

**Parish Ministry Associate Program
Central States Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.

(1 Corinthians 4:1)

The Parish Ministry Associate program seeks to equip people for their own ministry as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Additionally, the program seeks to help identify and nurture the gifts God has given God's people for public ministry, so that that good news can be shared among all people. As servants we are obedient to Christ. As stewards of God's mysteries, we are responsible to care for and use the gifts given to us and to the church.

Education Opportunities and Classes

The Lutheran tradition has long recognized the value of theological education. One of Martin Luther's many contributions to the church was translating the Bible into the language of the people so that people could read, study, and wrestle with Scripture themselves. Confessions were written, debated, and disseminated as believers were invited in a dialog about the who God was, how God operated, what was the purpose and meaning of the church, and so forth. For the church to continue to be both faithful and relevant, we need both theological trained and educated rostered ministers but also lay members who take seriously their role as the priesthood of all believers.

The Central States Synod provides educational opportunities and classes for lay members of the synod to deepen their understanding of Scripture, Lutheran theology, worship and preaching, mission and outreach. These classes will not only help individuals grow in faith, but also assist congregations and other ministries of the church to grow in their mission.

Classes and educational opportunities offered through the Parish Ministry Associate Program are open to all and are described further on the next few pages. Individuals may take as few or many as they desire. Reasons for participating in this educational process include:

- For personal growth
- To strengthen one's understanding of the church and Bible to better serve in one's own congregation
- To serve the larger church in an official capacity by becoming a Parish Ministry Associate (see below).

Parish Ministry Associates

While the education opportunities offered within the synod are open to all laypeople, some may choose to put that education to work toward certification as a Parish Ministry Associate (PMA) in the Central States Synod. Certified PMAs can be engaged in ministry to:

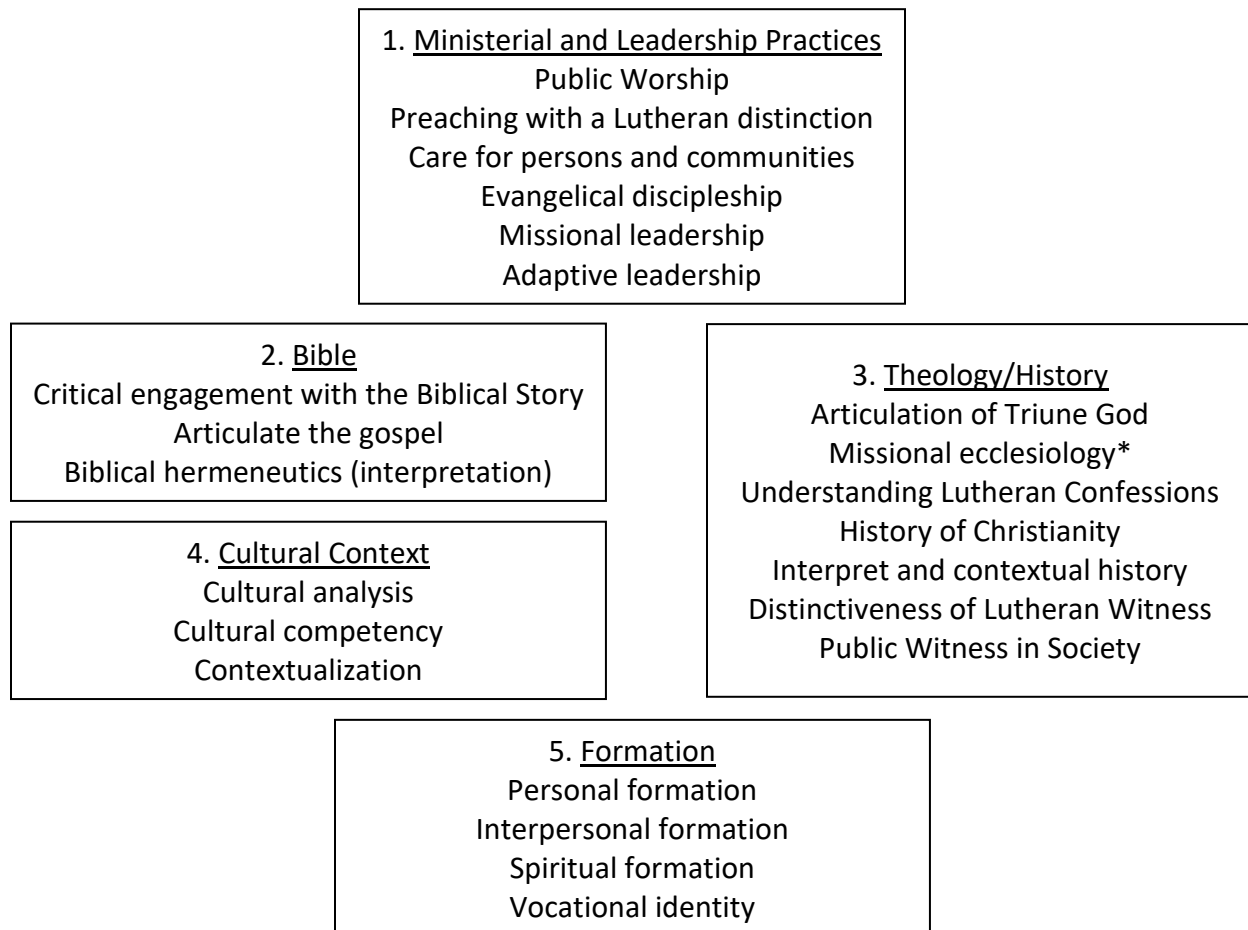
1. Serve within their own congregation in a volunteer capacity or on staff. (If they are requested to provide pulpit supply, they still need authorization from the Bishop to preside at communion.)

