Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

As adopted November ~~12~~, ~~2022~~2025
by the Church Council of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

(exclusive of quoted and highlighted constitutional provisions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions otherwise in force)

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Part One:
Ministers of Word and Sacrament
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I. Constitutional description for Ministry of Word and Sacrament and Standards for Ministers of Word and Sacrament`

7.10. MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED PEOPLE OF GOD

7.11. This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members. In its function and its structure this church commits itself to the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world and in this church. It is within this context of ministry that this church calls some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church.

7.20. MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

7.21. Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons.

7.22. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to preach, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

7.23. The standards for acceptance and continuance of ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be set forth in the bylaws.

7.24. The secretary of this church shall maintain a roster containing the names of ministers of Word and Sacrament who qualify on the basis of constitutional provisions 7.22., 7.23., and 7.31., and related bylaws.

7.25. Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be subject to discipline as set forth in Chapter 20 of this constitution.

7.30. STANDARDS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

7.31. In accordance with the description stated in 7.22., ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be governed by the following standards, policies, and procedures.

7.31.01. Basic Standards. Persons admitted to and continued in the ministry of Word and Sacrament of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council:

a. commitment to Christ;
b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
g. membership in a congregation of this church.

7.31.02. Responsibilities. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:
   1) preach the Word;
   2) administer the sacraments;
   3) conduct public worship;
   4) provide pastoral care;
   5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
   6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
   7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
   8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proclaiming God's love for the world, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
2) relate to all schools and organizations of the congregation;
3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
4) with the council, administer discipline;
5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and the synod; and
6) encourage adherence to covenantal relationships with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

~~**7.10. MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED PEOPLE OF GOD**~~

~~**7.11. This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members. In its function and its structure this church commits itself to the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world and in this church. It is within this context of ministry that this church calls some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church.**~~

~~**7.20. MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**~~

~~**7.21. Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons.**~~

~~**7.22. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to preach, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.**~~

~~**7.23. The standards for acceptance and continuance of ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be set forth in the bylaws.**~~

~~**7.24. The secretary of this church shall maintain a roster containing the names of ministers of Word and Sacrament who qualify on the basis of constitutional provisions 7.22., 7.23., and 7.31., and related bylaws.**~~

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~~a. commitment to Christ;~~
~~b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;~~
~~c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;~~
~~d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;~~
~~e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;~~
~~f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and~~
~~g. membership in a congregation of this church.~~

~~**7.31.02. Responsibilities.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,~~

~~a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:~~
~~1) preach the Word;~~
~~2) administer the sacraments;~~
~~3) conduct public worship;~~
~~4) provide pastoral care;~~
~~5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;~~
~~6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;~~

7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
2) relate to all schools and organizations of the congregation;
3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
4) with the council, administer discipline;
5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and the synod; and
6) encourage adherence to covenantal relationships with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

II. Admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament

A. Preparation and Approval

7.31.03. Preparation and Approval. Except as provided in 7.31.04., a candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament shall have:

a. either

1) membership in a congregation of this church and registration, by its congregation council and the pastoral leadership of the congregation, of the candidate with the candidacy committee; or

2) active participation in a Word and Sacrament ministry of this church and registration, by its governing body and the pastoral leadership of the ministry, of the candidate with the candidacy committee;

b. been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and supervision of the appropriate committee before being approved for call;

c. completed the academic and practical preparation according to the criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;

d. been examined and approved by the appropriate committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;

e. been recommended to a congregation or other entity by the bishop of the synod to which the candidate has been assigned for first call in accordance with the procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council; and

f. received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.

~~**7.31.03. Preparation and Approval.** Except as provided in 7.31.04., a candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament shall have:~~

~~a. membership in a congregation of this church and registration, by its pastor and council, of the candidate with the candidacy committee;~~

~~b. been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and supervision of the appropriate committee before being approved for call;~~

~~c. satisfactorily completed the requirements for the Master of Divinity degree from an accredited theological school in North America or completed a program of study for those accepted into the TEEM program (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries), including practical preparation, as defined by the appropriate churchwide unit, such as internship and supervised clinical work;~~

~~d. completed the expectations and outcomes established for Lutheran learning and formation in a seminary of this church or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, except when waived by the appropriate committee in consultation with the faculty of a seminary of this church or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada;~~

~~e. been recommended for approval by the faculty of a seminary of this church or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or have received the waiver described in 7.31.03.d.;~~

~~f. been examined and approved by the appropriate committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, after consultation with the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;~~

~~g. been recommended to a congregation or other entity by the bishop of the synod to which the candidate has been assigned for first call in accordance with the procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council; and~~

~~h. received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.~~

B. Bishop authorization of ordination

The bishop with the power to authorize an ordination is ***the bishop of the synod in which a candidate has accepted a call***. That bishop authorizes the ordination, even if the candidate comes from another synod and may have been approved by the multi-synod or synod Candidacy Committee of another synod.

1. **Power to ordain:** According to †S8.12.c. and f. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the bishop of a synod is to: "Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synod bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament;" and "Install (or provide for the installation of)" such pastors.

2. **Jurisdiction:** In receiving and accepting a valid call, the candidate comes under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the synod in which the call was issued. That bishop, on the basis of the record of such a valid call, authorizes the ordination, even if the ordination is to take place on the territory of another synod.
3. **Planning of ordination:** If the ordination is to occur on the territory of another synod (*e.g.*, at a candidate's home congregation), the bishop who authorizes the ordination ***shall*** consult with the bishop of the synod on whose territory the ordination may be held ***prior to*** approving any plans for such an ordination.
    a. No candidate shall make plans for ordination prior to consultation with the synod bishop under whose authority the candidate is to be ordained.
    b. If an ordination is planned on the territory of another synod, the *patterns and practices of the synod of jurisdiction shall prevail*. No ordination is to be scheduled without the prior approval of the bishop on whose territory the rite is to occur.
4. **Signing the certificate of ordination:** The bishop authorizing the ordination shall be the bishop who signs the certificate of ordination.

C. Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM)

~~**7.31.04. Approval under Other Circumstances.** Candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament who by reason of (a) age and prior experience, (b) ordination in another Lutheran church body, or (c) ordination in another Christian church body, whether in North America or abroad, shall be approved by the candidacy committee for ordination or reception according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In preparing such criteria, policies, and procedures, the appropriate churchwide unit shall consult with the seminaries of this church and, as appropriate, with other churchwide units.~~

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This policy summarizes the process by which the ELCA approves for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament those individuals ~~"who by reason of … age and prior experience" (churchwide bylaw 7.31.04.)~~who are qualified to participate in an alternate route to ordination. Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) is a program by which the ELCA responds to the missional needs of this church. The program takes into consideration the leadership gifts and ministry skills of a candidate in determining a program of preparation.

Identification of TEEM settings and candidates

Synod bishops have primary responsibility for recommending people who may be suitable for the TEEM program, as well as providing oversight of any TEEM candidate's preparation process. An ethnic community or churchwide unit may assist the bishop in identifying a person who meets the criteria established for TEEM ministry. Those identified may include a lay mission developer already employed by the church or a person serving in an emerging ministry. It is important to note that TEEM candidates do not self-identify. Synod bishops work with the community where the candidate might be placed in identifying candidates.

[Following is from the Candidacy Manual]

TEEM candidates do not self-identify. Consideration for admittance into the TEEM process begins with the granting of Entrance by a candidacy committee, followed by a recommendation from a synod bishop. The director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area then grants acceptance of a candidate into the TEEM process when the criteria for acceptance listed below are met.

1. Criteria for Acceptance into TEEM

A person seeking to complete all the academic and practical requirements for Word and Sacrament ministry through the TEEM process will demonstrate the characteristics of a missional leader as understood through a Lutheran confessional lens (*Candidacy Manual 2.1*). Every candidate participating in the TEEM process must be serving in an emerging ministry site identified by a synod bishop.

2. Emerging Ministries

Emerging ministries of Word and Sacrament communities such as the ones listed below:

1. ethnic-specific, multicultural, or recent immigrant ministries;
2. small membership rural or urban congregations where a synod bishop has had difficulty identifying and placing a candidate for call;
3. new mission starts authorized through normal ELCA processes;
4. congregational renewal ministries authorized through normal ELCA processes; and
5. ministries with people who are differently abled.

3. The TEEM Process

TEEM candidates will complete all the steps in the candidacy process outlined in this manual. A candidate's admittance into TEEM will occur only after the steps listed below have been completed.

1. A synod bishop provides a letter recommending a candidate for admission into the TEEM process. The bishop's letter of recommendation must identify a specific ministry site where the candidate will serve. The same ministry site will serve as both the candidate's teaching parish experience and the location of a supervised internship.
2. The director for candidacy acts to accept the candidate into the TEEM process following the granting of Entrance.

After TEEM candidates complete the academic and practical ministry requirements and are granted Approval by a candidacy committee, they will normally serve their first call in the ministry site originally identified by the synod bishop. Following first call, the opportunities for mobility will be the same as for all ELCA rostered ministers.

4. Steps in Candidacy for TEEM

Candidates for the TEEM process must be granted Entrance by a candidacy committee. In preparation for an Entrance interview, the following are required:

1. Candidacy Application form, Entrance essay, and Entrance Information form;
2. Congregational Registration Form (Communal Discernment);
3. background check;
4. psychological evaluation;
5. personal financial worksheet;
6. personal health assessment;
7. transcripts, licenses, and certificates;
8. when appropriate, evidence of payment of the application fee; and
9. a consent form to release student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) must be completed by the candidate, at each step of the candidacy process, and shared with the seminary. The form authorizes the seminary to share information with the candidacy committee.

Following the granting of Entrance, a candidacy committee will send the following documentation to the director for candidacy:

1. the Entrance decision form,
2. the Entrance essay, and
3. a bishop's letter of recommendation identifying the ministry site where a candidate will be serving.

After review of the documentation, the director for candidacy will send the synod bishop and the candidacy committee a written notification of acceptance or rejection into TEEM with copies to the candidacy leadership manager. Candidates not accepted into TEEM may continue the candidacy process by applying for admission into a Master of Divinity program at an accredited seminary.

D. Admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of individuals ordained in another Lutheran church or another Christian tradition

7.31.04. Approval when Ordained in Another Church Body. Candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament who (a) have been ordained in another Lutheran church body or (b) have been ordained in another Christian church body, whether in North America or abroad, shall be approved by the candidacy committee for ordination or reception according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In preparing such criteria, policies, and procedures, the appropriate churchwide unit shall consult with the seminaries of this church and, as appropriate, with other churchwide units.

~~**7.31.04. Approval under Other Circumstances.** Candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament who by reason of (a) age and prior experience, (b) ordination in another Lutheran church body, or (c) ordination in another Christian church body, whether in North America or abroad, shall be approved by the candidacy committee for ordination or reception according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In preparing such criteria, policies, and procedures, the appropriate churchwide unit shall consult with the seminaries of this church and, as appropriate, with other churchwide units.~~

This policy summarizes the principles and process by which the ELCA approves for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament those individuals already ordained for such ministry in another church body. This policy shall apply to those who are resident in the United States as well as those who seek to immigrate to the United States. The process is designed to balance respect for those who have served in other settings with the specific life and needs of the ELCA:

> The mission of the ELCA involves worship, nurture, outreach, service, and advocacy for justice. While the scope of this mission is global, its particular focus is on ministry in the United States and the Caribbean. It is essential to have leaders who are familiar with and have experience in the cultural context of the ELCA. Candidates should appreciate and be familiar with ELCA teachings, polity, liturgy, and traditions (Candidacy Manual 5.2).

1. Basic standards for ministers of Word and Sacrament

According to ELCA bylaw 7.31.01., individuals admitted to the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall satisfactorily meet and maintain:

a. commitment to Christ;
b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
g. membership in a congregation of this church.

2. Role of candidacy committees

Candidacy committees are crucially involved in decisions concerning those seeking admission to the roster. The Candidacy Manual 5.2, "Admission of Applicants in an Ordained Word and Sacrament Ministry in Another Lutheran Church or in Another Christian Church Body," describes procedures for applicants (5.2.2-5.2.4) and clarifies expectations for a range of situations:

a. Full communion partners: A minister of Word and Sacrament in a full communion partner church seeking to be rostered in the ELCA will have a process followed by a Candidacy Committee. If such a minister has already served in an ELCA congregation, that experience should be acknowledged.
b. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) partner: A Candidacy Committee may consider the application of a minister of Word and Sacrament in an LWF member church seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Early consultation with the Service and Justice home area is essential in such cases. Any concerns related to agreements or implications for the churches involved can be identified and considered when there is open communication among the partners. The candidacy process should always include a deep respect for the credentials and background of those seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Credentials need to be examined to ensure that an applicant has good standing in the partner church and possesses good moral character. For applicants who come from outside the United States,

there are additional factors to consider, such as length of time in the United States, familiarity with American culture, and prior service in the ELCA.

c. Other Lutheran church partners: Ministers of Word and Sacrament in other Lutheran churches should be treated with dignity and respect. The perspective of an individual with such credentials can enrich the ELCA and broaden an understanding of mission. The primary foci of the candidacy process in such situations are evaluation for suitability, screening, and orientation to the ELCA.

d. Other Christian traditions: Ministers of Word and Sacrament who serve in other Christian traditions may be admitted to the roster of the ELCA if they meet and maintain standards for such ministers and are committed to the confession of faith of this church.

Note that candidacy committees are not involved in the exchange of ministers of Word and Sacrament from churches with which the ELCA has an agreement of full communion, where the Guidelines for Orderly Exchange apply; or in short-term or temporary service in congregations or synods performed by ministers of Word and Sacrament in member churches of The Lutheran World Federation. (*See Candidacy Manual 5.2.*)

Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) shall be received by transfer upon acceptance of a valid call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council of this church following the certification of their status on the roster of the ELCIC, completion of a Rostered Minister Profile, and the approval of the bishop of the synod in which they are to serve.

3. Ordination or reception of the candidate

After a candidate has received and accepted a letter of call, the bishop of the synod of call consults with the Office of the Secretary to determine if ordination is necessary. The ELCA receives as ordained many ministers of Word and Sacrament ordained in other traditions. Those from churches not confessing the faith of the historic ecumenical creeds or those whose authority for ordination was from a single congregation will be ordained according to the ELCA Rite of Ordination. The Office of the Secretary will determine how this policy applies in the case of each candidate.

4. Pastoral care and support

For those who come to the ELCA from other Christian traditions, the beginning of service as an ELCA rostered minister is a time to establish significant relationships for support and growth. During the rostered minister's early years of service, the synod bishop may provide a mentor who supports and nurtures the newly rostered minister.

E. Policy for Ordination in Unusual Circumstances in the ELCA

7.31.08. Ordination in Unusual Circumstances. For pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances, a synod bishop may provide for the ordination by another minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America of an approved candidate who has received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. Prior to authorization of such an ordination, the bishop of the synod of the candidate's first call shall consult with the presiding bishop as this church's chief ecumenical officer and shall seek the advice of the Synod Council. The pastoral decision of the synod bishop shall be in accordance with policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

1. Introduction

a. Ordination to the office of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA is a rite of the church administered according to the practices of this church in order to extend the mission and ministry of the church. It is not a personal privilege to be determined by the candidate.
b. The purpose of this policy is to describe how a synod bishop may exercise pastoral judgment in unusual circumstances to allow an exception to this church's established ordination practices.
c. All requests for exceptions to this church's ordination practices shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2. Definitions

The term "for pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances" is broadly stated in order to allow the synod bishop and the presiding bishop to use their judgment in evaluating individual cases according to their particular circumstances. However, the following principles should be considered as decisions are made:

a. The decision should enhance and extend the ministry and mission purposes of this church.
b. The decision should contribute to the unity of the church.

3. Procedural steps

a. A candidate for ordination who seeks an exception to the ordination practices of this church will meet promptly after assignment with their bishop of candidacy and the bishop of the synod in which they are being considered for a first call promptly upon entering the First Call process to discuss the candidate's request for an exception, and for the bishop to interpret to the candidate the bishop's concerns. A written statement explaining why a pastoral exception is warranted shall be provided to the synod bishop. The statement shall deal with the principles as stated in 2.a. and b. above.
b. The synod bishop shall consult with the presiding bishop of the ELCA before granting any such request. The purpose of this consultation is to consider together whether such an exception to this church's ordination practices is consistent with the principles as stated in 2.a. and b. above. After such consultation, the synod bishop shall exercise pastoral judgment and determine whether to authorize the ordination by another pastor of the ELCA. There is no appeal to the synod bishop's decision.
c. The synod bishop shall seek the advice of Synod Council before granting any such request.
~~d. Should emergency circumstances prevent the presence of the synod bishop at an ordination, the bishop may authorize another ELCA bishop or another ELCA pastor to serve as ordinator.~~
ed. This policy shall be evaluated periodically by the appropriate churchwide unit and reviewed by the Conference of Bishops and by the Church Council.

4. Emergency circumstances

Should emergency circumstances prevent the presence of the synod bishop at an ordination, the bishop may authorize another ELCA bishop, or, with the approval of the presiding bishop, another ELCA pastor, to serve as ordinator.

III. Status on the roster

A. Calls for ministers of Word and Sacrament

1. Letters of Call and Service under Call

7.40. CALLS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

7.41. Letters of Call. Letters of call to ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

~~**7.40. CALLS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**~~

~~**7.41. Letters of Call. Letters of call to ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council.**~~

7.41.01. Service under Call. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a Synod Council, a Synod Assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.44.A24.

b. A pastor serving under call to a congregation shall be a member of that congregation. In a parish of multiple congregations, a pastor shall be a member of one of the congregations being served.

