

# Report to the ELCA Southeastern Synod Council Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta

January 2020

TEEM is one of Four Focused Areas of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA). In 2013 LTCA with Synod Council approval formed a partnership with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary to bring a TEEM program to Southeastern Synod.

The **Theological Education for Emerging Ministries** (TEEM) certificate program is a non-residential and contextual-educational aimed at preparing women and men for ordained ministry [ELCA Constitution 7.31.14] in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church USA. Students study at home with local pastors/mentors, while doing the ministry in a congregation; they meet together three times a year with their professors, and weekly with their local academic mentors. Four ELCA bishops received their theological education through TEEM programs.

## **What are Emerging ministries?**

These are ministries are word and sacrament communities that meet one or more of the following criteria according to the ELCA candidacy manual.

- ethnic-specific, multicultural, or recent immigrant ministries,
- small membership rural or urban congregations where a synod bishop has had difficulty identifying and placing a candidate for call,
- new mission starts authorized through normal ELCA processes,
- redevelopment ministries authorized through normal ELCA processes, and
- ministries with people who are differently abled.

TEEM had been training pastors for over 25 years and the PLTS-Luther program has approximately 250 graduates from the program.

The program is now offered in several locations: in collaboration with Southeastern Synod and the Lutheran Theological Center Atlanta in Atlanta, GA; in Indianapolis, IN in collaboration with Indiana Kentucky Synod; and in Portland, OR in partnership with Oregon Synod leaders and local pastors and scholars. Students in Southeastern Synod may be taught by local pastors, scholars from the Atlanta Theological Association which includes the Interdenominational Theological Center and Candler as well as regular faculty from PLTS and Luther Seminary.

The curriculum of this program generally consists of 16 courses taught primarily by PLTS and Luther faculty, 4 workshops led by churchwide specialists, plus internship and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

The TEEM program is not an academic degree program; however all courses are taught at the master's degree level, and grades are awarded for the courses. Typically sixteen courses and four workshops are required and it takes about 4 years to complete the program. All steps of the ELCA candidacy process must be completed: Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval by every candidate graduating from the TEEM program [ELCA candidacy manual ].

## **TEEM Program Participants Status**

**Graduates of TEEM**

**6**

<b>TEEM Candidates approved for ordination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TEEM Candidates, currently enrolled</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TEEM Students who withdrew from the program</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

*The following profiles of Southeastern Synod TEEM participants are offered to provide a picture of the program.*

**Pastor Debra (DJ) Jimenez** came to the TEEM program from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Johns Creek, GA where she was a faithful and active member for 12 years, She was a lay minister for contemporary worship services, she assisted in baptisms and funerals and occasionally preached. Pastor DJ led efforts to eradicate Human Trafficking in Metro Atlanta and advocate for its victims. She led community Bible studies and taught Sunday school for kindergarten and first graders. Debra, a grandmother, previously worked in the business world as a Director of Human Relation, and as a manager of Environmental Operations. Pastor Jimenez took her TEEM classes at PLTS, Luther and LTCA. She was ordained in 2017 and called to the Rocky Mountain Synod to serve as pastor at Trinity LC in Hobbs, NM a diverse congregation.

**Clarissa Dias**

*Currently works full time as a medical specialist-insurance investigator, and holds a Bachelor’s degree in the Biological Sciences. She was recently appointed Synod Authorized Minister at Martin Luther LC in Mobile, AL. Minister Dias enjoys support from congregations on the Gulf Coast, as she manages her time as a single mother, as a SAM, and as a TEEM candidate. She is an excellent preacher and expects to be approved by the candidacy committee in April, 2020 in time for the PLTS graduation in May. Clarissa especially enjoys working with young people who are excited about working in their congregation. Clarissa classes have been taken at PLTS, Luther and Wartburg.*

**Mardy Ringer**

*Studied music and business as an undergraduate. He is an independent producer for several radio stations in Metro Atlanta. Mardy is the Synod Authorized Minister at St. Mark LC in East Point, GA. He is moving towards endorsement, as he completes the CPE requirement for candidacy. He describes his love of ministry at St. Mark where he appreciates its members who are “steeped” in their faith, but open to “Out-of-the box” approaches to worship and telling their stories to neighbors.*

**Need for TEEM Program in Southeastern Synod**

In 2012 Bishop Gordy asked that a TEEM program be developed for the synod to support leadership in congregations that may not have the ability to call a pastor. An agreement between Southeastern Synod-Lutheran Theological Center, Atlanta and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS)-California Lutheran University was entered into in 2013 following a consultation involving Southeastern Synod, LTCA, PLTS and the churchwide organization. All parties were in agreement with the partnership whose terms were detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU was approved in 2013 with classes for SE synod students starting in October 2013.

## **A new Consortium of Faculty and a new Cohort of Students**

An active collaboration of PLTS and Luther Seminary has proved to be very effective and significant in TEEM. LTCA's collaboration with PLTS, now, makes it possible to expand to an array of faculty from the Interdenominational Theological Center-PLTS – Graduate Theological Union and California Lutheran University- Luther Seminary, other seminaries in Atlanta, as well as the Churchwide staff. Similarly, students who are predominantly from the US southeastern tier (Region 9) context, including black and white as well as new ethnic leaders such as Asian American, Hispanic, African National, and Caribbean ethnicities will make this pedagogy very dynamic and relevant.

## **A New Consortium of Faculties**

The active collaboration of PLTS and Luther Seminary has proved to be very effective and significant in TEEM. Indeed the TEEM program was developed based on research done at the two seminaries and was subsequently funded by the Lilly Foundation and the predecessors of Thrivent. LTCA's collaboration with PLTS, now, makes it possible to expand to an array of faculty from ITC, PLTS – Graduate Theological Union, and

California Lutheran University- Luther Seminary, other seminaries in Atlanta, as well as the Churchwide staff. Recently Indiana Kentucky Synod, and the Oregon Synod joined the collaboration. Similarly, students who are predominantly from the US southeastern tier ( Region 9) context, including black and white as well as new ethnic leaders such as Asian American, Hispanic, African National, and Caribbean ethnicities will make this pedagogy very dynamic and relevant.

## **Major Goal of the PLTS| LTCA Memorandum of Understanding**

- During the course of this agreement, around 15 leaders will be identified and immersed in the TEEM program.

*Starting in October 2013, and until December 31, 2019, twenty five (25) potential leaders have been identified and associated with TEEM. These leaders are from Southeastern Synod with the exception of 5 students.*

Southeastern Synod: 20      South Carolina Synod: 2    Nebraska Synod: 1  
Northeast Ohio Synod 2

Southeastern Synod, continues to experience influxes and migration of peoples. At the same time, some of the oldest ELCA congregations are found on the synod territory. Many of the congregations in the synod will be able to better welcome and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as new leaders are trained along with congregations themselves in cross-cultural, intercultural and multicultural encounters. The TEEM collaborations between candidates for ordained ministry and congregation will contribute to the viability of these congregations.

***God often calls us to things that we cannot accomplish alone.***

Pastor Everett Flanigan

