

VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEPARTMENT OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY

LAY SUPPORT TEAM (LST) GUIDELINES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
CONTACT INFORMATION	2
INTRODUCTION	3
The Typical Process Toward Ordination.....	3
The Seminary Context: An Overview	4
THE LAY SUPPORT TEAM	5
Purpose	5
Function.....	5
Organization	6
HOW TO PLAN A MONTHLY MEETING.....	9
Developing Discussion Topics: Three Methods.....	9
SAMPLE AGENDAS	11
Middler Year	11
Optional Senior Year (Continuing At Same Site).....	15
One-Year Seniors, Anglican Studies & Theology Seminararians.....	18
Intensive: 8-week	20

VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEPARTMENT OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY

PREFACE

These guidelines, distilled from the experience of educators and Seminararians, define the Lay Support Team's (LST's) contributions to theological education as part of the Holy Spirit's work to guide "into all truth." (John 16:13).

For more information about the CXM program or Seminararian context, speak with the Seminararian, Supervisor, or the CXM Dept. Further information is provided on our CXM website on the VTS webpage.

A special thanks to the Rt. Rev. James, R. Mathes, the Rev. Dr. Allison St. Louis, the Rev. Jacques Hadler, the Very Rev. William S. Pregnall, and the Rev. Edward Morgan III, who created and contributed to past iterations of this manual.

Changes on Brightspace take precedence over instructions in CXM manual

Lay Support Team Guidelines
Spring Term 2026

VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEPARTMENT OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY

CONTACT INFORMATION

MAILING ADDRESS	The Department of Contextual Ministry Virginia Theological Seminary, #104 3737 Seminary Road Alexandria, VA 22304
DIRECTOR OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY	Laura O. White Phone: 703-461-1744 Email: lwhite@vts.edu Office: Aspinwall 104
COORDINATOR OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY	Kordel Nelson Phone: 703-461-1744 Email: knelson@vts.edu Office: Bohlen 103
LAY SUPPORT TEAM (LST) COORDINATOR	TBD

PRIMARY RESOURCES

THE VTS WEBSITE	http://www.vts.edu
THE PARISH	Clergy, vestry, and parishioners should understand and affirm lay support ministry Example: <i>The Lay Support Team may be commissioned at a Sunday service the Fall of its first year and/or recognized for its ministry in the Spring of its last year.</i>
CXM COORDINATOR	Provides practical guidance for LSTs, as needed
CXM DIRECTOR	Has overall responsibility for the CXM program and is available to LSTs and Conveners of Senior and Anglican Studies Seminararians, particularly on matters of policy or conflict
THE SEMINARY	Dean, faculty, and staff show support notably on occasions, such as the Spring CXM “Celebrating our Contextual Ministry Journey” Event..

VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEPARTMENT OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

THE TYPICAL PROCESS TOWARD ORDINATION

Most, though not all, Master of Divinity and Anglican Studies Seminarians are Postulants for Holy Orders. The typical process aids their transition from laity to clergy. Therefore, these guidelines focus primarily on Postulants, but are easily altered for Seminarians pursuing lay ministry. Postulants are subject to a two-part process with several core elements, spanning approximately 4-5 years.

PART I. THE DIOCESAN PROCESS

1-2 YEARS	The Aspirant/Applicant: • Seeks support of their rector • Applies to the Bishop • Submits to a parish-based process for Vestry recommendation • In some Dioceses, interns or shadows in another parish • Interviews with Diocesan Commission on Ministry (COM) or a subcommittee thereof, and then with the Bishop • Bishop admits the Aspirant as <i>Postulant for Holy Orders</i>
------------------	--

PART II. THE SEMINARY PROCESS

JUNIOR YEAR	The Postulant: • Enters seminary • Engages in the CXM call process • Participates in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) the summer after Junior Year
MIDDLER YEAR	• Begins and completes VTS CXM requirements • Interviews with COM for recommendation as a <i>Candidate for Holy Orders</i> by Diocesan Standing Committee • Interviews with Standing Committee for recommendation to the Bishop • Bishop admits Postulant as a <i>Candidate</i> • Summer open for work or education, with some dioceses requiring a full-time parish training program
SENIOR YEAR	The Candidate: • <i>Optional</i>-Continues CXM for the academic year • Takes the General Ordination Examination (GOE) • Engages in the diocesan process for <i>Diaconal Ordination</i> • Bishop certifies Candidate for ordination as <i>Deacon</i> • Searches for positions in pastoral ministry • Ordination to the Diaconate • Graduation

