First Call Theological Education Survey
Division for Ministry
Department for Research and Evaluation
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Overview

The Department for Research and Evaluation, in consultation with staff of the Division for Ministry (DM), conducted a survey of rostered leaders experiencing their first call to public ministry. A letter describing the project and a survey were sent to 824 rostered leaders who were in their first three years of called leadership. Questionnaires were collected through December 2002. We received 618 completed questionnaires, resulting in a 75 percent response rate.

Characteristics of the Respondents

Most of the respondents to the survey were pastors (91%), and slightly more females (53%) than males. The age of respondents ranged from 24 to 75, with an average of 42 years old. There were a variety of seminaries represented, but the most common graduating seminary was Luther Seminary (21%). A complete list of frequencies is found in Appendix A.

Experiencing the First Call

Several of the questions on the survey asked respondents to rate on a scale from one to five their opinions on their experiences during their first call. A high mean rating indicates greater preparedness, importance, difficulty, etc. This report will discuss the overall ratings on these items and then consider differences due to gender and age.[1]

The Respondents' Perceptions of Preparedness

The first question asked respondents to rate how prepared they felt in their first call to handle several congregational responsibilities. Complete mean ratings are presented in Table 1 from highest to lowest level of preparation. Overall, respondents felt they were most prepared to preach (M=4.28), followed by planning worship services (M=4.27) and visiting members (M=4.19). In contrast, the respondents reported that they felt least prepared to plan a church budget (M=2.34), plan stewardship programs (M=2.46) or manage a church office (M=2.99).

Females rated themselves as more prepared for establishing trusting relationships with members, helping people deal with grief, teaching youth and children, preparing Sunday bulletins, and providing a ministry of healing. On the other hand, males rated themselves as more prepared for preaching, planning stewardship programs, and planning a church budget.

Overwhelmingly, second career leaders[2] rated themselves as more prepared for a variety of congregational responsibilities. They felt they were better prepared for visiting members,

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[1]All reported differences are significant at the .05 level.

[2]Leaders aged 42 or older were considered "second career;" those younger than 42 were "first career."

teaching adults, providing spiritual direction/guidance to members, working effectively with congregational leaders, doing pastoral counseling, giving guidance/support to committees, providing a ministry of healing, training/equipping others for their ministries, visiting prospective members, addressing social and ethical issues facing communities, managing a church office, planning stewardship programs, and planning a church budget. The only areas where first career leaders felt more prepared were preaching and planning worship services.

In addition to differences by gender and career, we were interested in differences by the seminary of graduation. Table 2 presents means for the items where significant differences between seminaries were found. Graduates of Southern Seminary consistently rated themselves as more prepared than other seminary graduates in almost every area. The only items where the Southern graduates did not give themselves the highest ratings were preaching, managing a church office, and teaching adults. The only score below two was for Luther graduates in planning a church budget.

Respondents were asked to rate the level of need by the church in several areas, and then were asked to rate their level of preparedness in addressing those needs. Mean ratings for this question are presented in Table 3. The highest rating for need was "reaching out to unchurched persons" (M=4.70), followed by "helping congregations work toward a vision" (M=4.65) and "helping people grow spiritually" (M=4.61). Interestingly, the lowest rating for preparedness was "reaching out to unchurched persons" (M=2.86), suggesting that these pastors think the need is high and their preparedness is relatively low. Respondents also rated themselves low on preparedness for "involving congregations in community issues of justice" (M=3.11) and "helping congregations revitalize their ministry" (M=3.12). For all items, ratings for level of preparedness were lower than ratings for level of need.

Table 4 presents gender differences in ratings of the needs of the church and preparedness to address those needs. Women rated higher the needs of "helping congregations work toward a vision," "listening to people's questions and concerns," "helping people grow spiritually," and "being a teaching theologian in your congregation." They also rated themselves higher on preparation for "listening to people's questions and concerns" and "helping people grow spiritually." The only item men rated higher was preparation for "being a teaching theologian in your congregation."

In terms of perception of need and preparedness there were few differences by career. Second career leaders rated higher the needs of "listening to people's questions and concerns" and "helping congregations to revitalize their ministry." They also rated higher their preparation for "reaching out to unchurched persons." First career leaders rated themselves higher in preparation for "being a teaching theologian in your congregation."

Challenges

Next, respondents were asked to rate how difficult certain tasks were in the early months or year of their first call experience. (See Table 5.) The highest overall rating was for "finding time for my own spiritual growth" (M=3.66), followed by "finding ways to move the congregation toward a mission-field perspective" and "pacing myself with all the responsibilities of the congregation" (both M=3.44). On the other hand, respondents reported the least difficulty with "planning worship/programs through the cycles of the first year" (M=1.99). They also had

less difficulty "learning about the congregation's culture and traditions" (M=2.10) and "switching from seminary life/culture to congregational life/culture" (M=2.11).

There were relatively few differences between women and men in the level of difficulty ratings. Females rated "pacing myself with all the responsibilities to the congregation" and "building an identity as a pastor or rostered lay leader" as more difficult. Then only item males rated as more difficult was "applying my seminary training to the work before me."

In contrast, there were many differences in level of difficulty ratings by career. In all cases, first career leaders rated the areas as more difficult than second career leaders. These areas included "finding time for my own spiritual growth," "dealing with tax law for church workers," "discerning when to make changes in congregational practices," "dealing with a sense of isolation," "managing personal debts and financial planning," "managing debt," "building an identity as a pastor or rostered lay leader," "applying my seminary training to the work before me," and "switching from seminary life/culture to congregational life/culture."

Support

Another question asked respondents to rate the importance of different types of support during their first call. (See Table 6.) Most important was "colleague group support" (M=4.13); "a mentor" (M=3.94) and "help on how to train and empower lay leaders" (M=3.91) were also rated highly important. Respondents rated as least important "counsel on technological challenges, e.g., web-sites, worship presentations" (M=2.83) and "counsel on dealing with family in times of transition" (M=2.92). They also rated as low importance "mutual ministry committee (or comparable lay support group)" and "personal financial planning" (both M=3.02).

