

THEOLOGICAL ESSAY

2011-2012

**Designed for
MAR STUDENTS
NOT ENROLLED IN THE CANDIDACY PROCESS OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

**THE
LUTHERAN
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
AT PHILADELPHIA**

*Centered in the Gospel
of the crucified and risen Christ*

Dear Senior MAR LTSP Student,

The writing of a *Theological Essay* is one of the final steps in the LTSP's evaluation process as you complete your theological education and preparation for ministry. These final steps provide an opportunity to review and inquire in depth your readiness for ministry as an associate minister, deacon, or in a variety of places and forms of ministry.

Your essay will help us to assess your competence in vital areas of ministry, as a tangible expression of your faith as it has developed throughout the course of your theological education.

It is our hope that your preparation and formation have been challenging and fulfilling. Your seminary education has truly prepared you for facing the challenges of Christian ministry. May God's spirit be strong in your heart and mind as you prepare this essay, take the next steps toward your call in Christian ministry, and offer yourself in the service of the church for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,
Dr. J. Paul Rajashekar
Dean of the Seminary
The Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

All MAR students enrolled at LTSP participate in the student learning assessment process. This process includes the writing of a *Theological Essay* normally following the completion of at least 12 course units for students not enrolled in the candidacy process of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

ELCA MAR Students

If you are a MAR student enrolled in the ELCA candidacy process, you are required to prepare an Endorsement Essay and an Approval Essay at designated times in your theological preparation. At such times, as determined by you and your Candidacy Committee, you are to prepare an essay in accordance with the instructions in the appropriate annual ELCA essay brochure.

ALL Other MAR Students

MAR students not enrolled in the ELCA candidacy process (e.g. African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and other denominational students) are required to write a Theological Essay as part of a broader assessment plan of the seminary.

This Theological Essay will become a part of your student portfolio that you and your academic advisor will review and discuss at a designated point during your senior year. Your portfolio will consist of:

- ✧ Your transcript
- ✧ Theological Essay
- ✧ Field Education evaluations
- ✧ Student Learning Assessment Forms

For Further questions about
Student Assessment contact:

Dr. Mrinalini Sebastian
*Director, Student Assessment
and Institutional Research*
The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

7301 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19119
Phone: 215-248-6392
Fax: 218-248-4577
Email: msebastian@ltsp.edu

THEOLOGICAL ESSAY
MAR STUDENTS
NOT IN THE ELCA CANDIDACY PROCESS

You will address three parts in this essay:

Part 1 will focus on your understanding of Christian vocation with reference to your social and cultural context.

Part 2 will involve a reflection that integrates theological thinking with the practice of ministry.

Part 3 invites you to reflect on specific denominational perspectives and specific gifts you bring to your ministry in church and/or society.

1. Prepare the essay **double-spaced, 12-point type, numbered with your name on each page.**
2. Your essay should be about **12-15 pages in length.** We suggest Part 1 be about 6-8 pages, with Parts 2 and 3 each about 3 pages in length.
3. You are encouraged to be in conversation with theological partners, religious leaders (both clergy and lay) and those engaged in different forms of ministry in both church and society. The final writing is to be your own. Include Bible studies or ministry projects in your reflection.
4. **Submit two (2) copies** of your essay to the Director of Assessment. We will not return your essay; therefore, retain a copy for your files.
5. The essay is **due on or before September 6th.**

Please indicate the following parts in your essay.

Part 1

Articulate your understanding of Christian “vocation” or “calling” in the post-modern, secularized and religiously plural context of today. How do you describe your own calling or sense of Christian vocation in today’s world? Illustrate your response with specific issues, challenges and opportunities that you have encountered in ministry.

Part 2

Based on the focus of your studies or “specialization” in the MAR program, identify an important social or ethical issue that demands a Christian response today. Explore the theological and practical dimensions of the chosen issue. How would you formulate a coherent Christian response to it? In what way has your education at the seminary equipped you (or not) in responding to the issue?

Part 3

Describe particular denominational perspectives that have been formative in your understanding of Christian vocation. What are the ways in which you have changed and grown in the course of your seminary education? What are some of the growing edges? State your sense of preparedness for ministry that you have chosen or are called to do.