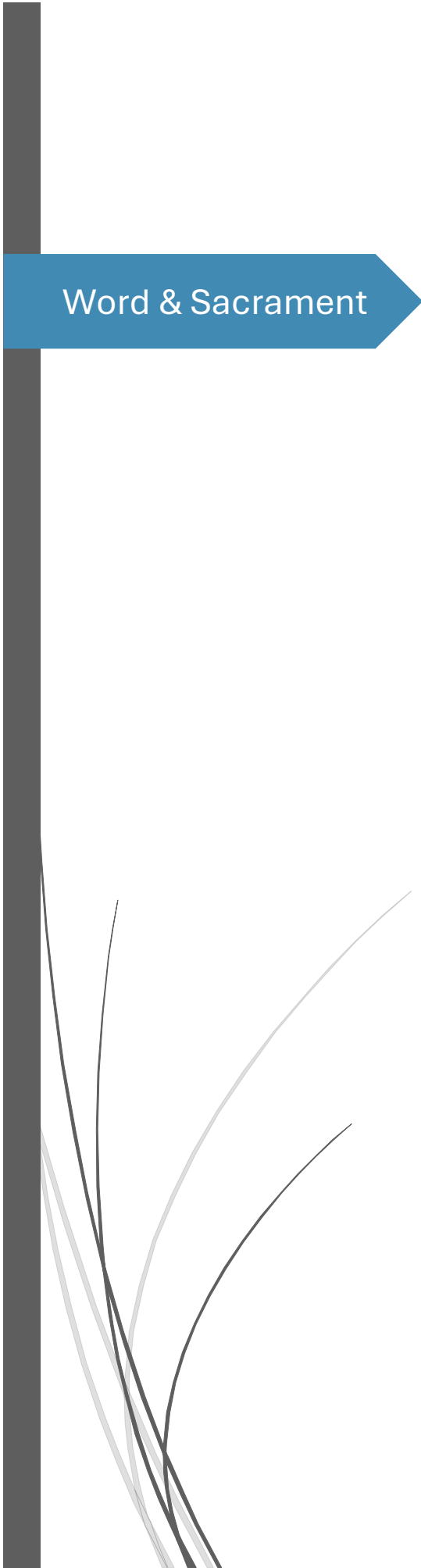


A thick dark grey vertical bar runs down the left side of the page. A blue arrow-shaped banner points to the right from this bar, containing the text 'Word & Sacrament'. In the bottom left corner, several thin, curved lines in dark grey and light grey sweep upwards and to the right.

Word & Sacrament

LSTC Seminary Internship Handbook

Created by the
Contextual Education Office

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Contact Information

Deacon Marji Shannon
Director of Contextual Education
Director of TEEM Program
mshannon@lstc.edu
(773) 771-2025

Rev. Dr. Brooke Petersen
John H. Tietjen Chair of Pastoral Ministry and Associate Professor of
Pastoral Care
Director of MDiv and MAM/MA Programs and Director of Candidacy
brooke.petersen@lstc.edu
(773) 256-0691

LSTC Mailing & Physical Address:
5416 S. Cornell Ave., Fourth Floor
Chicago, IL 60615

www.lstc.edu

The LSTC Internship Program

About LSTC

Based in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) is a leading urban Lutheran seminary training students to serve in the global community. True to our Lutheran heritage and built on a foundation of intellectual rigor, we equip students for visionary ministry. The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, seeks to build up the Body of Christ and work for a world of peace and justice that cares for the whole creation.

LSTC Values

- **LSTC is Christ-centered.** We strive by God's grace to follow Christ's call to loving service.
- **LSTC is responsive to its context.** We embrace our diverse urban setting and exciting academic environment that enable learning from and ministering to the community. Relationships with synods and congregations provide academic and practical experiences that meet the needs of the church.
- **LSTC is attentive to diversity.** We emphasize knowing and honoring the perspectives of all nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, Christian traditions, and religions to form leaders whose witness to the Gospel will build communities of hospitality and reconciliation.
- **LSTC is committed to excellence.** We send leaders into the church and world who are prepared academically, practically, and spiritually to serve in a variety of vocational and ministry settings. Faculty members are faithful Christians who are internationally recognized scholars and teachers. Administration and staff strive to provide exemplary service to all constituents.