In each case where there were gender differences, women's ratings were higher than men's for various kinds of support. These items were "colleague group support," "a mentor," "counsel on how to handle conflict," "access to programmatic resources," "meeting the expectations from members concerning my responsibilities," "a spiritual director," and "mutual ministry committee (or comparable lay support group)."

A more even distribution of differences by career emerged when examining the importance of different kinds of support. First career leaders rated as more important "help on how to train and empower lay leaders," "help on improving administrative skills," and "personal financial planning." On the other hand, second career leaders rated as more important "meeting the expectations from members concerning my responsibilities," "a spiritual director," "mutual ministry committee (or comparable lay support group)," and "counsel on technological challenges, e.g., web-sites, worship presentations."

Accepting the First Call

In Table 7, overall ratings are presented for the impact of different factors on respondents' decisions to accept their first call. By far, the most important factor was "a sense of call" (M=4.60), followed by "the geographic location of the congregation" (M=3.61), and "needs of the larger church" (M=3.01). In contrast, the least important factors were "obligations to my extended family" (M=2.17), "long term career plans" (M=2.21), and "a preference for working in a church with multiple staff" (M=2.22).

Men and women showed differences in the impact of factors on their decisions to accept their first call. Females rated as more important "a sense of call," "the geographic location of the congregation," "the composition of the membership of the congregation," "a preference for a certain type of church work like youth ministry," "a preference for working in a church with multiple staff," and "obligations to my extended family." The only item males rated as more important was "a preference for working as a solo pastor."

There were also career differences in the impact of factors on the decision to accept the first call. For first career leaders, more important were "concerns about paying off my educational debt" and "a preference for a certain type of church work like youth ministry." For second career leaders, more important were "a sense of call," "the geographic location of the congregation," "needs of my children," and "obligations to my extended family."

Activities

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate how often they participated in a variety of activities (see Table 8). The highest rating was for reading books (M=3.79), followed by reading periodicals (M=3.63) and Internet research (M=3.44). On the other hand, the lowest ratings were found for use of audio tape resources (M=1.11), journaling (M=1.46), and use of video tape resources (M=1.73).

Interesting gender and career differences were also found for some activities. Women were more likely to participate in journaling than men. Also, women were more likely to attend contemplative retreats and work with a spiritual director. Second career leaders were more likely to read periodicals, while first career leaders were more likely to do Internet research. Second career leaders were also more likely to attend contemplative retreats and work with a spiritual director (Table 9).

Background Characteristics

Several background characteristics showed gender differences. Women were more likely to attend LSTC (Table 9). In contrast, men were more likely to attend Southern Seminary. Type of leader also differed by gender (Table 10). Men were slightly more likely to be pastors, but women were much more likely to be rostered lay leaders such as associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and obviously deaconesses.

Many of these background characteristics also showed differences by career. First career leaders more often attended Luther Seminary and were baptized in a Lutheran church as infants. More males were first career leaders, while more females were in their second career. There were also differences by career in type of leadership (Table 10). First career leaders were slightly more likely to be pastors, but second career leaders were much more likely to be rostered lay leaders such as associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses. As Table 11 shows, career was related to the respondents' graduating seminary. First career leaders were more likely to graduate from Luther Seminary. Second career leaders were slightly more likely to graduate from LSTC, Gettysburg, Southern, Pacific, Trinity and Wartburg seminaries. Finally, the type of community respondents grew up in differed by career (Table 12). First career leaders more often grew up in a small city or suburb of a large city, while second career leaders more often grew up in rural/open country or a small town.

Competencies to Develop

After rating their level of preparedness for congregational responsibilities, respondents were asked to list four competencies from that list which they would like to further develop (Table 13). The most frequent item listed was managing disputes and conflict situations (36%). Other frequent responses were planning stewardship programs (34%) and training/equipping others for their ministries (32%). Not surprisingly, these three items ranked lower on the list of level of preparedness and are also reflected in the comments discussed below.

Identity

A final question asked respondents to rank-order several different terms for how they identified themselves as leaders in their first call. (See Table 14.) In this case, a lower mean rating indicated higher importance, as respondents were instructed to rank the most important term with a one, the second most important with a two, and so on. For this item, "preacher" was rated highest (M=2.18), followed by "leader" (M=2.55). The lowest ratings were for "organizer" (M=4.33) and "counselor" (M=4.32). Respondents could also indicate "other" and specify that identity. Twenty percent of those who marked "other" added "pastor" to the list of terms.

Comments

Several open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their opinions in certain areas of their first call experience. Comments were coded into several categories of responses. The coding system along with a complete list of frequencies is found in Appendix B. The first open-ended question asked what respondents would like to learn more about through First Call Theological Education. The most common response related to congregational issues (39%), such as dealing with conflict, training lay leaders, and revitalizing the congregation. Another frequent comment concerned specific skills or resources (25%), such as church taxes, time management, and computer skills.

The second open-ended question asked respondents to make specific suggestions about what should be changed in the first call process. The most common response was to improve communication (26%), specifically between the candidate and the synod staff, and overall more honesty in the process. Twenty-four percent of the comments centered around the interview process, such as allowing candidates to interview with more than one congregation, and more preparation and support throughout the process.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the nature of their full time work (if any) prior to attending seminary. The majority of respondents had previous careers in professional areas (39%), such as business, accounting, and management. Many respondents had also worked in the field of education (18%) prior to attending seminary.

Finally, respondents were asked if they had a concentration in seminary. Only 19 percent of the respondents specified a concentration, and of those, 21 percent indicated youth and family/education as their concentration. Other common responses were an urban concentration and spirituality/theology/liturgy concentrations (both 15%).

