

Frequently Asked Questions about Becoming an Internship Site

Q: What qualifies someone to be a supervisor for internship?

A: A pastor should be in place in their congregation at least a year before taking on an intern. This gives the pastor the time they need to build relationships and trust with the congregation before adding an intern into the mix. A pastor should have at least three years of ordained experience. Our best supervisors are interested in reflecting on how they know what they know in order to help explain and coach interns in areas that might not come naturally to the intern. These supervisors also enjoy thinking theologically as well as practically. They want to help an intern discover their own pastoral identity and leadership style rather than simply trying to show interns how to pastor exactly as they do.

Q: What makes for a good internship site?

A: A congregation that is open to learning and trying new things alongside the intern as they bring their gifts and passions into internship is a necessary characteristic for internship sites. It needs to be a place where an intern can preach at least monthly and experience the breadth of pastoral ministry.

An intern may be able to help provide oversight or help in a specific area, such as youth ministry, mission or pastoral care. However, if what you really want/need is a program staff member who will mostly focus only on one aspect of ministry, the intern will not be able to gain the experience they need to be prepared for first call. Likewise, the congregation may be frustrated that their ministry needs are not being met because the intern needs to focus on other areas of pastoral development. An intern is not the solution to “our youth minister just left, what should we do?”

Q: What are the best kinds of settings for internship?

A: Some congregations or supervisors assume they may not be a good internship setting because they think interns are only interested in being in bustling cities. Trinity attracts students with a diversity of ministry interests. Some would like to be in an urban and/or multicultural setting, but others are very interested in small town or rural ministry. The quality of the supervisor and the openness of the congregation are more important than the location of the site.

A site that is not already engaged in multicultural ministry, interfaith dialogue, or social justice ministry might still be a great match for a student with those interests as long as the internship site is open the intern helping the congregation figure out how to engage in those arenas.

Q: I've heard that seminaries prefer internship sites to be RIC? Do we have to be RIC to get an intern?

A: Seminaries are seeing an increase in candidates who are gender and sexual minorities. The more open your congregation is to the breadth of possible interns, the more likely Trinity will have an intern who might be a match for you. Whether your congregation has the official designation of RIC or not, there are ways you can start a conversation that could move the congregation to more openness to the diversity of possible interns. Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) has a guide for helping congregations expand their view of what a pastoral leader might be like. They also have a specific resource tailored towards preparing a congregation for an intern who is a gender or sexual minority. Visit <https://www.elm.org/resources/> to check out ELM's resources. For a congregation to be a good match for an LGBTQIA intern, the supervisor and an internship committee would need to be ready to

fully support the intern. The supervisor and council would need to be ready to take on work that might arise from congregation members who are uncomfortable with LGBTQIA leadership. We want the intern's main focus during internship to be on learning how to lead, not defending their place as a leader.

Q: I've heard that Trinity only wants to focus on Region 6 internship sites, is that true?

A: We have many connections within Region 6 and so naturally, many of our internship sites have been developed through those connections. However, we are open to developing partnerships all across the country. In recent history, we have placed students in Florida, Washington, Iowa, Rhode Island, Texas and Virginia. We continue to try to diversify our matrix of internship sites.

Q: Can an intern be placed in a "detached" internship site?

A: Yes! We have multiple students currently serving in smaller congregations as the sole pastoral presence. Their supervisor is a nearby pastor, active or retired, who commits to weekly meeting and ongoing support of the intern throughout the span of their internship. For students who have the leadership capacity, "detached" sites can be an excellent opportunity for them to grow. "Detached" sites often give the best view of what first call will look like and allow students to learn about redevelopment ministry as part of internship. For "detached" sites to work well, support from the synod where the internship site is located is crucial. The synod can really help lay the groundwork for preparing the congregation for an intern pastor. Occasionally, someone from the synod office may be called upon to help remind a council or congregation about their role in supporting an intern in their learning. In some detached sites, the bishop, in consultation with the bishop of the synod where the student is a candidate, will give permission for the student to preside at Eucharist during internship. (Some students are designated as SAM's for this purpose.) Other bishops may prefer to help coordinate bringing in a retired pastor to attend to the sacraments while the intern is serving on internship.

Q: Can multi-point ministries be considered for internship?

A: Because our students are balancing coursework while completing internship, we have found that more than two sites as part of internship is too much to take on. However, in some situations, a combination of a traditional site with a mission satellite or non-traditional ministry can provide an excellent learning opportunity for a student. A two-point parish where the student is serving alongside an established pastor could also be a possibility. The student would need to be someone who is organized and has a good sense of managing time. A strong supervisor who can help structure the time split between the two sites will be important. For a "detached" site internship, where the student is the sole pastoral presence and preaching weekly, it is best to stick to one ministry site.

Q: How is Trinity's internship program the same or different than other ELCA internship programs.

