

THE VICARAGE – GENERAL INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Students in the Master of Divinity Program ordinarily serve a vicarage after completing approximately two-thirds of the required classroom courses. The minimum length of vicarage is twelve months. The vicarage is a vital part of the seminary's M. Div. Program, and the chief purpose of the vicarage is to further the formation of the student leading to certification for the pastoral office in the LC-MS.

ACTIVITIES

Vicars are to participate in or observe all facets of the parish ministry. They normally preach for regular services at least once a month, with evening services and chapel services for the day school or midweek school offering supplemental preaching experiences. They participate in evangelism programs and youth ministries, teach confirmation and Bible classes, visit the sick and shut-ins, assist in administration, conduct liturgies, attend meetings, and acquaint themselves with grief and crisis counseling procedures and principles. Rather than the vicar focusing on only one area (e.g., youth ministry), he needs a broad range of experiences in preparation for the pastoral office.

OFFICIAL ACTS

According to guidelines mutually adopted by the seminaries and the Council of Presidents, vicars do not usually conduct the official acts of administering the Sacraments, performing marriages or conducting funerals, since these are normally reserved for ordained clergymen. Vicars, however, may assist pastors with such things as the distribution of the Lord's Supper and various portions of weddings, funerals, and other occasional services. If an exception needs to be made in this area, authorization from both the District President and seminary official should be obtained.

SUPERVISION

In cooperation with the seminary's director of vicarage, a congregation's pastor serves as the vicar's mentor and supervisor, and all of the vicar's responsibilities should be cleared through him. The supervisor should delineate clearly the duties assigned to the vicar, meet regularly with the vicar for evaluation and fraternal discussion of the vicar's work, and submit to the seminary the reports requested during the year. The director of vicarage at the Fort Wayne seminary is available for consultation via email (Richard.nuffer@ctsfw.edu) or telephone (260-452-2273). The director of vicarage at the St. Louis seminary is available for consultation via e-mail (vicarage@csf.edu) or telephone (314-505-7211).

FINANCES

A vicar is not expected to subsidize his own vicarage. Thus, his housing, an auto allowance and reasonable moving expenses (self move) from and to the seminary should be covered by the congregation. These costs will need to be determined locally. In addition, the vicar should receive a monthly stipend, and the Council of Presidents has set this stipend at \$1,400 per month or higher, depending on local living standards. The

vicar is subject to federal and state income taxes, and social security taxes. He will also have health insurance costs. Currently, the requirement is at least \$6,000 for the year unless actual costs are less (which may be the case for a single vicar). If the student's health insurance costs are more than the \$6,000 (which may be the case for a vicar with a family), congregations are encouraged to provide additional assistance, but are not required to do so. (NOTE: Vicars who will be returning to the seminary for classes are ineligible for participation in the Concordia Plans). Also included in the congregation's budget should be money for the supervisor's travel and housing for the annual Vicarage Supervisors Conference usually held in September. There is also an educational fee (\$579.00 per year) the congregation is to cover for the vicar. The seminaries encourage congregations to provide for the vicar a day off each week and two weeks of paid vacation during the vicarage.

APPLICATIONS

A congregation may secure a vicarage application form from the district president, who will also furnish information about procedures and deadlines for submitting applications. When approved by the district president, the application is sent to the Board for Pastoral Education (BPE), which then forwards a copy of the application to each seminary.

ASSIGNMENTS

Most students are assigned vicarages by the Council of Presidents in late April or early May of each year. Such vicarages normally begin in early August, although a few students can begin earlier in the summer. Depending upon the availability of students, a smaller number of assignments are made in October (for vicarages beginning December 1) and January (for vicarages beginning March 1).