~~**7.41.01. Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a Synod Council, a Synod Assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.~~

~~a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.44.A19.~~

~~b. A pastor serving under call to a congregation shall be a member of that congregation. In a parish of multiple congregations, a pastor shall be a member of one of the congregations being served.~~

~~c. Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in interim ministry appointed by the synod bishop may serve under a letter of call, according to policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council. A call to interim ministry shall be a term call extended by the Synod Council upon recommendation of the synod bishop.~~

7.43. A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Sacrament, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.

a. Issuance of a letter of call: Ministers of Word and Sacrament serve under call as stated in churchwide bylaw 7.41.01. An average of ~~15~~ 10 hours of service per week is the minimum standard for a call to be issued.

b. Attesting signature: The appropriate synod bishop shall attest the letter of call (provisions †S8.12.e. and †S14.16.c. in the *Constitution for Synods* and provision *C9.04. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*).

The bishop's signature confirms only that the call process has been followed, that the letter of call was properly extended, and that the minister of Word and Sacrament or candidate is eligible to accept the call.

2. Initial Call to Congregational Service/Exceptions

7.41.02. Initial Call to Congregational Service. Because the responsibilities of the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament are most clearly focused in the congregational pastorate, experience in which is deemed by this church to be invaluable for all other ministry of Word and Sacrament, initial service of at least three years shall be in a congregation of this church or, with the approval of the synod bishop, a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists. Exceptions to the three-year requirement may be granted under criteria and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

a. Requests for exceptions to the three-year requirement must be reviewed by the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. The Roster Committee will present its recommendation to the Conference of Bishops for approval/denial of the request. ~~*(See Appendix H for Roster Committee considerations.)*~~

1) The ~~bishop of the synod~~ Synod Council that desires to issue an initial call to a candidate for non-congregational service initiates the request to the Roster Committee. The synod bishop will make a recommendation to the Synod Council regarding approval or denial of the request to seek an exception from the Conference of Bishops. The bishop will communicate the recommendation to the candidate or rostered minister prior to the Synod Council vote. If the recommendation is for denial of the request, the candidate or rostered minister will be granted an opportunity to address a designated committee. After hearing from the candidate (or rostered minister) and the synod bishop, the committee may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate further and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The decision of the Synod Council is final. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for an exception request, the candidate (or rostered minister) would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

2) The request to the Roster Committee must include:

a) a statement by the candidate outlining the circumstances and reasons for the request and how it will meet the Word and Sacrament ministry needs of this church;

b) a letter from the synod bishop explaining the need for Word and Sacrament ministry in this context;

c) a statement from the synod-related institution or organization that is seeking the person for service;

d) action by the Synod Council indicating a willingness to issue a call if approved by the Conference of Bishops; ~~and~~

e) written concurrence from the synod candidacy committee; and

f) a plan for the candidate (or rostered minister) to provide concurrent, time-limited service in a local congregation in order to receive ongoing pastoral congregational formation.~~.~~

b. ~~While the bylaw regarding the "Initial Call to Congregational Service" presumes this is for candidates seeking a first call, e~~Candidates who received an initial call to congregational service but are now seeking ~~another~~ a subsequent call to non-congregational service prior to the completion of three years of service in a congregational setting must also request an exception in the same manner outlined above ~~, in paragraph a.,~~ omitting ~~a.2.e~~the concurrence of the synod candidacy committee).

c. In ~~rare~~ pressing circumstances, exceptions to the initial call to congregational service may be approved by the Roster Committee in the interim between Conference of Bishops meetings and be reported to the Conference of Bishops ~~for ratification~~.

d. Service in the following categories of ministry shall be considered as congregational service under the terms of bylaw 7.41.02., and does not require an exception:

1) Hospital/hospice chaplaincy
2) Campus ministry
3) Mission development
4) Federal chaplaincy
5) Global service (other than Young Adults in Global Mission-related service)

e. For the purposes of initial calls, "mission development" is to be understood as a call to Word and Sacrament ministry with a Synod-Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC), and requires the approval of the executive director for Christian Community and Leadership. Calls to other developing ministries, such as Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministries (SAOMs), are still subject to an exception request and authorization by the Conference of Bishops, which will consider the degree to which sacramental ministry is part of the responsibilities of the call.

f. The senior director for federal chaplaincy, with the concurrence of the synod bishop, may request initial calls to federal chaplaincy (or subsequent calls for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not completed the three-year requirement) from the Executive Committee of the Church Council. The executive director of the Service and Justice unit, with the concurrence of the synod bishop, may request initial calls to global service

(other than YAGM-related) (or subsequent calls for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not completed the three-year requirement) from the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

3) ~~The Service and Justice unit (for global mission calls) and the senior director for federal chaplaincy within the Christian Community and Leadership unit (for federal chaplaincy calls) may seek an initial call for candidates or a subsequent call for ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not completed the expected initial three years of congregational service.~~

~~1) The executive director for service and justice (or designee) or the senior director for federal chaplaincy initiates the request to the Roster Committee. Requests must include evidence of consultation with the home synod bishop.~~

~~2) The request must include:~~

~~a) a statement by the candidate/minister for Word and Sacrament outlining the circumstances and reasons for the request and how it will meet the Word and Sacrament ministry needs of this church;~~

~~b) a letter from the executive director for service and justice (or designee) or senior director for federal chaplaincy ministries explaining the need for Word and Sacrament ministry in this context;~~

~~c) a letter from the bishop of the synod that will receive/retain this candidate/minister of Word and Sacrament onto its roster.~~

~~3) By decision of the Conference of Bishops [CB92.10.48], exceptions to the initial call to congregational service for global mission and federal chaplaincy may be approved by the Roster Committee and reported to the Conference of Bishops for ratification.~~

~~e. Service as a mission developer shall be considered as congregational service under the terms of bylaw 7.41.02. when such service is approved by the synod bishop and the executive director of the Christian Community and Leadership unit and a call has been issued by the Synod Council where the mission development is located.~~

3. Sources of Calls

7.44.A24. *Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament*

a. Principles for Sources of Calls

1) A "call" is an action by expressions of this church, as specified in the "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament," through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a "letter of call."

2) Interdependence within the body of this church suggests that any action of one of its entities affects other entities. Therefore, interdependence is expressed in all calls extended within this church.

3) A call expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline.

4) A letter of call is issued by that expression of this church authorized to do so which is most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

5) Decisions on calls for ministries in unusual circumstances not otherwise provided for but deemed to be in the interests of this church's care of the Gospel are referred to the Conference of Bishops for recommendation to the appropriate calling body.

b. Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Setting	Calling Body
1.0 Congregational ministry	
1.1 Single congregation	*Congregation meeting*
1.11 Pastor	
1.12 Senior pastor	
1.13 Associate/assistant pastor	
1.14 Co-pastor	
1.15 Shared-time pastor	
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	*Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal*
1.21 Pastor	*One of the participating congregations*
1.22 Other pastoral arrangements	*One of the participating congregations*
1.3 Coalition and cluster ministry	*Synod Council*
1.4 Congregations beyond this church	
1.41 Independent Lutheran congregation	*Synod Council*
1.42 Overseas independent Lutheran congregation	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
1.43 Full communion congregation	*Synod Council*
1.44 Other	*Synod Council or Church Council*
1.5 Interim pastor	*Synod Council*
1.6 Pastor in a synod-authorized ministry	*Synod Council*
1.7 Supply ministry	*Synod Council*
2.0 Synod ministry	
2.1 Bishop	*Synod Assembly*
2.2 Assistant to bishop	*Synod Council*
2.3 Shared staff by two or more synods	*Synod Council of one of the participating synods*
2.4 Synod staff partially supported by grants from churchwide units	*Synod Council*
3.0 Regional ministry	
3.1 Staff	*Church Council*
3.2 Shared synod-churchwide staff	*Church Council*
4.0 Churchwide ministry	
4.1 Presiding bishop and secretary	*Churchwide Assembly*

4.2 Treasurer	*Church Council*
4.3 Staff of the churchwide organization	*Church Council*
5.0 Chaplaincy and institutional ministry	
5.1 Institution/agency related or unrelated to a synod	*Synod Council*
5.2 Institution/agency related to more than one synod	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
5.3 ELCA-related institution/agency	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
5.4 Federal agency/institution	*Church Council*
5.5 Military	*Church Council*
6.0 Campus ministry	
6.1 Staff	*Synod Council*
7.0 Outdoor ministry	
7.1 Staff	*Synod Council*
8.0 Ecumenical/Inter-Religious ministry	
8.1 Related to a synod	*Synod Council*
8.2 Related to more than one synod	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
8.3 National/international organization	*Church Council*
9.0 Inter-Lutheran ministry	
9.1 Related to a synod	*Synod Council*
9.2 Related to more than one synod	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
9.3 National/International	*Church Council*
10.0 Educational ministry	
10.1 ELCA-related seminary (incorporated or unincorporated) chaplain/faculty/ administrator	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.2 Chaplain/faculty/ administrator of seminary unrelated to ELCA	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.3 ELCA-related college chaplain/non-seminary faculty/non-seminary administrator	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.4 Chaplain/faculty/ administrator of a college unrelated to ELCA	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.5 ELCA-related school chaplain/faculty/ administrator	*Congregation of which the school is a part or, if related to several congregations, Synod Council of the synod in which the school is located*
10.6 Chaplain/faculty of a school unrelated to ELCA	*Synod Council of the synod in which school is located*
10.7 Director/staff of a continuing education center related to a churchwide unit	*Synod Council in which the main office of center is located upon the request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.0 Missionary ministry	
11.1 Outside United States	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.2 Within United States	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
12.0 Independent Lutheran Organization	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
13.0 Separately Incorporated Ministry	*Church Council*
14.0 Other	
14.1 Non-stipendiary service under call	*Synod Council upon approval by the Conference of Bishops*

14.2 Unusual ministries (as in conjunction with occupations and in approved situations not otherwise specified)	Synod Council or Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops

7.44.A19. Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

a. Principles for Sources of Calls

1) A "call" is an action by expressions of this church, as specified in the "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament," through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a "letter of call."

2) Interdependence within the body of this church suggests that any action of one of its entities affects other entities. Therefore, interdependence is expressed in all calls extended within this church.

3) A call expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline.

4) A letter of call is issued by that expression of this church authorized to do so which is most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

5) Decisions on calls for ministries in unusual circumstances not otherwise provided for but deemed to be in the interests of this church's care of the Gospel are referred to the Conference of Bishops for recommendation to the appropriate calling body.

b. Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Setting	Calling Body
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1.15 Shared-time pastor	
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal
1.21 Pastor	One of the participating congregations
1.22 Other pastoral arrangements	One of the participating congregations
1.3 Coalition and cluster ministry	Synod Council
1.4 Congregations beyond this church	
1.41 Independent Lutheran congregation	Synod Council
1.42 Overseas independent Lutheran congregation	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
1.43 Full communion congregation	Synod Council
1.44 Other	Synod Council or Church Council
1.5 Interim pastor	Synod Council
1.6 Pastor in a synod-authorized ministry	Synod Council
2.0 Synod ministry	
2.1 Bishop	Synod Assembly
2.2 Assistant to bishop	Synod Council
2.3 Shared staff by two or more synods	Synod Council of one of the participating synods

2.4 Synod staff partially supported by grants from churchwide units	Synod Council
3.0 Regional ministry	
3.1 Staff	Church Council
3.2 Shared synod-churchwide staff	Church Council
4.0 Churchwide ministry	
4.1 Presiding bishop and secretary	Churchwide Assembly
4.2 Treasurer	Church Council
4.3 Staff of the churchwide organization	Church Council
5.0 Chaplaincy and institutional ministry	
5.1 Institution/agency related or unrelated to a synod	Synod Council
5.2 Institution/agency related to more than one synod	Synod Council of one of the synods
5.3 ELCA related institution/agency	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
5.4 Federal agency/institution	Church Council
5.5 Military	Church Council
6.0 Campus ministry	
6.1 Staff	Synod Council
7.0 Outdoor ministry	
7.1 Staff	Synod Council
8.0 Ecumenical ministry	
8.1 Related to a synod	Synod Council
8.2 Related to more than one synod	Synod Council of one of the synods
8.3 National/international organization	Church Council
9.0 Inter-Lutheran ministry	
9.1 Related to a synod	Synod Council
9.2 Related to more than one synod	Synod Council of one of the synods
9.3 National/International	Church Council
10.0Educational ministry	
10.1ELCA related seminary chaplain/faculty/ administrator	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
10.2Chaplain/faculty/ administrator of seminary unrelated to ELCA	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
10.3ELCA-related college chaplain/faculty/ administrator	Synod Council of the synod in which college is located
10.4Chaplain/faculty/ administrator of a college unrelated to ELCA	Synod Council of the synod in which college is located
10.5ELCA-related school chaplain/faculty/ administrator	Congregation of which the school is a part or, if related to several congregations, Synod Council of the synod in which the school is located

10.6 Chaplain/faculty of a school unrelated to ELCA	Synod Council of the synod in which school is located
10.7 Director/staff of a continuing education center related to a churchwide unit	Synod Council in which the main office of center is located upon the request of appropriate churchwide unit
11.0 Missionary ministry	
11.1 Outside United States	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
11.2 Within United States	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
12.0 Independent Lutheran Organization	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
13.0 Separately Incorporated Ministry	Church Council
14.0 Other	
14.1 Non-stipendiary service under call	Synod Council upon approval by the Conference of Bishops
14.2 Unusual ministries (as in conjunction with occupations and in approved situations not otherwise specified)	Synod Council or Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops

a. Calls to Non-Congregational Service

7.41.03. Calls to Non-Congregational Service. Calls to serve in institutions, agencies, and other entities inside and outside this church may be extended where there is an identifiable relationship of the work to the purpose of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Such calls involve, for example, the care of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, pastoral care, and activities closely associated with those tasks including oversight in the church and in inter-Lutheran and inter-church agencies and institutions. Care is to be exercised so that positions in the church and in the world that can be filled adequately and appropriately by the laity not be filled by ministers of Word and Sacrament for their convenience or status. Synod councils and the Church Council may seek the advice of the Conference of Bishops in specific situations.

1) The decision on the source of call is determined in accord with ELCA continuing resolution 7.44.~~A19~~A24.a. As the calling source for calls to non-congregational service, the Synod Council or Church Council must decide if the proposed call is appropriate. The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops may be consulted.
2) The synod in which the institution, agency, or other employing entity is located should be the synod that issues the call to non-congregational service. In the case of ministries/agencies that are multi-synod, the bishops involved should collectively decide which synod should issue the call.
3) The bishop of the synod in which the minister being called is rostered ~~should~~ shall be consulted before a Church Council call to non-congregational service is issued.
4) Each rostered minister is required to report annually to the bishop of the synod in which the person is rostered.
5) Those under call to non-congregational service in predecessor church bodies were received onto the ELCA roster (7.41.06.) but came under annual review through the report form provided by and submitted to the synod bishop.
6) Responsibility for oversight of such non-congregational calls should be noted in the minutes of the appropriate Synod Council or Church Council.
7) Note churchwide constitutional provision 7.42. regarding rostering of individuals in non-congregational calls:

Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:
...
b. which issues a letter of call to the minister of Word and Sacrament; [or]
c. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament was listed at the time of the issuance of a letter of call from the Church Council. ...

8) A minister who receives a letter of call issued by the Church Council normally shall remain on the roster of the synod in which she or he served prior to receiving the call through the Church Council. Specific exceptions exist, as noted in provision 7.42.:

Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:
...

d. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if a seminary teacher or administrator, was assigned by the seminary leader in consultation with the board, subject to approval by the synod bishop in consultation with the Synod Council of each affected synod. This roster assignment should promote proportionate representation of faculty and administration in the synods of its region;

e. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament was listed at the time of the issuance of a call to federal chaplaincy or on the roster of the synod of current address, if approved by the synod bishop and received by the Synod Council; …

~~d. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if a seminary teacher or administrator, was assigned by the seminary board, subject to approval by the synod bishop and Synod Council of each affected synod, to promote proportionate representation of faculty and administration in each synod of its region;~~

~~e. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament was listed at the time of the issuance of a call to federal chaplaincy or on the roster of the synod of current address, if approved by the synod bishop and received by the Synod Council. ...~~

9) ELCA bylaw 7.42.01. indicates:

If the service of a minister of Word and Sacrament who receives and accepts a letter of call from this church, under 7.42.c., would be enhanced through transfer of roster status from the previous synod of roster to the synod of current address, such a transfer may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

10) ELCA bylaw 7.42.02. provides:

In certain circumstances for the sake of the ministry and mission needs of this church, the transfer of roster status of a minister of Word and Sacrament serving under call in the churchwide organization may be authorized, at the

initiative of the presiding bishop of this church, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved in such a transfer after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

b. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call

7.41.04. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call. When it is deemed necessary for the mission needs of this church, a letter of call may be issued by the Synod Council—according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—to a minister of Word and Sacrament for non-stipendiary service after the Synod Council has sought and received approval by the Conference of Bishops. Care is to be exercised so that positions in the church and in the world that can be filled adequately and appropriately by the laity not be filled by ministers of Word and Sacrament for their convenience, status, or personal preference. A call to non-stipendiary service is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated by the Synod Council when it is no longer serving the mission needs of this church.

