

### **Parish Ministry Associate Team (PMAT)**

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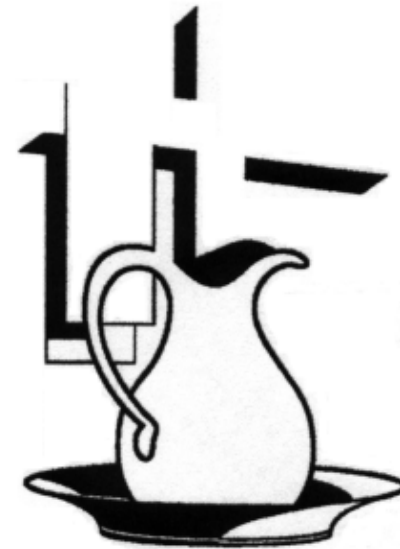
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PARISH  
MINISTRY  
ASSOCIATE PROGRAM

## **HANDBOOK**

**Central States Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

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Handbook

PMAP Student – a person who has enrolled in the PMAP and is taking courses to complete the program. Students taking courses, but not enrolled in the PMAP, are simply students.

Parish Ministry Associate (PMA) – a person who has completed the PMAP course of study. Completion is evidenced by a certificate of completion issued by Bethany House of Studies.

Supervising Pastor – a person who provides direct and comprehensive supervision for a PMAP Student or a Parish Ministry Associate as they continue their vocational journey.

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## **Guidelines for Pastors**

The primary purpose of Parish Ministry Associates is to enhance through their vocational calling in the world, the mission of the congregation. In this role, a PMA is accountable to and supervised by a pastor. PMAs and pastors should meet frequently.

## **Guidelines for PMAs and PMAP Students**

- The titles “Pastor,” “Associate in Ministry,” “Diaconal Minister,” and “Deaconess” are reserved for rostered personnel. Parish Ministry Associates are not rostered personnel.
- Clerical collars or clerical stoles are only worn by ordained clergy. Those are signs of the office of pastor and are worn only by those who are rostered pastors.
- Counseling is conducted by those who hold appropriate credentials.
- The Office of the Bishop retains authority in all cases to approve administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. A congregation and/or pastor must request approval for a PMA, a PMAP Student, or any other individual to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion to the Office of Bishop.

## **Terminology**

Parish Ministry Associate Program (PMAP) – a course of study for laity in the Central States Synod (CSS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Parish Ministry Associate Team (PMAT) – the policy-making body of the PMAP consisting of three PMAs, three supervising pastors, and a representative of the Office of the Bishop, all appointed by the Bishop.

The Parish Ministry Associate Program (PMAP) is an educational program sponsored and endorsed by the Central States Synod (CSS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). This course of study was initiated in 1993.

The focus of the PMAP is to deepen the laity’s understanding of their faith so they can minister more effectively with the gifts God has given them. God continues to use the gifts of Parish Ministry Associates (PMAs) in many ways. PMAs share in making known God’s love and hope for the world through activities such as congregational leadership, youth and family ministry, Christian education, spiritual care, supply preaching, churchwide and synodical expressions of the church, and service in their vocational calling.

After they successfully complete the requirements of the program, students receive a certificate of completion from the Bethany House of Studies. Following this recognition most will continue to serve in their home congregation. PMAs are not trained to take the place of ordained ministers nor are they placed on a synodical roster. However, on occasion, some may serve as synodically authorized pastoral leaders in another congregation at the request of the Bishop. A PMA may function in either a paid or unpaid position.

In support of the Parish Ministry Associate Program, Central States Bishop Gerald Mansholt writes: “Through the Parish Ministry Associate Program, the Central States Synod is providing a means for the growth and extension of the Church’s mission in the world. Major demographic shifts, as well as the challenges of a changing world, demand new models for ministries. We are blessed with many individuals with gifts and passions that can serve the Church well in making these new models alive and viable. Through PMAs, the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to be proclaimed through traditional as well as new ministry models.”

In order to provide continuity, the PMAP will be administered through its regional coordinators in collaboration with the Bethany House of Studies. Policies for the PMAP are set by the Parish Ministry Associate Team (PMAT). This team, appointed by the Bishop, consists of three PMAs, three supervising pastors, and a representative of the Office of the Bishop.

Governance for the Bethany House of Studies is provided by a five-member board appointed by the Bishop. This board functions in accordance with the covenant established with the Bethany House of Studies and the Central States Synod. The Bethany House of Studies is charged with the responsibility to develop curriculum and offer specific courses consistent with the prescribed PMAP course of study.

### **What is a Parish Ministry Associate?**

A Parish Ministry Associate (PMA):

- Is a lay person.
- Is an active member of a congregation in the Central States Synod of the ELCA.
- Has completed a prescribed course of study through the Bethany House of Studies.
- Is supervised by a synodically authorized pastor.

### **What Steps Are Needed to Become a PMA?**

1. A pastor and/or a congregation may identify and encourage an individual to consider entering the PMAP course of study; an individual may also indicate interest in the PMAP to his/her pastor and congregation council.
2. The pastor and congregation council will evaluate the individual's spiritual maturity, leadership skills, and willingness to learn and serve. The pastor's and the

settings. Remotely located individual students may take courses by distance learning through the Bethany House of Studies or under the direction of a mentor or supervising pastor.

The Parish Ministry Associate Program will be administered through its regional coordinators in collaboration with the Bethany House of Studies. It is the responsibility of the person who wishes to enroll in the Parish Ministry Associate Program to discuss this matter with his/her pastor and congregation council, complete the enrollment form, and forward the finished enrollment form to Bethany House of Studies with a copy to the appropriate PMA Coordinator.

