



E L C I C

MENTOR'S HANDBOOK
For Mentors of Candidates for Rostered Ministry

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
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PREAMBLE

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This handbook has been developed to provide a tool for those engaged in mentoring a candidate for diaconal or ordained ministry in the ELCIC. It has been adapted from resources of the Lutheran Deaconess Association (LDA), Valparaiso, Indiana. The ELCIC is grateful to the LDA for sharing these resources and for offering permission to adapt them.

The handbook is prepared under the auspices of the ELCIC's Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry (PCLM). PCLM is indebted to members of the diaconal roster for initiating this concern, for seeking out LDA resources as a starting point, and for preparing initial drafts.

PCLM considers mentorship to be valuable for candidates for both diaconal and ordained ministry. In February, 2012, PCLM revised a draft document and circulated it for additional comments. In 2013, PCLM made revisions, and it was adopted by the National Church Council as a resource for the candidacy process.

Additional information regarding candidacy may be obtained by contacting a synod office, or by contacting the ELCIC National Office:

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A. INFORMATION FOR MENTORS

1. What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship, based on mutual trust, respect, openness, and confidentiality in which the mentor, drawing on a fund of experience, offers encouragement, counsel, and guidance.

- The mentoring relationship offers an opportunity to serve each other, following the example of Jesus.
- Building relationship is an ongoing process, changing over time, involving feelings and perceptions from both parties. The hope is for a growing, strengthening, long-lasting relationship.
- Mentoring is a mutual covenant that allows the candidate to be a learner—not a peer. By granting authority to the mentor, the candidate opens up to learning, allowing the mentor to shape and guide, without forcing submission.
- In the relationship, the mentor may be reminded of previous experiences of candidacy or ministry. For the mentor, this is a chance to grow in self-awareness, and to explore doing things differently.

2. Why mentoring?

The education and formation of candidates for rostered ministry, ordained or diaconal, involves more than academic study and skill acquisition. The mentor/candidate relationship is a primary way to support a candidate's development, with a focus on the formation of identity, spiritual growth, aid in grounding and connecting with community (e.g. within the ELCIC diaconal community), and understanding of public ministry.

3. Is it useful for every candidate to have a mentor?

Yes. The *ELCIC Candidacy Manual* recommends that every candidate have a mentor. In some places, mentors are selected by the candidate. In other places a mentor may be assigned or ratified by a synod. It is possible in some situations that a mentor may live in a different synod. A mentor relationship is of potential benefit throughout the candidacy process. Candidates are encouraged to establish a mentor relationship early in the candidacy process. Seminary or synod programs may have particular expectations or recommendations for a mentorship process.

4. How does mentoring benefit the candidate?

Having a mentor offers the opportunity to:

- Openly share personal and professional concerns in a context of confidentiality, and to profit from the mentor's experience through support and encouragement.
- Enhance understanding of the church, one's role in it, and future ministry options.
- Process feedback (affirmation, critique, and challenge).
- Grow in understanding and empathy for self and others.
- Be vulnerable in safe and healthy ways.
- Establish an immediate supportive relationship with at least one rostered minister in our community.

5. How does mentoring benefit the mentor?

Formation is an ongoing process of discernment and responsive service to a world in need of God's care. Mentors are also in a continual formation process of lifelong learning and growth in ministry. Therefore, mentoring is mutually beneficial to the development of both the candidates and the rostered leaders.

Being a mentor offers the opportunity to:

- Make a considerable contribution to the ministry of the church by helping in the process of formation and development of candidates for rostered ministry.
- Develop a significant relationship with a new candidate.
- Grow personally in ability to share pertinent experience and expertise in ministry.
- Renew an understanding of diaconal/ordained ministry through reflection with the candidate.

6. What is the mentor's role?

The mentor:

- Forms a supportive relationship with the candidate through regularly scheduled meetings that work for both the mentor and the candidate.
- Is available to the candidate for conversation; using available methods of communication such as phone and skype.
- Listens with attention, care and interest, and provides feedback to the candidate; allowing the candidate to grow at his/her own pace.
- Shares, relates, gives feedback, encourages dreaming, has fun.
- Suggests resources for areas where the candidate may need growth.
- Recognizes that the candidate brings diversity from her/his own background.
- Supports and encourages the candidate's discernment and process.
- Encourages discussion around ministry skills, interpersonal skills, knowledge.
- Enhances education requirements, through readings, non-classroom learning, attitude-shaping experiences and preparation for colloquy.
- The mentor is NOT an evaluator, a problem solver, or a lone ranger in the discernment process.
- The mentor is NOT a counselor or therapist. Referral for professional help should be made if the mentor deems that this is needed.
- There is no remuneration for serving as a mentor.
- Candidacy commonly lasts four years or more. Approximately every two years, mentors might consider reviewing their capacity to continue to serve in the mentorship role.
- Mentors may enable candidates to meet diaconal and ordained ministers in your area, in order to hear a variety of perspectives and reflections on ministry, spirituality, theology, and diaconal/ordained community. You might include appropriate local area gatherings of the diaconal community or the ministerial in the mentoring experience.

