

Guidelines for the Ministry in Context (MIC) Lay Committee

Rationale

Candidates for ordained ministry expect to meet with synodical candidacy committees as well as with lay committees from parishes considering issuing calls to these candidates. It is essential therefore, that seminarians have the experience of meeting with lay people in meetings where the primary purpose is the evaluation of the student's gifts and limitations for rostered ministry. Lay people can and do offer suggestions and feedback on a one-to-one basis, but there is a unique value in reflecting together on ministry in general and the student's ministry in particular.

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

The committee should be large enough so that three to six people can be present for each meeting. Committee members should represent the diversity of the congregation in terms of attitudes toward clergy, worship, social issues, and the like. Youth and elderly, various occupational backgrounds, social classes, ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, et cetera should be represented. Of primary importance is each person's willingness to speak openly and frankly about the relationship between ministry priorities and a student's gifts and limitations. It is not a *political* committee in the sense that it is to determine the student's duties, nor does it need to make official reports to the church council, pastor-supervisor, or seminary. It exists primarily to give feedback directly to the student in an informal, reflective way. The pastor-supervisor would not normally attend the meetings since the committee's purpose is evaluation by lay people.

How is such a committee chosen?

The pastor or church council may do the selecting or the student themselves may make nominations. If the congregation has an on-going Ministry in Context 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 student will usually ask for responses to their ministry of preaching, pastoral care, teaching, et cetera. This can also be a time to reflect theologically and vocationally on ministry with the student. Even if members of the committee have not experienced each area of the student's ministry directly, they will no doubt be aware of the congregation's response to what the student has done and they can share the congregation's general reactions. Members of the committee may introduce their own agenda items. Also, if there are systemic disagreements between the student and supervisor, or between the student and members of the congregation, the committee may wish to mediate or assist in resolution.

How long or how often should the committee meet?

Ideally, the student should meet with the Lay Committee 2-3 times per semester.