

## **Job Description of a Mentor Pastor for a Synod Authorized Minister**

### **Context:**

Church attendance in North America and Western Europe has been declining for over 50 years. There is a parallel, if even steeper, decline of people responding to a call to serve in ordained word and sacrament ministry. A trend line that long points to something at work far beyond the secularization of society at large or the ineffectiveness of churches to engage people. God is up to something, making the church smaller, more focused, closer to the margins of society and more dependent upon the leadership of the laity. The emerging church of the 21st century looks a lot more like the church of first, second and third centuries than it does the churches of the intervening centuries when Christianity enjoyed a privileged place in western societies. Our clergy-centric model for providing word and sacrament ministry and leadership no longer works. What's needed now is a return to a New Testament model in which lay leaders function as servants of the gospel ("διάκονος" or "deacons" in the New Testament) under the leadership of an ordained elder/pastor (called an "ἐπίσκοπος" or overseer). In New Testament communities, deacons presided at the lord's supper, preached the gospel, and ministered to small house churches under oversight of a trained, experienced, ordained pastor or overseer from the nearby area or region. In our day the functional equivalent of a New Testament "deacon" is a "Synod Authorized Minister," and the functional equivalent of an overseer is a nearby seminary trained pastor. This job description is for those seminary-trained pastors who will oversee the work of a Synod Authorized Minister. To those overseers we are giving the title, "Mentor Pastor."

### **Objective of the Mentor Pastor:**

The objective of the Mentor Pastor is to ensure the integrity of the Lutheran church's unique expression of the Gospel by providing hands-on training, accompaniment, and oversight of the word and sacrament ministry being carried out by the Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) or Ministers to whom that pastor has been assigned as a mentor.

### **Some Considerations:**

Each SAM's need of oversight will vary based on the SAM's experience, prior education, etc. The Mentor and SAM should work together to determine the level of mentorship that is appropriate for the SAM's background and for the context in which they are serving. The following is offered as a general guideline only, recognizing that each person's prior experience and education is unique.

NOTE: In those situations where a Mentor has multiple SAMs assigned to them, each of these engagements could be accomplished in a group setting either in person or virtually as specified below.

### **Mentorship of a new SAM with 0 to under 2 years prior experience or training:**

- Ensure that the SAM can lead worship using the form of worship or liturgy used in their ministry context. Help the SAM understand the basic theological underpinnings of the various parts of the liturgy. This will require in-person, hands-on training.
- Ensure that the SAM can preside at the Lord's Supper. This will require in-person, hands-on training.
- Ensure that the SAM can preach the Gospel on the assigned text. This can be done using video conferencing tools or in person in one or more of the following ways:
  - Offer the SAM a completed sermon with suggestions for personalizing it.
  - Review a sermon written by the SAM before the sermon is preached.
  - Provide the SAM with sermon ideas, a sermon starter or lectionary notes in advance and review the completed sermon before it is preached.
  - The Mentor may discover other ways that this could be accomplished.
- Ensure that the SAM can conduct a pastoral visit that includes Holy Communion. This could be accomplished in person, with the Mentor and SAM role-playing the different roles or the SAM could accompany the Mentor on a visit and vice versa.
- Ensure that the SAM can conduct a funeral through in-person training or accompaniment. Review the first few funeral sermons as needed.
- Ensure that the SAM can conduct other pastoral acts as the need arises such as Baptisms, Weddings, etc.
- *Ensure that the SAM is equipped for educational ministry in the form of Bible studies and youth ministry. See to it that the SAM is aware of materials that can be used for adult and youth studies such as confirmation, first communion, new member's classes etc.*
- *Ensure that the SAM is prepared for low and high demand counseling situations. Low demand might be considered the ordinary day to day sharing of joys and sorrows with parishioners. These would include grief situations, as well as counseling for weddings, baptisms, etc. There should also be some preparation for situations that might require more expertise than the SAM might possess. Situations such as depression, mental illness, marriage and family counseling etc. The SAM should know when to refer parishioners for more extensive counseling.*
- As the SAM grows in competency and experience, expand mentorship to other aspects of ministry and parish leadership as the need arises. This can be accomplished virtually or in-person as appropriate to the specific situation.
- Once a year work with the SAMs congregation council and/or pastoral supervisor to conduct an annual review. Relate to the SAM committee the results of the review along with any recommendations for further training, support etc.

**Mentorship of a Current SAM with over 2 to under 5 years of experience and the minimal required training:**

- Once a month, review the SAMs recent sermons and offer suggestions for future consideration and revision.
- Once a quarter, walk with the SAM through some aspect of pastoral ministry that either the SAM requests or the Mentor suggests based on feedback from the parish or other circumstances in the SAMs current ministry.
- Once a month, have an informal coaching/mentorship session to check-in on the SAMs overall well-being and to explore issues of parish leadership or challenges the SAM may be facing. This may be incorporated into the SAMs monthly sermon review.
- Provide mentorship as needed or requested by the SAM or by the supervising congregation council, leader, or pastor.
- Once a year work with the SAM's congregation council and/or pastoral supervisor to conduct an annual review. Relate to the SAM committee the results of the review along with any recommendations for further training, support etc.

**Mentorship of a SAM with over 5 years of experience and somewhat more than the minimal required training:**

- Once a quarter, have an informal coaching/mentorship session to check-in on the SAMs overall well-being and to explore issues of parish leadership or challenges the SAM may be facing.
- Provide mentorship as needed or requested by the SAM or by the supervising congregation council, leader, or pastor.
- Once a year work with the SAMs congregation council and/or pastoral supervisor to conduct an annual review. Relate to the SAM committee the results of the review along with any recommendations for further training, support etc.

**Additional Requirements of Mentors:**

- Attend a semi-annual zoom check-in for Mentors.
- Attend an annual gathering of Mentors and SAMs.

**Compensation of Mentors:**

Mentors are to be compensated through a contractual agreement between either the congregation being served by the SAM. The compensation will vary based on each unique context and relationship. As a general guideline, compensation plans should be based on a guideline of \$75/hour plus expenses for the Mentor's time for all in-person or online meetings as well as for preparation time for any materials or resources being created by the Mentor for use with or by the SAM. The following is a general guideline for mentorship of SAMs who are working every week (Sunday) or nearly every week. In situations where a Mentor is mentoring multiple SAMs, a contract should be negotiated that takes into consideration the additional administrative time required and whether some of the mentorship can be accomplished in group settings. It is anticipated that the additional time and management required to mentor

multiple SAMs would amount to only a slight reduction of the monthly cost and a sharing of the additional annual costs.

- **For Mentorship of SAMs 0 to under 2 years prior experience:**  
\$3,600 mentor fees for year 1 & 2 (\$75 a session x 48)
- **For Mentorship of SAMs with over two years and under 5 years prior experience:**  
\$450 (\$75 x 6 sessions)
- **For Mentorship of SAMs with over 5 years prior experience:**  
Budget as needed (negotiate with SAM, mentor and church/parish council)