Seminarian Survey

In the spring of 2002, a questionnaire was distributed to 248 senior seminary students who had completed their course work and internship, and were in the call process. This survey contained many of the same or similar questions as the first call survey. The sample of completed surveys by seminarians was much smaller (N=97), with only a 39 percent response rate. However, we were able to compare many of the responses of the seminarians to those of leaders in their first call.

Looking at the pattern of responses, overall the results were remarkably similar for the seminarians and those in their first call. In terms of preparation, seminarians felt most prepared to establish trusting relationships with members, visit members, plan worship services, and preach. These were the top four areas of preparation for the first call leaders as well. Seminarians felt least prepared to plan a church budget, plan stewardship programs, and manage a church office, which were exactly the same three items rated lowest by first call leaders.

We also examined seminarians' responses for differences by seminary on the question of preparedness. Table 15 shows means for those items where significant differences between seminaries were found. Although there were fewer differences than in the first call sample, the same pattern emerged of Southern Seminary students rating themselves much higher than students from other seminaries. The only exception was for the item "planning a church budget." A direct comparison between first call leaders' ratings and seminarians' ratings of preparedness is found in Table 16. For every item, seminarians rated themselves higher in preparation than the first call leaders.

In the area of the needs of the church, there was a similar pattern between seminarians and first call leaders. Seminarians rated high the needs of "helping people grow spiritually," "helping congregations work toward a vision," "listening to people's questions and concerns,"and "reaching out to unchurched persons." These also closely match the ratings of the first call leaders. Both seminarians and first call leaders had higher ratings for need and lower ratings for preparedness, suggesting they believe the need is high and their preparedness is relatively low.

Seminarians and first call leaders showed similar ratings for areas of difficulty. Seminarians felt they would have the most difficulty with "finding time for my own spiritual growth," "dealing with tax law for church workers," "finding ways to move the congregation toward a mission-field perspective," and "pacing myself with all the responsibilities to the congregation." These items were also on the top of the list for difficulties among first call leaders. In contrast, seminarians felt they would not have difficulties with "learning about the congregation's culture and traditions" and "planning worship/programs through the cycles of the first year," which are exactly the items first call leaders ranked as least difficult.

In terms of different kinds of support, we again see similar patterns in the two samples. Seminarians rated "colleague group support" and "a mentor" as most important; an exact match with the first call leaders. Seminarians rated as low importance "counsel on technological challenges, e.g., web-sites, worship presentations," "counsel on self-care issues, e.g., time management, health, boundaries, etc.," and "personal financial planning." First call leaders'

responses were similar, except for counsel on self-care issues. They rated this type of support as more important than the seminarians did.

Most of the factors that influence the acceptance of the first call were similar for seminarians and first call leaders. Although "a sense of call" was not a choice on the seminarians' questionnaire, both groups ranked "the geographic location of the congregation" as very important. Seminarians rated as lower importance "a preference for a certain type of church work like youth ministry," "needs of my children," "obligations to my extended family," and "long term career plans." First call leaders differed only on the importance of the needs of their children, which they rated higher than the seminarians.

In terms of self-identity, the rank ordering was identical for the seminarians and the first call leaders, with preacher highest and leader second. The two samples also matched closely on various demographic variables. Frequencies were similar for gender, graduating seminary (except Trinity, which was not represented in the seminarian sample), and community context. Seminarians and first call leaders were also similar in the number who were baptized Lutheran and the number of students with a concentration in seminary. Frequencies for type of leader closely matched, except that more associates in ministry were included in the first call sample.

Summary of Findings

These two surveys generated a large amount of useful information. Overall, it is encouraging that the responses were so similar between seminarians and first call leaders. Any differences that emerged were relatively infrequent and small. Therefore, the expectations of seminarians anticipating a first call largely seemed to match their actual experiences in their first call. In fact, one question on the first call survey asked respondents how closely their expectations matched their experience of first call, and the average response was 3.28, where 5 = "very closely" and 1 = "not closely at all."

Both surveys also suggest that seminarians are generally well-prepared for their first call. None of the average ratings for preparedness were below two on a scale from one to five. Although there are certainly areas for improvement, the overall high ratings are encouraging. Areas in need of improvement mostly centered around practical issues such as planning a church budget, and interpersonal issues such as managing conflict and self-care concerns.

Examining the responses by gender and career also provided interesting insights. Generally, women rated all kinds of support as more important, as well as various needs of the church and the impact of several factors on the decision to accept their first call. As for differences by career, second-career leaders overall felt more prepared in a variety of areas. Supporting that finding, first-career leaders also reported more difficulties in several areas. Considering both gender and career, women were more likely to be second-career leaders, and both women and second-career leaders were more often rostered lay leaders; i.e., associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, or deaconesses.

The comments to the open-ended questions also provided important information. Most respondents wanted to learn more about dealing with congregational issues and obtaining specific skills or resources. The majority of suggestions on how to improve the first call process

centered around communication and the interview process. Taken together, the results of these surveys will help point out areas for future work and improvement in the first call process.

Table 1[3]
Level of Preparation for Congregational Responsibilities

Area of preparation	Overall rating	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Preaching	4.28	4.19	4.39	4.45	4.13
Planning worship services	4.27			4.37	4.17
Visiting members	4.19			4.11	4.27
Establishing trusting relationships with members	4.09	4.19	3.98		
Teaching adults	4.08			3.99	4.15
Helping people deal with grief	3.93	4.01	3.84		
Teaching youth	3.78	3.86	3.68		
Preparing Sunday bulletins	3.73	3.86	3.59		
Teaching children	3.70	3.90	3.50		
Teaching confirmands	3.63				
Providing spiritual direction to members	3.61			3.51	3.69
Working effectively with congregational leaders	3.56			3.41	3.69
Doing pastoral counseling	3.50			3.47	3.53
Working collaboratively w/ecumenical partners	3.49				
Giving guidance/support to committees	3.47			3.28	3.65
Providing a ministry of healing	3.40	3.55	3.24	3.21	3.58
Training/equipping others for their ministries	3.40			3.30	3.49
Visiting prospective members	3.26			3.09	3.42
Addressing social and ethical issues facing communities	3.17			3.05	3.27
Managing disputes and conflict situations	3.09				
Managing a church office	2.99			2.59	3.37
Planning stewardship programs	2.46	2.35	2.56	2.29	2.61
Planning a church budget	2.34	2.21	2.48	1.96	2.71

[3]For all tables, only means with significant differences are shown.

