



Field Education and Vicarage Manual

Biblical and Confessional Foundation

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.” (2 Timothy 4:1–4, RSV-IE)

“In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel. That is to say, it is not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ that God justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ’s sake. Gal. 3:14, ‘That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.” (Augsburg Confession, Art. V, Tappert).

Part I: Field Education (Pre-Vicarage Formation)

1. Purpose and Theological Rationale

Field Education is an essential component of the Pastoral Ministry Program at American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS). It serves as the student's initial, structured immersion into congregational life and pastoral practice, undertaken concurrently with academic coursework. Field Education is **formative rather than immersive**, providing guided exposure to the various dimensions of pastoral ministry while the student is still fundamentally a learner.

Theologically, Field Education is grounded in the Lutheran confession that the Holy Spirit gives faith and forms ministers through the means of grace, exercised within the Church (Augsburg Confession, Article V). Through supervised participation in congregational life, the student begins to internalize the habits, responsibilities, and spiritual posture proper to the Office of the Holy Ministry, particularly the calling of the pastor as *Seelsorger*—a caretaker of souls.

Field Education exists to foster ministerial identity, humility, teachability, and practical wisdom, while ensuring that students do not prematurely assume responsibilities proper only to the ordained office (Augsburg Confession, Article XIV).

2. Placement and Duration

Field Education is ordinarily completed over **six academic terms** (or their equivalent) while the student is enrolled in the Pastoral Ministry Program. It is normally carried out in a local congregation approved by ALTS, in consultation with the student's ecclesiastical authority and the Seminary Provost.

Field Education is:

- Part-time in nature
- Conducted concurrently with coursework
- Supervised by an ordained pastor approved by ALTS

Students are expected to remain in the same Field Education congregation for the duration of the program whenever possible, in order to cultivate continuity, accountability, and meaningful pastoral observation.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

A. The Field Education Student

The student enters Field Education as a learner under supervision. He is expected to:

- Maintain regular attendance and faithful participation in the worship and life of the congregation

- Approach all tasks with humility, diligence, and teachability
- Respect the authority and pastoral oversight of the Supervising Pastor
- Integrate academic learning with practical observation and reflection
- Maintain appropriate boundaries and confidentiality at all times
- Complete all required reports and evaluations in a timely manner

Students should ordinarily devote **3–5 hours per week** (including travel time) to Field Education activities.

B. The Supervising Pastor

The Supervising Pastor serves as mentor, teacher, and evaluator. He is responsible for:

- Approving and supervising all Field Education activities
- Gradually introducing the student to appropriate ministerial tasks
- Providing instruction, feedback, and theological reflection
- Modeling faithful pastoral ministry rooted in Word and Sacrament
- Ensuring that the student does not assume duties reserved for the ordained office
- Completing required evaluations and reports

The Supervising Pastor remains fully responsible for the doctrine, practice, and pastoral care of the congregation at all times.

4. Areas of Formation and Participation

Field Education is structured around progressive exposure to the following areas. The extent of participation in each area is determined by the Supervising Pastor, in light of the student's coursework, maturity, and demonstrated readiness.

A. Worship and Liturgy

Field Education introduces the student to the theology and practice of Lutheran worship as it is lived in the local congregation.

Permitted activities may include:

- Reading Holy Scripture in public worship
- Assisting in non-sacramental portions of the liturgy
- Observing the preparation and conduct of the Divine Service
- Learning the structure and theology of historic Lutheran liturgies

The student shall not:

- Pronounce Absolution
- Preside at Holy Baptism
- Speak the Words of Institution
- Consecrate the Sacrament of the Altar

The goal at this stage is **familiarity, reverence, and theological understanding**, not leadership.

B. Preaching

Students may not preach in Field Education until they have successfully completed **Preaching I**.

After completion of Preaching I:

- The student may preach **occasionally**, ordinarily no more than once every 6–8 weeks
- Every sermon must be reviewed and approved by the Supervising Pastor prior to delivery

After completion of **Preaching II**, preaching opportunities may increase modestly at the discretion of the Supervisor.

C. Visitation and Pastoral Care

Students may accompany the Supervising Pastor on pastoral visits, including:

- Hospital visits
- Shut-in visits
- Home visits
- Prospective member visits

Initially, the student observes silently. As competence grows, he may be invited to:

- Read Scripture
- Pray
- Engage in limited conversation under supervision

Emergency visits are undertaken only at the discretion of the Supervising Pastor.

D. Teaching and Catechesis

After completion of **Catechesis**, students may assist with or teach under supervision in:

- Catechism classes
- Bible studies
- Youth instruction
- Adult education

Continuity is encouraged. When possible, students should teach a class for a minimum of **four consecutive weeks**.