THE SEMINARY CONTEXT: AN OVERVIEW

Theological education meshes complex academic and practical disciplines. It is also a journey for Seminarians encountering God as part of a diverse community and seeking to respond appropriately.

At Virginia Theological Seminary, there are **four** major dimensions to this process:

1. Learning Christian tradition through the Bible, Church History, Theology, Christian Formation, and Ethics
2. Learning capacities for theological reflection on both tradition and ministry
3. Developing practical ministerial skills such as preaching, teaching, liturgical and congregational leadership
4. Spiritual formation through worship, private prayer, counseling, corporate worship, and Spiritual Direction

Dimensions are meant to be fluid, flexible, and interactive.

Although seminary does not complete this process, it prepares the foundation for practical ministry and constant theological reflection.

For most Seminarians, theological education occurs at **two** locations:

1. The VTS Community- where the four dimensions are taught academically
2. The CXM Site- the laboratory for application and integration

On-site CXM provides **three** integration arenas:

1. Individual Supervision- taking place weekly or bi-weekly
2. Colloquy- a peer reflection group facilitated by Practical Theology faculty and seniors, meeting weekly during the Middler year
3. The Lay Support Team- a lay reflection group meeting monthly

THE LAY SUPPORT TEAM

PURPOSE

You (the Lay Support Team or LST) are the forum for your Seminarian to wrestle over the essential ministry of the church in lay and clergy contexts and the differences in each. You are **not** for discernment of call.

As an *effective* LST, you:

- Commit fully to the Seminarian, the Seminary, each other, and to the Church
- Assist the Seminarian in their development as a Christian Spiritual Leader
- Walk with the Seminarian as fellow disciples, sharing common joys and struggles of life and faith

Tension exists in simultaneously giving honest feedback and support, in working together in each session, and in giving a final comprehensive assessment. Acknowledging and embracing this tension allows for deeper spiritual formation.

See the LST Evaluation of Seminarian

FUNCTION

As an *effective* LST, you maintain balance in all functions:

LISTENING

Listen to Seminarian experience. Seek clarity and mutual understanding. Active listening gets beneath the surface to greater meaning, feeling, and value. Active listening and thoughtful response are essential.

EMPATHIZING

Identify with your Seminarian as they face significant decisions and turning points.

FACILITATING REFLECTION

Facilitate *Seminarian reflection* on ministry, both negative and positive.

GIVING SUPPORTIVE AND CHALLENGING FEEDBACK

Tell the Seminarian how they come across *to you*. This is not an objective and final judgment, but subjective with concrete evidence provided.

- ***Support-*** Express encouragement, hope, care, forgiveness, acceptance, and love in your own words. Support includes steadfastness through disagreement, failure, and

confusion, and is held in equal step with accountability.

- ***Challenge-*** Be lovingly candid, question assumptions, reframe, and encourage Seminararians to act outside their own comfort. You can model this relationship of mutual authority.

Remembering that the Seminararian is still in formation, each form of feedback is:

- **Descriptive**, *not judgmental* -
 - **Example:** "When you read the lesson, I couldn't hear you" vs. "Your voice is too weak."
- **Specific**, *not general* -
 - **Example:** "Reviewing the agenda before we began was helpful to me" vs. "You sure conduct a good meeting."
- **Timely**- The best feedback is near in time to the corresponding event
- **Considerate**- Constructive feedback that is truthful, but not hurtful, is invaluable

Remember: Feedback is easily received and highly valued if you trust and respect each other.

ORGANIZATION

THE LST CONVENER

Your LST Convener is appointed by the CXM Supervisor.