### **Guidelines for Congregations**

Pastors and/or a congregation may identify and encourage individuals to consider entering the PMAP course of study. The focus of this program is to deepen students' understanding of their faith so they can serve more effectively with the gifts God has given them.

Parish Ministry Associates are also accountable to the congregation(s) in which they serve. For this reason, congregations are required to endorse those who wish to enroll in the Parish Ministry Associate Program (PMAP). In considering the whether to endorse an individual for enrollment in the PMAP, the congregation council should evaluate the individual's spiritual maturity, leadership potential, and willingness to learn and serve. The congregation's endorsement of the individual should reflect great care in its deliberation. This endorsement will be accomplished by a vote of the congregation council.

Congregation councils are also required to approved the *Annual Report of Parish Ministry Associate* after consultation with the PMA and pastor.

- As a synodically authorized pastoral leader. (*One serves as an authorized pastoral leader at the discretion and invitation of the CSS Bishop.*)

### **Supervision and Accountability**

A PMA is expected to attend the annual PMA Convocation and to complete continuing education annually. This may include coursework and/or attendance at seminars, conferences, etc., including the Bishop's Convocation. The PMA is supervised by a synodically authorized pastor and is accountable to the pastor and congregation/agency/institution in which he/she serves. Regular conversations should be held among the three.

In January of each year, the PMA must complete and send to the Bethany House of Studies the *Annual Report of Parish Ministry Associate*. (A copy should also be sent the student's PMA Coordinator.) This report must be approved by the PMA's supervising pastor(s) and congregation/agency/institution in which he/she serves *after consultation with both*. Only those who have submitted this report will be included on the CSS list of PMAs.

### **General Guidelines**

#### **Guidelines for individuals wishing to enroll in the Parish Ministry Associate Program**

The Parish Ministry Associate Program involves a course of study that takes place over a three- to six-year period. The curriculum entails the completion of nine courses, which consists of seven required and two elective. All financial obligations for these courses are the responsibility of the student; however, some congregations assist with these expenses. Teaching sites will be located at logical geographic

congregation council's endorsements of the individual should reflect great care in this evaluation.

3. The Enrollment Form is completed and sent to the Bethany House of Studies with a copy to the appropriate PMA Coordinator. (It is the responsibility of the individual to make sure this is done.)
4. Upon receipt of the Enrollment Form by the Bethany House of Studies, the individual is a PMA Student.
5. The PMA student completes the prescribed course of study under the direction of the his/her pastor and the Bethany House of Studies. While it is expected that a PMA student will attend all PMA Convocations, attendance at one PMA Convocation is also required as part of the PMA.
6. A certificate of PMA course completion is received from The Bethany House of Studies. The PMA Student is now a PMA. A rite of recognition may be celebrated by the congregation,

### **What is the Prescribed Course of Study?**

The course of study takes place over three to six years; the curriculum entails the completion of nine courses, which consists of seven required courses and two elective courses. All financial obligations for these courses are the responsibility of the student; however, some congregations help with these expenses. Most courses offered through Bethany House of Studies utilize resources from Select Multimedia. Elective courses not taken through the Bethany House of Studies are submitted for approval to the Bethany House of Studies.

In addition, anyone may participate in and complete the "prescribed" course of study or any component thereof without being designated as a PMA Student.

## Required Courses:

### Old Testament

(SELECT: *Introduction to the Old Testament*)

### New Testament

(SELECT: *Introduction to the New Testament*)

### Lutheran Confessions

(SELECT: *Getting Down to Basics: Augsburg Confession & Small Catechism*)

### Christian Ethics

(SELECT: *Ethics from a Lutheran Perspective*)

### Spiritual Care

### Lutheran Worship

(SELECT: *Evangelism and Lutheran Worship*)

### Preaching

(SELECT: *Sent to Preach*)

## Elective courses may be selected from areas such as:

### Christian Education

### Youth Ministry

### Worship and Music Leadership

### Church Administration

A ten-page reflection paper which shows integration of the material into the ministry objective of the participant is required in order to receive credit for each course. Each of the required courses will be offered over a three-year period. However, specific meeting places and schedules will vary according to identified facilitators and participants. Teaching sites will be located at logical geographic settings. Remotely located individual students may take courses under the direction of a mentor or supervising pastor.

Cost: For those in the PMAP, the course fee for each Bethany House of Studies sponsored course is \$150. Books and travel expenses are extra. Courses may also be taken directly through Select Multimedia or other *approved* educational programs. Expenditures for these programs are also paid by the student.

Course formats may include:

- Bethany House of Studies course in a group setting with an assigned facilitator.
- Bethany House of Studies guided distance learning course with an assigned facilitator.
- Select Multimedia course in a group setting with an assigned facilitator.
- Select Multimedia internet course with a Select Multimedia facilitator.
- Select Multimedia course by independent study.

## PMAP Student

### Supervision and Accountability

The PMAP Student is supervised by his/her pastor and is accountable to his/her pastor and congregation. Regular conversations should be held among the three.

In January of each year, the PMAP Student must complete and send to the Bethany House of Studies the *Annual Report of PMAP Student*. (A copy should also be sent the student's PMA Coordinator.) This report must be approved by the student's pastor and congregation council *after consultation with both*.

## Parish Ministry Associate

### Ways a PMA May Serve

- Within his/her own congregation.
- At another congregation, institution, or agency, or a synodical team or committee.