7. Sample agenda for regular meetings:

Regularly scheduled meetings protect the mentor's time, encourage responsibility, prevent interruptions, and reduce the possibility for problems to build. This allows the candidate to prepare and use the time wisely. Mentor and candidate will mutually agree on date, time, place, length, frequency, format, and agenda of meetings.

Here's a sample agenda for the meeting:

- What's going on in the candidate's process of preparation?
- Reflect on diaconal/ordained identity.
- Reflect on relationship to community and ministry colleagues.
- The mentor may have experienced some of the same things as the candidate. The mentor may be able to offer insight from his/her experiences, as well as from the perspective of our church's history of diaconal & ordained ministry.
- Praying together.

8. Confidentiality

Be clear about what may or may not be shared with others when topics are confidential. At times, a candidate may wish to disclose private information to his/her mentor before being willing to share it with others. The mentor/candidate relationship may be a safe place to verbalize thoughts and feelings, and to sort out what action to take. If the mentor needs guidance from another person, the mentor must ask for the candidate's permission to share some of the information in order to get guidance.

For issues involving the candidate's health or safety, including emotional issues, the mentor has an ethical responsibility to refer the candidate for additional help and support.

9. Resolving issues between candidate and mentor

Mentor/candidate problem solving:

- Suggest possible actions that might improve the situation. Try it/them. Reflect. Evaluate. Adjust. Move forward.
- Involve the bishop or another designated person as needed.

Mentors maintain contact with other mentors. Share about the process of the relationship. Use other mentors for support. Be committed to the success of this process between yourself and the candidate you mentor.

10. What a candidate and mentor might expect of each other

- Pray for each other.
- Openness to the mentoring relationship, the process, and its benefits.
- Commitment to a professional relationship of mutual trust, respect, and confidentiality in which boundaries are observed.
- Commitment to meet regularly and to respond appropriately to emerging concerns.
- An understanding of the church and its culture, the aims of the seminary curriculum, and the candidacy process.
- Openness to a variety of questions and concerns.
- Non-judgmental empathy and encouragement; honesty about pastoral and/or diaconal ministry, its joys and sorrows.
- Commitment to understand call as an ongoing discernment process.
- Take responsibility for transferring out of mentorship relationship when life situations change.

B. PROGRESSION OF MEETINGS

1. Initially:

- Set the tone. Mentors create an environment where trust is built. Tell your story. Show your faith. Verbalize your care for the candidate.
- Get to know each other. Take several meetings (or emails, phone conversations) to find out basics: family background, where she/he grew up, favourite movies, music, activities. What common ground do you have? How did she/he (and you) find your way to diaconal/pastoral ministry?
- Clarify expectations re mentoring relationship. A safe place for this kind of learning requires openness, hospitality, and boundaries.
- Pray for each other between meetings.

2. First three to four months:

- Build a relationship by telling each other your backgrounds, how you were called to diaconal or pastoral ministry and why you said “yes.”
- Talk about formation events (diaconal, or other) and the experience with other diaconal/ordained ministers.
- Talk about how diaconal/ordained ministers in your area work together, meet, who attends, what they do, etc.
- Learn about the candidate’s ministry interests, learning goals, courses worked on, etc.
- Confirm plans for next meetings.

3. In the middle – sharpening your mentoring skills

- Maintain trust. Stay on track, follow through with commitments, be available and flexible. Maintain confidentiality—and define what kind of information can be shared with anyone, with other mentors, with each other only.
- Be open to learning from the candidate as well.
- Set an agenda at the beginning. Solicit topics from both candidate and mentor. Recognize “teachable moments.” Know the formation goals of the candidate for the coming year.
- Offer your network. Enable the candidate to connect to resources.
- Offer perspective. Help the candidate stay focused on why we’re doing what we do and for whom we’re doing it.
- Listen, and ask purposeful questions. Invite the candidate into self-reflection. “What was going on inside of you when that happened? What were you thinking about?”
- Challenge assumptions, the candidate’s and your own. Encourage and guide. Stretch.
- Improve your own competency to *challenge*. Identify actions or work habits inconsistent with the candidate’s stated goals and commitment. Never *challenge* beyond your own willingness to stay alongside the person and become part of the solution.
- Allow time for candidate’s questions.