If you are invited to become a LST Convener, ask yourself:

- Am I organized enough to keep track of tasks and due dates?
- Do I have the additional time to spend with the Seminararian one-on-one, as necessary?
- Am I able to ask a Team Member to step down, if necessary?
- Am I willing to ask for help from the Seminary, if necessary?

If you agree to serve as the LST Convener:

- **Due April 1-** Provide contact information to the CXM Supervisor to be sent to the CXM Dept.
- Meet with the Seminararian and CXM Supervisor on or after the last Monday of April of Junior year to discuss:
 - Preliminary learning goals
 - Functions and processes
 - Selection of LST Members
- In consultation with the CXM Supervisor, recruit **3-7 LST Members** the Summer before your Seminararian begins CXM. Base invitations on Seminararian priorities, learning goals and Members available for this ministry.
- **Due August 1st** Provide confirmation and member names to the CXM Dept.

Plan to attend the orientation with the seminarian, and bring information back to the LST, so all are informed of process and expectations.

Your duties include:

- Distributing LST Guidelines prior to on-site CXM
- Attending orientations and trainings offered (the same orientation workshop as your Seminarian, if possible), sharing the information with the team members.
- Notifying Members and Seminarian of meeting times and places
- Planning meeting agendas with the Seminarian and informing Members of the agenda ahead of time, especially when responding to liturgical activities
- Convening and ending meetings on time and providing leadership
- Sending the Seminarian Evaluation to the Supervisor and Seminarian by date indicated on the CXM Timeline
- Contacting the CXM Coordinator if resigning before the end of the year
- Contacting the CXM Coordinator or LST Coordinator should issues arise

LST MEMBERS, STRUCTURE, AND EXPECTATIONS

Your LST will be 3-7 members, diversely representing the community and reflecting Seminarian learning goals.

LST Members cannot:

- Be any ordained individual
- Be exploring their own call to ordained ministry or have family members exploring a call
- Have explored their own call to ordained ministry
- Be a family member of the clergy supervisor.

While helpful *individually*, their presence may cause unequal power dynamics and be counter-productive to an effective LST.

If you are considering serving on an LST, ask yourself:

- Do I have time, monthly, to spend in a 2-hour meeting?
- Do I want to invest myself in the guidance of a Seminarian?
- Do I want to learn the processes of the Episcopal Church related to priestly formation?
- Should I learn more to be of help?
- Do I have strong opinions about the Episcopal Church that may inhibit active listening?
- Am I able to maintain confidentiality?
- Am I able to be honest and still be kind?
- What are my expectations of priests that bias my thoughts and opinions?
- Am I comfortable withdrawing early enough to let someone else take on the task?
- Am I able to discuss differences of opinion without contention?

Changes on Brightspace take precedence over instructions in CXM manual

Lay Support Team Guidelines
Spring Term 2026

If you agree to serve on an LST:

- You attend as many meetings as possible, missing no more than two of eight.
- You are present at events when the Seminarian requests feedback on preaching or teaching.

VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEPARTMENT OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY

HOW TO PLAN A MONTHLY MEETING

BASIC AGENDA

• Prayer • Check-in <i>15-30 minutes</i> • Meeting topic(s)	• Agenda suggestions for next meeting • Prayer
---	---

DO:	DON'T:
• Establish regular locations, dates, start times • Arrange a comfortable setting • Get to know each other personally and develop trust • Plan • Meet beginning in September and meet each month through April, totaling eight for the academic year • Discuss concerns and identify issues • Establish ground rules ◦ Examples: <i>confidentiality, attendance, shared responsibilities</i>	• Muddle social and meeting time ◦ Example: <i>end the coffee-and-dessert and start the meeting; end the meeting and serve the coffee-and-dessert</i> • Discuss an absent third party or bemoan situations on site – or elsewhere • Excuse absenteeism or breach of ground rules without question • Give Seminarian, Convener, or any committee Member position to dominate the agenda or discussion