A: Most of Trinity's students are part of our 2+2 curriculum. This means students take two years of coursework on campus and then take part in a 2-year (22 month) internship process. While on internship they may take up to two courses per semester in either an online or intensive format. Online courses take place throughout an academic semester. Students read, post online, and write papers. These courses typically do not require students to login at one particular time during the week to take the class. Intensive courses require students to read and do some smaller writing projects before they come to campus for a week of face-to-face classroom contact. After the intensive week, students return

to their site and engage in a final project. We are continuing to adapt our curriculum so that the classes students take during internship dovetail with their internship. For instance, now, instead of taking a systematic theology intensive while on internship, students will take Theology of Mission. While students are in classes, we expect them to serve their internship site directly 30-35 hours a week and study for an additional 10-15 hours a week. Between semesters or if a student is taking less classes, we expect their serving in the congregation to scale up towards a typical 40 hour week of serving in the congregation.

Q: When do Trinity internships typically start?

A: We encourage students to start their internship as early in July as possible. We have found that having time to get orientated and start building relationships at the internship site before online coursework begins in late August provides the smoothest internship start. This early start-time is crucial for interns in “detached” site internships who will be preaching every week. The beginning of August is the latest we recommend for an internship start-date.

Q: This 2-Year internship sounds different than previous internships we have experienced. What are the benefits?

A: There is typically a learning curve during the first few months of internship while the student figures out how to manage coursework and internship. The congregation may also have to adjust to seeing slightly less of the intern than they were used to with a one-year internship. However, the extended period of time on internship allows the students to build deeper relationships with staff and congregation members, truly get to know and understand the particular needs of the church, and contribute in significant ways. As students complete their first year, many supervisors, internship committees and students comment that they can't imagine the student leaving already. They are just hitting their stride! Because students are in place longer, we have had students develop ministry teams, such as Stephen's Ministry or a technology/media ministry team. Students get to experience two cycles of the church year and deeply engage with planning, leading, and administrative ministry in a way that is not possible in one year. Because most students go through the Approval Process in the fall of their second year and enter the Spring Assignment Process, the congregation gets to walk alongside them, pray for them, and support them as they interview for their first call. Instead of preparing students for their first call in the future, internship sites are now able to see the fruits of their labor as the student moves from internship to first call.

Q: Does Trinity still do any traditional one year internships?

A: Yes! We are seeing an increase in affiliated students at Trinity. These students are completing the majority of their M.Div at a non-ELCA seminary and come to Trinity for specifically Lutheran courses and internship. These students can choose to complete a traditional one-year internship or a two-year internship depending on which courses they need to take and other life circumstances. Some of these students are unrestricted and can go anywhere for internship. Others have very specific geographic needs for their internships.

Q: I've heard that more students are geographically restricting. What if Trinity won't have an intern for us this year?

A: All ELCA seminaries are finding that we have more students who have particular placement needs and fewer students who are open to go anywhere. However, the restrictions our students have on placement are not always to the Columbus Metro area. You may be the very site we need for a student with a restriction. We also continue to have students who are open to move. ELCA seminaries have a policy that a potential internship site should apply with just one seminary. This keeps students from being caught in the middle of the various placement processes that each seminary employs. However, the seminaries work closely with each other to share sites in hopes that all students will get placements and the most internship sites as possible are utilized year to year.

Q: Do students ever need placements in an agency or other non-church setting?

Our ELCA Word and Sacrament students are required to complete internship in a congregational based setting. However, our Word and Service students who aspire to become Deacons in the ELCA have a lot more flexibility in completing their internship experience. Depending on their specific vocational needs, Word and Service students may learn through an accredited CPE residency or through a partnership with a non-profit agency or ministry.

Q: We are not an ELCA congregation, could we have an intern placed with us?

Trinity is working to expand the diversity of our student population. We typically work with students from other traditions to find an appropriate placement for their internship needs. Because of the particularities of our students from other traditions, we typically work to actively recruit an internship site as the need arises. While we can't promise we will have a student who is an appropriate match for your church year to year, it is worth letting us know of your interest so that when the need arises we can reach out to you. Students from other traditions are required to complete 1000 hours of internship. Students may complete those hours in a full-time or part-time capacity.

Q: What does Trinity's Placement Process Look Like?

A: We ask sites to complete site application forms by December 1st for a placement the following summer. If you are interested in being an internship site, but need an extension beyond the December 1st deadline, please contact TJ Carpenter, Assistant for Academic and Contextual Matters, at tcarpenter@capital.edu to express your interest and talk through what kind of extension you might need. After you have applied, The Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation will schedule a video conference call to learn more about your site and supervision style to try to determine which students might be a match for your congregation. A reference check will be run through your synod's Bishop. Interviews typically occur in late January or the month of February. Ideally, placements are finalized no later than March. If a student is placed with you, the supervisor is required to attend a two day internship orientation with their student. Depending on when Easter falls, this orientation occurs anywhere between late April and early June. The Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation should be able to let you know the dates of the orientation when you are in the application process.

Q: We applied last year, or two years ago. Do we need to fill out an application form again?

A: Please contact tcarpenter@capital.edu for instructions. It is possible you will be able to review what you submitted in the past to make sure it is still accurate instead of starting from scratch.

Q: How much does an internship cost a congregation?

A: See the attached financial details page.

Q: I still have more questions. How can I get answers?

A: Contact TJ Carpenter at tcarpenter@capital.edu He will either be able to answer your questions or schedule a phone conversation with the Director of Contextual and Experiential Formation.