As a Reconciling in Christ seminary, LSTC seeks to offer hospitality and welcome to all who enter LSTC's academic programs. Following Jesus Christ, whose reconciling love bridged barriers and made strangers friends, we seek to welcome and learn from one another's particularity-including but not limited to one another's race, national or ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, physical ability, social status and theological diversity.

What is Internship in the ELCA?

Candidates for ELCA ordination are required to complete an internship in a congregation or a combination agency-congregation site, under the supervision of an experienced Rostered Minister.

For those students pursuing the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, the ELCA requires an internship of at least 2000 hours. LSTC interprets these hours as a full-time (40 hrs a week), 12-month internship, unless a part-time plan is negotiated with the Contextual Education Office and the Intern's Candidacy Committee. Internships are usually arranged to be done in a congregational context but can be split to include other experiences such as an additional unit of CPE, work with a specific agency, etc.

The purpose of an internship is to facilitate the development of vocational skills and professional ministerial formation. Identified pastoral supervisors work with students in the various areas of ministry and reflect with them about their learning and growth in regular supervisory sessions. Interns also receive frequent feedback on their ministry from a group of designated lay leaders called the Lay Committee. Learning goals for the internship are formed, a comprehensive Intern Project is planned, and ELCA evaluations are completed by Intern, Supervisor and Lay Committee at specific intervals.

Assessment of Site and Supervisor and Intern Placement

Sites and Supervisors applying to receive an intern are initially assessed and evaluated through a prepared form sent to their bishop. Supervising pastors are assessed according to their ability to lead, teach, relate to students, process theology, their experience in ministry, and their support of the larger church. The next assessment comes when the proposed assignment of an intern to a specific site is put before the seminary faculty for their approval. Official assignments are made on the basis of the perceived needs of each intern and the ability of the intern to fit into a given situation. While the needs of a particular congregation or institution are important, these remain secondary to the educational nature of internship. Where the supervisor-intern relationship has been positive, every effort is made to relate to the same site again, from year to year.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Communication and Relationship Building

Rostered pastors who serve as supervisors are by virtue of their personal qualities and training, able to help interns become familiar with the many concerns and facets of Word and Sacrament ministry. This relationship requires guidance and nurture from the supervisor for the intern's personal and professional growth. In order to fulfill this responsibility, supervisors must have a sensitivity to the particular needs and development of the interns assigned to them. When relationships are good and people are open to each

other, tensions - which are bound to come up - can honestly be faced and dealt with. Internships fail when interns and supervisors can no longer trust each other. The cultivation of such rapport is one of the primary tasks the intern and supervisor share and can be accomplished through open and regular communication. The Director of Contextual Education is an available resource for both the Intern and the Supervisor for strategizing, especially if the conflict becomes problematic.

Supervisory Sessions

It is very important that specified times, *at least once a week*, be set aside for evaluation and theological reflection. Care must be taken so that these sessions do not become staff or "guidance" periods. Instead the focus can be expected to arise out of the intern's concerns and needs, or those of the supervisor. It is not the time when congregational needs are foremost. Just to be able to communicate personal concerns and needs often requires considerable effort. The supervisor (or the intern) aids the communication process by being an "active listener." Then, when the concern or need is understood, problem-solving or negotiation may begin.

It is expected that personal concerns will enter the conversation during reflection sessions. The relationship should not intentionally become that of counselor-counselee in any professional sense. A helpful rule of thumb is: if more than half of the session is spent on a personal problem, it is time to find another resource, such as a therapist or spiritual director. It is too difficult to keep proper boundaries if either the Supervisor or Intern takes on the role of counselor. If the Supervisor or Intern needs professional counseling, they should seek it from someone outside the ministry.

