

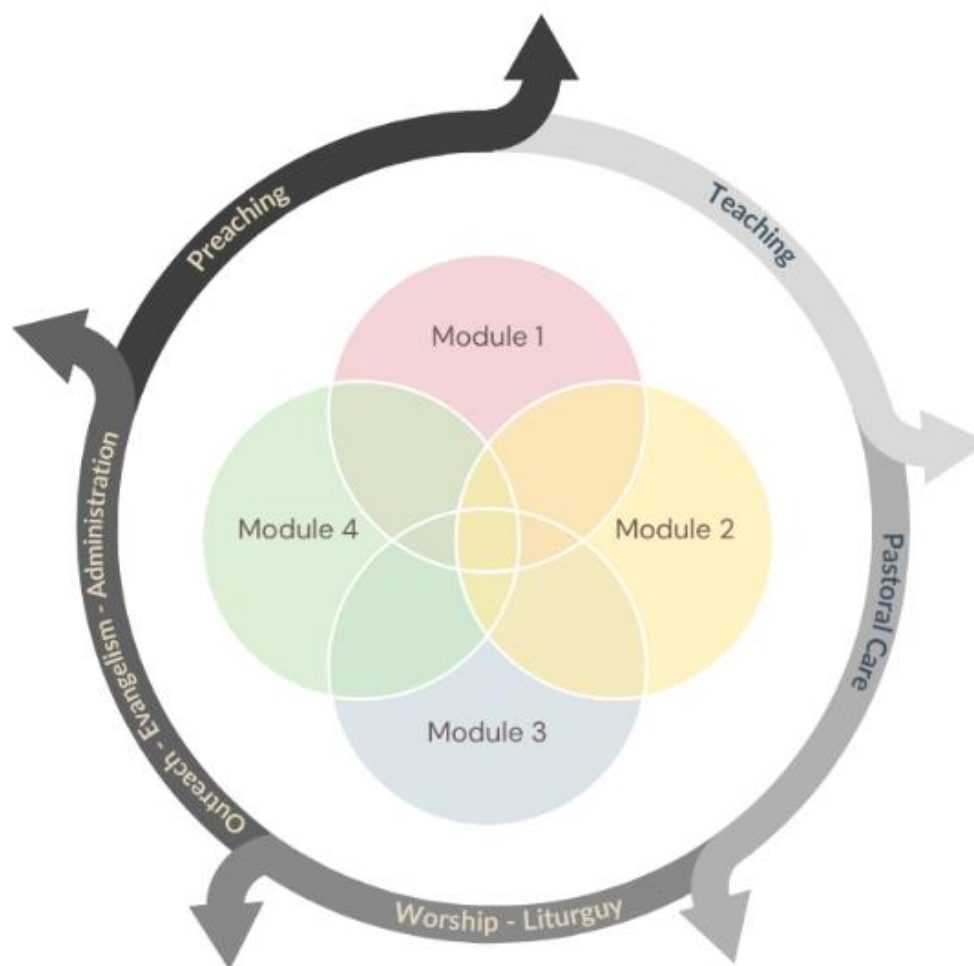


Lay Ministry Formation Orientation Handout

LMF/SALMs Overview

Foundations: The four core dimensions of the Lay Ministry Formation program in 4 Modules: (1) The God of God's Mission, (2) The Church of God's Mission, (3) Horizons of God's Mission, and (4) Discerning God's Mission-Communal Spiritual Leadership. We use an interdisciplinary, integrative approach to these foundations courses by putting the classic approaches to theological education (Systematic Theology, Bible (OT/NT), Lutheran Confessions/History) in conversation with person's lived experience, sense of calling, and contextual realities. Each module includes 5 sessions (including annual LiVE retreats and courses).

