through June 30th of the following year.

Late applications will be accepted until July 1, with a \$25 late fee required. Action on these requests will be taken by July 31, with certification valid through June 30th of the following year. Applications received after July 1 will not be considered and certification revoked. However, you may apply for reinstatement of certification; applications are due June 1st.

- B. Consideration for renewal of certification will be granted or denied based on fulfillment of the continuing education requirements and abiding by PMA Program expectations. All PMAs are expected to participate in boundaries training once every three years. Nebraska Synod offers *Essential Boundaries for Wise Leaders* courses; approval of other boundaries training programs is given through our synod's boundaries training coordinator. The PMA Steering Committee may request an interview as part of the re-certification process.
- C. Per ELCA Church Council policy, all PMAs are expected to abide by *Vision and Expectations of Ordained Ministers*. The document is available at www.elca.org.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVOCATION

- A. Because PMAs are accountable to the whole church through the office of the synodical bishop, authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synodical bishop who need not specify the reason.
- B. The PMA Steering Committee provides the synodical bishop with recommendations concerning authorization of and accountability for authorized ministries within the synod, and follows the three-stage accountability process (Concern, Suspension, Probation/Revocation) outlined in this synod's PMA Program Accountability Procedure.
- C. Certification will be revoked if and/or when a PMA leaves or is removed from Nebraska Synod membership for any reason.

5. MENTORS AND SUPERVISORS

- A. Unassigned PMAs are required to have an ordained ELCA pastor as their mentor.
 - 1. When an ordained ELCA pastor is not available, the PMA may request approval from the bishop to name an ordained pastor from a Full Communion denomination as their mentor until an ELCA pastor is available.
 - 2. Mentors will conduct at least an annual evaluation with their unassigned PMAs, usually just before the annual Mentor's and Council's Annual Report is submitted. This report is due on April 15.
- B. Assigned PMAs are required to have an ordained ELCA pastor as their supervisor.

1. When an ordained ELCA pastor is not available, the PMA may request approval from the bishop to name an ordained pastor from a Full Communion denomination as their mentor until an ELCA pastor is available.
 2. Supervisors of assigned PMAs will meet at least monthly with the Assigned PMA, and will annually submit the Supervisor's Annual Report to the PMA Office. This report is due on April 15.
- C. Specific duties of mentors and supervisors are described in the PMA Mentor and Supervisor Handbook.
 - D. Mentors and supervisors are welcome to attend PMA Convocations.
 - E. When a PMA serves on a church staff, the supervisor is the ordained pastor who is head of staff.
 - F. The name and contact information for your mentor or supervisor must be reported to the PMA Office and kept up to date.

6. TITLES AND CLERICAL ATTIRE

- A. PMAs will not wear clerical attire - e.g. clerical collars, clerical or diaconal stoles.
- B. PMAs are not to use the titles Pastor or Deacon because these are used only for ministers on the national roster of the ELCA.

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION

- A. Twelve hours of continuing education per year is required. One hour of learning time equals one contact hour of continuing education. At a group event snack, break, and meal times do not count for learning time.
- B. Nebraska Synod's PMA Convocation, Theological Convocation, and Assembly are preferred events for continuing education and may be counted for up to six hours each, depending on the number of keynote presentations and workshops attended.
- C. Up to six hours can be earned through participation in:
 1. Educational events offered by another ELCA synod.
 2. **If approved in advance by the PMA Office**, educational events offered by a Full Communion partner of the ELCA.
 3. **If approved in advance by the PMA Office**, educational events offered by colleges, professional associations, community organizations, et cetera.
 4. Education experiences with a focus on spiritual formation, spiritual discernment, and faith development that are approved in advance by the PMA Office are strongly encouraged when not from the ELCA.
- D. Three or six hours can be earned through participation in a Nebraska Synod vision, mission, or field trip:
 - a. For three to five-day trips, 3 hours will be granted upon completion of a three-page reflection and integration paper, and processing the experience with the mentor or supervisor.

