



First Call Theological Education Alternative Education Opportunity

We understand that there are many factors which determine that a pastor may not be able to participate in one of the six required sessions of First Call Theological Education (FCTE) that are organized by the Sierra Pacific Synod. An alternative educational program may be substituted for one of the six required sessions of FCTE. The following is meant to assist pastors in making arrangements for alternative programming in these cases.

The alternative program should be for a minimum of 25 contact hours (50 minutes equals 1 contact hour) and must address at least one of the following components:

- The faith, theological understanding, or spiritual discipline of the pastor
- The articulation of an evangelical pastoral ministry
- An understanding of appropriate and inappropriate conduct in the pastoral role
- Collegiality, accountability, or mutuality in ministry on the roster of the ELCA
- The complexity of demands, expectations, challenges, and disappointments of ministerial leadership
- Joy and fulfillment in congregational ministry
- Effectiveness in the translation and articulation of God's word in daily living.
- Listening, respecting, and attending to the following contextual realities:
 - the history and present character of the congregation and its members,
 - the neighborhood and wider community,
 - the state and region,
 - the nation and the world
 - and synodical, churchwide, and ecumenical expressions of the church

While bringing the following factors to bear in the consideration of these contextual realities:

- the interpersonal relationships of your ministry
- the cultural and ethnic realities of your ministry
- the socio-economic realities of your ministry
- the geo-political issues in your ministry
- The development and/or implementation of any of the following:

- Preaching
- worship leadership
- teaching
- evangelism
- intentional outreach
- stewardship
- community building in the congregation
- development of lay leaders
- administration
- conflict transformation
- youth/children/family ministry
- social ministry
- ecumenical dialogue and cooperation

The cost of the alternative program may be financed by the designated FCTE funds of the congregation that were included in the compensation agreement with the pastor. The program may not be eligible for the financial subsidies of the Sierra Pacific Synod that have been designated for FCTE. However, there may be alternative sources of funding which the synod staff can help you identify.

For an alternative program to qualify as a substitution for an FCTE it must be approved by the bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod. Prior to the scheduled FCTE gathering that this alternative program will substitute, pastors should submit a written proposal for the alternative FCTE opportunity that includes the following:

- The name of the program and organization administering it
- The number of contact hours and timeline in which it will be completed
- Cost and location of the program
- Which of the objectives above it will meet
- The pastor's personal learning objectives

After the program is completed, a written report should be sent to the Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod reflecting on the learning done by the pastor and the application it will have in the coming years of ministry. This report should be submitted no later than 60 days after the completion of the program.