E. Administration and Record Keeping

Students should be introduced to the administrative life of the congregation, including:

- Church records (baptisms, communions, marriages)

- Meetings of congregational leadership
- Organizational structures and policies

The goal is **awareness and preparedness**, not administrative authority.

5. Restrictions on Ministerial Acts

In accordance with Lutheran confession and ALTS policy, Field Education students **shall not**:

- Administer the Sacraments
- Pronounce Absolution
- Solemnize marriages
- Conduct confirmations
- Wear vestments proper to the ordained office unless explicitly permitted for instructional purposes

All public ministry is exercised **only under supervision and by delegation**.

6. Evaluation and Reporting

A. Student Reports

At the conclusion of each term, the student shall submit a written reflection summarizing:

- Activities undertaken
- Growth observed
- Areas needing further formation

These reports are submitted to the Supervising Pastor and the Seminary.

B. Supervisor Reports

The Supervising Pastor shall provide periodic evaluations addressing:

- Faithfulness and teachability
- Integration of theology and practice
- Readiness for increased responsibility

These evaluations inform the Seminary's ongoing discernment regarding readiness for Vicarage.

7. Transition to Vicarage

Field Education prepares, but does not replace, the Vicarage. Completion of Field Education does not guarantee placement as a Vicar. Eligibility for Vicarage is determined by:

- Completion of required coursework
- Satisfactory Field Education evaluations
- Ecclesiastical approval

- Seminary discernment

Field Education concludes when the student is formally approved to enter Vicarage or completes the required terms.

Part II: Vicarage (Pastoral Internship)

1. Purpose and Theological Rationale

The Vicarage is the culminating phase of pastoral formation in the Pastoral Ministry Program at American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS). It is an **immersive, supervised pastoral internship** in which the seminarian serves full-time (or its approved equivalent) in a congregation while continuing advanced theological study.

Theologically, the Vicarage is grounded in the Church's confession that the Holy Spirit forms ministers through the Word, the Sacraments, and lived participation in the Church's pastoral life (Augsburg Confession, Article V). The Vicar does not yet hold the Office of the Holy Ministry, but he is intentionally formed toward it through structured practice, disciplined reflection, and pastoral oversight. The Vicarage exists to shape the man not merely as a functionary, but as a faithful *Seelsorger*—a shepherd who brings Christ's Word rightly to bear upon real people in real circumstances.

The Vicarage is therefore **neither employment nor mere observation**, but a year of ecclesial formation ordered toward readiness for ordination.

2. Eligibility and Admission to Vicarage

A student may be admitted to Vicarage only after:

- Completion of 18 courses in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program. Within the 18 courses, the Vicar must complete and pass these seven courses (including prerequisites):
 - Preaching I
 - Confessions I
 - Doctrine I
 - Catechesis, (including the ability to quote the entire Small Catechism).
 - Pastoral Theology and Life
 - Pastoral Care
- Successful completion of Field Education
- Demonstrated doctrinal soundness and pastoral maturity
- Ecclesiastical approval by the appropriate church authority
- Seminary approval by the President

Admission to Vicarage is not automatic and remains subject to ongoing evaluation.

3. Placement, Duration, and Status

The Vicarage is ordinarily:

- **One academic year full-time**, or its approved part-time equivalent
- Served in a congregation approved by ALTS
- Conducted under the supervision of an ordained pastor in good standing

During the Vicarage, the student holds the title **Vicar**. He is not ordained, does not hold the Office of the Holy Ministry, and serves only under supervision and delegation.

For legal and tax purposes, the Vicar is considered an **employee of the congregation**, not clergy.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

A. The Vicar

The Vicar is expected to:

- Serve faithfully and diligently in the congregation
- Submit to pastoral supervision and evaluation
- Integrate theology and practice in all aspects of ministry
- Maintain confidentiality and appropriate boundaries
- Cultivate a disciplined devotional life
- Care wisely for family life and personal health

The Vicar is a learner, not a replacement pastor.

B. The Supervising Pastor

The Supervising Pastor bears primary responsibility for the Vicar's formation and remains fully responsible for the congregation's doctrine and practice. He shall:

- Mentor and supervise the Vicar's work
- Provide regular instruction and feedback
- Review and approve sermons, teaching, and worship leadership
- Teach the Vicar **all liturgies used by the congregation, as well as those that may appropriately be used**, including seasonal variations, occasional offices, and pastoral adaptations
- Conduct formal evaluations at designated intervals

The Supervising Pastor is not merely an administrator, but a teacher of pastoral wisdom.

5. Core Areas of Formation

The Vicarage intentionally develops competence in the following areas. Growth in each area is evaluated according to the ALTS Vicarage Assessment Rubric.

A. Worship and Liturgical Leadership

The Vicar shall grow in theological understanding and practical leadership of Lutheran worship.

