

+ Guidelines for an Internship Lay Committee +

Rationale

Candidates for ELCA ministry expect to meet with synodical candidacy committees, synodical approval panels, and with lay committees from congregations considering issuing calls to these candidates. It is essential therefore, that interns have the experience of meeting with lay people in meetings where the primary purpose is the evaluation of the intern's gifts and growth edges for their identified roster. Lay people can and should offer suggestions and criticism on a one-to-one basis, but there is a unique value in reflecting together on ministry, in general, and the intern's ministry, in particular.

Who should serve on such a committee, and what is its function?

The committee should be about 4-6 people gathering a cross-section of the congregation including a rostered Deacon, if one serves at the church, and any lay members with experience in the candidate's area of specialization (such as teachers, office administrators, counselors, etc.) Of primary importance is each person's willingness to speak openly and frankly about the relationship between ministry priorities and an intern's gifts and limitations. The members should have regular exposure to and familiarity with the candidate's work. They will serve as a resource to the candidate for understanding the congregational system and its societal context. It is not a "political" committee in the sense that it is to determine an intern's duties, nor does it need to make official reports to the church council, pastor or agency supervisor. It exists primarily to give feedback directly to the intern in an informal, reflective way. They will also fill out periodical written evaluations about the candidate's work and follow the candidate's progress in fulfilling the objectives of their Learning Covenant. The pastor/supervisor does not normally attend the meetings since the purpose is evaluation by lay people.

How is such a committee chosen?

The pastor or agency supervisor may do the selecting, and the intern, when they arrive, may make additional nominations. If the congregation has an on-going internship program, membership could rotate like that of a church council. If possible, it should be a committee distinct from a mutual ministry committee or a personnel committee, even if those committees exist.

What is a typical agenda?

The intern will usually ask for responses to their work in the area of their specialization and their ministry of preaching, calling, teaching, etc. Even if members of the committee have not experienced each area of the intern's ministry directly, they will no doubt be aware of the congregation's/agency's response to what the intern says and does and can share the general reaction. If there are systemic disagreements between an intern and supervisor, or between an intern and members of the congregation/agency, the committee may wish to mediate or assist in resolution. Prior to an intern's arrival in the congregation/agency, the committee may wish to work with the pastor/agency supervisor in arranging a reception for the intern (and family), or to invite the intern (and family) to social events. Arranging a farewell could be another committee function.

How long or how often should the committee meet?

If the intern is serving full-time, the goal would be to meet with the Lay Committee once a month. If the intern's hours are less, then the time between meetings would be stretched out. The length of the meetings depend on the agenda and how much conversation is needed. The agenda should be agreed upon before the actual meeting and can be written by the intern or by the committee chair.