1) Definition and criteria for Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call
   a) Non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA is understood to be service as a rostered minister either without compensation, for reimbursed expenses only, or for a token stipend that is significantly below the typical salary received for similar ministry.
   b) Non-stipendiary calls are not eligible for participation in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program; therefore, such non-stipendiary service is possible only when there is clear evidence that the minister of Word and Sacrament has adequate alternative income and health insurance.
   c) A letter of call to non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA may be issued only by ~~a~~ the Synod Council following approval by the Conference of Bishops.
   d) The minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a non-stipendiary call shall be accountable to the synod bishop and Synod Council in carrying out this ministry, and shall provide an annual ministry plan.~~:~~
   e) A call to non-stipendiary service shall be a one-year term call that may be renewed by the Synod Council only on the basis of the satisfactory fulfillment of the established criteria ~~enumerated below~~.
   f) A call to non-stipendiary ministry neither qualifies as an initial call to congregational service required for ordination nor does it imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation to the Synod Council. (*See ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.43. and bylaw 7.43.01.*)
   ~~g) The criteria under which a Synod Council may issue a letter of call to a minister of Word and Sacrament for non-stipendiary service include the following:~~
      ~~i. There shall be a clearly defined statement of the need for this minister to provide for Word and Sacrament ministry in the synod and a rationale for this call to be for non-stipendiary service, including an annual ministry plan;~~
      ~~ii. The minimum commitment by the minister of Word and Sacrament shall be a monthly average of 15 hours per week to the ministry to which called.~~

2) Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council

When the synod bishop and Synod Council believe that the criteria for a non-stipendiary letter of call are met by a specific ministry, the Synod Council may propose by a majority vote a letter of call.

   a) The Synod Council must determine that a call to non-stipendiary service is extended in order to carry out a specific ministry on behalf of the synod.
   b) The Synod Council forwards its request for a call~~, together with the rationale for issuing the call to non-stipendiary service,~~ to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. There~~-~~ request shall ~~be~~include a clearly defined statement of the need for this minister to provide for Word and Sacrament ministry in the synod and a rationale for this call to be for non-stipendiary service, along with affirmation that the rostered minister has adequate alternative income and health insurance.
   c) The Conference of Bishops takes action to approve or deny the request.
   d) Should the Conference of Bishops approve the request and the Synod Council issue the call, the Synod Council will conduct an annual review of the non-stipendiary call.
   e) Annual Synod Council action is required in order to continue the call to non-stipendiary service.

3) Action by the Conference of Bishops

The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops receives all requests from synod councils for calls to non-stipendiary service.

   a) The Roster Committee reviews these requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
   b) The Conference of Bishops, in a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for calls to non-stipendiary service. It reports its decision to the synod seeking such approval.

c) When approval is given by the Conference of Bishops, the Synod Council may proceed to issue a letter of call to non-stipendiary service and may annually renew such a call without subsequent action by the Conference of Bishops.

c. Shared-time ministries

7.41.01. Service under Call. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a Synod Council, a Synod Assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.44.~~A19~~A24. ...

1) Definition of shared-time ministry

The ELCA understands shared-time ministry to exist when a rostered minister is called to serve in one or more settings of this church while earning income from other employment or while devoting substantial time to other activities. Some examples of contexts and settings for which shared-time ministries may be appropriate are:

- *Small-membership congregations* with significant opportunities for mission and service.
- *New ministries* so limited in size or slow in development that they would require a disproportionate and unwise investment of time and money, if the more typical mission-development approach were employed.
- *Ministries* (e.g., *inner city, ethnic, and rural*) where the community's expectation is that the rostered minister will receive primary financial support from secular employment.
- *Multi-staff congregations* looking for ministry specialties, in addition to the services of rostered ministers and contracted laypersons.
- *Parishes that would benefit from having two or more individuals serving a single congregation or multiple congregations* but that cannot afford full-time salaries for several individuals.
- *Specialized pastoral or ministry needs* of institutions and agencies that may call for a high degree of training and skill but that may neither warrant investment of appropriate full-time salary nor justify the engagement of a full-time staff person in that position.

2) Criteria for shared-time ministry

a) Individuals eligible for shared-time ministry must be on the roster of this church or have been recently approved for initial call. Initial calls to Ministry of Word and Sacrament normally are in a congregational setting.
b) Experienced individuals, whose ability to work in complex settings has already been tested, are preferred.
c) A minister of Word and Sacrament engaged in shared-time ministry shall have a significant responsibility for a ministry of Word and Sacrament in a congregation, institution, or other expression of this church *(churchwide bylaws 7.41.01. and 7.41.03.)*.
d) A rostered minister may be under call to only ONE church entity. Other employment is by agreement, not under call.
e) The work-load for the call must be no less than an average of ~~15~~ 10 hours per week.
f) Compensation shall be commensurate with synod compensation guidelines that apply to individuals in full-time positions.
g) Any contemplated non-church employment for the rostered minister shall be subject to the review and approval of the synod bishop.
h) Part-time reserve component military chaplaincy alone does not normally meet the threshold for minimum work-load hours as a shared-time call.

3) Procedures for call to shared-time ministry

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* provides principles and procedures for the calling of ministers of Word and Sacrament (churchwide continuing resolution 7.44.A19.). In addition to the regular procedures, a letter of call for shared-time ministry shall include the following:

a) The range of duties and responsibilities shall be specified by adding appendices to the "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities," related to the letter of call (*C9.09.).
   i. If a minister of Word and Sacrament is called as the only pastor of a congregation, it shall be to the full range of such duties. If the call is to a congregational staff position, the shared-time pastor shall have significant responsibility for preaching and administration of the sacraments.
   ii. If a minister of Word and Sacrament is called to a ministry in a non-congregational setting, specialization of function may be appropriate, provided opportunity for Word and Sacrament ministry is included.
b) The decision to seek a shared-time pastor shall be based upon a study of mission and ministry needs in the particular setting. Appropriate synod or churchwide leaders must participate in the study and decision.

c) A periodic evaluation by the calling entity shall be encouraged by the appropriate synod bishop or churchwide leaders so that the called person is held accountable for the ministry in that particular situation. The calling entity is accountable for adequate professional and financial support.
d) Any exceptions to the guidelines governing time and compensation must be requested from the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.

4) Appropriate candidates for shared-time ministry

Shared-time ministry demands the ability to use time efficiently, the flexibility to adjust to altering circumstances, and the willingness to make a positive contribution to church and society through secular employment or other interests. The effective shared-time leader has a clear sense of personal ministry and professional integrity. He or she has a concept of ministry that values extensive shared leadership with laity.

It is appropriate for ministers of Word and Sacrament to offer themselves for shared-time ministry, as with all specific ministries, on the basis of their own sense of vocation and their sense of the needs of this church. It is not appropriate, however, for this dual-vocational interest to take priority over the mission needs of this church.

5) Support and accountability in shared-time ministry

The nature of shared-time ministry requires that the employing entity pay particular attention to such matters as compensation and benefits, setting of non-working times for meetings, and specifying shared expectations, which acknowledge the special dynamics of this style of ministry.

a) Accountability of the shared-time person is the same as with all rostered ministers.
b) Evaluation of the ministry should be based upon the stated goals and conditions established for that ministry at the time of call.
c) The entity of this church that calls the individual will review the ministry annually to evaluate the ongoing appropriateness of the shared-time style for that particular mission opportunity.

d. Calls to Serve in Unusual Circumstances

7.41.05. Calls to Serve in Unusual Circumstances. When it is deemed to be in the interests of this church in the care of the Gospel, ministers of Word and Sacrament may be called for a stated period of time, not to exceed three years, to minister on behalf of this church while employed in an occupation outside the traditional range of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Such calls may be extended by a Synod Council or the Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops according to criteria and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. A call to serve in unusual circumstances is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council or Church Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated when it is no longer serving the mission needs of this church.

1) Requests to serve under "Unusual Circumstances" are submitted to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops by the rostered minister's bishop. The request should include a letter from the rostered minister describing the reasons for making this request and a letter from the bishop that supports this request.
2) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops must first determine that the proposed call does not fall within any other category of call available in the church and only then shall determine the appropriate source of call.
3) The appropriateness of a potential call to serve in unusual circumstances should be examined using the following questions:
   a) Does the proposed call advance the interest of the church in the care of the gospel?
   b) What aspects of the position require that the worker be a minister of Word and Sacrament?
   c) How would a minister of Word and Sacrament serving in this position provide a distinct advantage for this church?
   d) Is there adequate provision for ecclesial accountability by the minister to the synod bishop?
   e) Is there realistic potential for abuse of the call for the personal or financial benefit of the minister or for business advantage?

e. Interim ministry

7.41.03. Calls to Interim Ministry. Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in interim ministry shall normally serve under a letter of call, according to policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council. A call to interim ministry shall be a term call extended by the Synod Council upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have retired status may be appointed by the synod bishop without a letter of call.

†S14.23. During service to a congregation, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of this synod. The interim pastor and any rostered minister who may assist shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop of this synod that the congregation records, for the period for which the interim pastor was responsible, are in order.

***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in this congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any rostered minister providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.

~~**7.41.01. Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a Synod Council, a Synod Assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.~~

~~...~~

~~c. Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in interim ministry appointed by the synod bishop may serve under a letter of call, according to policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council. A call to interim ministry shall be a term call extended by the Synod Council upon recommendation of the synod bishop.~~

~~**†S14.23.** During service to a congregation, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of this synod. The interim pastor and any rostered minister who may assist shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop of this synod that the congregation records, for the period for which the interim pastor was responsible, are in order.~~

~~***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.~~

~~***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in this congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any rostered minister providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.~~

1) Congregations in transition
   a) Because of the importance of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the ELCA seeks to ensure appropriate pastoral leadership for congregations during a time of pastoral vacancy. Interim ministry ~~is~~ may be provided by synods during the time of transition following the completion of service by the congregation's former pastor and prior to the calling of a new pastor. This ~~is~~ may also be provided for in a congregation served by a multiple staff when a congregation's senior pastor leaves, or when an associate pastor or other pastoral staff leaves. The interim period is thus a time in which pastoral care is arranged for a congregation by the synod as the congregation moves through a process of self-study and change toward new pastoral leadership.
   b) The synod bishop ~~arranges~~ may arrange for the congregation to receive Word and Sacrament leadership during the period prior to the regular calling of a pastor through the appointment of an interim pastor.

c) A congregation in a situation of significant concerns and stress related to a pastoral transition may benefit from the leadership of an experienced and trained interim pastor. Situations in which this is particularly appropriate include the transition following a long pastorate, a congregation facing new mission opportunities and/or a changed context for ministry, a transition following the resignation of a pastor related to disciplinary action by the synod, or a transition marked by significant discord or upheaval within a congregation.

2) Appointment
   a) An interim pastor ~~is may be~~ appointed by the synod bishop (*see *C9.06. above*) and ~~may~~ shall normally serve under a term call extended by the Synod Council, unless the pastor has retired roster status. (*See bylaw ~~7.41.01.c.~~7.41.03. above.*)
      i. Calls to interim ministry may not be extended by a congregation.
      ii. A pastor serving under appointment by the bishop serves the congregation in a contracted and compensated arrangement.
   b) Unless previously agreed to by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served during this time of transition and shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor (*see *C9.07. ~~in the Model Constitution for Congregations~~above*).

3) Guidelines for called interim pastoral ministry
   a) Initial issuance of a call to interim ministry by the Synod Council shall be upon the recommendation of the synod bishop.
   b) A called interim pastor shall serve under contract with a congregation, providing a minimum of ~~15~~ 10 hours per week to the congregation and be compensated in accordance with synod guidelines. The initial interim ministry agreement with a congregation may be reviewed by the bishop or synod staff prior to the acceptance of the contractual arrangement by the interim pastor.
      i. A call to interim ministry shall be primarily for the benefit of the congregation served, not for the status of the minister of Word and Sacrament.
      ii. Such a call is issued by the Synod Council and may be either a term call to a specific congregation or a general term call to interim ministry in the synod.
   c) Prior to being eligible for a call to interim ministry, the pastor shall normally receive appropriate training for interim ministry. The appropriate churchwide unit will review interim ministry training programs and serve as consultant to synods in evaluating such programs.
   d) Only pastors who have served in a regular called congregational ministry for a minimum of three years are eligible to serve in a called interim ministry without an exception to the three-year congregational service bylaw from the Conference of Bishops. ~~.~~ Interim calls will not be granted to candidates for ordination as a first call.
   e) In issuing a call to interim ministry, the synod assumes no responsibility for guaranteeing continuous employment, compensation, or benefits for the pastor under call (ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.43.).
      i. Compensation and benefits are normally provided entirely by the congregation or ministry setting being served. Where possible, continuation of the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program will be advocated by the synod.
      ii. It is explicitly understood that the synod is the calling body and not the employer of record at any time during the service of an interim pastor under call from the Synod Council.
   f) Calls to general interim service within a synod may be issued for a one-year to three-year term of service, with an annual review by the Synod Council or its designated committee.
      i. If a pastor under a term call to interim ministry has not served in a congregation during the preceding 12 months, however, the call shall be terminated by the Synod Council.
      ii. A term letter of call issued by the Synod Council may also be coterminous with the duration of service within ~~the~~ a specific congregation ~~served~~ *(ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.43.)*.
      iii. The term call may be terminated by action of the Synod Council.

4) Guidelines for appointed interim ministry
   a) An appointed interim pastor is authorized to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to a congregation by the synod bishop with the concurrence of the Congregation Council or congregation.
      i. The interim pastor assumes the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor.
      ii. The appointed interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the synod bishop (†S14.23. in the *Constitution for Synods*).

b) A retired pastor or a pastor on leave ~~from call~~ who serves an interim ministry is recommended by the bishop and signs an interim ministry agreement with the congregation which provides for the compensation, benefits, and the specific goals and expectations related to the period of interim ministry.

f. Supply ministry

7.41.04. Calls to Supply Ministry. When it is deemed necessary for the mission needs of this church, and upon recommendation of the synod bishop, a letter of call may be issued by the Synod Council—according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—to a minister of Word and Sacrament for supply ministry. The minister of Word and Sacrament shall include a description of this ministry in the annual report to the synod bishop. A call to supply ministry is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated by the Synod Council when it no longer fulfills the criteria under which it was issued.

1) Purpose

Calls to supply ministry are intended to help meet the needs of congregations for temporary or occasional Word and Sacrament leadership either because of temporary absence of the regularly called pastor or because of unavailability of an interim pastor during a pastoral vacancy. These calls are intended primarily for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who are without regular call but who seek to be actively engaged in ministry and remain on the active roster. However, **such calls are not intended to preclude occasional supply ministry performed by those who have on-leave, disability, or retired roster status.** Calls to supply ministry are to serve the care of the gospel in the synod, and are not to be issued solely for the status of the rostered minister.

2) Eligibility

Calls to supply ministry are to be issued only to rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament who have left a previous call. Such calls may not be issued as a first call to candidates for ordination, candidates for reception, those seeking reinstatement after leaving the roster for matters related to discipline, or those rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not fulfilled three years of initial service in a congregation or approved equivalent ministry setting. They may not be issued to rostered ministers who are eligible for retired status, as those ministers typically are free to perform occasional or interim pastoral ministry without need of a letter of call.

3) Guidelines for supply ministry

a) Requests for calls to supply ministry shall be presented to the Synod Council by the synod bishop, who will make a recommendation concerning approval or denial. The bishop will communicate the recommendation to the rostered minister prior to the Synod Council vote. If the recommendation is for denial of the request, the minister will be granted an opportunity to address a designated committee. After hearing from the minister and the synod bishop, the committee may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate further and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The decision of the Synod Council is final. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for a letter of call, the minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

b) Calls to supply ministry are term calls of no more than one year, renewable annually after review and action by the Synod Council. Calls may be withdrawn by the Synod Council at any time. If the call is not renewed or is withdrawn, the minister may be invited to apply for leave.

c) The synod shall establish clear guidelines with expectations for supply ministry calls. Normally, the expectation will be for the minister to offer at least two weeks of supply ministry per month, but the expectation will differ according to context within a given synod, dependent on such factors as the number of congregations and rostered ministers available for supply, distance between congregations, and individual circumstances of the minister. Ministers with calls to supply ministry are expected to remain actively involved in the life of the synod and in continuing education for ministry.

d) Each year, every minister of Word and Sacrament with a call to supply ministry shall provide as part of the required annual report to the synod bishop a written accounting of the supply ministry provided that year, along with an accounting of involvement in the life of the synod and continuing education, which shall serve as information for the Synod Council's annual review for possible renewal of the call.

e) Supply ministry is to be centered in the worship life of the congregations of the synod and is not intended for ministry offered primarily through occasional services such as weddings and funerals.

f) Supply ministry should be limited to occasional or short-term engagements and is not intended for long-term situations. Supply for extended periods normally should be the subject of a call to interim ministry.

g) Synods should establish guidelines for compensation and expense reimbursement for supply ministry.
h) Ministers who provide supply ministry across synod borders should have a letter of call from the synod in which they primarily serve. If a minister is invited to offer supply ministry occasionally in a neighboring synod, they should consult with that synod bishop before offering such ministry.

g. Ecclesiastical endorsement for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (MCPCCE)

Background: *This resource is intended for use by synod bishops and synod staff in working with individuals considering service in a ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education. Following all other applicable call guidelines, a synod may issue a letter of call to a rostered minister to serve in such ministries even if that person does not have ecclesiastical endorsement or professional certification. However, synods are encouraged to seek endorsed and certified individuals for such ministries. Those individuals serving in these ministries who are not endorsed and certified should be encouraged and supported to seek MCPCCE ecclesiastical endorsement. This section describes both the values and limitations of such endorsement and certification as well as an overview of the process.*

Introduction

The ecclesiastical endorsement process in the ELCA for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education (MCPCCE) provides the basis for a recommendation to the synod bishop and Synod Council concerning a rostered minister's suitability, readiness, aptitude, pastoral identity and competence, and theological integration for a particular ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical pastoral education. The professional certification process follows ecclesiastical endorsement.

1) Definition of ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification
   a) Professional certification: The recognition by a professional chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical pastoral education organization that a person has met a level of professional competence of ministry in a specific setting.
   b) Ecclesiastical endorsement: The recognition that a rostered minister has met ELCA endorsement standards for theological and pastoral competence to serve in ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

      Ecclesiastical endorsement is a necessary pre-requisite for certification by a professional organization. Ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification are both normally required by an employing agency/institution. ELCA rostered ministers who seek ecclesiastical endorsement are expected to seek and obtain professional certification.