Forming the Lay Committee

It is essential 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 areas for ordained ministry. Lay people can and do 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.

It is the Supervisor's responsibility to identify and gather a group of lay people who represent a cross-section of the congregation and are willing to support, encourage, affirm, and challenge the intern through both formal and informal experiences, listening, and feedback. A chairperson should be chosen for the purpose of leading the monthly meetings and working with the Intern to set the coming agenda.

While the supervisor has the responsibility of forming and getting this committee started, they do not attend the monthly meetings.

Lay Committee Handbook link: [Current Internship Lay Committee Handbook.pdf](#)

Internship Paperwork involving Intern, Supervisor and Lay Committee

From the very beginning of the internship, a broad but balanced Learning Covenant will be carefully outlined and agreed upon between the intern and supervisor. Take time to read through this manual together and work together on various aspects of ministry for the first few days. Supervisors should make sure that interns are well oriented in every new duty which comes their way. The Intern should also share this Learning Covenant with the Lay Committee to gain their insight into opportunities - both inside and outside the congregation - of connection, support, and growth.

Supervisors and interns are required to share their written evaluation reports with each other before they are signed and sent to the seminary so as to gain the benefits of the evaluations for their own relationship. A mark of good supervision is when these reports contain few surprises. The Lay Committee will do the same with their written evaluation reports and time should be set aside during one of the monthly meetings with the Intern to discuss the feedback before signing and sending in the evaluation form.

Through early-on collaboration with the supervisor and lay committee, the intern will identify and outline a project that they will be responsible for completing during the internship. The intern will be the one responsible for getting the support of the congregation, bringing laity on board to help/participate, and then evaluating with the appropriate people the successes and improvements of the plan as it was carried out.

Internship Manual including LSTC and ELCA paperwork to be completed can be found at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z9gdOv3XxZaFWrb-mRhNI_fGRlcp0pX-?usp=drive_link

ELCA Evaluation Forms can also be found on the ELCA Website: [Home - ELCA Resources](#)

Table: Internship Timeline for Word & Sacrament Intern

(based on full-time, 12-month internship)

[Table - Internship Timeline for Word and Sacrament Intern.pdf](#)

Harassment/Bullying

While the hope is always that the relationship between Supervisor, Intern, and congregation is one of mutual respect, we recognize that at times people do not operate out of their healthiest selves and on rare occasions bullying or harassment may occur. This is not acceptable behavior, and any bullying or harassing behavior should be reported immediately to the Director of Contextual Education. In cases where the person reporting does not believe that they can report to the Director of Contextual Education, or if the Director of Contextual Education is unavailable, reports can be made to the Academic Dean. Contact information for all persons can be found on the LSTC website www.lstc.edu. Please use this link to view the [LSTC Harassment Policy.pdf](#).

Congregations/agencies are asked to have their own council-approved harassment policy in place and a copy should be sent to the Contextual Education Office, if it hasn't been submitted already. Contact the Contextual Education Office for examples of harassment policies used by internship sites.

Financial Matters

Administrative & travel pool fee

The congregation/agency agrees to pay the seminary a \$2,000 required financial fee in support of the internship process. This one-time internship fee helps cover seminary administrative costs and will provide money for unrestricted students to travel to their internship site. Congregations will normally receive billing in September and, if necessary, the fee may be split into two payments

Intern Stipend

The congregation/agency will provide a monthly, undesignated cash stipend of \$2,000.00 directly to the Intern. All internship stipends are subject to taxation because the IRS considers the intern an employee of the church.

Housing for Unrestricted Intern

The congregation/agency will provide adequate furnished housing including utilities (ie: gas, electricity, water, garbage, cable & internet). Adequate furnished housing is defined as having own bathroom, kitchen, sleeping space that can accommodate a married couple, and own separate entrance not connected to living space of a member of the congregation or any individual related to the ministry programs and communities in which the intern will be serving. Where unfurnished housing is provided, the student is entitled to some assistance in moving furniture and personal possessions. Normally this means the congregation will pay for the rental of a trailer or a truck. The student is responsible for negotiating this agreement with the congregation. In cases where a married couple are interns, both should receive full stipends, although housing and utility costs may then be divided by the two congregations/agencies. When providing an apartment, the rental

agreement should be in the church's name (with the intern's name added) to protect the intern from having to find a new renter if, at any time, the internship is ended.