2. Provide pulpit supply as needed for congregations in the synod (worship leadership to administer the sacraments as authorized by the Bishop)
3. Serve as Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) upon the request and approval of the Bishop, entering into a covenant relationship to serve a congregation or parish. See Appendix A for more information about SAMs

Core Competencies

Serving in pastoral leadership during the primary worship of a congregation, whether that takes the form of occasional pulpit supply or full-time covenanted synod authorized ministry, is considered Word and Sacrament ministry in this church. Therefore, it is important that the education requirements for the PMA program align with the ministerial competencies for candidacy in the ELCA. These competencies are accountable benchmarks of the knowledge and skills needed to perform the duties of a rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament.

While a PMA certification is not a direct step toward ordination to the Word and Sacrament roster, the standards of this education program are necessarily aligned with those for roster candidates as the work of worship leadership and preaching is the same regardless of who is leading it. The ministerial competencies for candidacy in the ELCA are divided into the following five areas:



*Missional ecclesiology is an understanding of the church’s primary role to be sent out by God in witness.

Application and Certification Process

- Membership in a congregation of this synod is required for a layperson to enroll in the PMA program.
- An individual interested in becoming a PMA requests and receives an enrollment application, which includes recommendations from their pastor and/or congregation, as well as a brief description of the applicant's spiritual journey. The application fee is \$100, which covers the cost of background checks and administrative expenses related to the program.
- Prior to the approval of their enrollment application, each student must complete the Safe Gatherings online course and background check.
- The enrolling applicant participates in an entrance interview with the Parish Ministry Associate Team. If the applicant's enrollment is accepted by the PMA Team, pending the results of their background check and Safe Gatherings course, the applicant is officially designated as a "student" in the PMA program.
- As noted in the previous section, all coursework must be completed within six years of a student's enrollment within the PMA Program. This reasonable time frame exists, in part, as a measure of accountability from those who desire to be certified as PMAs in the synod. Additionally, if a student has not completed any program courses within the last three years, their enrollment expires and they must reapply to the program and participate in an additional entrance interview with the PMA Team. The six year time frame for courses already completed still applies.
- Following (or just prior to) the completion of their course work, students will meet for a final interview with the PMA Team to be approved for certification as a PMA.
- At the following Synod Assembly, the newly certified PMA will receive a medallion and towel. They may wear the towel as a liturgical vestment with their alb & cincture.

