

# First Call Theological Education – Southeastern Synod

## **A Vision for First Call Theological Education**

First Call Theological Education in the Southeastern Synod will engage in the continuing development of our Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Ministers of Word and Service, Synod Authorized Ministers, and those who have completed the TEEM track.

Our synod's approach will be three-fold:

1. *Equip* ministers with individual assessments and resource development
2. *Empower* ministers by establishing mentor relationships
3. *Engage* our ministers in group learning (in-person and virtual) to discern next steps

### **What are some of the outcomes of our First Call Theological Education?**

By the conclusion / through the process of FCTE the first call minister will:

- be equipped with resources for understanding one's identity in Word and Sacrament and Word and Service ministry
- be empowered to live into their individualized calling in their context
- be engaged in peer-to-peer relationships for mutual support and learning

### **Who do we expect to engage in First Call Theological Education?**

We expect participation from those who have recently completed their formation as Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Ministers of Word and Service, Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs), and Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM). Specifically, we will engage these ministers from completion of studies through their first 3 years of public ministry.

### **How we will approach FCTE?**

The work in FCTE is an opportunity to further develop one's own call and further understand how one's individual call is lived out in the local, regional, and worldwide context. The more a FCTE participant works through this education plan, the more prepared one will be further down the road.

#### **1. Individual Assessments and Resource Development (EQUIP)**

- a. The synod staff and FCTE team have developed assessments that will be for your personal and professional development. These assessments will help the FCTE participant to know one's areas of strength and growth.

- b. These assessments will remain confidential; however, the results should be shared with the FCTE Coach to help the participant develop an individualized plan for FCTE.
- c. The synod will provide and curate online resources to help address individual areas of growth, as well as invite FCTE participants to share resources they have found or created on their own.
- d. FCTE Participants will develop their own personalized Pastoral Development Plan. This Plan will include:
  - i. development of Pastoral Resources and Community Resources, within the first 3 months of ministry
  - ii. assess readiness for and develop strategies to address Administrative functions, within their first 6 -12 months of ministry

## **2. Mentor Relationships (EMPOWER)**

- a. The bishop and the synod staff will be identifying mentors with whom you can engage for personal and professional development.
- b. These mentors will receive some training, but we are also trusting the life and ministerial experiences of these mentors to guide, assist, and challenge the FCTE participants. These mentors will also find that these relationships can provide beneficial mutual growth, as mentors will undoubtedly learn from the FCTE participants during this journey.
- c. We encourage those serving alongside a co-pastor or senior pastor to engage in a mentor relationship with someone who is not the co-pastor or senior pastor. Working with someone outside of the congregational system will allow the FCTE participant to receive a viewpoint from outside of that system.
- d. As time progresses, FCTE participants will find other mentors to guide them; this is encouraged, but the participant is also remain connected to the FCTE mentor to allow for ongoing observation and support from the synod.

## **3. Engagement in group learning (ENGAGE)**

- a. We will gather the FCTE participants through a hybrid model of in-person gatherings and online gatherings.
- b. Personal reflections from FCTE participants will provide the majority of the direction for group learning, so that time spent together is directed where most needed.
- c. These will be times to build relationships with fellow ministers who are beginning their time of public ministry as a rostered or appointed church minister
- d. These gatherings may be led by the synod staff or an outside resource specific to the topic to be discussed

### **How will the synod support your FCTE?**

1. The synod remains committed to developing healthy leaders.
2. A synod staff person is dedicated to oversee FCTE in the synod.
3. This staff person will work with a small group of individuals who feel called to support FCTE participants.
4. The synod staff will encourage congregation councils to follow through on their commitment to support FCTE efforts through funding and time dedicated to FCTE (per a letter of call), by reminding them that this investment into the development of their pastor / deacon will bear fruit not only for the minister, but for the entire congregation, the synod, and the wider Church.
5. The synod staff will facilitate the group gatherings in relaxed environments, individual assessments, mentor relationships, and production/curation of online resources for all FCTE in the synod.
6. The synod staff will be working with the Candidacy Committee, as well those who oversee the SAM and TEEM individuals.

### **How will the FCTE participant contribute?**

1. Spending time and energy in this education plan will bring about a level of confidence and security in one's call and context.
2. Plan to be present at in-person and online gatherings
3. Be open to what the Spirit has to say through your mentor
4. Be honest with the synod leadership about the effectiveness of this approach to FCTE. We are willing to listen and adapt.
5. With guidance from your mentor, you will develop the following resources:
  - a. Within your first 3 months, you will develop pastoral and community resources
  - b. Within your first 6 months, you will begin to address issues and develop a personal and / or congregational resource related to managing personnel, facilities, finances, and other administrative functions.
6. All of this if for your own development as a leader for your benefit.
  - a. You are encouraged to share this with your congregation as you see fit

### **How will the Congregation participate?**

The FCTE Participant will incur expenses for times of retreat, fellowship, and learning. These expenses will need to be covered by the FCTE participant's congregation, as per their letter of call. These enrichment activities are crucial in the formation of rostered ministers who join our roster. The expectation is that the congregation supports their rostered minister with the expenses needed to cover these events and time dedicated to this work IN ADDITION TO their scheduled vacation time. In this profession, we highly value the work we do to help our ministers to equip, empower, and engage the people of their congregations and communities.

The congregation's members are willing to participate in reflective exercises helpful to the FCTE participant's personal assessments and development.

**CONFIDENTIALITY DISLCAIMER:**

*Please know that all information shared between the FCTE Mentor and FCTE Participant is to remain confidential, even to the bishop and the synod staff. We wish for you to build your relationship on trust. The only exception to this confidentiality is if the participant expresses the intent to harm themselves or others. In this case, the mentor will be required to report this expression of harm to the bishop of the Southeastern Synod.*

For more information or questions or comments, please contact Pr. Michael Jannett, Assistant to the Bishop for Formation and Communication – [mjannett@elca-ses.org](mailto:mjannett@elca-ses.org) – 615-617-9697 (Cell)



**SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD**  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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