Table 2
Level of Preparation by Graduating Seminary

Area of preparation	Luther	LSTC	Gettys-burg	Phila-delphia	South-ern	Pacific	Trinity	Wart-burg
Preaching	4.40	4.13	4.32	4.38	4.38	4.46	4.33	4.30
Preparing Sunday bulletins	3.72	3.74	3.90	3.36	4.06	3.74	3.47	3.64
Working with cong. leaders	3.33	3.34	3.63	3.51	3.94	3.54	3.48	3.54
Managing a church office	2.64	3.04	3.26	3.11	3.23	2.80	2.94	2.91
Pastoral counseling	3.46	3.25	3.43	3.22	4.10	3.65	3.48	3.62
Giving guidance to committees	3.26	3.34	3.50	3.36	3.82	3.39	3.46	3.38
Planning a church budget	1.96	2.20	2.68	2.43	2.79	2.13	2.45	2.25
Helping people deal with grief	3.93	3.71	3.80	3.70	4.20	3.91	4.07	4.13
Est. trusting rel. w/ members	4.13	4.09	4.14	3.78	4.36	3.80	4.00	3.94
Working w/ ecumen. partners	3.12	3.56	3.32	3.33	3.85	3.53	3.57	3.49
Providing a ministry of healing	3.39	3.06	3.29	2.80	3.79	3.30	3.40	3.65
Spiritual guidance to members	3.66	3.55	3.39	3.49	3.91	3.58	3.45	3.48
Stewardship programs	2.18	2.30	2.77	2.17	3.00	2.39	2.56	2.34
Train/equip others for ministry	3.20	3.27	3.38	3.30	3.83	3.18	3.42	3.47
Teach children	3.74	3.34	3.80	3.60	3.93	3.91	3.40	3.65
Teach youth	3.82	3.47	3.96	3.56	3.98	3.77	3.48	3.79
Teach adults	3.97	3.96	4.23	4.04	4.11	4.16	3.84	3.92

Table 3
Needs of the Church and Level of Preparedness to Address Needs

Area of need/preparation	Level of need	Level of preparedness
Reaching out to unchurched persons	4.70	2.86
Helping congregations work toward a vision	4.65	3.20
Helping people grow spiritually	4.61	3.62
Helping congregations revitalize their ministry	4.55	3.12
Listening to people's questions and concerns	4.36	4.15
Leading worship that is sensitive to congregational context	4.16	3.84
Being a teaching theologian in your congregation	4.00	3.84
Helping members deal with tough moral issues	3.94	3.35
Involving congregations in community issues of justice	3.93	3.11

Table 4
Needs of the Church and Preparedness by Gender and Career

Area of need/preparation	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Helping congregations work toward a vision–need	4.71	4.60		
Listening to people's questions and concerns–need	4.47	4.23	4.24	4.46
Listening to people's questions and concerns–preparedness	4.31	3.99		
Helping people grow spiritually–need	4.67	4.54		
Helping people grow spiritually–preparedness	3.75	3.49		
Being a teaching theologian in your congregation–need	4.09	3.93		
Being a teaching theologian in your congregation–preparedness	3.71	3.98	3.93	3.77
Helping congregations to revitalize their ministry–need			4.49	4.61
Reaching out to unchurched persons–preparedness			2.76	2.95

Table 5
Level of Difficulty During Early Period of First Call

Area of difficulty	Overall rating	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Finding time for my own spiritual growth	3.66			3.85	3.48
Finding ways to move the congregation toward a mission-field perspective	3.44				
Pacing myself with all the responsibilities to the congregation	3.44	3.53	3.35		
Pacing myself with all the responsibilities to my family	3.29				
Dealing with tax law for church workers	3.03			3.27	2.80
Recognizing and dealing with emerging conflicts	2.90				
Discerning when to make changes in congregational practices	2.89			3.03	2.78
Finding a mentor	2.76				
Dealing with a sense of isolation	2.62			2.77	2.51
Managing personal debts and financial planning	2.61			2.88	2.36
Managing debt	2.50			2.78	2.23
Building an identity as a pastor or rostered lay leader	2.38	2.48	2.27	2.50	2.28
Getting started with my continuing theological education	2.21				
Finding peer and colleague support	2.20				
Applying my seminary training to the work before me	2.16	2.08	2.26	2.31	2.02
Switching from seminary life/culture to congregational life/culture	2.11			2.40	1.83
Learning about the congregation's culture and traditions	2.10				
Planning worship/programs through the cycles of the first year	1.99				

Table 6
Importance of Different Kinds of Support during First Call

Kind of support	Overall rating	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Colleague group support	4.13	4.22	4.02		
A mentor	3.94	4.08	3.79		
Help on how to train and empower lay leaders	3.91			4.05	3.76
Counsel on how to handle conflict	3.78	3.86	3.68		
Getting acquainted with leaders in the synod	3.73				
Opportunities for theological reflection on context and practice	3.70				
The synod Bishop/staff	3.60				
Access to programmatic resources	3.52	3.66	3.36		
An advisor with ministerial experience outside of the local community	3.50				
Counsel on self-care issues, e.g., time management, health, boundaries, etc.	3.43				
Meeting the expectations from members concerning my responsibilities	3.41	3.52	3.28	3.30	3.51
Help on improving administrative skills	3.18			3.31	3.06
A spiritual director	3.14	3.32	2.91	2.88	3.39
Personal financial planning	3.02			3.25	2.80
Mutual ministry committee (or comparable lay support group)	3.02	3.16	2.87	2.79	3.24
Counsel on dealing with family in times of transition	2.92				
Counsel on technological challenges, e.g., web-sites, worship presentations	2.83			2.71	2.95