4. The next year or two:

- Candidates have a CTEL/Candidacy Committee relater during their studies. Refer candidates to *them* for questions concerning their education and courses, field

work/internship, CPE, etc. Remind them that relaters are there to help them achieve their goals for ministry.

- Keep asking what experiences the candidate might need in order to fulfill CTEL/Candidacy Committee requirements. Ask how the candidate plans to get the experience. Remind candidate to make sure courses are the ones needed, and needed ones are offered.
- Offer to hear about the candidate's field work, CPE, or internship, or early experiences in ministry.
- Invite reflections about meetings with other diaconal/ordained ministers.
- Discuss questions about ministry in general, e.g.: "What is a diaconal/ordained minister?" "Am I engaged in servant ministry?" "How am I different than any other service provider?" "How do I need to grow?" "Where is God leading me now?" "How is ministry of Word and Service different from ministry of Word and Sacrament?"
- Midterm, your relationship might have become mutual, so the candidate provides you with support as well. Identify and affirm this quality in the candidate.

5. Mentoring is not for the impatient

- As one of the most effective ways of developing effective Christians, mentoring is also time-consuming.
- Education and formation as diaconal/ordained ministers is a lifelong process. You are beginning a relationship that has time to unfold in this community. Enjoy!

6. Final months

Before colloquy and/or before the end of an intentional mentorship:

- Acknowledge that you both will make a transition from candidate/mentor relationship to colleagues. Identify what might help each of you to make this transition.
- Review and discuss the candidate's statements on community, theology, ministry, and spirituality.
- Plan for the goodbye and send-off. Attend to the natural grief that comes with change.
- Celebrate. You have helped to equip another servant. This candidate is onto another stage of the journey, just as you are.

C. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

Candidates change. What is needed at the beginning might be different after a year or two in the process. Here are a few challenges:

- The beginning of the process is full of excitement and anxiety. Candidates look forward to being part of a community of caring and common values. After the "honeymoon," some candidates experience a let-down when the reality of work and/or study begin. Your candidate may need help integrating and renewing his/her commitment and decision to enter the education/formation process/ministry.
- As a candidate encounters new insights, Contextual Education challenges, or conflicts within the community, she/he may consider leaving the candidacy process. Be prepared to listen to concerns as the candidate sorts out whether to stay or leave the process.

- Some candidates have leadership skills that have been reinforced for many years. Explore and compare different ways for different contexts—perhaps by stronger/quieter leading, by sharing vulnerabilities, or by being gentle with self and others.
- Ministers are not always united on all points of theology/politics/service. It may be discouraging for candidates new to the experience to see this. How might you help the candidate process what is seen and heard?
- Pre-internship: Preparing for internship can bring its own set of concerns. Some candidates have their hearts set on a particular place. Some have no idea what they want to do. What experience or insight do you have to help a candidate be open to God’s direction? What might you share with the candidate to help him/her affirm his/her gifts, possible internship locations, and God’s call?
- Complaints come with the territory. Some candidates may resist “following the program.” How might you redirect your candidate when needed? How might you manage hearing criticism of the program while being supportive of the process at the same time?
- Experienced mentors can tell you a great deal about challenges. And they can tell you how certain issues were resolved. How will you get connected to people who can help you be an effective mentor to the candidate?

D. Suggested Criteria for Selection of a Mentor

1. It must be clearly understood that the mentor is not to function as recruiter for or liaison with the seminary, nor in the capacity of professional counsellor, nor in any way as a liaison with the Candidacy Committee, CTEL or the Examining Committee.
2. Any pastor or diaconal minister on a roster of the ELCIC is eligible to serve as a mentor with the exception of someone connected with the Candidacy Committee, CTEL or in a position of evaluating the candidate such as a professor or contextual placement supervisor. Some candidates may find an effective mentor from a partner church.
3. When choosing a mentor, the candidate should look for:
 - Experience of pastoral and/or diaconal ministry and/or of life.
 - Willingness to enter into a relationship of mutual trust and respect and to take the time to serve as a mentor and to be accessible to the candidate in that capacity.
 - An empathetic and encouraging but also challenging individual who can be honest about pastoral and/or diaconal ministry, its joys and sorrows.
 - Commitment to the candidate as a person in the process of discerning a call to and aptitude for pastoral or diaconal ministry.
 - Ability to discern when a candidate needs to be referred for professional help.
 - Trustworthiness, especially regarding confidentiality.