Taxation

The intern must file a W-4 form with the congregation, and the congregation is required to file a W-2 form on behalf of the intern. FICA is to be paid as for any lay employee of the congregation. If the housing is paid in cash (rather than the congregation renting the apartment or offering a parsonage), that amount is also considered income and taxable. For additional tax information related to your internship, each intern, supervisor and congregation are directed to seek specific tax advice from your own licensed accounting professional.

Days off/Vacation

The congregation/agency will grant the intern at least one day off per week and two weeks paid vacation for a 12 month internship. A two-week paid vacation is 14 days which includes weekends. The vacation is scheduled in consultation with the Supervisor.

Car/Mileage Expenses

The congregation will reimburse the intern for the use of their car in the service of the congregation, either through an acceptable car allowance or through actual mileage.

Work Expenses

The congregation/agency will reimburse the Intern for approved expenses incurred in their work such as attending synod assembly.

Health Insurance

Students applying to seminary need to come with their own health insurance plan - whether that is individually, through a spouse, or through a parent - to be compliant with the federal mandate for health care coverage. Health insurance coverage is expected to be maintained throughout attendance at LSTC including the internship year. ELCA Seminaries do not offer student health insurance anymore and internship sites are not allowed to offer ELCA healthcare coverage to their interns.

Cluster Gatherings

The congregation/agency will cover the cost of travel to and from the gatherings, including overnight accommodations, for both the Intern and the Supervisor. The contextual education offices at each ELCA seminary will take collective responsibility for organizing cluster meetings in the various geographic regions. These clusters provide the opportunity for fellowship, the enhancement of personal and professional growth, and the strengthening of supervisory relationships. Cluster meetings are held twice each year, and attendance is a required part of internship.

Worker's Compensation

Worker's compensation benefits are state regulated. The congregation is encouraged to inquire about any obligations surrounding coverage for the intern with their state's Department of Employment.

FMLA

The Family and Medical Leave Act is federally regulated. Currently the regulation states that an employee is eligible if the employer employs 50 or more employees and the employee must have worked at least 12 months in the past year for the employer. This would mean most interns are not covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act. An extended illness or leave of the intern can become problematic for an experience of such relatively short duration as an internship. In such situations a careful balance must be maintained ensuring fairness to the student as well as to the parish. When questions arise with respect to such situations, the following guidelines can apply.

Sick Leave

Congregations having sick leave policies for its paid staff should seek to apply that same policy to the intern. In the absence of an operative sick leave policy, the following is offered to the intern and the congregation as counsel and advice.

Definition: For the purposes of this policy, "sick leave" may be granted for any intern absent from duty because of accident or illness, including any illness resulting from pregnancy or childbirth.

- Short term illness - up to two weeks - shall not affect the stipend or housing arrangement.
- Long term illness or disability - more than two weeks - may necessitate adjustments as negotiated by Contextual Learning, the intern, and the congregation. A long term illness extending beyond a month may necessitate a review of the internship by Contextual Learning.
- An extended sick leave may interfere with the intern's ability to meet the required time of the internship. There is some flexibility allowing for negotiation for an absence of a maximum of three months.

Example: an intern may surrender their vacation time or negotiate a reduction of stipend or even waiver of stipend if appropriate. On occasion, interns are able to fulfill a portion of their pastoral duties by working part-time, permitting them to achieve some of their internship educational goals. The internship requirement should be fulfilled with a balance of integrity and compassion for the one who is ill.