DEVELOPING DISCUSSION TOPICS: THREE METHODS

I. CURRICULUM AND ISSUES: THE SEMINARIAN'S LIFE AND WORK

CURRICULUM <i>Have your Seminarian provide their course schedule and syllabi. Focus on one course per meeting, with the goal of mutual understanding.</i>	Examples: The Seminarian is studying the Gospels. Discuss: • The material's meaning to the Seminarian and to Lay Support Team Members • How Team Members use the Bible; what different approaches to interpretation various individuals take The Seminarian is studying Liturgics. Discuss: • Salient points • Lay attitudes to various liturgical practices • How the BCP is or should be used • How these relate to the CXM Site context
ISSUES <i>Assist in working out healthy balance.</i>	Example: First Semester Middlers often struggle with time management Discuss:

	• The reality of struggle for the Seminarian at VTS and on-site • How this struggle reflects full-time ministry • How you engage in the same struggle • What is at stake in setting limits on time and commitments • How do self-expectation and other's expectations exacerbate
--	--

II. ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

THE LEARNING COVENANT <i>Refer to the Learning Covenant for specific goals</i>	Example: The Seminarian wants to gain proficiency in leading worship • Observe the Seminarian in action, make notes or use the <i>Listener Response to Reading Scripture in Worship</i> • Provide feedback at the next meeting • Identify and discuss what "proficiency" means – to whom
PASTORAL ACTIVITIES AND AREAS <i>Select an area where the Seminarian is concerned or where they are currently involved on-site</i>	Example: Pastoral counseling. Discussion could include: • Committee Members' assessment of the ministry's value • Whether and how it can be shared by clergy and laity • How they see the Seminarian developing skills Discussion could help Seminararians clarify whether to seek certain CXM experiences or certain courses.
ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY <i>Select a current event or debate in the world, the Seminarian's life, or a Team Member's life to address issues in Christian ministry</i>	Examples: • The Church's role in peace efforts • Lay ministry in the world and in the Church • What constitutes positive clergy leadership in response to creation care, evangelism, and racial reconciliation Seek to stay with personal convictions, objective data, and realistic possibilities. Remember: <i>Seek mutual understanding above agreement.</i>

III. THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR FRAMEWORK

- Provides more structure and presents approaches described above. Any part may be used independently.
- Center discussion on issues and practices relevant to the Seminarian.

NOTE

Some teams make Bible Study a regular part of each meeting. Do not assume leadership responsibility falls to the Seminarian. Rotation allows all an opportunity to work on leadership and allows the Seminarian to participate as a member — a position that supports lay ministry.

VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEPARTMENT OF CONTEXTUAL MINISTRY

SAMPLE AGENDAS

These are unfixed forms. You and your Seminarian always determine final agendas.

MIDDLER FALL SEMESTER

PRIOR TO START DATE	• The LST Convener meets with the Supervisor for an initial organizational meeting to discuss the Seminarian's place on site, expectations of the team, and how your work correlates • The Convener distributes copies of the CXM Manual and the LST Guidelines • At the initial LST meeting, the LST Convener conveys the thoughts and expectations of the CXM Supervisor. The Team gets to know each other and establishes mutual expectations for meetings and conduct. • Discuss the Seminarian Learning Covenant. Please be sure to have copies available.
SEPTEMBER Attend the LST Orientation.	Allow for introductions with the Seminarian. "Ice breakers" may help: Spiritual Journeys: Share a very brief spiritual autobiography. Consider: - What were your childhood understandings and experiences of God? - How does your history intersect with God – or does it? <i>Summarize your history first.</i> - What are your current moral dilemmas and spiritual delights? - What is your sense of the future for your faith? In round-robin fashion, share autobiographies for about ten minutes. Ask questions to clarify understanding but remember: there is no right or wrong. At meeting's end, note commonality and differences between Members and the Seminarian. Self-Introduction and Expectations: Introduce yourself with whatever personal data seems appropriate, including something the group may not know. In all self-introductions, share however you are comfortable. Neither you nor your Seminarian need to reveal more than you wish. In addition, the Seminarian may take the opportunity to share expectations for working on-site and expectations of work with the Team, using a basic description of current courses and their Learning Covenant. Respond with your own expectations. Discuss. Clarifying expectations is an important step. <i>Get to know the Seminarian outside of formal meetings. Make introductions to site members who otherwise might not be met or who are important to meet.</i>
OCTOBER	Via the LST Convener, you receive copies of the Seminarian Learning Covenant. Plan your time and discussion accordingly. Continue building trust and familiarity. Discuss issues from the September