      The MCPCCE program is located in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

      Ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincies is required for a minister of Word and Sacrament to apply for positions in the Departments of Defense (military), Veterans Affairs (VA), Justice (Bureau of Prisons) and any other federal departments, agencies, bureaus, and services. Each federal department establishes minimum standards for applicants to apply, and all require a valid, current ecclesiastical endorsement specifically for chaplaincy service in that department. Applications for ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincy are obtained through the Christian Community and Leadership unit, senior director for federal chaplaincy.

The following are recognized professional organizations:
Association of Professional Chaplains (APC); American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC); American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT); American Psychological Association (APA); Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE); American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA); National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC);National Association of Certified Mental Health Counselors (NACMHC); Association of Certified Social Workers (ACSW).

2) MCPCCE endorsement process

The document "Endorsement Standards and Procedures, Call Criteria and Program Guidelines for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education" (ELCA.org/Resources/Specialized-Pastoral-Care):

- Establishes standards for theological and pastoral competence for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Sets forth criteria for calls and appointments to ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Presents guidelines for pastoral ministry programs in all affiliated or recognized social ministry organizations

Based upon material submitted by the candidate and a meeting with a consultation committee, a recommendation is provided to the synod bishop regarding the readiness of the rostered minister for a specific ministry. The synod bishop and the Synod Council have sole authority to grant or revoke the ecclesiastical endorsement.

3) Values of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Seeks to establish accountability between individuals serving in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education and their respective judicatories and to emphasize the importance of appropriate conduct and practice of those who serve in these ministries.
   b) Seeks to emphasize the importance of ecclesiastical endorsement in a synod's consideration of a call to service in one of these ministries.
   c) Enables synod councils to issue a term call that permits a non-endorsed candidate engaging in the ecclesiastical endorsement process to serve while completing the endorsement process.
   d) Provides a standard set of expectations for rostered ministers who seek to serve in a specific area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

4) Endorsement consultation outcomes
   a) Renders an assessment of the readiness, pastoral competence, and theological integration of rostered ministers who seek to enter a specific field of ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.
   b) Utilizes the professional gifts of rostered ministers who have long ministered in a specific area to assist in rendering a professional recommendation for ecclesiastical endorsement.
   c) Renders a recommendation on the professional pastoral competence of candidates to employing agencies and institutions that seek to meet national professional accreditation standards.
   d) Serves as a referral source and consultation to bishops and seeks to provide resources for rostered ministers exploring vocational and training options in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

5) Limitations of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Does not imply or guarantee that professional certification will be achieved or that a call to serve in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education will be issued.
   b) Does not establish an employment, agency, or supervisory relationship between the endorsing synod and the rostered minister receiving the endorsement.
   c) Does not imply or assure that the endorsed individual has undergone any background or reference checks, screening, psychological testing, or evaluation as part of the ecclesiastical endorsement process.

6) Initiating the ELCA ecclesiastical endorsement process

When a rostered minister contacts the synod regarding the ecclesiastical endorsement process, or when a synod is considering issuing a call to a ministry within the synod of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education, questions related to ecclesiastical endorsement in the ELCA or for military, VA, or federal corrections applications may be directed to the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

Any individual seeking ecclesiastical endorsement for a federal chaplaincy will contact the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit. The application from the individual requires a letter from the synod bishop on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed.

g. Military service

Involuntary call-up for military chaplains is a term applied: (a) to a reserve component chaplain who is assigned to a reserve unit that is activated for federal duty, or (b) to an individual reserve chaplain who is called to active duty when he or she has not requested it. The suggestions provided here for chaplains serving under call to congregations may be used as guidance for other employing entities, institutions, or agencies where ministers are serving under call outside of the congregational setting.

1) Procedures for pastors
   a) If you have not already done so, make your congregation aware of your status as a military reservist.
   b) Notify your Congregation Council president and Executive Committee and arrange for a meeting with the Congregation Council to discuss your involuntary call-up to military service.
   c) Notify your synod bishop and invite the bishop or a member of the bishop's staff to participate in the Congregation Council meeting where the issues related to your call-up will be considered.
   d) Contact the ELCA senior director for federal chaplaincy.
   e) Contact the Board of Pensions of the ELCA (hereafter referred to as Portico Benefit Services) for essential ELCA Retirement Plan and ELCA Health Benefits Plan information.
   f) Note that no new ecclesiastical endorsement is necessary in order for you to respond to the call-up.

2) Considerations for congregations
   a) The federal Uniformed Service Employment and Re-employment Act (USERRA) was passed in 1994 to encourage military service by making it easier for service personnel to return to civilian life after duty. While it is doubtful that this law is directly applicable to pastors under call to congregations, efforts should be made to ensure that ministers of Word and Sacrament are not placed at a disadvantage by their involuntary call-up.
   b) For a call-up of 18 months or less, a leave of absence should be granted to the pastor by the Congregation Council. The synod should assist the congregation in arranging for interim or supply pastoral care during the leave of absence.
   c) If the call-up extends for more than 18 months, the situation should be reviewed and possibly renegotiated. The leave of absence may be extended, or the pastor could submit a letter of resignation, allowing a new pastor to be called by the congregation.
   d) The salary of the pastor should continue until military pay is received by the pastor or the pastor's family.
   e) Although the congregation cannot sponsor the pastor in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program during her/his active-duty service, the congregation should continue the health benefits coverage of the pastor and the pastor's family until health benefits coverage is provided by the military. If the congregation does not continue the health benefits coverage, USERRA does give employees on leave the right to continue their health insurance for 18 months at their own expense.
   f) The congregation should consider accumulating make-up contributions for the pastor's ELCA Retirement Plan account for at least the 18 months of the leave of absence. It is necessary to confer with Portico Benefit Services to determine what is appropriate and permissible under these circumstances.

3) Other considerations
   a) There will be a delay of approximately 30 days for the chaplain's family members to be incorporated into the military medical system. For this reason, it is important that family members have copies of both (a) the military member's orders activating him or her to active duty, and (b) a reserve identification card. These items could help a family member to receive medical care during the 30-day period.
   b) Medical services for military members and their families are administered under the Tricare System. Further information on this system is available at www.tricare.mil.
   c) While on leave of absence, the pastor's housing allowance should continue until the military housing allowance is activated. If a pastor's family is living in a parsonage, arrangements should be made for their continuing in that setting during the leave of absence, or until a new pastor is called. When the military housing allowance is received, that amount should either be offered to the congregation in lieu of rent for the parsonage or used to pay utility costs.

4. Termination of call

7.43. A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Sacrament, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.

7.43.01. When the Synod Council or the Church Council, as the calling source, determines that the service or employment no longer fulfills the criteria under which a call was issued, the Synod Council or the Church Council shall vacate the call and direct that the individual be placed on leave from call or, if such leave status is not granted, the individual shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

7.43.02. Ministers of Word and Sacrament previously under call to the churchwide organization or to a synod shall respect the integrity of the ministry in which they no longer serve and shall not interfere with or exercise the functions of the office or position in which they no longer serve unless invited to do so by the presiding bishop or Church Council in the churchwide organization or, in the synods, by the bishop or the Synod Council.

7.46. The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and a congregation shall be as follows:

a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the pastor's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:

1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;
4) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the pastor;
5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;
6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;
7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.

b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.

c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address

whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, the congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

~~7.43. A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Sacrament, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.~~

~~7.43.01. When the Synod Council or the Church Council, as the calling source, determines that the service or employment no longer fulfills the criteria under which a call was issued, the Synod Council or the Church Council shall vacate the call and direct that the individual be placed on leave from call or, if such leave status is not granted, the individual shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.~~

~~7.43.02. Ministers of Word and Sacrament previously under call to the churchwide organization or to a synod shall respect the integrity of the ministry in which they no longer serve and shall not interfere with or exercise the functions of the office or position in which they no longer serve unless invited to do so by the presiding bishop or Church Council in the churchwide organization or, in the synods, by the bishop or the Synod Council.~~

~~7.46. The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and a congregation shall be as follows:~~

~~a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the pastor's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:~~

~~1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;~~

~~2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;~~

~~3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;~~

~~4) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the pastor;~~

~~5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;~~

~~6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;~~

~~7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;~~

~~8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or~~

~~9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.~~

~~b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,~~

~~1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or~~

2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.

c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

~~d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.~~

~~e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, the congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.~~

~~f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph e. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.~~

a. Termination of congregational call: A letter of call from a congregation to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated only as provided for in constitutional provisions 7.46., †S14.18., and *C9.05. If a minister of Word and Sacrament resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the pastor nor be rejected by the congregation. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the congregation agrees to a later date.

b. Termination of Synod Council or Church Council call: A letter of call from the Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated by: 1) the conclusion of the service or employment for which the call was granted; 2) resignation; 3) resignation or removal of the minister from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church; or 4) by decision of the calling authority to vacate the call. If a minister of Word and Sacrament resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the pastor nor rejected by the calling authority. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the calling authority agrees to a later date.

5. Completion of responsibilities

The role of pastors in congregations to which they are not (or are no longer) called is governed by †S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods*, which states, "Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council."

Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have completed their pastoral call to a particular congregation change their role in how they relate to that congregation, and care should be taken to provide for an orderly transition. Certain ministerial functions are specific to and performed on behalf of the congregation, not the individual, and are therefore the responsibility of the minister of Word and Sacrament serving under call (or one appointed by the synod bishop or contracted by the Congregation Council for such ministry). Although to be regarded as affirmations of the pastor's past service to the congregation, requests from members for the former pastor to preside at weddings, baptisms, funerals, and the like should be politely refused. Regardless of whether the pastor has accepted a call to another congregation or another expression of this church, the completion of pastoral responsibilities must be marked clearly and carefully.

The following guidelines are for pastors, the congregations they served, and synod bishops in understanding the new status of a pastor who has resigned a call. They are intended to affirm the past ministry of such pastors, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves during transitions, and to point to constructive and healthful interactions in the future.

a. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the minister of Word and Sacrament is no longer a pastor of the congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in that congregation.
b. Care must be taken by the pastor to assure that the record of pastoral acts conducted within the congregation is up to date. As required by *C9.14. in the *Model Constitution for Congregations* and †S14.21. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the secretary of the congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop that the record was received, in good order, before the departing pastor can be installed in a new charge or be granted retired status. Attention

also must be given to "make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations" to the congregation before departure (*C.9.08. and †S14.22.).

c. Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of the resignation as is practicable, the minister of Word and Sacrament may make use of the rite of "Farewell and Godspeed" during which the pastor may return to representatives of the congregation the signs of the ministerial office that were given at the pastor's installation.
d. If invited to exercise a ministerial role by a member of a congregation to which they were formerly called, ministers of Word and Sacrament should indicate that they are not (or are no longer) authorized to take such a role. If invited to exercise such a role by the current pastor, care must be taken to assure that the parameters and limited scope of the activity are clear.
e. As part of the bishop's pastoral care, especially during times of transition, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to discuss these guidelines and their implications either in person or in correspondence.

B. On Leave from Call

7.31.07. On Leave. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call and who requests a temporary leave from active ministry, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church by action of the Synod Council of the synod on whose roster the minister is listed, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such leave shall be reviewed annually and may be terminated by the Synod Council if it no longer meets the criteria under which it was granted.

a. Regular Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament who is without a current letter of call and who has requested temporary leave from active ministry may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

b. Study Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Sacrament or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

d. Extensions of these time limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.

e. Ministers who have been granted on-leave status are expected to maintain membership in a congregation of this church. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted on-leave status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

~~**7.31.07. On Leave from Call.** A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod of which the minister of Word and Sacrament is a member, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.~~

~~a. Normative Pattern: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, a minister of Word and Sacrament who is without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of three years, beginning at the completion of an active call.~~

~~b. Study Leave: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, with the approval of the synod bishop and in consultation with the appropriate churchwide unit, a minister of Word and Sacrament engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years.~~

~~c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament may request leave for family responsibilities. By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, such a minister of Word and Sacrament who is without a current letter of call and who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Sacrament or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church – under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council – for a maximum of six years beginning at the completion of an active call.~~

~~d. Exception to these limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.~~

1. Definition and criteria for on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status

a. At the termination of the call of a rostered minister, if the rostered minister has not received and accepted a subsequent call, the following procedure is to be followed:

1) The rostered minister must inform the bishop of the date ~~his/her~~the current call is coming to an end. The bishop shall, in a timely manner, make sure that the rostered minister is aware of the necessity to comply with these guidelines.

2) A rostered minister seeking on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status shall make a written request to the synod bishop within 45 days following the termination of a prior call, providing a rationale as to why on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status should be granted. Failure to do so may result in removal from the roster.

3) The request for on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status must include:

a) a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call;

b) a statement of how the rostered minister's gifts and abilities can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;

c) the anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a letter of call;

d) a statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services while on leave ~~from call~~ at the direction of the synod bishop;

e) the rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave ~~from call~~; and

f) a statement describing the rostered minister's current and intended participation in a congregation of this church, or, if the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, a request for permission to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

4) The synod bishop shall make a recommendation to the Synod Council whether to grant or deny on-leave status, and shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the bishop recommends granting on-leave status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant that status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted on-leave status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for leave, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

~~If a rostered minister requesting on-leave from-call status desires to make a personal statement relative to the request, the Synod Council may, at its discretion and in the manner of its determination, allow for a personal appearance by the rostered minister to the Synod Council (or its designated committee).~~

5) On-leave status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.31.07., and †S8.12.i.9. in *the Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop within 90 days of receiving a recommendation from the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.

~~On-leave-from-call status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.31.07., and †S8.12.i.9. in the *Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.~~

6) The effective date for on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status, if granted by the Synod Council, begins the day the rostered minister is no longer serving under a regularly issued letter of call. This date is not affected by severance payments.

7) Synod Council action related to a rostered minister's on-leave-~~from-call~~ status is reported as information to the annual Synod Assembly in the report of the bishop or the Synod Council.

8) Written notification is sent to the rostered minister requesting on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status reporting the action of the Synod Council.

9) The action of the Synod Council in granting on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status must be reported to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services. Similar notification is given by the synod to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services when such status is ended.

10) Prior to the annual anniversary of the effective date of the rostered minister's on-leave ~~from call~~ status, the rostered minister must request renewal of the on-leave ~~from call~~ status. Annual action by the Synod Council is necessary for the continuation of that status.
11) While on leave ~~from call~~, a rostered minister must be an active member of a congregation of this church., If the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
12) A rostered minister on leave from call remains accountable to the synod bishop and must be willing to meet the criteria and standards of this church for its rostered ministers.

b. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may be retained on the roster of this church for a maximum of six years by annual action of the Synod Council, in consultation with the appropriate unit. (*See bylaw 7.31. 07.b.*)
A person already granted regular on-leave ~~from call~~ status~~,~~ whose life circumstances change~~,~~ may apply for a change to study leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

c. Family Leave: ~~On~~ On leave ~~from call~~ status for family responsibilities is available to rostered ministers with demonstrated circumstances that fulfill the criteria for this status. A rostered minister may request on-leave ~~from call~~ status for family responsibilities for a maximum of six years, by annual action of the Synod Council, based upon either of the following reasons *(See bylaw 7.31.07.c.)*:
1) For the birth or care of a child or children of the rostered minister.
2) For the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health problem. A serious health problem is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either a period of incapacity or treatment with inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility, or a period of incapacity or subsequent treatment following inpatient care. A medical certification of such a serious health problem must be submitted to the Synod Council as part of the request for on-leave ~~from call~~ status.

A person already granted regular on-leave ~~from call~~ status~~,~~ whose life circumstances change~~,~~ may apply for a change to family leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

d. With approval of the Synod Council, either by general policy or by specific authorization, the synod bishop may place limitations or restrictions upon the availability for service of a rostered minister who is on leave ~~from call~~. At least three months prior to the end of a rostered minister's on-leave ~~from call~~ status, the bishop or bishop's designee will contact the rostered minister to review:
1) Pension and health insurance implications, with a recommendation that Portico Benefit Services be contacted.
2) The criteria for continuation of on-leave ~~from call~~ status beyond ~~three~~ six years, if applicable.
3) The implications and expectations of being removed from the roster.
4) The process for reinstatement to the roster.

f. The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is on leave ~~from call~~ may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

g. The secretary of this church shall report semi-annually to the Conference of Bishops any person whose on-leave ~~from call~~ status is coming to an end within the next six months.

2. Criteria for extension of on-leave ~~from call~~ status

a. A rostered minister may remain on leave from call beyond ~~three~~ six years when such an extension contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the on-leave ~~from call~~ status warrant an exception to the normal ~~three~~six-year limitation. Such continuation on the roster of this church beyond the ~~third~~ sixth year is contingent upon ~~recommendation by the synod bishop and~~ action of both the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops.

b. A rostered minister who is eligible for retired status should not be considered for ~~an~~ extension of on-leave ~~from call~~ status.

c. A rostered minister who seeks to remain on leave ~~from call~~ beyond ~~three~~ six years must provide a written request to the synod bishop and Synod Council for an extension of that status. This request should be received no later than six months prior to the end of the ~~third~~ sixth year of on-leave ~~from call~~ status.

d. This request must state clearly the reason(s) for such a request and how these reasons relate to this church's ministry and mission.

e. The request must include the following information:
   1) The rationale for the rostered minister to remain on leave ~~from call~~, including a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call, and an articulation of how the rostered minister's gifts and circumstances can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;
   2) The anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a call;
   3) A statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services at the direction of the synod bishop, consistent with the ministry and mission needs of the synod;
   4) The rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave from call;
   5) A statement describing the rostered minister's current congregational participation ~~in a congregation of this church~~.

f. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may remain on study leave beyond six years when such continuation contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the study leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of on leave ~~from call~~ (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the educational goals of the rostered minister, the time line for completion of study, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of study. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon ~~recommendation by the synod bishop and~~ action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council ~~upon request of the synod bishop~~ after notice to the rostered minister.

g. Family Leave: A rostered minister on leave for care-giving responsibilities may remain on family leave beyond six years when the particular circumstances of the family leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave from call (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the continuing care-giving needs of the rostered minister, the possible time line for conclusion, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of these circumstances. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon ~~recommendation by the synod bishop and~~ action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council ~~upon request of the synod bishop~~ after notice to the rostered minister.

h. Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council
   1) The synod bishop reviews the request for continuation of the on-leave ~~from call~~ status beyond ~~three~~ six years ~~(six years in the case of graduate study and family leave)~~ and forwards that request to the Synod Council together with the bishop's evaluation of the request. The rostered minister shall be notified of the nature of the bishop's recommendation. If the bishop recommends not to approve the request, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation.
   2) ~~At the request of the synod bishop, the~~The Synod Council considers the request of the rostered minister and how it relates to the mission and ministry of the synod. Should the decision of the Synod Council be to recommend approval, the Synod Council shall make such a request to the Conference of Bishops.
   3) On behalf of the Synod Council, the synod bishop forwards the request and rationale to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.
   4) A rostered minister on leave ~~from call~~ must provide an annual written request to the synod bishop for recommendation to the Synod Council for continuation of that status.
   5) The Synod Council must review and act annually on requests for continuance of on-leave ~~from call~~ status beyond the ~~three~~six-year norm ~~(six years for graduate study and family leave).~~

i. Action by the Conference of Bishops
   1) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops reviews such requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
   2) The Conference of Bishops, at a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for continuation of on-leave ~~from call~~ status. It shall report its decision to the synod seeking such a continuation.
   3) The action of the Conference of Bishops ~~in approving the request of a Synod Council is valid for two years, if approved annually by the Synod Council.~~automatically grants the first year of extension of leave. The Synod Council must subsequently vote to grant the second year, upon written request of the rostered minister and recommendation of the synod bishop.