Formation includes:

- Planning and leading services under supervision
- Learning the theology, structure, and rubrics of historic Lutheran liturgies
- Instruction in multiple musical and ceremonial settings
- Seasonal and occasional services (Advent, Lent, funerals, weddings, festivals)

Restrictions: The Vicar shall not:

- Pronounce Absolution
- Preside at Holy Baptism
- Speak the Words of Institution
- Consecrate the Sacrament of the Altar

The Supervisor may permit the Vicar to assist in distribution of the Sacrament at his discretion.

Rubric Alignment: Worship Leadership

B. Preaching

Preaching is central to the Vicarage.

Expectations:

- Preach a minimum of **12 sermons** during the Vicarage
- Preach at least **one seasonal service** (Advent or Lent)
- Maximum of **three sermons per month** in regular services
- All sermons reviewed and discussed with the Supervising Pastor

The Vicar shall demonstrate growth in:

- Faithful exegesis
- Law/Gospel distinction
- Christ-centered proclamation
- Pastoral application

Rubric Alignment: Exegetical Proficiency; Doctrinal Soundness; Preaching

C. Teaching and Catechesis

The Vicar shall plan, teach, and evaluate instruction across age groups.

Minimum expectations:

- Teach **10 confirmation classes**
- Plan and teach **one four-week Bible study**
- Participate in new member instruction

Rubric Alignment: Teaching & Catechesis; Historical Understanding

D. Visitation and Pastoral Care (*Seelsorge*)

The Vicar shall grow in pastoral presence and theological care.

Benchmarks:

- Conduct at least **six pastoral visitations**, with multiple visits to the same individual or family
- Demonstrate empathy, prayerfulness, and theological clarity
- Write case reflections as directed

Rubric Alignment: Pastoral Competence as Seelsorger; Visitation & Pastoral Care

E. Administration and Leadership

The Vicar shall be exposed to the realities of parish administration.

Benchmarks:

- Attend council and committee meetings as appropriate
- Observe budgeting, record-keeping, and policy implementation
- Plan and execute **one ministry group event**

Rubric Alignment: Administration & Leadership; Ministerial Integration

F. Youth and Family Ministry

The Vicar shall engage youth ministry with care, clarity, and firm boundaries.

Benchmarks:

- Participate in youth instruction or activities
- Demonstrate appropriate boundaries and communication

Rubric Alignment: Youth & Family Ministry

6. Personal and Spiritual Formation

The Vicarage attends not only to skills, but to the man himself.

Expectations include:

- A disciplined devotional life, including daily prayer and bible reading.

- Growth in pastoral identity
- Wise management of family and ministry demands
- Humility, teachability, and collaboration

Rubric Alignment: Spiritual & Personal Formation

7. Evaluation and Assessment

Formal evaluations are conducted at:

- **4 months**
- **8 months**
- **Final evaluation**

Each evaluation includes:

- Supervisor assessment
- Vicar self-assessment
- Joint discussion

Evaluations follow the **ALTS Vicarage Assessment Rubric** and are submitted to the Seminary.

8. Benchmarks Summary (Minimum Expectations)

During the Vicarage, the Vicar shall ordinarily:

- Preach **12 sermons**
- Preach **one seasonal service**
- Plan **12 worship services**
- Plan **one four-week sermon series**
- Conduct **six pastoral visitations**
- Teach **10 confirmation classes**
- Teach **one four-week Bible study**
- Lead **three devotions**
- Write **four newsletter or teaching articles**
- Read **two pastoral theology books** and submit reflections

Benchmarks serve formative purposes and are evaluated qualitatively through the rubric.

9. Completion and Recommendation

Successful completion of the Vicarage does not guarantee ordination. The Seminary, in consultation with ecclesiastical authorities, discerns readiness based on:

- Rubric-based evaluations
- Faithfulness in doctrine and life

- Demonstrated pastoral maturity
- Suitability for the Office of the Holy Ministry

The Vicarage concludes with a formal recommendation or identified areas for continued formation.

Part III: Assessment

The following rubrics for assessment of the Vicar will be sent via Google Forms. They are provided here for reference.

I. Supervisor Evaluation of Vicar

Purpose: To provide ALTS and the student with a structured evaluation of pastoral formation and readiness based on the program's objectives and outcomes.

Section A: Foundational Information

- Vicar's Name:
- Supervisor's Name:
- Congregation:
- Evaluation Period: ☐ 4-Month ☐ 8-Month ☐ Final

Rating	Description
1 – Unsatisfactory	Significant concern. Performance is below expectations and shows little or no evidence of competency in this area. Requires immediate improvement and close supervision.
2 – Developing	Early growth but inconsistent. Demonstrates partial understanding or skill but requires frequent guidance. Improvement is needed before competency is reached.
3 – Competent	Meets expectations. Performs responsibilities at an acceptable level of competence. Demonstrates foundational understanding and can function with regular supervision.
4 – Proficient	Above expectations. Performs strongly and consistently in this area. Shows theological depth, pastoral maturity, and requires minimal supervision.
5 – Exemplary	Exceptional performance. Demonstrates mastery and models best practices. Functions with confidence, theological clarity, and pastoral wisdom appropriate to a first-call pastor.