	meeting or explore Site culture. For the third option, the Seminarian introduces some categories from the Seminarian Reflection Paper. <i>Ask your Seminarian to provide Seminarian Reflection questions</i>
NOVEMBER	By now the Seminarian has connection on-site • Explore "belonging": ○ What helps one feel included? What hinders? ○ Have Members experienced similar feelings to those of the Seminarian? ○ How does Jesus address inclusion? What does this mean in relation to this community? To the wider church? ○ How do we build community in a parish, community, or small group? ○ How do we celebrate inclusion? ○ How do we deal with lingering feelings of exclusion? ○ How do we reach out? [cf. Henri Nouwen, <u>Reaching Out</u>. Doubleday, 1975.] <i>If your Site is a parish:</i> by now the Seminarian should be preaching. Begin with ground rules for feedback before responding to a specific sermon. <i>See Sermon Response Form</i>
DECEMBER <i>This is a "short month" as classes end in the second week. A long break follows, covering the Christmas Season and January.</i>	<i>If your Site is a parish:</i> Provide a feedback session on liturgical leadership. • Rather than rely solely on your opinions, use The Listener Response to Reading Scripture in Worship, as it is consistent with proper oral interpretation of Scripture • Dispense to several worshipers when the Seminarian is reading Scripture. All responders must sign forms to follow-up. • Collect and tabulate • Use tabulation at the December meeting to discuss feedback Seminarrians needing remedial help must be notified to provide time for improvement. <i>See Listener Response to Reading Scripture in Worship</i> Because breaks disconnect Seminarian and Site, prepare. Discuss plans and ways to keep connection. • Some Seminarrians will be away entirely. In this case, praying for them in the prayers of the people and explaining their absence may be enough. • Other Seminarrians may take Jan. Term intensives and attend on-site activities to maintain contact. Still others will do a Jan. Term Intensive on-site and continue an active presence. • Your Seminarian may negotiate early return to the Site in exchange for finishing CXM early. For this last option, the team can begin second semester meetings in January rather than February.

MIDDLER SPRING SEMESTER

FEBRUARY <i>Seminarians return either the last Sunday in January or the first Sunday of February.</i>	Meet as soon as the semester begins to "catch up". This meeting may take longer than two hours. Discuss: Over break, your Seminarian may: • Make important contact with- ○ Their home parish ○ Diocesan officials ○ Extended family • Have participated in- ○ a cross-cultural internship ○ a retreat ○ intensive courses New courses and exercises leadership responsibility on-site. Discuss. This semester's Seminarian Reflection Paper concerns God's sacred story with this community, including current leadership. Discuss. <i>Ask your Seminarian to provide Seminarian Reflection questions. See the CXM Timeline</i>
MARCH	Review the Seminarian's ministry on-site prior to the April session. Remember: Each member must fill out an individual LST Evaluation of Seminarian form to bring to the April meeting. <i>See LST Evaluation of Seminarian</i> <i>If your Site is a parish:</i> • Discuss a Seminarian's sermons but spend no more than one session a semester responding unless it is a primary learning goal or there are serious problems with homiletics. • In the second case, notify Supervisor, Seminarian, and CXM Director to schedule an appointment between all concerned, including the Homiletics faculty. Each designated listener fills out The Sermon Response Form immediately after that sermon. Use this form to discuss as soon as possible. <i>See Sermon Response Form</i>
APRIL <i>The Feedback Session</i>	Submit the Evaluation to the Supervisor and Seminarian by the date indicated on the CXM Timeline. Evaluation copies are sent to the CXM Director and Seminarian via email but are meant to inform the Seminarian and Supervisor's evaluation session in May. <u>INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION PROCESS</u> Each Member completes the LST Evaluation of Seminarian-Middler form. Describe Seminarian behavior in categories important to ministry. If you have not noticed any behavior in some categories, say so. This still provides basis for the assessment.