C. Disability

7.41.08. Disability. Ministers of Word and Sacrament may be granted disability status and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for designation of disability on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted disability status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.42. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

h. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if granted disability status, was listed when last called or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Sacrament for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church. ...

1. Introduction

Disability roster status is an ecclesial determination granted by the Synod Council upon endorsement by the synod bishop in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of disability status by any health plan or benefits provider.

2. Disability roster status

a. Disability roster status is discretionary, and there is no right or entitlement to such roster status even when disability benefits have been granted by a health plan or benefits provider.

b. A minister of Word and Sacrament who seeks disability roster status shall submit a written request to the synod bishop for such status. The request from the minister should include the medical diagnosis, benefits decision, if any, of Portico Benefit Services or other benefits provider, and other pertinent information regarding the minister's disability. The synod bishop has sole discretion to determine whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether to grant disability roster status.

c. Disability roster status may be granted even though the minister has not submitted a request to the bishop or disability benefits have been denied by a health plan or benefits provider (*e.g.*, 7.46.c., †S14.18.c., *C9.05.c.).

d. The synod bishop shall act to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation or for those previously served by the minister.

e. The continuation of disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Sacrament is subject to review at any time and shall be reviewed in the event that disability benefits are terminated. Disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated by the Synod Council upon recommendation by the synod bishop or in the event the minister accepts a call.

f. The transfer of the roster status of a minister with disability roster status may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

g. If the disability roster status ceases, a minister who is not under call or has not received and accepted a call, should request on-leave ~~from call~~ status or retired status, if eligible, in accordance with the established processes.

D. Retirement

7.41.07. Retirement. Ministers of Word and Sacrament may retire upon attaining the earlier of age 60 or 30 years on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted retired status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.42. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

i. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if granted retired status, was listed when last called or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Sacrament for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

1. Policy and procedures related to retired status

a. A minister of Word and Sacrament who has attained the age of 60 or who has been on the roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies for 30 or more years may be granted retired status by this church. Retired status is an ecclesial determination which may be granted by the Synod Council ~~upon endorsement by the synod bishop~~ in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of benefits under any health or retirement plan in which the minister of Word and Sacrament may be a member.

b. A minister of Word and Sacrament who seeks retired roster status shall make a written request to the synod bishop no later than 45 days following the termination of the most recent call or of on-leave ~~from call~~ or disability status.

c. The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Sacrament is eligible for retired status and whether~~, in the bishop's sole discretion, to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the Synod Council, in executive session if deemed necessary.~~ to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. The bishop shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the synod bishop recommends granting retired status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted retired status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right to make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee) in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. ~~If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the~~ The Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for retired status, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

d. The synod bishop shall act to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation or for those previously served by the retiring minister.

e. A minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted retired status shall retain that roster status until (1) the minister is no longer on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, (2) the minister accepts a call, or (3) the Synod Council revokes retired status upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Such revocation of a minister's retired status may occur only upon a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council, present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting.

f. The Synod Council shall engage in a regular, periodic examination of all ministers of Word and Sacrament on the retired roster such that each and every retired minister's status is reviewed at least once during a three-year cycle.

2. Guidelines for retired ministers of Word and Sacrament

a. Roster of ministers of Word and Sacrament

A retired minister is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the minister resides. The retired minister remains accountable to the synod bishop where rostered, and the minister should regularly report to the synod bishop on any activities as a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Unless bylaw 7.41.~~07~~09.b. applies, a retired minister must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and remains subject to the standards for ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church.

b. Congregational membership

A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one's membership to another congregation allows the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor's retired role.

c. Pastoral service

At the time of retirement, a minister of Word and Sacrament is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in any congregation previously served unless specifically authorized to do so. Ministers of Word and Sacrament must respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve as well as the authority of the current pastors of such congregations.

The service of retired pastors is governed by the *Constitution for Synods* [†S14.19.], which describes the role of pastors in congregations in which they do not serve: "Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council" (†S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods*).

The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

d. Interim ministry

One area of potential service for the retired minister is interim ministry. Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. The ELCA invites retired pastors to consider this important arena of ministry.

A retired pastor may serve under contract as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only upon appointment by and authorization of the synod bishop. Retired pastors who serve under call in an interim ministry return to the active roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

e. Compensation

Retirement benefits provided through Portico Benefit Services, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to ministers in retirement. Neither retired pastors nor their spouses are entitled to any compensation from any congregation or ministry previously served solely by reason of being retired or having previously served in that congregation or ministry.

f. Consultation with synod bishop

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired ministers of Word and Sacrament, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a minister at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the minister's new retired status, and its implications.

g. Transfer from one synod to another

The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is retired may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

IV. Removal from the roster

A. Reasons for removal

1. Death

Death of a minister of Word and Sacrament removes the minister from the roster.

2. Resignation

A minister of Word and Sacrament may voluntarily resign from the roster by giving written notice to the synod bishop. A resignation may not be withdrawn or rejected. No acceptance is necessary. The synod bishop responds to the notification with a letter describing the implications of resignation.

3. Lack of call or other roster status

If the call of a minister of Word and Sacrament comes to an end and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted, on-leave ~~from call~~ status, retired status, or disability status, then the minister is no longer on the roster. Likewise, if a minister's on-leave ~~from call~~ status, retired status, or disability status comes to an end or is terminated, and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted another roster status, then the minister is no longer on the roster.

4. Discipline

A minister of Word and Sacrament may be removed from the roster pursuant to the disciplinary provisions in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

5. Lack of congregational membership

A minister of Word and Sacrament who ceases to be a member of a congregation of this church, except as provided in 7.31.07.b., 7.41.09, and 7.41.10.~~7.41.07.b. and 7.41.08.b.~~, shall be removed from the roster.

6. Dual rostering

7.31.05. Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As required by constitutional provision 7.22. and bylaw 7.31.01., ministers on the Word and Sacrament roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must accept and adhere to this church's Confession of Faith, as well as abide by this church's standards and policies for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

In accordance with bylaw 7.31.05., a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church who enters the ordained ministry of another church body, or who serves a group schismatic from this church or from a congregation thereof, shall cease to be a member of this church. The minister's name shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament by the synod bishop.

B. Reporting

The synod bishop shall promptly report all removals from the roster to the secretary of this church and to the next ~~synod~~ Synod ~~assembly~~Assembly. The synod's roster files of those removed from the roster shall be transmitted to the secretary of this church in a timely manner, except in the case of death when the file should be transmitted to the synod or regional archives.

C. Guidelines for individuals formerly rostered as ministers of Word and Sacrament

1. The ministry of the baptized

This church affirms the integrity and importance of the ministry of the baptized. Removal of a person's name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church reflects a change of calling and function within the ministry of the baptized.

2. The ministry of Word and Sacrament

Some individuals are called by God in the church to the public ministry of Word and Sacrament. For a variety of reasons, there may be a time in the life of these individuals when they are no longer called by this church to serve in this ministry.

a. When a person's name is removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges, rights, and responsibilities of that person to serve as a minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA cease.

b. Individuals removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament may apply for reinstatement and may be reinstated.
c. Individuals who are not under call by this church, are not on its roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and are not under the discipline of the ELCA may not function as pastors in the name of this church.
d. For the sake of the gospel, there may be occasional exceptions to this rule. For instance, formerly rostered individuals may be authorized for a stated place and period of time by the synod bishop to preside at the sacraments and provide other pastoral ministry when, in the bishop's judgment, this will best serve the gospel in this church.

3. The participation of formerly rostered ministers

Removal from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament ends the rights and privileges this church confers at ordination. Formerly rostered individuals may continue as members of this church. Several specific changes follow:

a. Use of the stole, sacramental vestments, and other clothing or symbols associated with the public ministry of Word and Sacrament is prohibited.
b. Use of titles such as "Pastor" or "the Reverend" must be discontinued by the individual.
c. Formerly rostered individuals may not preside at the sacraments and rites of this church unless specifically authorized by the synod bishop for the sake of the gospel. The gifts, training, and experience of a formerly rostered individual can be valuable to a congregation. The use of these gifts in the congregation should be discussed with the synod bishop at the time the rostered minister is removed and with that person's congregational pastor in consultation with the bishop. When preaching, a formerly rostered individual functions as a lay preacher and not as a supply pastor.
d. The synod bishop is responsible to oversee and administer the work of the synod, including providing pastoral care and leadership to congregations and rostered ministers. It is, therefore, important that formerly rostered individuals consult with the synod bishop and observe synod guidelines regarding their service in this church.

See the model letters provided in the appendices.

V. Reinstatement to the roster

7.31.06. Reinstatement. A person seeking reinstatement as a minister of Word and Sacrament, whether having served previously in this church or in one of its predecessor bodies, shall be registered by the pastor and council of the congregation of which such a person is a member with the candidacy committee of the synod in which the person was last rostered or, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved, after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church, with the candidacy committee of the synod of current residence. The person then shall be interviewed, examined, and approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee under criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In this process, the committee shall review the circumstances related to the termination of earlier service together with subsequent developments. The person is reinstated after receiving and accepting a letter of call to serve as a minister of Word and Sacrament in this church.

[Following is from the Candidacy Manual.]

A. Reinstatement Process

1. Reinstatement to the rosters of the ELCA is the responsibility of the candidacy committee of the synod where the applicant was last rostered.
2. If an applicant is seeking both reinstatement to a roster and a transfer to another synod, in accordance with *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,* the secretary of the ELCA and the synods involved must consent to the transfer. A transfer of candidacy that includes reinstatement requires the concurrence of both candidacy committees and both bishops.
3. In the case of an applicant whose previous rostered ministry was in one of the ELCA predecessor churches, the successor ELCA synod has the responsibility. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster or its successor.
4. In the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of one of the following:
   a. the official disciplinary process of this church,
   b. resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
   c. application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06, where the person was on leave ~~from call~~ after conduct or allegations that could lead to disciplinary charges,

   then a minimum of five consecutive years without call must elapse before an application for reinstatement may be considered. The passage of five years without call does not guarantee reconsideration.

B. Application for Reinstatement

1. The applicant provides to the appropriate synod the completed Application for Reinstatement to the Roster of the ELCA, and the synod sends a copy to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for information. A Candidacy Application and a Rostered Minister Profile must be submitted online.
2. Upon receipt of the Application for Reinstatement, the synod bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
3. With the approval of the ELCA secretary, the reinstatement process may be transferred from the synod of previous roster to the synod of current residence upon the written concurrence of both candidacy committee chairs (in consultation with members of the candidacy committee) and both synod bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
4. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered schedules an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant's eligibility to be a candidate in the synod. The bishop also determines whether the application is timely.
5. In the case of an applicant where inappropriate conduct or allegations of misconduct led to resignation or removal from the roster, the synod bishop examines the applicant for indications of repentance and amendment of life as well as indication of or attempts at reconciliation with those injured by the conduct. Before proceeding with reinstatement, the bishop also documents corrective actions that have occurred. The bishop should invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.
6. The candidacy committee considers an applicant for reinstatement when the synod bishop forwards the application to the committee. The bishop may, in their sole discretion, decline to forward the application to the candidacy committee or may forward the application with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

C. Candidacy Committee

1. The candidacy committee will receive and review the Congregational Registration form from the congregation where the applicant is a member.
2. The committee shall determine that it has received all records and information concerning the applicant, including verification of synod records concerning the reason for removal from the roster. If synod records are incomplete, this verification may include conferring with the former bishop, with synod staff, or with the churchwide office.
3. The committee may request additional information from any source that it deems necessary to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement.
4. The applicant must prepare an Approval essay and submit it to the candidacy committee.
5. The committee may request a new psychological evaluation and background check when necessary. In the case of any applicant who has been off the roster or without call for more than five years, the candidacy committee will require the applicant to participate in a psychological evaluation. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
6. The candidacy committee follows the standards and procedures in the Candidacy Manual as its guide in considering a request for reinstatement. The candidacy committee interviews the applicant to explore all concerns related to reinstatement, including but not limited to:
   a. the circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
   b. the applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement, with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
   c. discussion of the applicant's understanding of the specific roster in the ELCA and the applicant's willingness to serve in response to the needs of this church; and
   d. discussion of the applicant's commitment to live according to the standards of this church, including *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.
7. The candidacy committee may request the Christian Community and Leadership home area to convene a Theological Review Panel to determine the applicant's theological readiness for Word and Sacrament ministry. The Theological Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

D. Decision

1. The candidacy committee will decide the applicant's suitability to serve as a rostered minister of this church. This decision is one of the following:
   a. grant approval for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call,
   b. postpone approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement, or
   c. deny approval for reinstatement.
2. If the decision of the candidacy committee is to deny an applicant reinstatement, that decision is final. Any such applicant who desires reconsideration must begin the process again by applying.
3. In the case of an applicant who was removed from the roster under any of the circumstances listed in V.A.4.a–c. above, if the applicant is approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee, such approval is not effective unless affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the total membership of the executive committee of the Synod Council. After the candidacy committee reports its approval and the reasons for it to the executive committee of the Synod Council, the executive committee may obtain whatever additional information or advice, including legal advice, it deems necessary before affirming the decision of the candidacy committee.

E. Approval

If approved, the candidate will complete the normal First Call paperwork and will participate in the First Call process.

If the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the Christian Community and Leadership home area, following consultation with the synod bishop and the home area executive director, shall postpone the candidate's participation in the First Call process until all requirements are met.

1. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for a period of one year after Approval by the synod. Any delay occasioned by a postponement is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
2. The process for renewal of Approval is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.

3. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster.

See the form for "Application for Reinstatement" in the Candidacy Manual.

VI. Cooperation with other church bodies in the exercise of Word and Sacrament ministry

A. With church bodies in the United States

1. Full communion partners

In 1991, the ELCA defined characteristics of a relationship of full communion which are "theological and missiological implications of the gospel that allow variety and flexibility" and "stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone." Among these characteristics is "a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject to the disciplinary regulations of other churches" ("Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA").

Since then, the ELCA has entered into four agreements establishing full communion relations: "A Formula of Agreement" (1997) with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ; "Called to Common Mission" (1999) with The Episcopal Church; "Following our Shepherd to Full Communion" (1999) with the Moravian Church in America Northern and Southern Provinces; and "Confessing our Faith Together" (2009) with the United Methodist Church. While the designations for "ordained ministers" have varied slightly among the partner churches, the agreements provide for the recognition and exchangeability of what the ELCA now calls "ministers of Word and Sacrament."

8.63.01. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church or a minister of Word and Service, serving temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be retained on the roster—upon endorsement by the synod bishop and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister is listed on the roster—under policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

a. A letter of call may be issued to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving temporarily in such a church body, by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a Synod Council, in accord with the Table of Sources of Calls (7.44.~~A19~~A24.b.).

...

c. A letter of call issued by the Church Council or a Synod Council for service in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established by the Churchwide Assembly shall be governed by provision 7.43. and bylaw 7.43.01.

8.63.02. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be authorized by the synod bishop to serve in a congregation or employing entity of this church. Such service shall be rendered under a contract between the congregation or employing entity and the minister of Word and Sacrament in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by the congregation or employing entity. Any such service shall be in accord with churchwide policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

8.63.03. Whenever a rostered minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to serve or is serving in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly, or whenever a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been so declared and established is to serve or is serving in this church, a full sharing of relevant information concerning such rostered minister's experience and fitness for ministry is expected between the synod bishop (or other appropriate office or entity) of this church and the appropriate person, office, or entity in the other church. Relevant information related to fitness for ministry shall include, but is not limited to, any information concerning disciplinary proceedings or allegations that could result, or could have resulted, in disciplinary proceedings.

8.63.04. A minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be granted the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church, in accord with bylaw 8.63.02.

8.63.05. The availability of a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in America shall be understood normally in three categories: availability to serve in an occasional situation; availability to meet an extended need, including service in "yoked parish" settings; and availability for a transfer of roster status.

a. *Occasional service:* An occasional situation is defined as one in which a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in a congregation of this church on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.
b. *Extended service:* A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be invited to serve as the pastor of a congregation of this church for an extended period of time, yet remain a minister of Word and Sacrament of the minister's present church body. Such a person would be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in a congregation of this church in a manner that is consistent with the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of this church. Such service shall be rendered only as authorized by the synod bishop in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of this church in a given situation.
c. *Transfer:* A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists who seeks to serve indefinitely within the ministry of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may apply for admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and be approved through the candidacy process for admission to the roster. Such a minister would then become a minister on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church upon receipt and acceptance of a regular call and installation in a congregation or other setting in this church.