Education Requirements

Parish Ministry Associates

The full program of study for the Parish Ministry Associate Program is found in Luther Seminary's Faith+Lead Academy and can be completed through their certificate program (<https://faithlead.org/catalog/certificate/>). While Faith+Lead offers a variety of courses and offerings, Parish Ministry Associate students must complete these 4 certificates:

- Theology and Church History Foundations
- Pastoral Leadership Foundations
- Bible Foundations
- Preaching

Each of these certificates requires about 5 courses and a final project, and each course is 8-12 online, asynchronous classes. The certificates are designed for most people to complete in 6-12 months.

Theology and Church History Foundations Certificate (5 classes)

4 required classes:

- Exploring Great Theological Themes
- Milestones in Church History
- Crash Course: Church
- Missio Dei: The Church Sent

Choose 1:

- Lutheran Principles for Ministry
- Faithfully Gifted: Women in Church History
- Faith, Lies, and Spies: Bonhoeffer's Life and You

Pastoral Leadership Foundations Certificate (5 classes)

3 required classes:

- Emotional Intelligence for Ministry
- Embodying Thoughts & Prayers: Providing Spiritual Comfort & Care
- A Lay Leader's Guide to Planning Worship

Choose 1:

- Missio Dei: The Church Sent
- Fresh Expressions

Choose 1:

- Engaging Faithful Innovations in Your Congregation
- Spirit-Led Solutions Through Human-Centered Design

Bible Foundations Certificate (5 classes)

3 required classes:

- Genesis to Revelation: A Biblical Overview
- Overflow: Loving God with our Minds
- Lutheranism: Bound and Free

Choose 2:

- Crash Course: Bible
- The Gospel of Matthew: Life in the Way of God
- The Book of Acts: The Ever-Expanding Church
- Interpreting Scripture for Preaching

Preaching Certificate (5 classes)

4 required classes:

- You've Been Asked to Preach: Now What?
- Special Occasion Preaching
- Interpreting Scripture for Preaching
- Preaching in a Polarized Society Workshop

Choose 1:

- Storied Faith: Connecting with God through Story
- Lutheran Characteristics of Preaching

All four certificates must be completed within a six year period in order to receive PMA certification in the Central States Synod. If a student enters the program having taken classes in other institutions or settings, they will need to work with the Director of Lay Ministry to develop an individual plan for completion of requirements.

Additional SAM Requirements

For Synod Authorized Ministers there are additional requirements and expectations (see Appendix A). SAMs are to complete or be working toward the completion of two additional certificates through Faith+Lead. These two additional certificates are:

Leadership in Difficult Times Certificate (5 classes)

3 required classes:

- Emotional Intelligence for Ministry
- A More Excellent Way: The Gospel in an Age of Division
- Following Jesus to Purpose and Meaning

Choose 1:

- God and Mental Health Challenges
- God and Grief and Loss: Turning on the Light
- God and Chronic Illness

Choose 1:

- Preaching in an Age of Polarization
- Leading in an Age of Contempt

Contextual and Cultural Ministry Certificate (5 classes)

3 required classes:

- PopGods: Thinking Theologically about Pop Culture
- A More Excellent Way: The Gospel in an Age of Division
- Justice in the Bible

Choose 2:

- The Book of Acts: The Ever-Expanding Church
- Positions: Thinking Theologically about Politics
- Habitat: Thinking Theologically about the Environment
- Real Faith in an AI World: Rethinking Digital Ministry
- Funding Forward: A Pathway to More Sustainable Models for Ministry

Costs and Scholarships

Enrollment in the Faith+Lead Academy operates on a membership/subscription model and the student can select the right option for them. Membership gives students access to all that Faith+Lead has to offer and options include:

- Monthly Membership \$19.95
- Yearly Membership \$195
- Lifetime Membership \$495

If you become a member of Faith+Lead, each certificate program is additional \$75. If you are not a member of Faith+Lead, you can enroll in each certificate program for \$299/certificate. Depending on the choices of the student, the overall program cost will likely be \$700 - \$1,200.

