



Describe your ministry site as to its characteristics (e.g. rural, ecumenical, multiple point, or agency), purpose and relationship to the larger church.

St. Michael's is an open country congregation located two miles from a town of 1,000 people. The congregation is in the early stages of developing a "missional mindset," a focus on the community and world, but like most congregations struggles with financial resources, outside the box thinking, risk taking, and commitment beyond Sunday mornings. In recent years, St. Michael's has sent members to various events hosted by our Synod, and while there is still some latent animosity toward church institutional structures because of decisions by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, there is also a growing interest in and recognition of our partnership in ministry with the Synod and the whole ELCA.

Part II: COMPETENCIES OR SPECIALIZATIONS

Areas of Expertise

Interpret Theology

Teaching

Music / Worship / Arts

Preaching / Worship Leadership

Inter-personal Climate

Areas of Strength

Strategic Mission Planning

Building a Sense of Community

Social Ministry

Conflict Management

Self-Care / Family Life

Examples of Competencies

Interpret Theology

Theology matters. Everything in the church from how a congregation is structured, to what is taught in Sunday school, to the shape of worship, to the participation of people in God's mission to make the world whole, is rooted in a theological perspective. I feel passionate about interpreting the surface, deep, and latent theological claims and concerns people make and have. I feel gifted in being able to interpret Lutheran theology to others in a way that expresses why it is important to my life and for the life of the world. Bible studies I have led or been a part of have provided opportunities to do so. Our theological heritage as Lutherans involves deep thinking about everyday vocational, existential, and heart-wrenching experiences. It gives me life to be able to converse with people about our theological identities and to preach on, teach, and live out that identity.

I want to be a leader of a community that is rooted in a Lutheran identity, a community particularly proud to be ELCA Lutherans.



Teaching

I ~~love to teach~~. I love to teach theology, Church history, ethics, Bible studies and I am committed to the idea that adults in the faith should never be done learning. In the past I have taught Bonhoeffer's "Life Together" in a small group. I have been a part of a number of Bible studies at my current call. In recent years I put together presentations on different denominations and churches, the creeds, and how to read the bible, as part of an adult forum. I have seen, across the church as a whole, a real hole when it comes to adult faith formation and learning. After confirmation it seems that there is no more to learn. Sunday School and confirmation prepare us for a lifetime of learning. I also taught "Lutheran Creeds and Confessions" for the South Central Synod of Wisconsin's Diakonia program. Teaching the things of the faith gets me excited. I want to be a leader of a community that loves learning and sees adult education as fundamental to its life together, a community willing to explore ideas and think critically about the Bible, theology, tradition, and ethics without fear or division.

Music / Worship / Arts

I am an avid guitar player, who also dabbles in mandolin, banjo, harmonica, and the djembe drum. Music is important to my spirituality. I love to be a part of a community that sings together and that enjoys seeking out new musical expressions for its worship together. I have often led worship with my guitar. I think of myself as an innovative traditionalist. I appreciate traditional forms of liturgy. The history and spirituality of liturgy is deep and finds a home deep within me. I am also open to more emerging forms of worship that contextualize the Word and Sacraments for a community's time, place, and people. I think worship should be done well and that the goal of worship is to form us to be disciples who join in God's mission for the life of the world. I want to be a leader in a faith community that appreciates liturgy and is open to (and expects!), creativity, innovation, and change.

Preaching / Worship Leadership

Even before I was a pastor, I was called upon to preach from time to time as a camp counselor and college student. Preaching and worship is at the center of my devotional and spiritual life. It gives me life and energy to be able to proclaim what Jesus has and is doing for others and for the world. Throughout my ministry, I have sought to preach in a way that makes clear the gift of grace, but I also see preaching as a prophetic undertaking that challenges our everyday assumptions and living. This means, that through my preaching, I often address congregational and community issues, revealing inconsistencies that may be affecting our witness in the community. Through preaching and worship together, God fashions a community that exists not for its own members, but for the world. My preaching and the worship services I curate call us to look at our communities and the world through God's eyes, with God's dream of the new creation in mind. I want to be a leader of a community that understands itself as a vital part of God's mission and is ready to have its assumptions challenged in preaching.