8.63.06. Rostered ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, while serving in an ecumenical setting, remain subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists is understood by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the church body in which the minister is rostered or holds ministerial membership. Such a minister, while serving in a congregation or other ministry of this church, is expected to abide by the standards and policies of this church related to ministers of Word and Sacrament.

8.63.07. When a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America completes a contract for extended service, the synod file on that minister shall be sent to and retained by the Office of the Secretary.

7.31.05. Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As required by constitutional provision 7.22. and bylaw 7.31.01., ministers on the Word and Sacrament roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must accept and adhere to this church's Confession of Faith, as well as abide by this church's standards and policies for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

9.21.02. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synod bishop and the concurrence of the congregation, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which this church officially has established a relationship of full communion by action of a Churchwide Assembly may serve temporarily under contract as pastor of a congregation of this church.

Background: In accordance with the governing documents of the ELCA, policy related to the orderly exchange of ministers of Word and Sacrament between the participating church bodies is developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such policy would apply to ministers of Word and Sacrament in this church who, while being retained on the roster of the ELCA, would serve temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established, and to ministers of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established who would serve temporarily in a congregation or other ministry setting of this church without being admitted to the roster of the ELCA.

See "Admission to the Roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of Persons Ordained in Another Christian Tradition" for the process by which a minister of Word and Sacrament in a full communion partner church body, intending to serve indefinitely in the ELCA, may apply for admission to the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Such a person would then become an ELCA pastor upon receipt and acceptance of a regular call and installation in an ELCA congregation or other approved setting.

Roster status in more than one church body at a time is precluded in the ELCA.

Manuals for the "Orderly Exchange" of ministers of Word and Sacrament, with guidance for each full communion agreement, are available online: ELCA.org/Resources/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations.

a. Ministers of Word and Sacrament of another church body serving in the ELCA

NOTE: A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church serves in an ELCA congregation UNDER CONTRACT, NOT UNDER CALL by the congregation.

1) *Occasional service*. A minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.
2) *Extended service*. A minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as the pastor of an ELCA congregation for an extended period of time, yet remain an ordained minister of that church body. Such a person will be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the "Confession of Faith" of the ELCA, and to live in a manner consistent with the expectations of this church. Such service shall be rendered only as authorized by the synod bishop in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of the ELCA or its ecumenical partners in a given situation.

   Service in a congregation of this church or employing entity shall be rendered under a contract between the congregation or employing entity and the minister of Word and Sacrament, for a stated period of time in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by the congregation. Extended service is reviewed annually by the Synod Council or Church Council.

   Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by the Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry.

   a) Upon such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, "Invitation to Extended Service," which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or other setting of ministry in this church.
      The Rite of Installation is ***NOT*** used as that rite is for use only for a regularly called minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.
   b) A minister of Word and Sacrament who is approved to serve in an extended service ministry in the ELCA may be granted voice and vote in a synod assembly.

   At any time for the sake of the ongoing ministry, the synod bishop may withdraw authorization for service (or the congregation, employing agency or the minister may terminate a contract for extended service) after consultation with the other parties to the contract.

   Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have ceased to be "rostered" or the equivalent by a full communion partner church body are not considered eligible for such service unless or until they are received on the roster of the ELCA or of another full communion church.

b. ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in another church body

A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving for an extended period of time in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister is listed on the roster.

Congregations that cease to be rostered by a full communion partner church body are not eligible for service by a pastor of the ELCA until the congregation is received by the ELCA or another church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established.

c. Procedures

1) Assessment. Authorization for extended service is given by the Synod Council, on the basis of the synod bishop's assessment of the suitability for service of the minister of Word and Sacrament. The bishop may wish to appoint a panel to assist in this determination. The appropriate churchwide unit recommends that this not be a responsibility of the full synod Candidacy Committee, although members of the committee may serve on the panel.
2) Pension and medical insurance. A determination of the medical and disability insurance for the minister of Word and Sacrament will be made. The guiding principle has become that a minister of Word and Sacrament serving under provisions of a full communion agreement remains in his or her parent church body's pension and benefits plan, and the congregation or other ministry setting contributes to that plan.

It is anticipated that a congregation of this church will be able to contribute to the plan of another church body in order to provide appropriate medical coverage and a pension plan. Similarly, a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in another church body will need to determine that Portico Benefit Services (or another comparable plan) coverage is provided by the employing body.

3) Accountability and pastoral care. A minister of Word and Sacrament in another church body is accountable to the jurisdiction or judicatory in which that person is "rostered" or in other ways a member. Similarly, a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in another church body remains on the roster of this church and is accountable to the bishop of the synod in which rostered. The synod bishop is responsible for appropriate pastoral care and leadership for all ELCA congregations, including those served by ministers of Word and Sacrament of other church bodies (ELCA constitutional provision 10.31.a.3.).
4) Exchange of information. The assessments, authorizations, and reviews necessary to the "orderly exchange of ordained ministers" between church bodies with which a relationship of full communion exists require the complete and continuing disclosure to the synod of all information concerning the past and present ministry of these ministers serving in the ELCA, or of ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving under call from a synod council or the Church Council. Such disclosure must include any disciplinary proceedings, including discipline related to conduct during service in the ELCA by a minister of another church body.
5) Source of call. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in a congregation, local, or regional ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the Synod Council in which that minister is rostered. An ELCA minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a national ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the ELCA Church Council. This call is subject to annual review by the Synod Council or Church Council.
6) Titles. The usual title "pastor of (insert name of congregation)" would be used for ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in an ELCA congregation. The recognized professional title of "The Rev." for an ordained minister also would be applicable, in view of the officially recognized status of that minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which the ELCA has a relationship of full communion.

2. Other Lutheran bodies

8.64. This church, in accord with constitutional provision 2.05., acknowledges as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that accept the teaching of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and understands that altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations and other entities of such churches may be locally practiced. Local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship, in accord with churchwide constitutional provision 2.05., is subject to the approval of the Synod Council, upon endorsement by the synod bishop. Notice of such approval is to be given to the presiding bishop as the chief ecumenical officer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

8.64.01. The approval is granted initially for one year only and must be reviewed and approved annually by the Synod Council. Any time that the local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship no longer serves the mission and ministry needs of this church, the synod bishop may withdraw endorsement and the Synod Council may withdraw the approval.

3. Other church bodies in local practice of pulpit and altar fellowship

8.64.02. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body not in full communion with this church, while serving in a ministry involving the local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship with a congregation of this church is understood to be subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the church body in which the minister is rostered or holds ministerial membership. Such a minister, while serving a congregation or other ministry of this church, is expected to abide by the standards and policies of this church related to ministers of Word and Sacrament. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, while serving in a ministry involving the local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship with a non-ELCA congregation, remains subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

B. With church bodies outside the United States

1. Churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

3.04. This church, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in The Lutheran World Federation as a global communion of churches, engaging in faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and in service for the sake of God's mission in the world.

As a member of "The Lutheran World Federation, A Communion of Churches," the ELCA is in "altar and pulpit fellowship" with all other LWF member churches. This communion relation provides that this church recognizes the ministry of Word and Sacrament in all members of the LWF.

Global partnerships and connections at synod, congregation, and churchwide levels of the ELCA have helped make visible the relationships of the worldwide Lutheran communion. Synods and others working with LWF member churches are encouraged to collaborate with the Service and Justice unit and other appropriate units of the churchwide organization.

When an ordained minister from a member church of the LWF wishes to be considered for missionary service in a congregation or synod of the ELCA, the following protocols are to be respected:

a. Request for contact with companion church. At the point that the minister has an interview with an employing body in a synod of the ELCA, the synod bishop will contact the Service and Justice unit to formally request that the Service and Justice unit make official contact with the companion church. The request must come from the synod bishop and not from an individual congregation.
b. Exchange of information. The assessments, authorizations, and reviews necessary for the exchange of ordained ministers between church bodies require the complete and continuing disclosure to the synod of all information concerning the past and present ministry of a minister who wishes to serve in the ELCA. Such disclosure must include any disciplinary proceedings and an assessment of the minister's suitability for service in the ELCA. The Service and Justice unit will request this disclosure from the companion church judicatory. The synod bishop will be given full access to the information contained in such disclosure.
c. Visas and work authorization. All issues concerning visas, work permits, and taxes are the sole responsibility of the congregation or other employing body and the synod. The churchwide organization will not be involved in this process. The congregation and synod are to consult with competent legal counsel that specializes in immigration law and must abide by all laws and regulations concerning religious workers. All costs are to be borne by the congregation or other employing body and/or the synod.
d. Suitability. The minister will be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the "Confession of Faith" of the ELCA, and to live in a manner consistent with the expectations of this church. In assessing suitability, preference may be given to ministers who have completed three years of initial service in a congregation of the sending church.
e. Invitation to missionary service. Once the synod bishop has been assured of suitability and of the minister's legal right to serve, the bishop may issue to the minister a letter of invitation to missionary service.
f. Contract. The minister is to serve under a contract with the employing body that specifies responsibilities, compensation, and the term of service. The term of service should be determined in consultation with legal counsel, as it depends on visa status. Compensation is to be commensurate with synod guidelines. Pension and health benefits are to be provided. Typically, such benefits should be provided through the system in which the minister already participates. Any questions concerning the possibility of Portico benefits are to be addressed directly to Portico.
g. Memorandum of Understanding. Once an invitation to missionary service has been approved, the synod will, in consultation with the Service and Justice unit, draft a Memorandum of Understanding with the sending church that outlines the details of the missionary service, compensation, and accountabilities.
h. Roster status. The minister is to remain on the roster or official list of ordained ministers of the sending companion church. An invitation to missionary service is not to serve as a means of transition to the rosters of the ELCA. Ministers are expected to return to their sending churches at the end of their term of service.
i. Accountability. The minister will have multiple accountabilities: to the sending church, the synod bishop, and the congregation or other employing body.
j. Entry rite. Upon authorization the minister enters missionary service through the entry rite, "Invitation to Extended Service," which acknowledges the service of the minister as pastor in a congregation or in another setting of ministry in this church. The Rite of Installation is NOT used, as that rite is for use only for a regularly called minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.

k. Synod assembly status. A minister who is approved for missionary service in the ELCA may be granted voice and vote in a synod assembly.

l. Termination. At any time for the sake of the ongoing ministry, the synod bishop may withdraw authorization for service (or the congregation, employing body, or the minister may terminate a contract for missionary service) after consultation with the other parties to the contract and with the Service and Justice unit. At the end of the specified term, the invitation to missionary service will terminate. Any extensions are limited to those allowed by immigration status.

2. Particular agreements

a. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)
Among other Lutheran churches, the ELCIC has always had a uniquely close relationship with the ELCA that is grounded in proximity, common history, and continuing shared life. The "Statement of Inter-Lutheran Cooperation Between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" provides in detail for mutual recognition of ministry, as well as other matters. *(See the appendix.)*

b. Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD])
The EKD is a federation of regional Lutheran, Reformed, and United Protestant churches. With the Lutheran churches, the ELCA is already in communion through its membership in the LWF. Through an agreement with the EKD it is further recognized that "pulpit and altar fellowship, which includes the mutual recognition of ordination, exists between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and all member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany" ("Agreement between the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America"). Guidelines have been agreed upon for cases in which EKD ministers of Word and Sacrament, or students preparing for such ministry, consider service in the ELCA. *(See the appendix.)*

Part Two:
Ministers of Word and Service
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I. Constitutional description for Ministry of Word and Service and Standards for Ministers of Word and Service

7.50. **MINISTRY OF WORD AND SERVICE**

7.51. **This church calls and receives onto the roster qualified persons to provide a ministry of Word and Service, exemplifying the life of Christ-like service to all persons and creation: nurturing, healing, leading, advocating dignity and justice, and equipping the whole people of God for their life of witness and service within and beyond the congregation for the sake of God's mission in the world.**

7.52. **A minister of Word and Service of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to serve, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Service shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.**

7.53. **The standards for acceptance and continuance of ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be set forth in the bylaws.**

7.54. **The secretary of this church shall maintain a roster containing the names of ministers of Word and Service who qualify on the basis of constitutional provisions 7.52., 7.53., and 7.61., and related bylaws.**

7.54.01. Ministers of Word and Service shall be known as deacons.

7.54.A16. *Those persons previously rostered as associates in ministry, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be retained as deacons of this church (except for removals in accord with the governing documents, criteria, policies, and procedures of this church). Accountability for specific calls shall be exercised according to the policies and procedures of this church.*

7.55. **Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be subject to discipline as set forth in Chapter 20 of this constitution.**

7.60. **STANDARDS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE**

7.61. **In accordance with the description stated in 7.52, ministers of Word and Service shall be governed by the following standards, policies, and procedures.**

7.61.01. **Basic Standards.** Persons admitted to and continued in the ministry of Word and Service of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council:

a. commitment to Christ;
b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
g. membership in a congregation of this church.

7.61.02. **Responsibilities.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

a. be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
b. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
c. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proclaiming God's love for the world, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;
d. equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
e. encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;

f. practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
g. be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
h. share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
i. identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

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~~**7.50. MINISTRY OF WORD AND SERVICE**~~

~~**7.51. This church calls and receives onto the roster qualified persons to provide a ministry of Word and Service, exemplifying the life of Christ-like service to all persons and creation: nurturing, healing, leading, advocating dignity and justice, and equipping the whole people of God for their life of witness and service within and beyond the congregation for the sake of God's mission in the world.**~~

~~**7.52. A minister of Word and Service of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to serve, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Service shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.**~~

~~**7.53. The standards for acceptance and continuance of ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be set forth in the bylaws.**~~

~~**7.54. The secretary of this church shall maintain a roster containing the names of ministers of Word and Service who qualify on the basis of constitutional provisions 7.52., 7.53., and 7.61., and related bylaws.**~~

~~**7.54.01.** Ministers of Word and Service shall be known as deacons.~~

~~**7.54.A16.** *Those persons previously rostered as associates in ministry, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be retained as deacons of this church (except for removals in accord with the governing documents, criteria, policies, and procedures of this church). Accountability for specific calls shall be exercised according to the policies and procedures of this church.*~~

~~**7.55. Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be subject to discipline as set forth in Chapter 20 of this constitution.**~~

~~**7.60. STANDARDS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE**~~

~~**7.61. In accordance with the description stated in 7.52, ministers of Word and Service shall be governed by the following standards, policies, and procedures:**~~

~~**7.61.01. Basic Standards.** Persons admitted to and continued in the ministry of Word and Service of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council:~~

~~a. commitment to Christ;~~
~~b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;~~
~~c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;~~
~~d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;~~
~~e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;~~
~~f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and~~
~~g. membership in a congregation of this church.~~

~~**7.61.02. Responsibilities.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:~~

~~a. be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;~~
~~b. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;~~
~~c. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;~~
~~d. equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;~~
~~e. encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;~~
~~f. practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;~~
~~g. be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;~~

h. share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
i. identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

II. Admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service

A. Preparation and Approval

7.61.03. Preparation and Approval. A candidate who is to be called and received onto the roster as a minister of Word and Service shall have:

a. either

1) membership in a congregation of this church and registration, by its congregation council and the pastoral leadership of the congregation, of the candidate with the candidacy committee; or

2) active participation in a Word and Sacrament ministry of this church and registration, by its governing body and the pastoral leadership of the ministry, of the candidate with the candidacy committee;

b. been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and supervision of the appropriate committee before being approved for call;

c. completed the academic and practical preparation according to criteria and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;

d. been examined and approved by the appropriate committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;

e. been recommended to a congregation or other entity by the bishop of the synod in which the candidate is being considered for first call in accordance with the procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council; and

f. received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.

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~~**7.61.03. Preparation and Approval.** Except as provided in 7.61.04., a candidate who is to be called and received onto the roster as a minister of Word and Service shall have:~~

~~a. membership in a congregation of this church and registration, by its pastor and council, of the candidate with the candidacy committee;~~

~~b. been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and supervision of the appropriate committee before being approved for call;~~

~~c. completed the academic and practical preparation according to criteria and procedures established by the appropriate churchwide unit, after consultation with the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;~~

~~d. been examined and approved by the appropriate committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, after consultation with the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;~~

~~e. been recommended to a congregation or other entity by the bishop of the synod in which the candidate is being considered for first call in accordance with the procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council; and~~

~~f. received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.~~

B. Bishop authorization of ordination

The bishop with the power to authorize an ordination is ***the bishop of the synod in which a candidate has accepted a call***. That bishop authorizes the ordination, even if the candidate comes from another synod and may have been approved by the multi-synod or synod Candidacy Committee of another synod.

1. **Provision for ordination:** According to †S8.12.d. and f. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the bishop of a synod is to: "Ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service of this church;" and shall "install (or provide for the installation of)" such deacons.
2. **Jurisdiction:** In receiving and accepting a valid call, the candidate comes under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the synod in which the call was issued. That bishop, on the basis of the record of such a valid call, authorizes the ordination, even if the ordination is to take place on the territory of another synod.
3. **Planning of ordination:** If the ordination is to occur on the territory of another synod (*e.g.*, at a candidate's home congregation), the bishop who authorizes the ordination ***shall*** consult with the bishop of the synod on whose territory the ordination may be held ***prior to*** approving any plans for such an ordination.

a. No candidate shall make plans for ordination prior to consultation with the synod bishop under whose authority the candidate is to be ordained.
b. If an ordination is planned on the territory of another synod, the *patterns and practices of the synod of jurisdiction shall prevail*. No ordination is to be scheduled without the prior approval of the bishop on whose territory the rite is to occur.

4. **Signing the certificate of ordination:** The bishop authorizing the ordination shall be the bishop who signs the certificate of ordination.