	Your task is to determine <i>your</i> standards and their weight as you comment. The clearer the standards; the better the Seminararian's understanding of how laity assesses ministry. Bringing individual standards to group conversation determines which are reasonable or unreasonable. <u>GROUP ASSESSMENT PROCESS</u> <i>We require the assessment of the Seminararian in the group setting. Assessments should not be submitted that have not been openly shared and discussed with the Seminararian.</i> This is an important opportunity for the Seminararian to set future learning goals. <i>If you are an LST Member:</i> • Bring your completed Evaluation to share • Each member will share their evaluation. The Seminararian then responds by restating what they heard. • Discuss for clarification and consensus • Submit your evaluation to the LST Convener after the meeting <i>If you are an LST Convener:</i> • Record consensus or differences within the discussion • Follow-up with committee and Seminararian • Collect individual LST Evaluations of Seminararian • Use your record and the individual Member evaluations to write the Summary Report following the meeting • Submit the Summary Report to the Supervisor <u>EVALUATION</u> There is no formal provision for your evaluation by the Seminararian. You may invite assessment, or the Seminararian may offer it, for the committee to grow in efficacy. Naturally, this process must be a dialogue, with members having opportunity to respond to Seminararian comments.
MAY <i>A "short month" ending on the first Sunday.</i>	Focus on the upcoming Summer break and beginning again in the Fall (if applicable – VTS requires Seminararians to complete 9 hours of CXM for credit in their Middler year, However, some dioceses require their Seminararians to do additional CXM credits beyond these 9 hours). Review the year's work, group life, and celebrate. Return the End of the Year Evaluation of LST Ministry to the CXM Director by the date indicated on the CXM Timeline. Data is used in revising program materials; thus, is invaluable to the Seminary.

OPTIONAL SENIOR FALL SEMESTER

PRIOR TO RETURN	The LST Convener distributes the CXM Manual and LST Guidelines to any new Members. The LST Convener and Supervisor consult about plans for the Seminarian in the coming year.
SEPTEMBER <i>This meeting is a regular two-hour meeting.</i>	You must attend orientation sessions addressing issues in the Senior year. We mail information to the convener during the Summer. <i>If all Members are the same</i>, catch up and share expectations, including anticipated issues. <i>If the Team is substantially different from the preceding year</i>, re-establish familiarity and trust. <i>See Middler September, pg.11</i> <i>If the group has only one or two new Members</i>, new Members must be brought on board. Example: • Use newsprint or other large paper to draw a horizontal timeline for the previous four months (May-August). • Use rising and falling lines to indicate ups and downs for Members in that span. Take ten minutes to draw the timeline, then share with the group. This exercise includes new Members easily. Afterward, the group shares expectations for the coming year. If your Seminarian finishes on-site in December, there are three possibilities: The Seminarian finishes on-site in December: • Closure activities are conducted in December • The review session is combined with the final, ‘social’ gathering • A Site-wide farewell <i>See closure activities under the April and May agendas, pgs. 13-14</i> The Seminarian stays on-site unofficially, but will <u>not</u> continue with the Team: • Hold final Team ‘social’ gathering between December- May • Hold the Site-wide farewell on or near the Seminarian’s last day The Seminarian stays on-site unofficially and continues unofficially with the Team: • Implement mutually agreed upon meeting schedule for the fourth semester at the discretion of Team and Seminarian. There is no more reporting to either Supervisor or CXM. • Hold final ‘social’ gathering before Seminarian departure • Hold the Site-wide farewell on or near the Seminarian’s last day