Congregations are encouraged to share the financial responsibilities with participants. Students enrolled and accepted in the PMA Program (see Application and Certification Process below) may apply for a scholarship upon successful completion of each certificate. Students enrolled but not yet accepted into the PMA Program may also apply, and such approved scholarships will be awarded retroactively upon acceptance into the program. Scholarships, typically totaling one-half of the certificate fee, will be awarded as a reimbursement once certificates of completion have been received by the synod office. Full instructions are included on the scholarship form, available for download on the PMA page of the synod website.

Formation Expectations

Mentors / Supervision

- Mentors for Students - Each PMA student will select or be matched with a mentor. The mentor will be an ordained ELCA pastor – usually their home pastor – for guidance, wisdom, and support who will “walk through” the program with them.
- Mentors and Supervisors will receive training through ELCA Coaching (see Appendix B).
- Mentors for certified PMAs – Every unassigned PMA is expected to maintain a mentor/mentee relationship (see Appendix B).
- Supervisors for certified PMAs – Every PMA that is assigned to a congregation that is not their home congregation is assigned a supervisor.
- The mentor pastor may be a retired pastor, but they must be rostered in the ELCA. The name and contact information for your mentor/supervisor must be reported to the Director of Lay Ministry and kept up to date.

Cohorts

- Student Cohorts* - Upon enrollment in the PMA program, each student will become part of a cohort. This cohort will meet quarterly either in-person or hybrid.
- PMA/SAM Cohorts** – All PMAs and SAMs will meet quarterly either in person or in a hybrid model.

*The first student cohort is being formed jointly with the Nebraska Synod as of May 16, 2026, comprised of the newest students who have just entered the program. Additional students may enter the program at the next quarterly meeting.

**These PMA/SAM cohorts will also be formed jointly with the Nebraska Synod as this new process continues to develop. More details TBA.

Other Educational Opportunities

Not everyone who desires further study feels called to be a PMA or SMA. In addition to Faith+Lead Academy, the Central States Synod maintains contact and connection with many different institutions that offer robust theological education in a variety of settings and styles.

These are available for anyone to participate in, including for PMAs or SAMs to use for their continuing education. Information about these additional educational opportunities are located in Appendix C.

Accountability for PMAs

Parish Ministry Associates are certified to do ministry and exercise leadership on behalf of the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In order to remain on the active list of PMAs, they agree to:

- **Participate in 6 hours of continuing education annually**
 - The annual PMA Conference and the Fall Theological Conference are preferred events for continuing education and may be counted for up to six hours each.
 - Continuing education may also be earned by attending other education events, participating in a mission trip, doing an independent study if approved by the Director of Lay Ministry.

- **Actively maintain PMA status with the synod:**
 - All PMAs not currently serving under covenant as a SAM must submit an annual report to the Central States Synod Director of Lay Ministry. The form can be found on the synod website and includes information about the work and ministry of the PMA, their continuing education and matters of joy and/or concern over the past year.
 - PMAs serving under covenant as a SAM will participate in an annual conversation with the bishop and synod staff.
 - Failure to maintain communication with the synod and fulfill annual requirements may result in an “inactive” suspension of the individual’s Parish Ministry Associate status, up to and including removal from the synod’s pulpit supply list, ineligibility to serve in synod authorized ministry, or permanent revocation of the individual’s PMA certification
 - Such inactive PMAs who wish to continue in the PMA Program will be required to interview with the PMA Team in order to reactivate their status.

- **Only active PMAs can be on the synod’s pulpit supply list and available to preach in congregations throughout the synod:**
 - If presiding at communion, PMAs must receive authorization from the Bishop for the date and location of the congregation at which they are leading worship, unless they are already serving in that place under an active covenant as a SAM. A letter of authorization will be sent to both the congregation and the PMA.