Skill-Based Learning: preaching, teaching, faith formation, pastoral care/visitation, planning and leading worship, sacraments, Lutheran Confessions, Christian discipleship, evangelism and mission, and administration. Aspects of each of these are also introduced in the Foundations modules. *The skills-based learning practicums are more fully and intentionally engaged in additional opportunities outside of the Foundations courses*



LMF/SALMs Design



Module 1: The God of God's Mission

Description: God's mission creates new life in the world in a variety of ways. In this first module participants are introduced to the importance of developing an awareness theology plays in our lives. We already hold various theologies, but are we aware of it, and the impact it has in how we show up in the world? The module examines Christian theologies from biblical, historical and contextual perspectives and relate Christian theology (living with God) to doing ministry in light of God's call on our lives as persons and communities of faith. **Guiding Question:** *What is God up to in Jesus? Why do we need a theory of what God is up to in Jesus?*

Objectives:

- To root our theologies in our lived experience we share, and discern our own experience of God in our personal and collective journeys
- To learn the configurations of the God-Church-World relationship that navigates our approaches to doing Christian theology,
- To experiment with practical approaches to doing theology rooted in our tradition, experience and local church contexts
- To practice articulating our own growing understandings of God in our contexts, given the introduction to new language and concepts in Module 1

Module 2: The Church of God's Mission

Description: The church's identity is formed in God's mission in the life of Christ at the leading of the Holy Spirit. Module 2 explores what it means to be the church in the Spirit's leadership where the Spirit forms persons and communities in faith, hope and love by its life of prayer, worship and Scripture reading, and its life in mutual consolation. In anticipation of Module 3, we also consider what a sending church means in its participation in God's mission in the world, and when creation becomes co-creators of life with God in the world.

Objectives:

- To explore the identity-purpose of the church in light of the Holy Spirit
- To understand and learn to practice how faith is formed through Spiritual practices (reading Scripture, Worship, prayer)
- To explore and practice various approaches to interpreting and engaging Scripture in context, and how the Spirit is up to something through it
- To understand and appreciate why and how engaging Scripture matters for forming Christian community
- To consider ways local churches discern God's preferred and promised future for your contexts



Module 3: Horizons of God's Mission

Description: God's mission creates new life in the world in a variety of ways. This new creation involves all of God's creation, including the church. Following 'Configurations of the God, Church, World Relationship' as introduced previously, Module 3 focuses on the third domain of "world", or horizons as we call it, and how cultural influences help and/or hinder our witness and participation in living well others in light of living well with God.

Objectives:

- To understand church as public and as learning to live well with others, including accompaniment and prophetic postures
- To explore the dimensions of cultural life that help-hinder the churches efforts at living well with others
- To introduce and reflect on how to discern God's preferred and promised mission in and with the world
- To consider and to experiment with instances of being a public church

Module 4: Discerning God's Mission (Communal Spiritual Leadership)

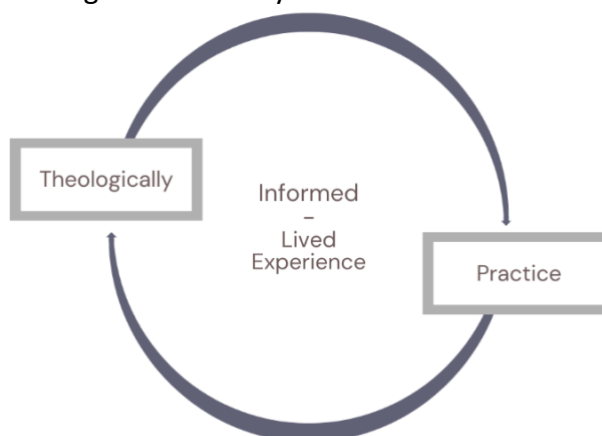
Description: Leadership in God's mission recognizes first and foremost that God's Spirit is leading before we ever arrive on the scene. **Discerning God's will together** is a **Christi-centered alternative to traditional decision-making** in church contexts. Instead of relying on adversarial debate, parliamentary procedure, or individual judgment and charisms alone, **discernment is guided by Christian spiritual practices**—prayer, scripture, shared history, listening, and community wisdom—to help the church *discover and join where the Spirit is leading*.