OCTOBER-MARCH	Base the next five meetings on learning goals. Generate topics according to diocesan process issues, pastoral activities and areas of Christian ministry For preaching or teaching goals: create a common agenda for meetings immediately following sermons or presentations. Discuss. <i>See Sermon Response Form</i> Your Seminarian may be preparing for GOEs. Agendas could focus on ‘Coffee Hour’ questions (<i>short questions, arising out of curiosity or confusion, which parishioners or children might ask during coffee hour</i>) for the Seminarian to respond to and discuss. <i>Sample questions are available in the VTS library. Ask the Seminarian to supply.</i> Other possible topics concern lay views on ministry – both in giving and receiving, and in experience and expression. Focus deliberately on sharing each Members' faith and ministry. A possible format: • Select a theme or issue • As a group, silently reflect on related experiences. Choose one experience you are willing to share. <i>approx. 3-4 min.</i> • Share experiences in "round-robin"- Be concise. <i>approx. 30 min.</i> • The leader (Convener, Seminarian, or appointed Member) asks "What theology helps us understand, live through, and interpret this experience?" Discuss. <i>approx. 15-20 min.</i> • Leader hands out Bibles or a specific passage. <i>approx. 20 min.</i> ○ Example: ▪ On "Asking for Help," the story of the centurion asking Jesus to heal his servant. (Matt. 8:5-13) ▪ Leader asks, "How does this enrich, support, and challenge our theological understanding of this experience?" For married or engaged Seminararians, consider inviting the spouse or fiancé(e) to a meeting to discuss the spousal role.
DECEMBER <i>A "short month."</i>	Remember: There are about two weeks of classes before exams. Seniors may be anxious about GOEs, ordination, and job searches taking place between now and February. Attention may be appreciated. Most Seniors take GOEs in a four-day period the first or second week of January. Afterward, some will be away the remainder of the break. In this case, praying for them in the prayers of the people and explaining their absence may be enough. <i>See Middler December, pg.12</i> <i>If your Seminarian will not be returning</i>, this is your last meeting. Focus on closure and celebration.

OPTIONAL SENIOR SPRING SEMESTER

FEBRUARY	Catch up and ask about GOEs. While Seminararians are not able to discuss questions asked, it will be helpful to debrief with them about the experience. They also may share their standing with their diocese, thoughts on ordination, and the impending job search. This meeting may be longer than two hours. <i>For other appropriate agendas, see Middler February and March, pg. 13 and Optional Senior October-March, pg. 16</i> VTS prepares graduates to provide vital Christian leadership so all may gain a sense of unique, God-commissioned ministry. A simple exploration exercise follows: 1. Take a few minutes to meditate and focus on ministry. Answer the following in writing: • List ways I see myself ministering. • My ministry was most recently affirmed when ... • My ministry was most recently frustrated when ... 2. Share answers "Round-robin" 3. Discuss lessons learned about ministry in this exercise
MARCH- APRIL <i>VTS hosts a CXM “Celebrating our Contextual Ministry Journey event, each Spring-for graduating Seminararians who did CXM and their Lay Support Teams</i>	<u>CLOSURE</u> Your group life is ending. Discuss "goodbyes" in general and specific. Intentional closure is important: express gratitude, disappointment, regret, and joy straightforwardly. Consider scheduling forms of closure for May. To be free to enter new ministry after ordination, help your Seminararian close this ministry gracefully.
MAY <i>This is a “short month” with CXM ending the first Sunday.</i>	You can liturgize closure through: • farewell parties • worship • simple handshakes and embraces • personal notes Share in any Site-wide farewell. Plan a separate, final, ‘social’ gathering to celebrate the group’s life and offer opportunities to share plans for the immediate future. You are invited to Commencement, if tickets are available.

ONE YEAR SENIOR, ANGLICAN STUDIES AND DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY SPRING SEMESTER

If you are an Anglican Studies (A.S.), Diploma in Theology (Theo.) or new Senior LST, you have eight meetings to work. To form trust quickly and promote Seminarian formation, hold the first two meetings in September and early October and commit to honest, forthright conversation from the beginning.

This timeline has elements of Middler and Senior years. Therefore, we reference agendas in previous sections and note special considerations based on program.