- b. For trips of five days or more, 6 hours will be granted upon completion of a six-page reflection and integration paper, and processing the experience with the mentor or supervisor.
- E. Up to nine hours can be earned by:
 - a. Successful participation in Nebraska Synod’s “Seeking the Spirit Within” spiritual direction training program.
 - b. Use of online and video learning resources from sources such as Select Learning, The Great Courses, and distance learning sites of seminaries, colleges, and universities, **if approved in advance by the PMA Office**. Credit guidelines are the same as for elective credits for PMA Students. Reflection papers must show integration of the subject matter into the ministry of the participant.
 - 1. 1 credit – 4-9 contact hours plus a four-page paper
 - 2. 2 credits – 10-18 contact hours plus a six-page paper
 - 3. 3 credits – 19-26 contact hours plus a ten-page paper
- F. Continuing education credits can be earned for reports on books read for the enhancement of ministry. The report should focus on new insights gained and how the new learning will be applied in the PMA’s ministry. Credits are awarded as follows:
 - Less than 200 pages in book = 4-page report for 2 credits
 - More than 200 pages in book = 6-page report for 3 credits
- G. All certified PMAs are expected to participate in boundaries training once every three years. Nebraska Synod offers *Essential Boundaries for Wise Leaders* courses; approval of other boundaries training programs is given through our synod’s boundaries training coordinator. Credit is granted for boundaries training.
- H. To receive continuing education credit, PMAs must send a completed Continuing Education Report to the PMA Office.

8. ANNUAL REPORTS

- A. All PMAs are required to send completed annual evaluation forms to the PMA Office. It is the PMA’s responsibility to remind mentors, congregation councils, and supervisors (when the PMA is assigned to a church) of the annual evaluation requirement and deadlines. It is strongly recommended that the PMA provide the required evaluation forms to their mentor, congregation council, and supervisor.
- B. When an Assigned PMA serves a multi-point parish, the parish council will complete the annual report on behalf of all congregation councils in the parish. The report from the parish council and supervisor will be shared with the bishop.
- C. See page 3 for a chart of required annual reports and their due dates.

9. SACRAMENTS

- A. PMAs are not authorized for sacraments for individual days or services in their home church or any other. When the pastor of a church with a PMA on staff will be absent for a few regularly scheduled sacraments, the congregation is asked to adjust their sacrament schedule to match their pastor’s availability.

- B. When the pastor of a church with a PMA on staff will be absent for an extended period of time, the church council should endeavor to secure the services of a pastor from the synod pulpit supply list or a pastor from one of our Full Communion partner churches (United Methodist, Episcopal Church USA, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, Reformed Church in America, Moravian Church) in order to maintain the sacramental life of the congregation. If none of these options work out, please contact the PMA Program Director to discuss other possibilities.

10. FUNERALS

- A. Whether unassigned or assigned, serving in a ministry related to or not related to the synod, no PMA may conduct a funeral or memorial service independently at any location without having been approved to conduct funerals independently according to the steps outlined in Certified PMA Handbook section 10.E.
- B. When a PMA is asked to lead a funeral or memorial service, the PMA will first ascertain where the deceased held church membership, and then contact the pastor of that church. The PMA will not conduct the funeral or memorial service without the consent of the deceased's pastor.
- C. When a PMA who is not approved to conduct funerals independently is serving as a transitional (interim) minister and their supervising pastor is not available to help conduct the funeral, the PMA may contact another ordained ELCA or, if one is not available, a pastor from a Full Communion partner church to assist.
- D. If no ordained pastor is available, the bishop may allow the PMA (on a one-time basis) to conduct the funeral independently. The PMA must contact the bishop's office before the funeral for authorization.
- E. A Certified or Assigned PMA seeking permission to conduct funerals independently in the future will: accompany an ELCA pastor when visiting at the hospital, funeral home or the home of the deceased before the funeral; assist the pastor and may deliver the homily at the funeral (under the direct supervision and guidance of an ELCA pastor); and accompany the ELCA pastor in the bereavement follow-up. After a PMA has satisfactorily assisted at and delivered the homily at a minimum of five funerals, under the direct supervision of an ELCA pastor, and upon receiving a written request from the PMA's supervising pastor stating the PMA, in that pastor's opinion, has met all the requirements and is ready to officiate at funerals independently, the PMA Program Director will grant permission to officiate at funerals without the presence of an ordained ELCA pastor. **Permission applies only at the church(es) to which the PMA is assigned or to their home church.**
- F. A PMA that has been approved to conduct funerals independently is to be in conversation with their supervising pastor as the funeral is planned.
- G. For PMAs working in a staff situation, the one who has worked closest with the family of the deceased is to be the one to proclaim the Good News during the sermon.
- H. When a PMA serves on a congregation's staff along side an ordained pastor, the pastor will determine who leads the ministry with the family of the deceased, the funeral, and the bereavement follow-up.