- **If invited by the Bishop’s office to serve as a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM), either as part of team with a rostered minister or as the solo pastoral leader, a PMA must follow the guidelines set forth in Appendix A – Synod Authorized Ministers.**

- While Parish Ministry Associates have fulfilled additional educational courses and been certified by the synod to serve within their congregations and the synod and may be

authorized to serve a congregation in worship or as the pastoral leader, they have not been through the candidacy process to be rostered members of the ELCA. Therefore, they are not to wear clerical collars or stoles in worship, which are symbols of ordination, or use the title “reverend.” For the sake of forming a partnership for the ministry of the whole church, lay and rostered ministers must recognize and respect their different callings even as they work together.

- An individual who has been removed from the ELCA roster because of misconduct or has been denied continuance in candidacy because of misconduct is precluded from serving as a Parish Ministry Associate.
- PMAs are expected to abide by the document *Definition and Guidelines for Discipline for Rostered Ministers* which is found on the ELCA website.
- When permitted by law (as is the case in Missouri and Kansas) PMAs may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation in which they are authorized to serve, with the concurrence of the congregation and the approval of the synodical bishop.
- Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the bishop, who need not specify a reason.
- Just like rostered ministers, PMAs are not to offer therapy or counseling as part of their ministries.
- PMAs may serve only within the Central States Synod. Since they are not ordained clergy, they are not recognized by the IRS for the housing allowance benefit on their federal tax returns.

Guidelines for Congregations

- Pastors and congregations may identify and encourage individuals to consider entering the PMA program. Those who apply must be endorsed by their home congregation. In considering whether to endorse an individual, the congregation council should take great care in evaluating the individual’s spiritual maturity, leadership potential, and willingness to learn and serve. Congregational endorsement is accomplished by a vote of the council.
- Congregations are also encouraged to provide financial assistance for individuals in the program to fulfill their educational requirements.

Role of the Director of Lay Ministry

- Provides oversight for and administration of the Central States Synod PMA program.
- Maintains the lay ministry database with the up-to-date status of all students, PMAs, and SAMs within the synod.
- Coordinates the education program for PMA students in consultation with the PMA Team and educational ministries across the synod, ~~and~~ creates schedules for upcoming classes
- Works with students to develop appropriate education plans and identify classes with them toward completion of those plans.
- Convenes meetings of the PMA Team throughout the year for purposes of:

- Conducting entrance interviews and approving new applicants to the PMA program, reviewing applications, recommendations, and background checks, etc.
- Conducting final interviews with candidates for PMA certification at Synod Assembly.
- Updating the PMA Handbook and other program documents.
- Planning and conducting an annual PMA Conference.
- Promotes the PMA program across the Central States Synod and the wider church.

For more information, see the synod PMA page at <https://css-elca.org/pma>

Appendix A

Synod Authorized Ministers – Central States Synod

In the document *The Use of the Means of Grace*, it states that “a pastor presides at holy communion.” This witnesses to the understanding that the sacrament is a celebration of the church, serving its unity and therefore it is an ordained minister who presides in the service of holy communion and proclaims the Great Thanksgiving. When it is not possible to provide ordained pastoral leadership, the synod bishop may authorize properly trained lay persons to preside for a specified period of time and in a given location only.

That provision is outlined in the constitution of the ELCA under **STANDARDS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT** and Synod Authorized Ministry (ELCA Constitution 7.31.10). *...when need exists, the synod bishop – acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with the standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council – may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer Word and Sacrament ministry as a synod-authorized minister. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop, such service shall be rendered during its duration under the sacramental authority of the bishop. Such an individual will be trained to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synod leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.*

Purpose of Synod-Authorized Ministry

The ELCA’s *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* (November 2025) identifies the purpose of synod-authorized ministry as follows:

- Synod-authorized ministry is intended to assist this church to respond pastorally and effectively to emerging opportunities in Christ’s mission, to equip the baptized to live out their vocations for the sake of the world. Synod-authorized ministry honors and respects the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament within this church as well as the ministry of the baptized to serve in their local settings to proclaim the gospel and equip the believers.
- Synod-authorized ministry recognizes and honors the office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession). While this church calls and ordains qualified persons to carry out the ministry of Word and Sacrament on behalf of the whole church, there may be times and contexts when qualified persons are called to carry out specific ministry only in their local settings for a designated period of time.