Parental Leave

Standard policy following the arrival of the child (birth or adoption) while on full-time

internship is up to six consecutive weeks of leave for the intern, divided as follows:

- 2 weeks paid leave
- 2 weeks standard paid vacation time
- 2 weeks unpaid leave

Housing support continues during this time.

Note that parental leave includes the paid vacation time required as standard for all internships. Understanding the limited duration of pastoral internships, these are to be considered reasonable, if basic, amounts. Congregations may choose to accommodate additional parental leave, in consultation and agreement with the intern, Luther Seminary, and the intern's Candidacy Committee.

Note that when pregnancy or an adoption occurs prior to the start of internship, the internship plan will be reevaluated by all parties. Intern, site, seminary, and candidacy committee will together determine the suitability and timing of the internship.

Special Circumstances on Internship

Interns are restricted in some pastoral functions, either because of church policy or state law. Some of these are:

Holy Communion

Word and Sacrament Interns are not expected to preside at Holy Communion, and in most cases, are prohibited from doing so. Consultation with the appropriate synodical bishop(s) as well as the congregation council is necessary if exceptions to the general expectation are desired.

Baptisms

In emergencies, an Intern may perform a baptism, as may any layperson. However, any non-emergency situation is governed by the policies of the ELCA, which call for an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament to preside at baptisms.

Weddings

In most states, an intern may not legally officiate at a wedding service. Although there are exceptions to the general rule, they are rare, and interns should not assume the right or privilege of performing a wedding while on internship.

Funerals

Neither church policy nor state law insists that an ordained person conduct funerals. Therefore, interns are free to conduct funerals with the consent and guidance of the supervising pastor.

Pastoral Vacancy

If a pastoral vacancy occurs in a congregation to which an Intern has been assigned, an automatic review of the assignment occurs. If the vacancy occurs before the internship begins, the Intern will usually be reassigned. If the vacancy develops after the internship begins, every effort will be made to continue the internship by seeking to find alternate forms of supervision – either with the assistance of an interim pastor, a neighboring pastor or a retired pastor from the congregation, if there is one.

Seminary Support

The seminary intentionally assumes a lower profile during the internship year to permit full immersion in the local setting. On-going communication with the Director of Contextual Education will occur to reflect, affirm strengths, discuss areas of growth, and suggest plans and goals. The frequency of this contact depends upon the inclination and interest of the Intern. Remember though, that it is important to contact the seminary sooner rather than later if there are concerns or conflicts in the internship.

Monitoring the Internship

About a month into the internship year, the Director of Contextual Education will reach out to the supervisor and intern to set up a check-in over Zoom. The purpose of this check-in is to make sure that the intern feels grounded, is receiving support from the supervisor, and is connecting with their Lay Committee. Quarterly ELCA evaluation forms give the Director an inside look into how the intern is managing their learning and if there are issues or concerns that need to be addressed. Since funding does not allow the Contextual Education Office to do a site visit, another Zoom check-in may be scheduled between mid-year and the end of the internship.

Other Supports

In addition to the support of the Contextual Education Office, there are other people at the seminary that can be additional conversation partners. Helpful resources might be your faculty adviser, other faculty members that you feel comfortable with, the Dean's Office, the Director of Candidacy, or fellow interns.

Evaluations

The first set of formal evaluations are for the Intern and Supervisor to complete during the third month. These evaluations give us a good idea of how the intern has been engaging people and connecting with the ministry opportunities at their site. At the mid-year point, substantial evaluations will be completed by the Intern, Supervisor and Lay Committee. These evaluations include a rating scale of "Competent" or "Not Competent". It is not expected that the intern will be rated "Competent" in all ministry areas at this point in time but one should see competencies in about two-thirds of them. The Final Evaluations should show the seminary that the intern has achieved competency in all ministry areas.

Interns will be expected to be ready to move into approval with LSTC and with their Candidacy Committee.

ELCA Evaluation Forms can be found on the ELCA Website [Home - ELCA Resources](#)

When Issues Arise

When an internship begins to falter, there can be many different reasons. Most challenges and conflicts can be overcome and a healthy relationship restored. When problems are addressed directly, it often results in an even more effective and successful internship experience. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to consult with the Director of Contextual Education sooner rather than later.