Table 7
Impact of Factors on Decision to Accept First Call

Factor	Overall rating	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
A sense of call	4.60	4.67	4.50	4.51	4.68
The geographic location of the congregation	3.61	3.87	3.30	3.37	3.83
Needs of the larger church	3.01				
Availability of a job for my spouse	2.89				
The composition of the membership of the congregation	2.75	2.96	2.52		
A preference for working as a solo pastor	2.62	2.36	2.87		
Needs of my children	2.39			2.15	2.61
Concerns about paying off my educational debt	2.38			2.68	2.07
A preference for a certain type of church work like youth ministry	2.26	2.47	2.04	2.40	2.10
A preference for working in a church with multiple staff	2.22	2.43	2.00		
Long term career plans	2.21				
Obligations to my extended family	2.17	2.33	2.02	1.95	2.40

Table 8
Frequency of Participation in Activities

Activity	Overall rating	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Reading books	3.79				
Reading periodicals	3.63			3.43	3.83
Internet research	3.44			3.61	3.28
Study group	2.89				
Working with a mentor	2.47				
Classes	2.15				
Video tape resources	1.73				
Journaling	1.46	1.80	1.06		
Audio tape resources	1.11				

Table 9
Differences by Gender and Career

Factor	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Contemplative retreats	60.3%	39.7%	36.8%	63.2%
Working w/ a spiritual director	70.2%	29.8%	39.5%	60.5%
Attended LSTC	66.7%	33.3%		
Attended Southern Seminary	36.8%	63.2%		
Attended Luther Seminary			64.7%	35.3%
Baptized as infant			60.4%	39.6%
Female			38.7%	61.3%
Male			60.0%	40.0%

Table 10
Type of Leader by Gender and Career

Type of leader	Female	Male	1st career	2nd career
Pastor	49.1%	50.9%	51.6%	48.4%
Associate in Ministry	89.2%	10.8%	18.9%	81.1%
Diaconal Minister	84.6%	15.4%	23.1%	76.9%
Deaconess	100%	0%	0%	100%

Table 11
Graduating Seminary by Career

Graduating seminary	1st career	2nd career
Luther Seminary	66.9%	33.1%
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago	46.4%	53.6%
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg	47.1%	52.9%
The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia	50.0%	50.0%
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	46.9%	53.1%
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary	47.7%	52.3%
Trinity Lutheran Seminary	46.3%	53.7%
Wartburg Theological Seminary	46.3%	53.7%

Table 12
Type of Community during Formative Years by Career

Type of community	1st career	2nd career
Rural or open country	41.6%	58.4%
Small town (under 10,000)	34.1%	65.9%
Small city (10,000 to 50,000)	61.4%	38.6%
Medium size city or its suburb (50,000 to 250,000)	50.0%	50.0%
Large city (250,000 or more)	49.4%	50.6%
Suburb of a large city	56.6%	43.4%

Table 13
Priority of Competencies to Develop

Competency	1st priority	2nd priority	3rd priority	4th priority	Total
Visiting members	2.4%	1.5%	1.0%	1.0%	5.9%
Visiting prospective members	5.8%	5.7%	5.0%	5.5%	22.0%
Planning worship services	2.3%	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%	8.2%
Preaching	7.8%	3.1%	2.4%	2.3%	15.6%
Preparing Sunday bulletins	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%	1.1%	2.7%
Teaching confirmands	3.9%	2.8%	2.6%	3.2%	12.5%
Working effectively with congregational leaders	6.3%	5.7%	7.1%	4.9%	24.0%
Managing a church office	5.3%	4.4%	5.5%	2.9%	18.1%
Doing pastoral counseling	6.3%	4.0%	3.9%	2.6%	16.8%
Giving guidance/support to committees	1.0%	2.4%	2.9%	3.4%	9.7%
Planning a church budget	6.1%	9.9%	5.3%	7.1%	28.4%
Helping people with grief	2.1%	3.6%	1.0%	1.5%	8.2%
Establishing trusting relationships with members	1.0%	1.9%	0.3%	0.5%	3.7%
Managing disputes and conflict situations	11.7%	7.6%	8.4%	8.1%	35.8%
Working collaboratively with ecumenical partners	0.5%	2.4%	2.3%	3.2%	8.4%
Addressing social and ethical issues facing communities	3.6%	4.7%	6.1%	6.8%	21.2%
Providing ministry of healing	1.5%	1.9%	2.8%	1.5%	7.7%
Providing spiritual direction to members	3.9%	6.3%	6.8%	3.4%	20.4%
Planning stewardship programs	6.5%	10.4%	9.1%	8.4%	34.4%
Training/equipping others for their ministries	10.8%	7.1%	8.1%	6.3%	32.3%
Teaching children	0.6%	1.1%	0.6%	1.5%	3.8%
Teaching youth	1.6%	1.8%	2.3%	2.9%	8.6%
Teaching adults	1.9%	0.8%	1.5%	1.6%	5.8%

Table 14

Rank Order of Self-Identity

Self-identity	Average rank (1=most important)
Preacher	2.18
Leader	2.55
Other	3.09
Teacher	3.33
Theologian	3.62
Counselor	4.32
Organizer	4.33

Table 15

Seminarians' Level of Preparation by Graduating Seminary[4]

Area of preparation	Luther	LSTC	Gettys-burg	Phila-delphia	South-ern	Pacific	Wart-burg
Planning worship services	4.00	4.75	4.67	4.53	4.80	4.53	4.61
Teach confirmands	3.27	3.00	3.50	4.20	4.60	3.80	3.94
Planning a church budget	1.73	2.50	2.17	2.93	2.20	3.13	2.83
Spiritual guidance to members	3.86	3.88	3.17	4.13	5.00	3.67	4.17
Stewardship programs	2.09	2.71	2.83	3.20	3.40	3.27	2.83

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[4]Trinity Lutheran Seminary was not represented in the seminarian sample.