- Synod-authorized ministry recognizes the need to be flexible and adapt to the ministry challenges and needs of smaller congregations and other ministry settings. And synod-authorized ministry recognizes that individuals may have the gifts and ability to serve this church through the proclamation of the gospel in a local context, but not the resources, ability or call to serve the whole church as ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. The purpose of synod-authorized ministry is to pair the gifts of individuals with the ministry needs of local communities in order to assist them to carry out their calling to be the Church in the world.

Synod Authorized Ministers

- This designation is for anyone who is not on the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA or a full communion partner who is serving **under covenant** as the primary lay pastoral leader which may include:
 - PMAs
 - TEEM candidates
 - Seminary interns serving with off-site supervisors
 - Individuals with qualifying seminary education, are members of the congregation, and willing to take additional classes (through the PMA program) in Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran Worship
- Qualifications: A person invited to prepare for a synod-authorized ministry must be an active member of an ELCA congregation, preferably for at least one year. (The synod bishop may approve an exception to this rule if the individual is a member of a full communion partner congregation or ordained in another tradition.) In addition, prior to preparing to serve in synod-authorized ministry, an individual must have:
 - been recommended by the individual's pastor and/or Congregation Council;
 - met with and been interviewed by synod staff and/or the synod committee responsible for the synod's program of preparation;
 - demonstrated the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synod-authorized ministry or provided satisfactory evidence of prior preparation toward the goals and standards of the program outlined in this policy;
 - submitted written responses to the questions similar to those on the candidacy Entrance Form; and,
 - passed a background check .

Any individual who has resigned or been removed from rostered ministry in the ELCA in connection with alleged misconduct, or who has been denied continuance in candidacy by reason of misconduct allegations, is precluded from serving as a synod-authorized minister.
- Authorization for Service: Individuals who serve in synod-authorized ministry are to meet the following criteria:
 - evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
 - satisfactory participation in a synod program of preparation, and/or demonstration of appropriate ministry skills; and,

- knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church.
- Covenants must be reviewed and signed each year by the council and SAM and attested by the Bishop.
 - The council should do an annual review of the SAM and their ministry.
 - Goals and expectations should be articulated as well as financial compensation. Remuneration should be determined with reference to the synod's annual compensation guidelines and worksheet.
- Yearly authorization to preside at communion is granted at the time the annual covenant is attested by the bishop.
- Regular contact, at least once a quarter, with their supervising pastor, who is appointed by the bishop (see job description below).
- Must participate in an annual review and conversation with the bishop and the director of lay ministry or other member of the PMA team.
- Able to be voting members at synod assembly (see continuing resolution S7.24.A21).
- Willingness to follow the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Synod for Rostered Ministers and to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of individuals serving in public ministry as described in "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers."
- Understand that the authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop, with or without cause.
- Clerical collars and stoles should not be worn by unordained individuals as these are signs of an ordained pastor. Exceptions may be granted for those individuals who are in candidacy and serving a congregation through the TEEM or as a seminary student to wear a clerical collar. But until ordained, these individuals may not wear stoles while presiding at worship.

While Synod Authorized Ministers are not on the roster of the ELCA, they do function as lay pastoral leaders for congregations within the synod. They should exercise this responsibility mindful of those duties outlined in the congregation's constitution (*C9.03.) They should also participate as much as possible in the synod assembly as well as meetings of the conference to which the congregation belongs. (S14.25). However, as stated above, the authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop without going through the process outlined for pastors who are on the roster and called by their congregations. (*C9.05).