Objectives:

- To become aware of one's own leadership styles, approaches, and gifts.
- To imagine leadership as communal spiritual discernment, and more broadly conceived than merely the identification of individually received gifts
- To embrace leadership as a dynamic flow grounded in listening and attending
- To explore leadership as an integration of personal and communal engagement
- To rethink how change, conflict-dissent, and transformation come to communities
- To consider leadership as the forming of community and Christian community with others

Conversational Method:

Discerning our callings through Theologically informed practice of our lived experiences.





Approach: Learning as Conversation

It is doubt (so often experienced initially as weakness) that changes things. Life happens when the tectonic power of your speechless soul breaks through the dead habits of the mind. Doubt is nothing less than an opportunity to reenter the Present. --John Patrick Shanley, *Doubt: A Parable*

Conversation is a game with some hard rules: say only what you mean; say it as accurately as you can; listen to and respect what the other says, however different or other; be willing to correct or defend your opinions if challenged by the conversation partner; be willing to argue if necessary, to confront if demanded, to endure necessary conflict, to change your mind if the evidence suggests it.
--David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*

Conversation is the central mode of learning in this discernment journey. God is a conversation, and we are called into a conversation that has long been going in prior to our arrival. In that sense, we honor and recognize that God has already been up to many things in you and your life, and that you bring experience, wisdom and knowledge in your participation with this Conversation. In a time increasingly uncivil, and churches increasingly made up of individuals meeting private needs, trained persons must exceed the normal expectations of teaching institutions, church and society in their ability to engage with the other in this shared activity. Each of us will seek to speak in our own voice and listen with an attentiveness and openness to the other in a way that includes willingness to being changed by what one hears. This involves risking change in oneself and openness to new ways of thinking, while remaining committed to the values of this process. Ours is a collaborative rather than a competitive process, even when persons disagree with one another.

Our conversation is exploratory – a journey, not a destination – and seeks an inquiry open and without demanding “answers” that are necessarily “right,” but instead “possible.” We will work together to be open to the emergence of novelty within the conversation and ourselves. This involves entering the conversation with an air of expectancy and also open to leaving with continuing questions and doubts. As participants we welcome diverse backgrounds theologically, ethnically, and socially, and recognize the task before us is oriented to how we hold ourselves and others in a healthy balance of good-will and suspicion. This expectancy creates an openness to a new kind of future that we create and discern, and that seeks to remain faithful to the continuity of the past.

The conversation is semi-structured with readings, videos and prompts. It has purposeful continuity, not simply and casually declaring our views, but engaging others in their response to our views. The purpose here is to move the conversation forward, moving from where it has been and toward where it seems to be going, by contributing to the determination of where it goes. We are seeking freedom within our conversation like an improvisational musician who works within the limits of the instrument, the composition and explores the music in new ways.

This view of conversation, in light of the course on which we are about to embark, is one in which the activity of conversation is viewed as valuable in and of itself; it is how we



constitute a learning community among ourselves. You will do well in this conversational mode if you *seek to understand* as much as *to be understood*. We may come to some settled judgments along the way, some of which are surprising to us in terms of who we have been, but that is not the primary purpose of our activity. **We are always in conversation with God, one another, and others.** We seek to listen to one another by freeing others voices as they work toward understanding. In this way, we are companions in our learning!

Fostering a Networked Learning Community

To support you on your journey, we encourage three ways for you to foster a learning community:

Cohort Connections:

We trust you will find the cohort process a valuable way to grow into and to discern God's call on your life. Together we will share, pray, laugh and cry, and be in further conversation with one another about topics, and our various ministries/callings generally. We do hope you are encouraged by recognizing that you are not alone in this process unlearning and re-learning, and that learning with and from one another is an essential part of growing deeper as disciples in Christ and the Spirit. Formation and learning always happens in community.

Mentor-Companions

We encourage you to find a mentor-companion to journey with you during this time. *For those in the Synod-Authorized Lay Minister track this is a requirement.* The role of the Mentor-Companions includes being good listeners, accompanying you and your discerning sense of call. They will also be able to share with you from their experience how certain aspects of ministry play out for them practically, i.e. preaching, teaching, worship leadership, etc. You are welcome to meet once every other month for an hour, or however much time you need to ask questions and for this to be another learning partner for you in this ministry.