Section B: Core Competencies (Rate 1–5 and provide comments)

Competency	Rating (1–5)	Comments
Exegetical Proficiency – Interprets Scripture faithfully using sound hermeneutics and Greek/Hebrew where applicable. Articulates the biblical narrative and theological themes.		
Doctrinal Soundness – Explains and defends Lutheran doctrine; rightly distinguishes Law and Gospel; applies doctrine pastorally.		
Historical Understanding – Demonstrates awareness of church history, Lutheran confessional heritage, and how these inform ministry today.		
Pastoral Competence as a Seelsorger – Shows growth in pastoral care, counseling, catechesis, and conflict resolution. Brings Christ’s Word into every pastoral situation.		
Ministerial Integration – Integrates theology and practice in ministry tasks; exhibits humility, teachability, and growth as a shepherd.		

Section C: Practical Ministry Areas

Area	Rating (1–5)	Comments
Worship Leadership – Plans and leads services appropriately; demonstrates reverence and understanding of Lutheran liturgy.		
Preaching – Preaches faithfully with Law and Gospel, exegetical depth, Christ-centered application, and pastoral relevance.		
Teaching & Catechesis – Plans and teaches classes effectively across age groups; applies Scripture and Confessions clearly.		
Visitation & Pastoral Care – Shows pastoral presence, empathy, prayerfulness, and theological depth during visits.		

Administration & Leadership – Demonstrates awareness of administrative responsibilities and grows in leadership discernment.

Youth & Family Ministry – Builds trust and communicates the gospel clearly to youth while maintaining proper boundaries.

Section D: Spiritual & Personal Formation

Formation Area	Rating (1-5)	Comments
Personal devotional life and prayer		
Growth in pastoral identity and calling		
Demonstrates humility, teachability, and collaboration		
Manages family life and ministry balance wisely		

Section E: Strengths and Areas for Growth

- Strengths observed during this period:
- Areas needing further development:
- Recommended strategies for continued growth:

Section F: Supervisor Summary & Recommendation

- Overall assessment of readiness for pastoral ministry:
- ☐ On track for ordination
- ☐ Additional growth needed in key areas (list below)
- ☐ Significant concerns (explain below)

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

II. Vicar Self-Assessment and Reflection

Purpose: To foster self-evaluation, spiritual reflection, and intentional growth as the vicar integrates theology and pastoral practice.

Section A: Basic Information

- Name:
- Congregation:
- Supervisor:
- Evaluation Period: ☐ 4-Month ☐ 8-Month ☐ Final

Rating	Description
1 – Unsatisfactory	Significant concern. Performance is below expectations and shows little or no evidence of competency in this area. Requires immediate improvement and close supervision.
2 – Developing	Early growth but inconsistent. Demonstrates partial understanding or skill but requires frequent guidance. Improvement is needed before competency is reached.
3 – Competent	Meets expectations. Performs responsibilities at an acceptable level of competence. Demonstrates foundational understanding and can function with regular supervision.
4 – Proficient	Above expectations. Performs strongly and consistently in this area. Shows theological depth, pastoral maturity, and requires minimal supervision.
5 – Exemplary	Exceptional performance. Demonstrates mastery and models best practices. Functions with confidence, theological clarity, and pastoral wisdom appropriate to a first-call pastor.

Section B: Self-Assessment on Core Outcomes (1–5 with reflections)

Outcome	Rating	Reflection
Exegetical Proficiency – How well do I interpret and apply Scripture in ministry?		
Doctrinal Soundness – How confidently do I teach and defend Lutheran doctrine?		
Historical Understanding – How do historical insights inform my ministry decisions and preaching?		
Pastoral Competence as a Seelsorger – How am I growing in pastoral care, counseling, and catechesis?		
Ministerial Integration – How well do I integrate theology into the practical tasks of ministry?		

Section C: Reflection on Ministry Areas

For each area, describe specific experiences, what you learned, and where you hope to grow:

- **Worship Leadership:**
- **Preaching:**
- **Teaching/Catechesis:**
- **Visitation and Pastoral Care:**
- **Administration and Leadership:**
- **Youth Ministry:**

Section D: Spiritual and Personal Formation

- Describe your current devotional life and how it shapes your ministry.
- How have you grown in pastoral identity and calling during this period?
- How are you balancing family life and ministry responsibilities?
- What challenges are you experiencing, and how can your supervisor and ALTS support you?

Section E: Goals for the Next Period

- List 2–3 specific goals for growth before the next evaluation.
- How will you seek to achieve them?

Signature: _____ Date: _____