Appendix B

Rostered Supervision & Mentoring for PMAs and SAMs

According to the polity and teachings of our church: Communion is one of the marks of the church and as such presided over by an ordained pastor who is set apart in the church to serve in this capacity for the whole church. *The Use of the Means of Grace*, which guides our sacramental practices in the church, give the bishop the latitude to extend their sacramental responsibility as the pastor of the synod to “properly trained lay persons to preside at communion for a period of time and in a specific location.”

There are three primary ways in which PMAs serve:

- As Synod Authorized Ministers serving a congregation under covenant as the primary pastoral leader or as part of the pastoral team. These individuals function as lay pastors in their congregations, preaching and presiding at communion on a regular basis.
- On the pulpit supply list of the synod, leading worship services on specific dates as needed across the synod in response to requests from congregations.
- As volunteers (and sometimes staff) in their own congregation using their gifts as needed and requested which may or may not include leading worship on an emergency basis.

Because PMAs and SAMs are not included on the roster of Word and Sacrament Ministry in the ELCA, they are required to have a rostered minister as a mentor or supervisor. This assists the bishop to extend their sacramental responsibility with care and good order for the sake of the ministry of the church.

Definitions

- Mentor – an ordained ELCA pastor (active or retired) working with a PMA student or unassigned PMA.
- Supervisor – an ordained ELCA pastor (active or retired) supervising an assigned PMA/SAM or PMA on their church staff.
- PMA Student – one who has not completed their studies.
- Certified PMA – a PMA who has completed their studies and is certified for ministry.
- Unassigned PMA – a PMA who has completed their studies, is certified for ministry, and serving primarily in their home congregation.
- Assigned PMA/SAM – a PMA who has completed studies, is certified for ministry, and assigned by the bishop to serve a congregation.

Guidelines and Expectations

These are the guidelines for rostered mentors and supervisors in the Central States Synod:

- Selection and Training

- Supervisors and mentors, after consultation, will be appointed by the Bishop. They can be active or retired pastors.
- Mentors and supervisors will complete a course through ELCA coaching called, “Coaching for Everyday Life”. This training will be focused on “mentoring with a coaching posture” and will incorporate the Central States Synod’s expectations for mentors & supervisors. This course is three 2-hour sessions with a cohort of at least 6 participants. The cost is \$125, but the Central States Synod will pay for it.
- During Studies
 - Be intentional in checking with the PMA Student about completing coursework in a timely manner.
 - Read drafts of papers/projects and offer constructive feedback.
 - As part of the preaching class(es), provide or help the student find opportunities to preach. Work with the student as they prepare the sermon and receive feedback.
 - Remind the student to participate in the PMA cohorts.
 - Make sure the student has read and understood Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers, available at www.elca.org.
- As Certification Nears
 - Work with the synod to ensure recognition at an upcoming synod assembly or other synod event. This includes ordering the towel & medallion.
 - Plan a congregational recognition of the student’s accomplishment in their home congregation.
 - Work with the council and/or congregation on a gift to the PMA. Meaningful gifts include an alb, cincture, ELW resources (Occasional Services, hymnal, etc), or other theological books of interest to the new PMA.
- Before, During and After Certification
 - Be aware of the PMA’s activities and ministries.
 - Be a resource and counsel for challenges, struggles, and joys; and offer additional help and support as needed by the PMAs.
 - Remind the PMA to participate in continuing education, text studies, synod events, and PMA cohort gatherings.
 - Meet with their PMAs in order to build a relationship of trust and accountability. The mentor/supervisor and PMA are mutually responsible to make sure this regular contact takes place with appropriate frequency:
 - For Unassigned PMAs meetings are at the discretion of the pastor and PMAs.