Table 16
First Call Leaders' and Seminarians' Level of Preparation

Area of preparation	First Call Leaders	Seminarians
Preaching	4.28	4.51
Planning worship services	4.27	4.46
Visiting members	4.19	4.62
Establishing trusting relationships with members	4.09	4.56
Teaching adults	4.08	4.16
Helping people deal with grief	3.93	4.09
Teaching youth	3.78	3.99
Preparing Sunday bulletins	3.73	3.92
Teaching children	3.70	3.75
Teaching confirmands	3.63	3.72
Providing spiritual direction/guidance to members	3.61	3.94
Working effectively with congregational leaders	3.56	3.88
Doing pastoral counseling	3.50	3.54
Working collaboratively with ecumenical partners	3.49	3.82
Giving guidance/support to committees	3.47	3.76
Providing a ministry of healing	3.40	3.88
Training/equipping others for their ministries	3.40	3.83
Visiting prospective members	3.26	3.65
Addressing social and ethical issues facing communities	3.17	3.66
Managing disputes and conflict situations	3.09	3.45
Managing a church office	2.99	3.15
Planning stewardship programs	2.46	2.81
Planning a church budget	2.34	2.52

Experiencing Your First Call to Public Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Division for Ministry, ELCA
(N=618)

Please answer the following questions by filling in the circle next to the response that best reflects your response. When filling in the circles, **completely fill** in the circle (●). **Please do not place a ✓ or an ✗ in or on top of the circles.** Feel free to make additional comments. Attach additional sheets as necessary.

1. As you think about the initial days and months in your first call to public ministry, to what extent did you feel **prepared** for the following congregational responsibilities? *Fill in one circle per item. If an item does not apply, just leave it blank and go on to the next.*

How prepared were you to . . .	Very Well 5	4	3	2	Not At All 1	Not Sure 9
a. visit members	45.3	36.1	13.4	3.4	1.3	0.5
b. visit prospective members	16.5	27.6	30.7	16.7	7.5	1.0
c. plan worship services	46.0	38.6	12.5	2.0	0.7	0.2
d. preach	47.4	39.1	10.1	1.9	1.0	0.5
e. prepare Sunday bulletins	32.9	31.2	19.3	10.2	5.1	1.2
f. teach confirmands	22.4	35.8	28.8	9.2	3.1	0.7
g. work effectively with congregational leaders	15.6	40.6	31.3	9.9	2.2	0.5
h. manage a church office	15.2	20.8	26.1	24.4	12.6	0.9
i. do pastoral counseling	19.1	32.9	30.9	13.7	2.9	0.5
j. give guidance/support to committees	14.1	38.8	32.2	10.4	4.0	0.5
k. plan a church budget	8.0	13.8	18.6	24.6	33.7	1.2
l. help people deal with grief	29.5	43.0	19.8	6.7	0.7	0.3
m. establish trusting relationships with members	35.3	45.0	15.3	2.7	1.2	0.5
n. manage disputes and conflict situations	5.3	34.2	33.7	19.3	5.8	1.7
o. work collaboratively with ecumenical partners	21.8	32.5	26.3	13.0	5.1	1.3
p. address social and ethical issues facing communities	9.5	31.1	35.0	17.3	5.6	1.5
q. provide a ministry of healing	18.0	33.2	28.2	14.4	3.8	2.4
r. provide spiritual direction/guidance to members	18.8	39.1	29.9	9.0	2.7	0.5
s. plan stewardship programs	3.1	16.1	28.0	30.7	20.6	1.6
t. train/equip others for their ministries	11.2	37.5	35.1	13.2	2.4	0.7
u. teach children	24.9	36.0	26.6	10.1	1.9	0.5
v. teach youth	25.3	40.6	23.1	9.0	1.7	0.3
w. teach adults	34.8	43.9	17.0	3.3	0.7	0.3

x. other:

2. Which of the above competencies would you like to further develop? Please write the letters of those items in the boxes below. In the first box, place the letter of the item that you feel would be a priority for you.

Competencies to further develop: 1. ☐   2. ☐   3. ☐   4. ☐

3. In your opinion, how **needed** are the following by the church in general and how well are you **prepared** to address each of the following? *Fill in one circle per item. If an item does not apply, just leave it blank and go on to the next.*

	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	Not Sure 9
a. helping congregations work toward a vision						
• level of need	73.3	21.2	4.0	0.8	0.5	0.2
• level of preparedness	8.4	31.2	40.8	12.8	5.9	1.0
b. helping congregations to revitalize their ministry						
• level of need	65.7	26.8	6.1	0.7	0.5	0.3
• level of preparedness	8.3	27.9	40.0	16.4	6.4	1.0
c. reaching out to unchurched persons						
• level of need	76.9	17.9	3.5	1.2	0.5	0.0
• level of preparedness	7.1	21.2	36.5	21.0	14.0	0.2
d. helping members deal with tough moral issues						
• level of need	30.4	38.8	26.7	3.0	0.8	0.3
• level of preparedness	10.1	35.5	38.6	12.3	2.4	1.2
e. leading worship that is sensitive to congregational context						
• level of need	44.2	36.1	14.6	2.4	1.9	0.8
• level of preparedness	27.5	43.0	19.6	6.3	2.7	0.9
f. involving congregations in community issues of justice						
• level of need	31.6	40.7	20.1	4.6	2.4	0.7
• level of preparedness	8.5	27.6	38.8	16.9	7.3	0.8
g. listening to people's questions and concerns						
• level of need	52.8	33.5	11.1	2.0	0.7	0.0
• level of preparedness	39.5	41.5	15.2	2.7	1.2	0.0
h. helping people grow spiritually						
• level of need	69.4	24.6	4.2	1.3	0.2	0.3
• level of preparedness	20.0	38.9	29.6	7.2	3.2	1.0
i. being a teaching theologian in your congregation						
• level of need	35.8	38.4	18.5	5.4	1.4	0.5
• level of preparedness	27.8	39.2	24.9	6.6	1.0	0.5