III. Status on the roster

A. Calls for ministers of Word and Service

1. Letters of Call and Service under Call

7.70. CALLS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE

7.71. Letters of Call. Letters of call to ministers of Word and Service of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

7.71.01. Service under Call. A minister of Word and Service of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a synod council, a synod assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.74.A24.

b. A minister of Word and Service serving under call to a congregation shall be a member of that congregation. In a parish of multiple congregations, a minister of Word and Service shall be a member of one of the congregations being served.

~~**7.70. CALLS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE**~~

~~**7.71. Letters of Call. Letters of call to ministers of Word and Service of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council.**~~

~~**7.71.01. Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Service of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a synod council, a synod assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.~~

~~a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.74.A19.~~

~~b. A minister of Word and Service serving under call to a congregation shall be a member of that congregation. In a parish of multiple congregations, a minister of Word and Service shall be a member of one of the congregations being served.~~

a. Issuance of a letter of call: Ministers of Word and Service serve under call as stated in churchwide bylaw 7.71.01. An average of ~~15~~ 10 hours of service per week is the minimum standard for a call to be issued.

b. Attesting signature: The appropriate synod bishop shall attest the letter of call (provisions †S8.12.e. and †S14.41.c. in the *Constitution for Synods* and provision *C9.24. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*). The bishop's signature confirms only that the call process has been followed, that the letter of call was properly extended, and that the minister of Word and Service or candidate is eligible to accept the call.

2. Sources of Calls

7.74.A24. *Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service*

a. Principles for Sources of Calls

1) A "call" is an action by expressions of this church, as specified in the "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service," through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a "letter of call."

2) Interdependence within the body of this church suggests that any action of one of its entities affects other entities. Therefore, interdependence is expressed in all calls extended within this church.

3) A call expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline.

4) A letter of call is issued by that expression of this church authorized to do so which is most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

5) Decisions on calls for ministries in unusual circumstances not otherwise provided for but deemed to be in the interests of this church's care of the Gospel are referred to the Conference of Bishops for recommendation to the appropriate calling body.

b. Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service

Setting	Calling Body
1.0 Congregational ministry	
1.1 Single congregation	*Congregation meeting*
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	*Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal, with one of the participating congregations issuing the call*
1.3 Coalition and cluster ministry	*Synod Council*
1.4 Congregations beyond this church	
1.41 Independent Lutheran congregations	*Synod Council*
1.42 Full communion congregation	*Synod Council*
1.43 Deacon in a synod-authorized ministry	*Synod Council*
1.44 Other	*Synod Council*
1.5 Interim congregation deacon	*Synod Council*
2.0 Synod ministry	
2.1 Assistant to the Bishop	*Synod Council*
2.2 Shared staff of two or more synods	*Synod Council*
2.3 Staff partially supported by grants from churchwide units	*Synod Council*
3.0 Regional ministry	
3.1 Staff	*Church Council*
3.2 Shared synod- churchwide staff	*Church Council*
4.0 Churchwide ministry	
4.1 Secretary	*Churchwide Assembly*
4.2 Treasurer	*Church Council*
4.3 Staff of the churchwide organization	*Church Council*

5.0 Institutional ministry	
5.1 Institution/agency related or unrelated to a synod	*Synod Council*
5.2 Institution/agency related to more than one synod	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
5.3 ELCA-related institution/agency	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
5.4 Other	*Church Council*
6.0 Campus ministry	
6.1 Staff	*Synod Council*
7.0 Outdoor ministry	
7.1 Staff	*Synod Council*
8.0 Ecumenical/Inter-Religious ministry	
8.1 Related to a synod	*Synod Council*
8.2 Related to more than one synod	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
8.3 National/international organization	*Church Council*
9.0 Inter-Lutheran ministry	
9.1 Related to a synod	*Synod Council*
9.2 Related to more than one synod	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
9.3 National/International	*Church Council*
10.0 Educational ministry	
10.1 ELCA-related seminary	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.2 Seminary unrelated to ELCA	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.3 ELCA-related college	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.4 College unrelated to ELCA	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.5 ELCA-related school	*Congregation of which the school is a part or, if related to several congregations, Synod Council of the synod in which the school is located*
10.6 School unrelated to ELCA	*Synod Council of the synod in which school is located*
10.7 Director/staff of a continuing education center related to a churchwide unit	*Synod Council in which the center's main office is located upon the request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.0 Missionary ministry	
11.1 Outside United States	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.2 Within United States	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
12.0 Independent Lutheran Organization	*Church Council upon request of the appropriate churchwide unit*
13.0 Separately Incorporated Ministry	*Church Council*
14.0 Other	
14.1 Non-stipendiary service under call	*Synod Council upon approval by the Conference of Bishops*
14.2 Unusual ministries (as in conjunction with occupations and in approved situations not otherwise specified)	*Synod Council or Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops*

~~***7.74.A21. Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service***~~

~~*a. Principles for Sources of Calls*~~

1) A "call" is an action by expressions of this church, as specified in the "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service," through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a "letter of call."

2) Interdependence within the body of this church suggests that any action of one of its entities affects other entities. Therefore, interdependence is expressed in all calls extended within this church.

3) A call expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline.

4) A letter of call is issued by that expression of this church authorized to do so which is most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

5) Decisions on calls for ministries in unusual circumstances not otherwise provided for but deemed to be in the interests of this church's care of the Gospel are referred to the Conference of Bishops for recommendation to the appropriate calling body.

b. Table of Sources of Call for Ministers of Word and Service

Setting	Calling Body
1.0 Congregational ministry	
1.1 Single congregation	Congregation meeting
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal, with one of the participating congregations issuing the call
1.3 Coalition and cluster ministry	Synod Council
1.4 Congregations beyond this church	
1.41Independent Lutheran congregations	Synod Council
1.42 Full communion congregation	Synod Council
1.43 Deacon in a synod-authorized ministry	Synod Council
1.44Other	Synod Council
2.0 Synod ministry	
2.1 Assistant to the Bishop	Synod Council
2.2 Shared staff of two or more synods	Synod Council
2.3 Staff partially supported by grants from churchwide units	Synod Council
3.0 Regional ministry	
3.1 Staff	Church Council
3.2 Shared synod-churchwide staff	Church Council
4.0 Churchwide ministry	
4.1 Secretary	Churchwide Assembly
4.2 Treasurer	Church Council
4.3 Staff of the churchwide organization	Church Council
5.0 Institutional ministry	
5.1 Institution/agency related or unrelated to a synod	Synod Council

5.2 Institution/agency related to more than one synod	Synod Council of one of the synods
5.3 ELCA-related institution/agency	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
5.4 Other	Church Council
6.0 Campus ministry	
6.1 Staff	Synod Council
7.0 Outdoor ministry	
7.1 Staff	Synod Council
8.0 Ecumenical/Inter-religious ministry	
8.1 Related to a synod	Synod Council
8.2 Related to more than one synod	Synod Council of one of the synods
8.3 National/international organization	Church Council
9.0 Inter-Lutheran ministry	
9.1 Related to a synod	Synod Council
9.2 Related to more than one synod	Synod Council of one of the synods
9.3 National/International	Church Council
10.0Educational ministry	
10.1ELCA related seminary	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
10.2Seminary unrelated to ELCA	Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit
10.3ELCA related college	Synod Council of the synod in which college is located
10.4College unrelated to ELCA	Synod Council of the synod in which college is located
10.5ELCA related school	Congregation of which the school is a part or, if related to several congregations, Synod Council of the synod in which the school is located
10.6School unrelated to ELCA	Synod Council of the synod in which school is located

~~10.7Director/staff of a continuing education center related to a churchwide unit~~	~~Synod Council in which the center's main office is located upon the request of appropriate churchwide unit~~
~~11.0Missionary ministry~~	
~~11.1Outside United States~~	~~Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit~~
~~11.2Within United States~~	~~Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit~~
~~12.0 Independent Lutheran Organization~~	~~Church Council upon request of the appropriate churchwide unit~~
~~13.0 Separately Incorporated Ministry~~	~~Church Council~~
~~14.0Other~~	
~~14.1Non-stipendiary service under call~~	~~Synod Council upon approval by the Conference of Bishops~~
~~14.2Unusual ministries (as in conjunction with occupations and in approved situations not otherwise specified)~~	~~Synod Council or Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops~~

a. Calls to non-congregational service

1) The decision on the source of call is determined in accord with ELCA continuing resolution 7.74.~~A21~~A24. As the calling source for calls to non-congregational service, the Synod Council or Church Council must decide if the proposed call is appropriate. The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops may be consulted.
2) The synod in which the institution, agency, or other employing entity is located should be the synod which issues the call to non-congregational service. In the case of ministries/agencies that are multi-synod, the bishops involved should collectively decide which synod should issue the call.
3) The bishop of the synod in which the minister being called is rostered should be consulted before a Church Council call to non-congregational service is issued.
4) Each rostered minister is required to report annually to the bishop of the synod in which the minister is rostered.
5) Responsibility for oversight of such non-congregational calls should be noted in the minutes of the appropriate Synod Council or Church Council.
6) Note churchwide constitutional provision 7.72. regarding rostering of individuals in non-congregational calls:

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:
…
b. which issues a letter of call to the minister of Word and Service;
c. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service was listed at the time of the issuance of a letter of call from the Church Council; …

~~**Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:**~~
~~**…**~~
~~**b. which issues a letter of call to the minister of Word and Service; [or]**~~
~~**c. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service was listed at the time of the issuance of a letter of call from the Church Council. …**~~

7) A minister who receives a letter of call issued by the Church Council normally shall remain on the roster of the synod in which she or he served prior to receiving the call through the Church Council. Specific exceptions exist, as noted in provision 7.72.:

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:
…
d. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if a seminary teacher or administrator, was assigned by the seminary board, subject to approval by the synod bishop and Synod Council of each affected synod, to promote proportionate representation of faculty and administration in each synod of its region; …

~~**Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:**~~
~~**…**~~
~~**d. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if a seminary teacher or administrator, was assigned by the seminary board, subject to approval by the synod bishop and Synod Council of each affected synod, to promote proportionate representation of faculty and administration in each synod of its region. …**~~

8) ELCA bylaw 7.72.01. indicates:
If the service of a minister of Word and Service who receives and accepts a letter of call from this church, under 7.72.c., would be enhanced through transfer of roster status from the previous synod of roster to the synod of current address, such a transfer may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.
9) ELCA bylaw 7.72.02. provides:
In certain circumstances for the sake of the ministry and mission needs of this church, the transfer of roster status of a minister of Word and Service serving under call in the churchwide organization may be authorized, at the initiative of the presiding bishop of this church, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved in such a transfer after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

b. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call

7.71.02. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call. When it is deemed necessary for the mission needs of this church, a letter of call may be issued by the Synod Council—according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—to a minister of Word and Service for non-stipendiary service after the Synod Council has sought and received approval by the Conference of Bishops. A call to non-stipendiary service is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated by the Synod Council when it is no longer serving the mission needs of this church.

1) Definition and criteria for Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call
   a) Non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA is understood to be service as a rostered minister either without compensation, for reimbursed expenses only, or for a token stipend that is significantly below the typical salary received for similar ministry.
   b) Non-stipendiary calls are not eligible for participation in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program; therefore, such non-stipendiary service is possible only when there is clear evidence that the minister of Word and Service has adequate alternative income and health insurance.
   c) A letter of call to non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA may be issued only by ~~a~~ the Synod Council following approval by the Conference of Bishops.
   d) The minister of Word and Service serving in a non-stipendiary call shall be accountable to the synod bishop and Synod Council in carrying out this ministry.
   e) A call to non-stipendiary service shall be a one-year term call that may be renewed by the Synod Council only on the basis of the satisfactory fulfillment of the established criteria ~~enumerated below~~.
   ~~f) The criteria under which a Synod Council may issue a letter of call to a minister of Word and Service for non-stipendiary service include the following:~~
      ~~i. There shall be a clearly defined statement of the need for this minister to provide for Word and Service ministry in the synod and a rationale for this call to be for non-stipendiary service, including an annual ministry plan;~~
      ~~ii. The minimum commitment by the minister of Word and Service shall be a monthly average of 15 hours per week to the ministry to which called.~~

2) Action by the Synod Bishop and Synod Council

When the synod bishop and Synod Council believe that the criteria for a non-stipendiary letter of call are met by a specific ministry, the Synod Council may propose by a majority vote a letter of call.

   a) The Synod Council must determine that a call to non-stipendiary service is extended in order to carry out a specific ministry on behalf of the synod.
   b) The Synod Council forwards its request for a call to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. The request shall include a clearly defined statement of the need for this minister to provide for Word and Service ministry in the synod and a rationale for this call to be for non-stipendiary service, along with affirmation that the rostered minister has adequate alternative income and health insurance. ~~b) The Synod Council forwards its request for a call, together with the rationale for issuing the call to non-stipendiary service, to the Conference of Bishops.~~
   c) The Conference of Bishops takes action to approve or deny the request.
   d) Should the Conference of Bishops approve the request and the Synod Council issue the call, the Synod Council will conduct an annual review of the non-stipendiary call.
   e) Annual Synod Council action is required in order to continue the call to non-stipendiary service.

3) Action by the Conference of Bishops

The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops receives all requests from synod councils for calls to non-stipendiary service.

   a) The Roster Committee reviews these requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
   b) The Conference of Bishops, in a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for calls to non-stipendiary service. It reports its decision to the synod seeking such approval.

c) When approval is given by the Conference of Bishops, the Synod Council may proceed to issue a letter of call to non-stipendiary service and may annually renew such a call without subsequent action by the Conference of Bishops.

c. Shared-time ministries

7.71.01. Service under Call. A minister of Word and Service of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a synod council, a synod assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.74.A24. …

~~**7.71.01. Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Service of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a synod council, a synod assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.~~

~~a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.74.A19. …~~

1) Definition of shared-time ministry

The ELCA understands shared-time ministry to exist when a rostered minister is called to serve in one or more settings of this church while earning income from other employment or while devoting substantial time to other activities. Some examples of contexts and settings for which shared-time ministries may be appropriate are:

- *Small-membership congregations* with significant opportunities for mission and service.
- *New ministries* so limited in size or slow in development that they would require a disproportionate and unwise investment of time and money, if the more typical mission-development approach were employed.
- *Ministries* (e.g., *inner city, ethnic, and rural*) where the community's expectation is that the rostered minister will receive primary financial support from secular employment.
- *Multi-staff congregations* looking for ministry specialties, in addition to the services of rostered ministers and contracted laypersons.
- *Parishes that would benefit from having two or more individuals serving a single congregation or multiple congregations* but that cannot afford full-time salaries for several individuals.
- *Specialized ministry needs* of institutions and agencies that may call for a high degree of training and skill but that may neither warrant investment of appropriate full-time salary nor justify the engagement of a full-time staff person in that position.

2) Criteria for shared-time ministry

a) Individuals eligible for shared-time ministry must be on the roster of this church or have been recently approved for initial call.
b) Experienced individuals, whose ability to work in complex settings has already been tested, are preferred.
c) A rostered minister may be under call to only ONE church entity. Other employment is by agreement, not under call.
d) The work-load for the call must be no less than an average of ~~15~~ 10 hours per week.
e) Compensation shall be commensurate with synod compensation guidelines that apply to individuals in full-time positions.
f) Any contemplated non-church employment for the rostered minister shall be subject to the review and approval of the synod bishop.

3) Procedures for call to shared-time ministry

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* provides principles and procedures for the calling of ministers of Word and Service (churchwide continuing resolution 7.74.~~A21~~A24.). In addition to the regular procedures, a letter of call for shared-time ministry shall include the following:

a) The range of duties and responsibilities shall be specified by adding appendices to the "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities," related to the letter of call (*C9.27.).

b) The decision to seek a shared-time deacon shall be based upon a study of mission and ministry needs in the particular setting. Appropriate synod or churchwide leaders must participate in the study and decision.
c) A periodic evaluation by the calling entity shall be encouraged by the appropriate synod bishop or churchwide leaders so that the called minister is held accountable for the ministry in that particular situation. The calling entity is accountable for adequate professional and financial support.
d) Any exceptions to the guidelines governing time and compensation must be requested from the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.

4) Appropriate candidates for shared-time ministry

Shared-time ministry demands the ability to use time efficiently, the flexibility to adjust to altering circumstances, and the willingness to make a positive contribution to church and society through secular employment or other interests. The effective shared-time minister has a clear sense of personal ministry and professional integrity. He or she has a concept of ministry that values extensive shared leadership with laity.

It is appropriate for ministers of Word and Service to offer themselves for shared-time ministry, as with all specific ministries, on the basis of their own sense of vocation and their sense of the needs of this church. It is not appropriate, however, for this dual-vocational interest to take priority over the mission needs of this church.

5) Support and accountability in shared-time ministry

The nature of shared-time ministry requires that the employing entity pay particular attention to such matters as compensation and benefits, setting of non-working times for meetings, and specifying shared expectations, which acknowledge the special dynamics of this style of ministry.

a) Accountability of the shared-time minister is the same as with all rostered ministers.
b) Evaluation of the ministry should be based upon the stated goals and conditions established for that ministry at the time of call.
c) The entity of this church that calls the minister will review the ministry annually to evaluate the ongoing appropriateness of the shared-time style for that particular mission opportunity.

d. Ecclesiastical endorsement for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (MCPCCE)

Background: *This resource is intended for use by synod bishops and synod staff in working with individuals considering service in a ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education. Following all other applicable call guidelines, a synod may issue a letter of call to a rostered minister to serve in such ministries even if that person does not have ecclesiastical endorsement or professional certification. However, synods are encouraged to seek endorsed and certified individuals for such ministries. Those individuals serving in these ministries who are not endorsed and certified should be encouraged and supported to seek MCPCCE ecclesiastical endorsement. This section describes both the values and limitations of such endorsement and certification as well as an overview of the process.*

Introduction

The ecclesiastical endorsement process in the ELCA for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical education (MCPCCE) provides the basis for a recommendation to the synod bishop and Synod Council concerning a rostered minister's suitability, readiness, aptitude, pastoral identity and competence and theological integration for a particular ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling or clinical pastoral education. The professional certification process follows ecclesiastical endorsement.