- For any (assigned or unassigned) PMA on the pulpit supply list – mentors/supervisors meet quarterly to review a sermon to engage in theological learning and to discuss worship practices. If the PMA’s preaching frequency is less than quarterly, then this meeting should happen once in each quarter that the PMA supplies/preaches.
- For Assigned PMAs and SAMs – supervisors meet monthly to discuss care and leadership in the congregation, offering both input and support, and at least quarterly reviewing a sermon to engage in theological learning and discussing worship practices.
 - The supervising pastor should meet annually with the congregation council to review how the ministry of the PMA/SAM is unfolding, answer questions, and offer guidance as needed.
 - Teach the PMA/SAM how to keep congregational records, record pastoral acts, complete the ELCA parochial report and other annual forms for the ELCA and synod.
- For PMAs and SAMs who have maintained a long-term relationship with their rostered supervisor, the frequency and purpose of these meetings may be adjusted at the discretion of the rostered supervisor, as indicated in the lay minister’s annual review with the synod.

The expectation is that in this established relationship, the PMA or SAM may contact the supervising pastor with any issues or questions that arise in the course of their ministry. If a PMA or SAM, their rostered supervisor, or a member or leader of the congregation(s) in which they serve, has any concerns about the ministry of the PMA or the supervisory relationship, they should contact the synod office. The Bishop and/or a member of the synod staff will then address the concern directly with the lay minister and rostered supervisor.

Appendix C Other Educational Opportunities

Not everyone who desires further theological education is called to be a PMA, SAM or rostered minister. Anyone can take classes through Luther Seminary's Faith+Lead Academy mentioned throughout this document, and you do not have to be working toward a particular certificate or PMA/SAM certification. There are a plethora of classes offered online at \$55/class, and you can learn more about their resources by visiting faithlead.org.

The Central States Synod also provides many educational events throughout the year, including the Fall Theological Conference, Synod Assembly workshops, Ministry Lab classes, Lunch & Learns, and other opportunities that arise. Our synod also networks with other institutions and organizations, and encourages those who are interested to explore classes/learning at any of the following:

Select Learning selectlearning.org

Select Learning provides access to quality theological learning experiences for personal, congregational and professional learning. Using outstanding seminary and college instructors and ministry practitioners, Select Learning combines high quality DVD-based video courses, customized study materials, proven textbooks, and online learning to create effective and flexible theological exploration opportunities. Select Learning is a member of the Lay School for Ministry Network of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Type of classes: online as part of a group

Cost: about \$400/class

Bishop Kemper School for Ministry bishopkemperschool.org

Located in Topeka, KS, this is a ministry of the Episcopal Church designed to offer theological education for all people. For each class, students primarily meet in-person over a focus weekend. They do some pre-reading/work before the class and then have some follow-up via Zoom. During the focus weekend, students receive face-to-face instruction and they worship, pray, eat and socialize together.

Type of classes: in-person or Zoom

Cost: about \$350-500/class

St. Paul School of Theology spst.edu/cos

Located in Leawood, KS, this is a seminary of the United Methodist Church. Their "Course of Study" program is similar to our PMA program, offering similar types of classes and expectations. Most classes include online lectures, possible in-person class time, and writing over the course of 7 weeks.

Type of classes: mostly online as part of a group, possible in-person opportunities

Cost: \$375/class

LSTC's Project Starling <https://lstc.edu/academics/project-starling/>

Project Starling is an innovative online learning platform developed by the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) launching Summer 2025. With a goal of making theological education accessible to all, Project Starling offers a rich array of courses, known as resources, as well as certificate programs, workshops, and training opportunities tailored for those seeking theological education.

Type of classes: online, asynchronous

Cost: \$400+/class

Wartburg Theological Seminary's CaSTLE Project thecastleproject.org

This experimental offering from the ELCA's Wartburg Seminary is especially designed to equip lay people to do ministry in rural and small towns. They offer a variety of webinars and are building their library of resources all the time.

Type of classes: asynchronous webinars

Cost: free

Central/Southern Illinois Synod csis-elca.org

On their website, under Mission & Ministry, click on Adult Faith Formation to learn more about the classes they offer. Each year they offer a variety of classes on topics like Old Testament, New Testament, church history, Lutheran theology, Lutheran worship, etc. Classes are held via Zoom on Saturdays from 9:00am – 12:00pm, with six sessions per topic over 2-3 months. Some classes may also offer an in-person option.

Type of classes: Zoom, as part of a group

Cost: \$50+/class