Inter-personal Climate

Having been called to two parishes in two different states with distinct cultures, I have learned much about the climate and terrain of congregations, their quirks and idiosyncracies. Part of my leadership in my current call, a congregation with a history of conflict and chasing away pastors, has been creating a culture of perspective and leadership. When a group or individual is bent out of shape over some issue, it is important to keep perspective. I often wonder with a person, "on the last day of judgment and renewal, will this matter?" I have spent time with the church council and other leaders trying to instill this mindset. I have also been working with them to be self-differentiated leaders who able to take a position without becoming anxious about offending others. I believe that a council's calling is to work with the pastor in leading the congregation into the future they discern God calling them toward. I want to be a leader of a community where the relationship between Pastor and council is casual, collaborative, and non-anxious, a congregation that respects its leadership and looks to them for direction.

References

Synodical Bishop



Part III: REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY

Calling:

You are called as a Child of God and into rostered service in this church. Reflect theologically on your sense of call and the way it shapes your life and work.

I am becoming more and more aware that God's call into rostered service entails a calling into a ministry of challenge, creativity, and community building. When I coached middle school basketball for a few years, I learned that coaching is parallel to ministry. You inspire and teach, you build a sense of team, all toward the common goal of playing the game and playing it well. Players need to be challenged. Team dynamics need to be addressed and evaluated. My sense of call has been informed by coaching in that I see ministry as getting the team (congregation) working together toward the goal of announcing and living out the kingdom of God. It also means challenging the particularities of congregations that get in the way of our working toward that goal. As the church grows more irrelevant to the lives of people, as numbers shrink and budgets dwindle, the church will need to think about if its institutional mindset, its focus on providing quality programming and getting more people, its fear of scarcity and becoming less important in the community, are obstacles to fulfilling the call God has given it: to give its life away for the world. As a pastor, my sense of call is to attempt to create new sight in the church so that we might see God's compassion and love for the world that knows no bounds, but also to see that how we have been church, our traditions and innovations, might be keeping us from the fullness of life God would have for us.

Convictions:

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your speaking, teaching, leading and living.

- 1) In Jesus Christ, God shows deep love for us in giving away God's own life for us. This is grace. Grace that changes us and changes how we are in the world.**
- 2) As Jesus' followers, God calls us to give ourselves away for our neighbors. People often experience church people as judgmental, hypocritical, morality police. This is because we often forget that we exist to serve others, to love and forgive others, to give our lives away for our neighbors.**
- 3) The goal of this self-giving is the new creation, the kingdom of God is bringing about in the world. The church under-estimates what it is capable of. It so often forgets that it is part of what God is doing in the world, not the goal itself. God means to re-make the world and the church is a tool that God uses to do that, so that through our forgiving and feeding others, through our speaking out against injustice, through the rituals of worship, the world becomes what it is meant to be.**

Context:

Describe the ministry setting(s) that would energize you and make the best use of your gifts, skills and passions.

This is a difficult question. The Church as a whole is undergoing a change in how it relates to society. The pattern is not growth. I would be energized by a congregation that is not interested in revisiting the glory years gone by, but is interested in facing the unknown future, that is open to creativity, that is focused on faithfulness in the midst of these changes. I like a good challenge and, in a way, I am excited by communities of faith that have known struggle. I believe I am equipped with the personality, demeanor, and the ability to tell the truth that is able to withstand difficult people and situations. I am interested in a faith community that respects pastoral leadership, that understands that a pastor holds multiple vocations. I am not interested in a church that would have me sacrifice my health or the well-being of my family for a rigorous work schedule. I appreciate a casual, self-directed work environment. I have only known rural ministry and am at home there, although I am interested in any size church or community that is excited to face the challenge of the future.

Accomplishments:

How has your current ministry setting developed in the last three years, and in what ways have you contributed to this growth or development?



I serve a congregation that has known strife and turmoil throughout its history. It is a congregation with a good number of strong willed Germans, which makes for a "too-many cooks in the kitchen" dynamic. Over the past three years, we have been gifted with an era of good feelings. We have begun to focus more on the needs outside of our walls, even as we face the challenges of fewer people, debt, and money struggles. I have sought to create a casual and collaborative environment with the church council, helping them grow in their own leadership that they might withstand the comments and criticisms of congregants. I have moved the congregation to address its prime financial burden (a building mortgage), by introducing a capital campaign that has significantly reduced our debt to a more manageable level. I have, in preaching and teaching, aimed at bringing to our attention that we exist for the world. In light of this, I have raised troubling questions about church fundraisers, meals, and events that only serve to serve us. Although, I raise such questions, I am a laid back and approachable person and I think that helps in interpersonal relationships.

