



Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

FIRST CALL ROSTERED MINISTERS 2019-2020 MINISTRY COVENANT

*“Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)
From the Service of Ordination (ELW)*

Part of being trustworthy servants includes being healthy leaders who are diligent in our study of the holy scriptures, faithful in our use of the means of grace, and preachers and teachers in accordance with the creeds and confessions of the Lutheran faith tradition. First Call Theological Education (FCTE) seeks to strengthen and support newly rostered ministers in these ordination vows, in their first three years of public ministry.

In the Virginia Synod, First Call Theological Education is a partnership between the Virginia Synod ELCA, the congregation, the first-call rostered minister, and a mentoring minister. An effective first call congregation serves to welcome, support, and grow with the newly rostered minister. First call ministers are expected to participate in 50 hours of continuing education for each of their first three years of ministry. Approximately 25 hours will be offered by the VA Synod, and 25 hours are to be chosen by each minister in areas that will benefit both the congregation/calling body and the minister. Congregations are expected to provide continuing education time and funds for required FCTE events and gatherings. Specifics on those gatherings are included below.

Another key part of FCTE is a covenantal mentoring relationship between a first call minister and a mentoring ministry partner. The first call minister and their ministry partner should meet regularly for prayer, support, and mutual consultation and conversation.

This FCTE covenant involves all four partners in FCTE in the Virginia Synod. The first call minister should review this covenant with their congregation council to determine key ministry emphases for the coming year. Together, the ministry partners are also asked to review the information below. All three – first call minister, ministry partner, and congregation – work together to create the covenant for your work together as God’s servants and God’s people and should sign the covenant, once it is completed. Please send a copy of the completed covenant to Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick (bayerderrick@vasynod.org) within 4 weeks of receiving it. Blessings on your ministry with God’s people!

Signatures:

First Call Minister: _____

Ministry Mentor: _____

Congregation/Parish Council President: _____

First Call Theological Education First Call Ministry Covenant – with Ministry Site

First Call Minister and Congregation/Ministry Site:

Serving as a ministry site for a First Call Minister brings with it joys and expectations. First call congregations offer welcome and support for this new minister in God's church. Congregations should recognize and communicate the strengths and gifts of the worshipping community as well as the wider community. The new minister can then engage in the nurture and enhancement of these assets. In this way, the minister and congregation together serve God's mission in your particular place. To that end, the minister and congregation council should walk through this covenant document together and should identify ministry emphases together. First call ministers should remember these emphases when crafting their continuing education and should share with the congregation, throughout the year, what they are learning in continuing education.

The ministry emphases that the first call congregation council and the first call rostered minister have identified which most need attention in the coming year are:

First Call Theological Education 2019-2020
Continuing Education
(50 hours/year total)

Continuing education is a gift! And it should be fun! Continuing education frees you to grow, ponder, and learn. Continued growth enables rostered ministers to serve in response to the needs of the church, especially in an ever-changing culture. Both first call ministers and their ministry sites will benefit from continuing education. Again, continuing ed is a gift and not a guilt.

First Call Theological Education splits continuing education between synod offered education opportunities (25 hours/year) and those opportunities structured by the first call minister (25 hours/year).

1. **ALL** first call ministers are expected to attend ALL synod offered continuing education, as listed below. Doing so fulfills the 25 hours of continuing ed expected.
2. First call ministers are encouraged to structure the remaining 25 hours/year of continuing ed around those events/opportunities/readings that best serve the minister and their congregation. Some suggestions are listed below.

Part 1: Continuing Education offered by the Virginia Synod

Schedule of Events 2019-2020

*(*These are events expected for all First Call Ministers*)*
25 Hours of Synodically Organized Continuing Education

Synod Orientation: October 21, 2019 (first year of ministry) [3 hours CE]

Virginia Beach, in connection with the Gathering of the Ministerium (see below). All rostered ministers new to the Virginia Synod gather with Synod staff for welcome and introductions, devotions, visioning, and conversations. The Virginia Synod pays for this event.

Gathering of the Ministerium: October 21-23, 2019 (first three years of ministry) [10 hours CE]

Virginia Beach. Rostered ministers gather to meet, reconnect, worship, relax, learn, sing, pray and play together. The congregation is expected to pay for this event.

First Call Retreat: February 3-4, 2020 (first three years of ministry) [9 hours CE]

Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond. Gather with other first call colleagues and ministry partners from across the Virginia Synod for worship, fellowship, and sharing as we reflect on our own spiritual journey. The congregation is expected to pay for this event.

See other VA Synod Continuing Education offerings included in the 2019 Rostered Minister Continuing Ed Report.

Part 2: Continuing Education – structured by the First Call Minister

First Call Theological Education 2019-2020

First Call Minister – Continuing Education

25 Hours of Continuing Education Total

First Call Ministry Partnership Mentoring: variable schedule, at least 12 hours/year

ALL first call ministers are assigned a ministry partner/mentor by the Office of the Bishop. The first-call minister and the ministry partner should meet regularly for prayer, support, and mutual consultation and conversation.

- **Plan for regular meetings (at least monthly):**
- **Reflection (for those in years 2 and 3):** What have you learned from your relationship with your ministry partner *during this past year/past months?*

Suggestions for Continuing Education:

ELECTIVE POSSIBILITIES: *ALL First call ministers are expected to attend at least ONE non-synodically offered continuing education event/offering each year.* You are encouraged to attend more, as resources allow.

- Continuing education events may be offered by seminaries, universities, the ELCA, other denominations, etc.
- Recommendations from colleagues, the Office of the Bishop, etc.
- The Virginia Synod ACTS Program (Ambassadors Community for Theological Study) is an excellent source of continuing education.
- Serving as a small group leader during synod youth events is also a great option.

STRUCTURED READING: Intentional reading (not sermon or class preparation.)

PERSONAL REFLECTION/RETREAT: may include prayer, meditation, walking a labyrinth, spiritual direction, the Lectio Divina, etc.

Please submit a copy of this covenant to Kelly Bayer Derrick, no later than December 15, 2019

bayerderrick@vasynod.org

(Please retitling your covenant with your last name appearing first. Thank you!)