- I. When the pastor of the congregation where the PMA is on staff is unavailable and grants permission, the PMA may conduct a funeral once the conditions for independently conducting a funeral have been met. (See Certified PMA Handbook section 10.E.)

11. WEDDINGS

- A. Online ordination is incompatible with the conduct expected of rostered and/or authorized ministers. A PMA who seeks ordination outside of the ELCA in order to preside at any wedding will have their certification revoked.
- B. A PMA may participate in a wedding, except for the exchange of vows and signing the official marriage certificate with the approval of their mentor or supervisor. **This applies to unassigned PMAs, PMAs on a church staff, and assigned PMAs who have not been trained and approved to solemnize marriages.** If your mentor or supervisor is not available, another ordained ELCA pastor should be asked to perform the exchange of vows and sign the official marriage certificate. If none is available, an ordained pastor from a church in Full Communion with the ELCA should be asked next.
- C. Because it is an increasing challenge to provide ordained clergy to preside at weddings as well as at regular eucharistic worship services, the bishop and PMA Steering Committee of this synod agree to permit **assigned PMAs** to solemnize marriages, subject to the following requirements being met:
 1. The right is reserved only to those PMAs currently authorized to serve in a pastoral leadership capacity (i.e. assigned by the bishop to serve a congregation in place of a pastor for regular or transitional ministry) or in the role of pastoral staff in a multiple-point parish with multiple ministerial staff (i.e. not simply being on staff in a congregation, even if that involves worship leadership).
 2. The right is reserved (as clearly stated in the Bishops' Relational Agreement) exclusively to the congregation where the PMA is assigned, with the congregation's concurrence, only for members of that congregation.
 3. The right is reserved only to those PMAs who have received preparation and whose authorization from the bishop specifically includes this right (as is the case with presiding at funerals).
 4. Preparation would include instruction in premarital counseling (Prepare/Enrich is the only curriculum approved by PMA Steering Committee), basic law regarding marriage, and worship planning for weddings.
 5. The right would be restricted to the period and location covered by the authorization (i.e., if the PMA's assignment and/or authorization ends, so does the right to preside at marriages).
 6. PMAs who violate the restrictions are liable not only to ecclesial discipline (which will likely include revocation of certification) but to civil prosecution and litigation.

12. COUNSELING

PMAs are not to offer any counseling as part of their ministries unless they hold the appropriate credentials. Only assigned PMAs who have trained and approved per the requirements of Section 11 may provide pre-marital counseling.

13. ECUMENICAL SERVICE

- A. The Full Communion agreements of the ELCA include the principle of reciprocity in recognizing each other's equivalent credentials for ministry. Certified PMAs may accept the invitation to serve in denominations that are in Full Communion with the ELCA, and PMA Students who have satisfactorily completed the required courses may accept invitations to provide pulpit supply in denominations that are in Full Communion with the ELCA: United Methodist Church; Episcopal Church USA; Presbyterian Church USA; United Church of Christ; Reformed Church in America; Moravian Church in America.
- B. PMAs serving long-term in a Full Communion partner denomination are subject to the polity requirements of that denomination, which may include the requirement of full membership in that denomination. Should full membership in that denomination be required, the ELCA policy prohibiting full membership in two denominations simultaneously comes into effect. There are two choices in this situation.
 - 1. Change to associate member status in your ELCA congregation, continue your involvement in your ELCA congregation, and keep your PMA status while also being recognized by the Full Communion partner.
 - 2. Resign your ELCA membership for the duration of your service in that denomination. When your service is completed and you return to ELCA membership, you may apply to the PMA Steering Committee for reinstatement of your PMA status.
- C. PMAs serving long-term in a Full Communion partner denomination shall have an ordained pastor of that denomination as their supervisor and, for the maintenance of ties to the Nebraska Synod, an ordained ELCA pastor as their mentor.

14. COMPENSATION

- A. In on-going or transitional (interim) ministries where there is to be compensation, it will be determined in consultation with the PMA, the synod staff, and the congregation council and recorded in the Assigned PMA Service Agreement that is submitted to the PMA Office or the Letter of Agreement for Transitional Ministry submitted to the synod.
- B. For Pulpit Supply, the PMA and congregation will use the current synod guidelines plus mileage at the current IRS rate.