Denominational Relationship:

What are your hopes for the ELCA? Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

My hope for the ELCA is that it continues to face the unknown future with courage. I often challenge my congregation's leadership to see the ELCA as a gift. That we are an ELCA congregation, a welcoming people and place in the midst of churches that exclude and proclaim bad news, is a good thing to be embraced. The ELCA has a distinct voice, theological perspective, and mission outlook that sets apart for the better. We have something to offer the world! I also hope that the ELCA has the courage to make changes that will embrace the post-christendom future we are headed toward, rather than seeking to hold on to the institutional forms of the church of yesteryear. When I highlight for others what it means to be part of the ELCA, I speak about the reality that we are not a church on our own. We are connected with others travelling the same way. The ELCA is not a hierarchy, a bureaucracy, but is each one of us. I want to be lead a congregation that is proud to be in the ELCA, that understands that our moral deliberation around social issues and our political advocacy are ways we seek to be faithful to the Gospel.

Public Ministry:

In your public role as a leader within the congregation or organization, how would you describe your preferred approach, style and manner?

I am someone who seeks to maintain perspective. I am a serious person when it comes to things that matter, when it comes to calling the church to be who it has been called to be. I am laid-back over things that many might get up in arms over. I seek to build community rather than consensus when I work with others. I am confident in my leadership and calling, but I do not accept compliments well! While some leaders of congregations might be comfortable with sitting on the sidelines in a meeting, I believe that my voice matters and that is why I have been called to be the congregation's pastor. I am not a work-a-holic, but a task oriented person and I believe this affords me the ability to be with my family and take care of myself.

Part IV: CANDIDATE COMMENTARY

The Candidate Commentary is an optional component that allows you to expand your Rostered Leader Profile with information that reveals your passions for ministry, your expertise, your experience or your vision for ministry. You are invited to be creative as you add any commentary that you feel will support this RLP.



Throughout my time as a pastor, I have become increasingly aware of how focused the church has been in passing on to young people information about the faith rather than forming them into followers of Jesus. Our catechetical instruction has been rooted in feeding young people with cold data to memorize and then we wonder why they remove themselves from church life when instruction ceases! There is a need to take risks and experiment when it comes to forming our young people for a life of faithfulness. At St. Michael's, I created a confirmation journey called "Koinonia" (koy-nuh-nee-uh). Loosely based on the catechumenate process some congregations use for joining the church, this journey is more relational than a traditional model of confirmation. "Koinonia" means sharing, communion, fellowship. We start with a meal and share highs and lows about our day. Then we have an anonymous question box from which we draw a question and have group discussion about it. This portion is not meant to provide answers, but to explore the question at hand. Then we move into a period, either of evening prayer or African Bible Study. African Bible study is a practice of reading the text out loud three times, with silence in between, and a question for reflection. Once again, the idea is not to look for answers, but to encourage and model engagement with scripture, to listen to what it does to the reader. To conclude, we pray for one another's requests. Koinonia has been a gathering of the students, but also adults interested in spiritual growth. The adults are often flabbergasted by the wisdom and concerns of the young people. It also creates connection across generations, which to me is one of the primary reasons why confirmands flee from church. They simply have little to no connection with older generations, generations who may especially behave as if the church is theirs. We have found that our adults involved in Koinonia converse more with young people outside of that gathering. We are hoping that focusing on eating, questioning, bible study, and praying together will plant seeds for a future of faithful participation.

At St. Michael's, we have also started what I call "Pubsong," a gathering at the local tavern where we sing sacred songs together. While the group attending has dwindled over the past few years, most of the congregation is happy to have a this presence in the town nearest to it.

Supporting Information

If requested, are you able to supply the following items?

	Selected Answer
* Video recording of a worship, preaching, teaching or speaking occasion?	Yes
* Audio recording of a worship, preaching, teaching or speaking occasion?	Yes
* Most recent Congregation/ Organization Annual Report?	Yes
* Samples of writing or communication pieces from your ministry?	Yes
* Letters of Reference?	Yes
* Resume or curriculum vitae?	Yes

Comments or Explanations (Regarding this RLP)

Disclosure Information

Out of care for the church, the following questions are asked of all rostered leaders and First Call candidates who are making themselves available for conversation with call committees. **Selected Answer**