Congregational Learning Team (CLT):

One of the ways to engage this work is with a group of people in your congregation. Think of them as learning partners with you in this process. We invite you to choose 3-4 people from your faith community to form this Congregational Learning Team. This team meets a couple times during each of your modules. They will serve as conversation partners to journey with you as you engage course materials and can be of assistance for Portfolio Projects (see below).

Synod-Authorized Lay Ministers

Some in LMF are also on the track to be trained as Synod Authorized Lay Ministers (SALMs). For those persons, additional ministry preparation requirements are involved. LMF folks are always welcome to participate in these. This includes practical ministry skills such as preaching, teaching Scripture/faith formation, pastoral care/visitation, leading worship, sacraments, Lutheran Confessions, and Christian discipleship, evangelism and mission. To be sure, the four modules include the foundations that relate to all of these, but the practical courses will focus solely on ministerial skills that help prepare and give confidence for serving as a SALM.



*Intermittent Zoom Check-ins

We may meet up intermittently on zoom to keep on track of our shared work. We will decide together as a group when it is most convenient for us to meet up. One-on-one conversational check-ins are available as needed.

Online Learning Platform – Mighty Networks

In addition to retreats, and monthly online zoom conversations there will be course materials and online interactive opportunities found on our Mighty Networks Learning Management Systems (LMS) platform. You will need to join this network and request access to each of the corresponding modules. This will be the location of readings and videos, through pdfs and links, for sessions within each module, and where you will be invited to engage in “prompts and posts” with one another.

Portfolio Project (optional)

The Portfolio Project is an end-of-the-module project that brings synthesis to the subject matter explored. It involves a practical engagement of the material covered in cooperation with the Congregational Learning Team, a small, selective group of the participants choosing. We will introduce the details on this as we move through each of the modules.

*Configurations of the God-Church-World Relationship

Fig. 1: Church-centered

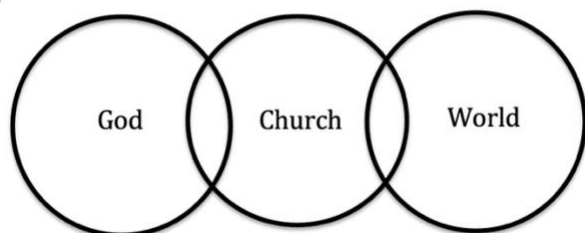


Fig. 2: God is Secondary to Church's Life in the World

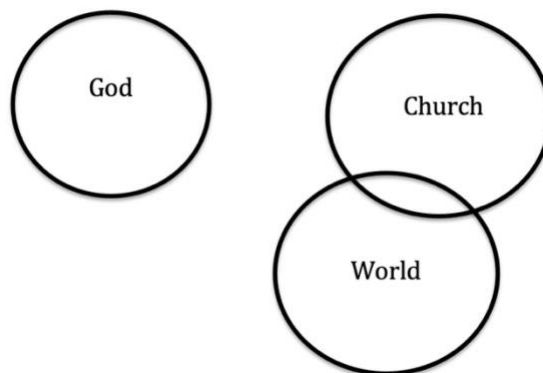


Fig. 3: Private - Isolationist

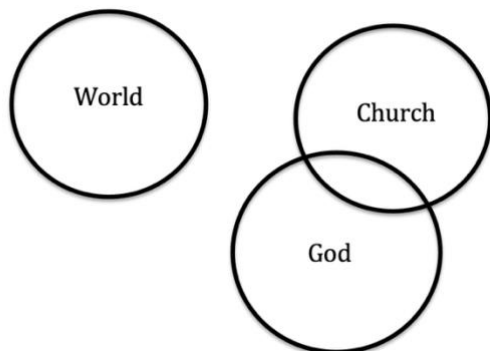


Fig. 4: Missional-Evangelical-Public Church