4. Thinking about the early months (or year) of your first call, how **difficult** were each of the following for you? *Fill in one circle per item. If an item does not apply, just leave it blank and go on to the next.*

	Very Difficult				Not at all Difficult	Not Sure
	5	4	3	2	1	9
a. planning worship/programs through the cycles of the first year	1.2	7.8	18.5	35.1	36.1	1.2
b. pacing myself with all the responsibilities to the congregation	19.8	29.8	30.5	14.7	5.2	0.0
c. pacing myself with all the responsibilities to my family	17.8	30.1	26.6	15.9	8.4	1.2
d. finding time for my own spiritual growth	25.1	36.1	23.3	10.5	5.0	0.0
e. discerning when to make changes in congregational practices	8.7	19.6	35.4	26.9	8.0	1.6
f. finding a mentor	21.0	17.7	13.9	13.7	31.0	2.8
g. recognizing and dealing with emerging conflicts	7.0	20.9	38.1	25.0	7.2	1.9
h. getting started with my continuing theological education	7.1	14.3	16.2	18.9	41.8	1.9
i. finding peer and colleague support	7.0	13.8	15.0	21.6	42.4	0.3
j. dealing with a sense of isolation	13.7	18.8	15.9	20.5	30.1	1.0
k. finding ways to move the congregation toward a mission-field perspective	27.4	26.4	24.1	11.9	5.8	4.4
l. managing personal debts and financial planning	12.4	16.8	20.7	21.1	28.0	1.0
m. dealing with tax law for church workers	23.6	22.3	16.5	15.4	16.1	6.2
n. learning about the congregation's culture and traditions	1.2	7.6	21.5	39.9	29.8	0.0
o. switching from seminary life/culture to congregational life/culture	4.3	10.1	19.5	25.9	39.2	1.1
p. applying my seminary training to the work before me	2.4	7.8	24.0	35.8	29.2	0.7
q. building an identity as a pastor or rostered lay leader	4.3	14.4	21.1	35.7	24.2	0.3
r. managing debt	10.3	15.8	21.2	20.1	31.2	1.4

5. How important are the following kinds of support during your first call experience? *Fill in one circle per item. If an item does not apply, just leave it blank and go on to the next.*

	Very Important				Not At All Important	Not Sure
	5	4	3	2	1	9
a. colleague group support	50.3	27.5	11.9	6.2	3.5	0.7
b. access to programmatic resources	21.9	32.7	28.1	12.0	3.4	1.9
c. an advisor with ministerial experience outside of the local community	31.8	26.0	19.0	12.5	5.3	5.4
d. the synod Bishop/staff	27.9	29.1	26.1	10.8	4.2	1.9
e. a mentor	40.9	32.7	15.3	5.7	1.6	3.8
f. mutual ministry committee (or comparable lay support group)	19.1	25.3	23.7	12.4	8.9	10.6

g. getting acquainted with leaders (Synod Bishop, staff, and other
   key leaders) in the synod 25.7 38.5 23.4 8.6 3.0 0.8

h. a spiritual director 24.4 24.2 20.2 12.7 9.2 9.4

i. opportunities for theological reflection on context and practice 26.9 37.0 22.7 8.4 2.5 2.4

j. counsel on how to handle conflict 27.8 38.1 22.6 8.4 1.9 1.2

k. personal financial planning 18.0 23.7 23.7 12.9 20.3 1.4

l. help on how to train and empower lay leaders 31.3 41.8 16.8 7.2 2.4 0.5

m. help on improving administrative skills 19.1 26.2 24.8 15.0 13.9 1.0

n. counsel on dealing with family in times of transition 9.9 25.4 30.5 18.8 12.4 3.1

o. counsel on technological challenges e.g., web-sites, worship
   presentations 11.9 22.2 27.8 17.2 17.5 3.4

p. counsel on self-care issues e.g., time management, health,
   boundaries, etc. 22.1 28.5 28.9 11.6 8.4 0.5

q. meeting the expectations from members concerning my
   responsibilities. 18.0 33.7 30.4 10.1 4.6 3.1

6. Through the synod or region's program of First Call Theological Education, I would like to **learn** more about . . .

7. My **self-identity** as a newly rostered leader is best expressed by . . . *Rank order only those that you feel apply, using 1 for the most important, etc.*

   _____ counselor   _____ theologian   _____ preacher   _____ organizer   _____ teacher   _____ leader

   _____ other:

8. How much did the following influence your decision to accept your first call? *Fill in one circle per item. If an item does not apply, just leave it blank and go on to the next.*