15. OTHER MATTERS

At those points where matters have not been addressed, the PMA Program will follow the ELCA's *Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized or Licensed Ministries* and *A Statement of Understanding Concerning Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament*, available at www.elca.org.

16. PMAs MAY BE ASSIGNED BY BISHOP

- A. Those who are certified in Word and Service are eligible to be assigned and authorized by the bishop to serve in Word and Sacrament in a specific location for a specified time where need exists as identified by the congregation, synod, and bishop.
 - 1. The authorization will be evidenced by an appropriate letter describing the terms, conditions, and scope of the authorization.

2. The ministry description may also limit or prohibit activities to be conducted.
 3. Assigned PMAs will follow all guidelines in the “Supervision and Accountability” section of this handbook.
- B. Renewal of authorization for assigned PMAs is given annually by the bishop when a demonstrated need for its continuation remains. Requests for renewal of authorization are due June 1st. Authorization is for July 1st through June 30th of the following year. Authorization expires on June 30th regardless of the date the assignment began. Requests can be emailed to PmaAuthorization@nebraskasynod.org or mailed to the bishop’s office.
 - C. Authorization to provide ministry with the synod may be revoked at any time by the synodical bishop who need not specify the reason.
 - D. When, in the judgment of the synod bishop, a person whose service as a PMA of Word and Sacrament likely will be long-term in one ministry, that person must consult with the authorizing bishop concerning the ELCA expectation as stated in the ELCA “Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized or Licensed Ministries,” (page 51, section H) regarding candidacy and theological preparation while serving in synodically authorized ministry.

17. AUTHORIZATION FOR WORD AND SACRAMENT MINISTRY

- A. The bishop will determine authorization for Word and Sacrament ministry, consistent with the policies of the ELCA. Authorization for sacraments and funerals applies only at the church(es) to which a PMA has been assigned by the bishop. A Sample New Request for Sacrament Authorization is in the PMA section of our synod website. Requests can be emailed to PmaAuthorization@nebraskasynod.org or mailed to the bishop’s office.
- B. Renewal of authorization may be given by the bishop when a demonstrated need continues. Requests for renewal of authorization are due by June 1st. Authorizations are for July 1st through June 30th of the following year. Authorization expires on June 30th of each year regardless of the starting date of assignment or authorization. A Sample Request for Renewal of Sacrament Authorization is at www.nebraskasynod.org. Requests can be emailed to PmaAuthorization@nebraskasynod.org or mailed to the bishop’s office.
- C. It is the PMA’s responsibility to remind the congregation council to submit a request for renewal of authorization for sacraments to the bishop prior to each deadline.

18. SUPERVISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF ASSIGNED PMAs

- A. In all cases, an assigned PMA shall be under the direct supervision of an ordained ELCA pastor approved by the bishop. Exceptions require the specific approval of the bishop.
- B. Local accountability and supervision for an Assigned PMA in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the congregation council. At least once per year the Assigned PMA and council should set aside time to discuss: the professional and spiritual strengths

- of the PMA; the professional and spiritual growth areas of the PMA; how the ministry is going; where ministry could be improved.
- C. Local accountability and supervision for an Assigned PMA in a non-congregational setting within the synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body that conducts that ministry, or if there is no such entity, the Synod Council.
 - D. The responsibilities of the supervising pastor shall include:
 - 1. At least weekly consultation with the PMA.
 - 2. Review of PMA Program guidelines as described in this handbook.
 - 3. Those described in the Mentors and Supervisors Handbook.
 - E. Like rostered leaders of the ELCA, PMAs will be subject to discipline by the bishop.

Continue to the next page.

Sign and date the Declaration, and send it to the PMA Office.

Declaration of Acceptance of the Certified PMA Guidelines
set forth in this Certified PMA Handbook, revised January 2018

We have read the January 2018 version of the Certified Parish Ministry Associate's Handbook and will abide by its guidelines while involved with the PMA Program.

Name (printed) of PMA

Name (printed) of Mentor or Supervisor

Signature of PMA

Signature of Mentor or Supervisor

Date signed

Date signed

After affixing your signature and date to this last page of your Certified PMA Handbook, send this page to the PMA Office to be placed in your personal file.

Send to:

PMA Administrator
Nebraska Synod, ELCA
PO Box 1462
North Platte, NE 69103-1462

pma@nebraskasynod.org