Still, there are situations when careful and attentive conflict resolution does not work. The Office of Contextual Education desires healthy and life-giving internship experiences for the Intern, the Supervisor, and the internship site. Thus, when an internship becomes problematic or harmful for either or both the Intern and the ministry, it may be necessary to end an internship. This does happen occasionally, and it is important for the Intern, the Supervisor, and the internship site to be gentle and gracious in this difficult process.

[Marks of a Healthy Internship.pdf](#)

Request to End an Internship

The congregation or intern may request ending the internship for good reason, but an on-site seminary evaluation is required before such action can be taken. If the intern is in an International Horizon placement, the evaluation will be done over Zoom. The Director of Contextual Education will attempt to provide the opportunity for the Supervisor, congregation, and Intern to process what has happened.

For the student whose internship has ended, there is often a need for time and space to review what has happened, attend to the variety of emotions involved, and consider realistic options for the future. Accordingly, it is not advisable to seek another assignment immediately. While resuming seminary coursework may be an option for some students, most students are well served by stepping back from the process entirely for at least one month. Students should be aware that they will receive such counsel routinely. The Dean's Office determines the student standing of the Intern.

Support will be extended to the student and their immediate family during and after an internship termination. This may include:

- Provision for counseling
- Continuation of the internship stipend for one month
- Transportation and relocation expenses, not to exceed \$500

Synodical Relationships

Since internships are a requirement for ordination in the ELCA, relationships with Synods of the Church are very important and should be maintained before, during, and after the internship year. If problems develop during the internship year in the relationships of the intern and supervisor and/or congregation, the seminary will decide if or when the Intern's Candidacy Committee should be consulted and included in the processing of the identified difficulty. At times, the synod of the congregation may also need to be brought into the conversation.

Boundaries to Note

The internship year presents many challenges for Interns to maintain a healthy personal life in the midst of a very public vocational life. Internship can mean moving away from vital friendships and support networks. Thus, some issues may arise, such as getting personal support on internship, balancing public ministry with private time, and having a social life outside of the congregation. The ELCA expects interns to maintain the professional, ethical boundaries of clergy.

- Because of the close working relationship, friendships may develop between the Intern and Supervisor. This is natural and good! It is important to remember that there is an imbalance of power in the supervisory relationship. Awareness of this power dynamic is important for a healthy learning environment.
- Relationships developed with individuals form the heart of ministry. Relational abilities and a willingness to enter into relationships with individuals are necessary skills for effective ministry. Often, an intern will be expected to work more closely with some groups – such as children, youth, seniors, etc. – than others because of individual educational developmental needs. Care should be taken to maintain appropriate boundaries in all relationships. In a congregational setting the Intern should not date a member of the congregation or a congregational staff member during the time of internship.
- Seminary and the internship experience can bring times of economic hardship. While interns are encouraged to share their life experience and the fullness of their emotions with the congregation, they should be mindful of doing so in a manner that does not encourage community members to step up and help them financially. Congregations may decide to offer financial support through difficult times, but interns should not solicit or seek out such help intentionally.
- There is freedom to ministry that should not be ignored. There will be periods in the year when the demands of ministry may occupy much of the time for several days or even weeks on end. However, when that particular period is over, the well-disciplined pastor can devote time and attention to interests neglected earlier, including personal and family interests, study, and recreational needs. This sets a

good example for the intern to develop a healthy self-care routine to keep them in ministry for years to come.

The Intern needs to be systematic, intentional, and able to set priorities so that all relationships continue to develop. Clergy boundaries can be a good topic for conversation with the Supervisor and/or Lay Committee so that everyone has the same understandings. Understanding boundaries is an important skill to be developed during internship – especially for those serving in a congregational setting. Internship should not be superficial or exhausting, but rich, deep, and satisfying.

Updated June 2025 by Deacon Marji Shannon