	Significant Impact				No Impact	Not Sure
	5	4	3	2	1	9
a. needs of the larger church	18.8	23.8	22.3	12.6	19.5	3.0
b. availability of a job for my spouse	31.2	13.0	10.3	6.3	37.5	1.6
c. needs of my children	18.7	12.6	11.0	8.1	45.8	3.8
d. concerns about paying off my educational debt	12.3	16.0	13.4	14.3	43.2	0.7
e. the geographic location of the congregation	36.2	25.3	16.0	8.6	12.9	0.9
f. the composition of the membership of the congregation	12.0	19.2	24.9	19.5	24.0	0.4
g. a sense of call	73.2	18.4	5.5	1.3	0.7	0.8

h. a preference for working as a solo pastor 17.2 21.4 13.5 6.9 36.2   4.8

i. a preference for working in a church with multiple staff 13.3 16.0 10.7 5.5 48.0   6.4

j. a preference for a certain type of church work like youth ministry . . 13.9 13.5 11.0 12.2 44.9   4.5

k. obligations to my extended family 10.3 14.4 12.3 11.5 47.8   3.7

l. long term career plans 9.0 13.1 17.1 14.0 44.3   2.5

m. other:

9. What specific suggestion would you make to improve the process of receiving a first call?

10. How closely did your expectations of a first call match your experience of first call? On a scale of 1 to 5, with "5" being <u>very closely</u> and "1" being <u>not closely at all</u>.

5	4	3	2	1	Not Sure
23.4	30.1	17.2	14.0	10.6	4.7

11. In addition to First Call Theological Education events, have you participated in any of these educational experiences in the past year? *Please select all that apply.*

88.7 Workshops or conferences	24.4 Preparation for teaching	5.8 Interactive video conferences
28.3 Education travel	16.0 For-credit courses	
30.1 Contemplative retreats	1.8 On-line courses	
0.6 Sabbatical leave	20.1 Worked with a spiritual director	

12. Think about the past year (or the time you've been in your first call). On a scale of 1 to 5 ("1" being "Very often" and "5" being "Not often"), how frequently did you participate in the following activities?

	Very Often				Not Often	I did not participate in this activity
	5	4	3	2	1	9
Reading books	38.4	24.3	20.2	11.8	5.1	0.2
Reading periodicals	30.0	29.3	22.6	11.0	6.4	0.7
Classes	5.8	13.6	23.4	20.5	20.7	16.1
Journaling	5.7	6.2	9.1	16.0	32.7	30.2
Internet research	33.6	21.5	17.6	14.0	9.7	3.6
Study group	23.5	20.0	16.9	14.3	12.8	12.6
Working with a mentor	11.7	20.8	22.1	12.7	13.6	19.1
Audio tape resources	2.5	5.1	6.8	12.8	32.1	40.7
Video tape resources	3.2	12.2	14.8	18.0	28.2	23.7

13. Please fill out the following information which will aid us in analysis.

   a. In what year were you born? _____

   b. In what year did you start your first call? _____

   c. Are you: 52.6 female   47.4 male

   d. Are you...
       91.4 Pastor
       6.3 Associate in Ministry
       2.1 Diaconal Minister
       0.2 Deaconess

   e.

	What Lutheran seminaries have you attended? *Check all that apply.*	From which seminary did you graduate? *Check one.*
Luther Seminary	25.3	20.5
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago	12.9	9.2
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg	10.5	8.4
The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia	10.0	7.9
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	9.7	8.2
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary	9.9	7.5
Trinity Lutheran Seminary	12.8	11.1
Wartburg Theological Seminary	11.0	8.9
I have not attended any of these seminaries	7.6	9.5

   f. If you worked full time prior to coming to seminary, what was the nature of the work you did?

   _____

   g. In what type of community did you spend the majority of your formative years?
       14.9 rural or open country   24.3 medium size city or its suburb (50,000 to 250,000)
       15.1 small town (under 10,000)   14.4 large city (250,000 or more)
       14.9 small city (10,000 to 50,000) 16.4 suburb of a large city

   h. Were you baptized in a Lutheran church as an infant?   60.1 yes   39.9 no

   i. Did you have a concentration in seminary? (e.g., rural, urban, multicultural studies)
       79.2 no
       20.8 yes ➜ What was your area of concentration? _____

Appendix B: Comments from First Call Survey
(N=618)

	Frequency
6. Through FCTE, I would like to learn more about...	(n=518)
1. Associate pastor/AIM	4.6
2. Administrative issues	10.0
3. Congregational issues (conflict, revitalizing, evangelism, training lay leaders)	38.8
4. Family and self-care (personal finances, spirituality, expectations, support)	17.2
5. Specific skills/resources (computers, church taxes, time management)	24.5
6. Leadership (role as a pastor and public leader)	4.8
7. My self-identity as a newly rostered leader is best expressed by...other:	(n=89)
1. Equipper/facilitator	13.5
2. Pastor	20.2
3. Healer/chaplain	6.7
4. Spiritual guide/other (child of God, disciple, partner, evangelist, servant, etc.)	40.4
5. Musician/liturgist	9.0
6. Principal/community figure	4.5
7. Janitor/handyman/administrator	5.6
9. What specific suggestion would you make to improve the first call process?	(n=341)
1. Wait (too long)	10.6
2. Information in seminary/support	2.3
3. Interview process (preparation, support, number of interviews)	24.3
4. Flexibility (in the process, geographically, consideration of spouse/family)	17.0
5. Fit (between candidate and congregation, not just filling spots)	12.3
6. Communication (between synod staff and candidate, honesty)	25.5
7. Salary/benefits/debt and negotiation	7.9
13f. Nature of full time work before seminary :	(n=471)
1. Parent	1.1
2. Education	17.6
3. Church-related	13.6
4. Professional (accountant, business, management)	38.6
5. Sales	8.7
6. Helping profession (nurse, social worker, counselor)	16.6
7. Military	3.8
13i. Concentration in seminary:	(n=117)
1. Rural	13.7
2. Urban	15.4
3. Multicultural/Hispanic	10.3
4. Pastoral care/counseling	12.8
5. Youth and family/education	20.5
6. Mission	3.4
7. Eco-justice/environmental/transformational	4.3
8. Healing	1.7
9. Aging	2.6
10. Spirituality/Theology/Liturgy	15.4