SEPTEMBER	<i>see Middler September, pg. 11</i> <i>If you are an A.S. and Diploma in Theo. Team:</i> These Seminarrians are ordained and experienced in another Christian tradition or have completed two or three years in a non-Episcopal seminary. <i>In this introductory meeting, explore that previous experience.</i> The former will focus on learning the Episcopal context, while the latter may also have skill-building goals. A One-Year Seminarrian's needs are quite different from a Three-Year Seminarrian. They may be further along in developing requisite skills for ordination, and those previously have already formed a ministerial identity. Here, help develop <i>Anglican</i> identity. This leads to at least three areas of work: 1. Comfort with liturgy according to the Book of Common Prayer 2. Thinking like an Anglican 3. Understanding the subtleties of Anglican polity, including vestries.
OCTOBER	<i>For group building, see Middler October suggestions, pg. 11</i> <i>For topics, see Continuing Senior October-March, pg. 16</i> The LST Convener distributes the Seminarian Learning Covenant, stating learning goals and Site responsibilities. Use this to plan time and choose topics. <i>If you are One Year Senior Team,</i> because the Seminarrian has completed a year of CXM, expect more clarity and leadership than from a Middler. <i>If you are an A.S. and Diploma in Theo. Team,</i> the three areas of Anglican identity <i>as stated above</i> provide areas for agenda building. You: • Provide feedback on liturgical presence. • Work on 'thinking Anglican' with GOE Coffee Hour questions • Discuss the work of vestries and rectors, annual meetings, and the

Changes on Brightspace take precedence over instructions in CXM manual

Lay Support Team Guidelines
Spring Term 2026

	individual parishioner – division of labor, responsibility, and interaction for the good of the Body.
NOVEMBER-MARCH	Agendas for the next four meetings touch on topics based on learning needs and the Seminarian's situation. <i>See Optional Senior October-March, pg. 16</i> <i>For options for Anglican Studies, see October, pg. 18</i>
DECEMBER	<i>See Optional Senior December, pg. 16</i>

ONE YEAR SENIOR, ANGLICAN STUDIES AND DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY SPRING SEMESTER

FEBRUARY	<i>See Optional Senior February, pg. 17</i>
MARCH	<i>See Optional Senior March, pg. 17</i> <i>If you are an A.S. and Diploma in Theo. Team,</i> use the LST Evaluation of Seminarian form for A.S. and Diploma in Theo. Seminarians. You are invited to the Celebrating our Contextual Ministry Journey Event in the Spring. <i>See LST Evaluation of Seminarian</i>
APRIL	Brings your individual, written Seminarian evaluation. <i>See Middler April, pg. 13-</i> <i>See Individual Preparation Process and Group Assessment Process, pg. 12</i> Share comments, Seminarian response, and discuss. The Convener collects written responses, collates, and forwards a copy to the Supervisor by the date indicated on the CXM Timeline. <i>See CXM Timeline</i>
MAY	<i>See Optional Senior May, pg. 17</i>

INTENSIVE: 8-WEEK

4-week January or Summer intensives are a condensed version of this timeline.

PRIOR TO START DATE	The Supervisor meets with you for an initial organizational meeting, but no other subsequent meetings. Supervisors share thoughts about the Seminarian's place on-site and how your work correlates.
FIRST WEEK	The LST Convener distributes the CXM Manual and LST Guidelines. <i>For meeting content, see Middler September, pg.11</i>
SECOND WEEK	Via the Convener, you receive a copy of the Seminarian Learning Covenant, including learning goals, responsibilities, and the Summer agenda. Plan meeting time and discussion accordingly. You may become familiar or explore Site history and culture. If applicable, offer feedback on liturgical leadership regarding Scripture reading and prayer leading <i>See Listener Response to Reading Scripture in Worship</i> As an additional option, the Seminarian introduces categories from the Seminarian Reflection Paper-Intensive. <i>See Seminarian Reflection Paper-Intensive</i>
THIRD WEEK	<i>For meeting content, see Middler November, pg. 12</i>
FOURTH, FIFTH, SIXTH, AND SEVENTH WEEKS	Agendas can focus on the following: • Liturgical leadership, <i>if applicable</i> • Seminarian issues • Site issues If you and Seminarian discuss Site structure and dynamics, center on one or two issues, with Members sharing honest thoughts and feelings relative to Site life and ministry. Seminararians may respond later with their thoughts and perceptions.
EIGHTH WEEK	<i>See Middler April, pg.13</i> <i>See Optional Senior March, pg.17</i> <i>See Seminarian Evaluation- Intensive</i>