1) Definition of ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification
   a) Professional certification: The recognition by a professional chaplaincy, pastoral counseling or clinical pastoral education organization that a person has met a level of professional competence of ministry in a specific setting.
   b) Ecclesiastical endorsement: The recognition that a rostered minister has met ELCA endorsement standards for theological and pastoral competence to serve in ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education.

      Ecclesiastical endorsement is a necessary pre-requisite for certification by a professional organization. Ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification are both normally required by an employing agency/institution. ELCA rostered ministers who seek ecclesiastical endorsement are expected to seek and obtain professional certification.

      The MCPCCE program is located in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

      Ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincies is required for a minister of Word and Service to apply for positions in the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Justice (Bureau of Prisons) and any other federal departments, agencies, bureaus, and services. Each federal department establishes minimum standards for applicants to apply, and all require a valid, current ecclesiastical endorsement specifically for chaplaincy service in that department. Applications for ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincy are obtained through the Christian Community and Leadership unit, senior director for federal chaplaincy.

The following are recognized professional organizations:
Association of Professional Chaplains (APC); American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC); American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT); American Psychological Association (APA); Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE); American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA); National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC);National Association of Certified Mental Health Counselors (NACMHC); Association of Certified Social Workers (ACSW).

2) MCPCCE endorsement process

The document "Endorsement Standards and Procedures, Call Criteria and Program Guidelines for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education" (ELCA.org/Resources/Specialized-Pastoral-Care):

- Establishes standards for theological and pastoral competence for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Sets forth criteria for calls and appointments to ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Presents guidelines for pastoral ministry programs in all affiliated or recognized social ministry organizations

Based upon material submitted by the candidate and a meeting with a consultation committee, a recommendation is provided to the synod bishop regarding the readiness of the rostered minister for a specific ministry. The synod bishop and the Synod Council have sole authority to grant or revoke the ecclesiastical endorsement.

3) Values of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Seeks to establish accountability between individuals serving in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education and their respective judicatories and to emphasize the importance of appropriate conduct and practice of those who serve in these ministries.
   b) Seeks to emphasize the importance of ecclesiastical endorsement in a synod's consideration of a call to service in one of these ministries.
   c) Enables synod councils to issue a term call that permits a non-endorsed candidate engaging in the ecclesiastical endorsement process to serve while completing the endorsement process.
   d) Provides a standard set of expectations for rostered ministers who seek to serve in a specific area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

4) Endorsement consultation outcomes
   a) Renders an assessment of the readiness, pastoral competence, and theological integration of rostered ministers who seek to enter a specific field of ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.
   b) Utilizes the professional gifts of rostered ministers who have long ministered in a specific area to assist in rendering a professional recommendation for ecclesiastical endorsement.
   c) Renders a recommendation on the professional pastoral competence of candidates to employing agencies and institutions that seek to meet national professional accreditation standards.
   d) Serves as a referral source and consultation to bishops and seeks to provide resources for rostered ministers exploring vocational and training options in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

5) Limitations of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Does not imply or guarantee that professional certification will be achieved or that a call to serve in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education will be issued.
   b) Does not establish an employment, agency, or supervisory relationship between the endorsing synod and the rostered minister receiving the endorsement.
   c) Does not imply or assure that the endorsed individual has undergone any background or reference checks, screening, psychological testing, or evaluation as part of the ecclesiastical endorsement process.

6) Initiating the ELCA ecclesiastical endorsement process

When a rostered minister contacts the synod regarding the ecclesiastical endorsement process, or when a synod is considering issuing a call to a ministry within the synod of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education, questions related to ecclesiastical endorsement in the ELCA or for military, VA, or federal corrections applications may be directed to the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

Any individual seeking ecclesiastical endorsement for a federal chaplaincy will contact the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit. The application from the individual requires a letter from the synod bishop on whose roster the minister of Word and Service is listed.

3. Termination of a call

7.73. **A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Service of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Service, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.**

7.73.01. When the Synod Council or the Church Council, as the calling source, determines that the service or employment no longer fulfills the criteria under which a call was issued, the Synod Council or the Church Council shall vacate the call and direct that the individual be placed on leave from call or, if such leave status is not granted, the individual shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.

7.73.02. Ministers of Word and Service previously under call to the churchwide organization or to a synod shall respect the integrity of the ministry in which they no longer serve and shall not interfere with or exercise the functions of the office or position in which they no longer serve unless invited to do so by the presiding bishop or Church Council in the churchwide organization or, in the synods, by the bishop or the Synod Council.

7.75. **The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and a congregation shall be as follows:**

a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a minister of Word and Service, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the deacon's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:

1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
2) resignation of the minister of Word and Service, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
3) inability to conduct the office to which they have been called effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;
4) inability to conduct the office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the minister of Word and Service;
5) suspension of the minister of Word and Service through discipline for more than three months;
6) resignation or removal of the minister of Word and Service from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church;
7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.

b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the deacon under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one non-rostered person, or
2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one non-rostered person.

c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the minister of Word and Service's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant. When the position is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the deacon on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take

steps to enable the minister of Word and Service to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the minister of Word and Service and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the minister of Word and Service's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the minister of Word and Service, if appropriate. If the minister of Word and Service and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the minister of Word and Service's call, the congregation may dismiss the minister of Word and Service only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

~~7.73. A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Service of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Service, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.~~

~~7.73.01. When the Synod Council or the Church Council, as the calling source, determines that the service or employment no longer fulfills the criteria under which a call was issued, the Synod Council or the Church Council shall vacate the call and direct that the individual be placed on leave from call or, if such leave status is not granted, the individual shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.~~

~~7.73.02. Ministers of Word and Service previously under call to the churchwide organization or to a synod shall respect the integrity of the ministry in which they no longer serve and shall not interfere with or exercise the functions of the office or position in which they no longer serve unless invited to do so by the presiding bishop or Church Council in the churchwide organization or, in the synods, by the bishop or the Synod Council.~~

~~7.75. The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and a congregation shall be as follows:~~

~~a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a minister of Word and Service, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the deacon's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:~~

~~1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;~~

~~2) resignation of the minister of Word and Service, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;~~

~~3) inability to conduct the office to which they have been called effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;~~

~~4) inability to conduct the office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the minister of Word and Service;~~

~~5) suspension of the minister of Word and Service through discipline for more than three months;~~

~~6) resignation or removal of the minister of Word and Service from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church;~~

~~7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;~~

~~8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or~~

~~9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.~~

~~b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the deacon under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,~~

~~1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one non-rostered person, or~~

~~2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one non-rostered person.~~

~~c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the minister of Word and Service's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant. When the position is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the deacon on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the minister of Word and Service to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.~~

~~d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the minister of Word and Service and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the minister of Word and Service's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the minister of Word and Service, if appropriate. If the minister of Word and Service and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.~~

~~e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the minister of Word and Service's call, the congregation may dismiss the minister of Word and Service only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.~~

~~f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.~~

a. Termination of congregational call: A letter of call from a congregation to a minister of Word and Service may be terminated only as provided for in constitutional provisions 7.75., †S14.43. and *C9.25. If a minister of Word and Service resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the deacon nor rejected by the congregation. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the congregation agrees to a later date.

b. Termination of Synod Council or Church Council call: A letter of call from the Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Service may be terminated by: 1) the conclusion of the service or employment for which the call was granted; 2) resignation; 3) resignation or removal of the minister from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church; or 4) by decision of the calling authority to vacate the call. If a minister of Word and Service resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the deacon nor rejected by the calling authority. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the calling authority agrees to a later date.

4. Completion of responsibilities

The role of deacons in congregations to which they are not (or are no longer) called is governed by provision †S14.44. in the *Constitution for Synods*, which states, "Ministers of Word and Service shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the Congregation Council."

Ministers of Word and Service who have completed their call to a particular congregation change their role in how they relate to that congregation, and care should be taken to provide for an orderly transition. Certain ministerial functions are specific to, and performed on behalf of, the congregation not the individual, and are therefore the responsibility of the minister of Word and Service serving under call, or one appointed by the synod bishop or contracted by the Congregation Council for such ministry. Although to be regarded as affirmations of the deacon's past service to the congregation, requests from members for the former deacon to preside at weddings, funerals, and the like should politely be refused. Regardless of whether the deacon has accepted a call to another congregation or another expression of this church, the completion of responsibilities must be marked clearly and carefully.

The following guidelines are for deacons, the congregations they served, and synod bishops in understanding the new status of a deacon who has resigned a call. They are intended to affirm the past ministry of such deacons, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves during transitions, and to point to constructive and healthful interactions in the future.

a. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the minister of Word and Service no longer is a deacon of the congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of that office in that congregation.
b. Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of the resignation as is practicable, the minister of Word and Service may make use of the rite of "Farewell and Godspeed."
c. If invited to exercise a ministerial role by a member of a congregation to which they were formerly called, ministers of Word and Service should indicate that they are not (or are no longer) authorized to take such a role. If invited to exercise such a role by the current rostered ministers, care must be taken to assure that the parameters and limited scope of the activity are clear.
d. As part of the bishop's pastoral care, especially during times of transition, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to discuss these guidelines and their implications either in person or in correspondence.

B. On Leave from Call

7.61.07. On Leave. A minister of Word and Service of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call and who requests a temporary leave from active ministry, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church by action of the Synod Council of the synod on whose roster the minister is listed, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such leave shall be reviewed annually and may be terminated by the Synod Council if it no longer meets the criteria under which it was granted.

a. Regular Leave: A minister of Word and Service who is without a current letter of call and who has requested temporary leave from active ministry, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

b. Study Leave: A minister of Word and Service engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Service in this church, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Service who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Service or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

d. Extensions of these time limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.

e. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted on-leave status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

~~**7.61.08. On Leave from Call.** A minister of Word and Service of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod of which the minister of Word and Service is a member, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.~~

~~a. Normative Pattern: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, a minister of Word and Service who is without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of three years, beginning at the completion of an active call.~~

~~b. Study Leave: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, with the approval of the synod bishop and in consultation with the appropriate churchwide unit a minister of Word and Service engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Service in this church, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years.~~

~~c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Service may request leave for family responsibilities. By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, such a minister of Word and Service who is without a current letter of call and who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Service or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church—under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.~~

d. Exception to these limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.

1. Definition and criteria for on-leave-from-call status

a. At the termination of the call of a rostered minister, if the rostered minister has not received and accepted a subsequent call, the following procedure is to be followed:

1) The rostered minister must inform the bishop of the date the current call is coming to an end. The bishop shall, in a timely manner, make sure that the rostered minister is aware of the necessity to comply with these guidelines.

2) A rostered minister seeking on-leave-from-call status shall make a written request to the synod bishop within 45 days following the termination of a prior call, providing a rationale as to why on-leave-from-call status should be granted. Failure to do so may result in removal from the roster.

3) The request for on-leave-from-call status must include:

a) a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call;

b) a statement of how the rostered minister's gifts and abilities can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;

c) the anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a letter of call;

d) a statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services while on leave from call at the direction of the synod bishop;

e) the rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave from call; and

f) a statement describing the rostered minister's current and intended participation in a congregation of this church, or, if the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, a request for permission to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

4) The synod bishop shall make a recommendation to the Synod Council whether to grant or deny on-leave status, and shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the bishop recommends granting on-leave status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant that status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted on-leave status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for leave, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

If a rostered minister requesting on-leave-from-call status desires to make a personal statement relative to the request, the Synod Council may, at its discretion and in the manner of its determination, allow for a personal appearance by the rostered minister before the Synod Council (or its designated committee).

5) On-leave status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.61.08., and †S8.12.i.9. in *the Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop within 90 days of receiving a recommendation from the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.

On-leave-from-call status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.61.08., and †S8.12.i.9. in the *Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.

6) The effective date for on-leave-from-call status, if granted by the Synod Council, begins the day the rostered minister is no longer serving under a regularly issued letter of call. This date is not affected by severance payments.

7) Synod Council action related to a rostered minister's on-leave-from-call status is reported as information to the annual Synod Assembly in the report of the bishop or the Synod Council.

8) Written notification is sent to the rostered minister requesting on-leave-from-call status reporting the action of the Synod Council.

9) The action of the Synod Council in granting on-leave ~~from call~~ status must be reported to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services. Similar notification is given by the synod to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services when such status is ended.
10) Prior to the annual anniversary of the effective date of the rostered minister's on-leave ~~from call~~ status, the rostered minister must request renewal of the on-leave ~~from call~~ status. Annual action by the Synod Council is necessary for the continuation of that status.
11) While on leave ~~from call~~, a rostered minister must be an active member of a congregation of this church. If the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
12) A rostered minister on leave ~~from call~~ remains accountable to the synod bishop and must be willing to meet the criteria and standards of this church for its rostered ministers.

b. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may be retained on the roster of this church for a maximum of six years by annual action of the Synod Council, in consultation with the appropriate unit. *(See bylaw 7.61.~~0807~~.b.)*
A person already granted regular on-leave ~~from call~~ status~~,~~ whose life circumstances change~~,~~ may apply for a change to study leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

c. Family Leave: On ~~-~~ leave ~~from call~~ for family responsibilities is available to rostered ministers with demonstrated circumstances that fulfill the criteria for this status. A rostered minister may request on-leave ~~from call~~ status for family responsibilities for a maximum of six years, by annual action of the Synod Council, based upon either of the following reasons. *(See bylaw 7.61.~~0807~~.)*
1) For the birth or care of a child or children of the rostered minister.
2) For the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health problem. A serious health problem is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either a period of incapacity or treatment with inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility, or a period of incapacity or subsequent treatment following inpatient care. A medical certification of such a serious health problem must be submitted to the Synod Council as part of the request for on-leave ~~from call~~ status.

A person already granted regular on-leave ~~from call~~ status~~,~~ whose life circumstances change~~,~~ may apply for a change to family leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

d. With approval of the Synod Council, either by general policy or by specific authorization, the synod bishop may place limitations or restrictions upon the availability for service of a rostered minister who is on leave ~~from call~~.

e. At least three months prior to the end of a rostered minister's on-leave ~~from call~~ status, the bishop or bishop's designee will contact the rostered minister to review:
1) Pension and health insurance implications, with a recommendation that Portico Benefit Services be contacted.
2) The criteria for continuation of on-leave ~~from call~~ status beyond ~~three~~ six years, if applicable.
3) The implications and expectations of being removed from the roster.
4) The process for reinstatement to the roster.

f. The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is on leave ~~from call~~ may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

g. The secretary of this church shall report semi-annually to the Conference of Bishops any person whose on-leave ~~from call~~ status is coming to an end within the next six months.

2. Criteria for extension of on-leave ~~from call~~ status

a. A rostered minister may remain on leave from call beyond ~~three~~ six years when such an extension contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the on-leave ~~from call~~ status warrant an exception to the normal ~~three~~six-year limitation. Such continuation on the roster of this church beyond the ~~third~~ sixth year is contingent upon recommendation by the synod bishop and action of both the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops.

b. A rostered minister who is eligible for retired status should not be considered for ~~an~~ extension of on-leave ~~from call~~ status.

c. A rostered minister who seeks to remain on leave from call beyond ~~three~~ six years must provide a written request to the synod bishop and Synod Council for an extension of that status. This request should be received no later than six months prior to the end of the ~~third~~ sixth year of on-leave ~~from call~~ status.
d. This request must state clearly the reason(s) for such a request and how these reasons relate to this church's ministry and mission.
e. The request must include the following information:
    1) The rationale for the rostered minister to remain on leave ~~from call~~, including a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call, and an articulation of how the rostered minister's gifts and circumstances can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;
    2) The anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a call;
    3) A statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services at the direction of the synod bishop, consistent with the ministry and mission needs of the synod;
    4) The rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave ~~from call~~;
    5) A statement describing the rostered minister's current congregational participation ~~in a congregation of this church.~~
f. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may remain on study leave beyond six years when such continuation contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the study leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave from call (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the educational goals of the rostered minister, the time line for completion of study, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of study. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon ~~recommendation by the synod bishop and~~ action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council ~~upon request of the synod bishop~~ after notice to the rostered minister.
g. Family Leave: A rostered minister on leave for care-giving responsibilities may remain on family leave beyond six years when the particular circumstances of the family leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave ~~from call~~ (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the continuing care-giving needs of the rostered minister, the possible time line for conclusion, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of these circumstances. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon ~~recommendation by the synod bishop and~~ action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council ~~upon request of the synod bishop~~ after notice to the rostered minister.
h. Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council
    1) The synod bishop reviews the request for continuation of the on-leave ~~from call~~ status beyond ~~three~~ six years ~~(six years in the case of graduate study and family leave)~~ and forwards that request to the Synod Council together with the bishop's evaluation of the request. The rostered minister shall be notified of the nature of the bishop's recommendation. If the bishop recommends not to approve the request, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation.
    2) ~~At the request of the synod bishop, the~~The Synod Council considers the request of the rostered minister and how it relates to the mission and ministry of the synod. Should the decision of the Synod Council be to recommend approval, the Synod Council shall make such a request to the Conference of Bishops.
    3) On behalf of the Synod Council, the synod bishop forwards the request and rationale to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.
    4) A rostered minister on leave ~~from call~~ must provide an annual written request to the synod bishop for recommendation to the Synod Council for continuation of that status.
    5) The Synod Council must review and act annually on requests for continuance of on-leave ~~from call~~ status beyond the ~~three~~six-year norm ~~(six years for graduate study and family leave).~~
i. Action by the Conference of Bishops
    1) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops reviews such requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
    2) The Conference of Bishops, at a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for continuation of on-leave ~~from call~~ status. It shall report its decision to the synod seeking such a continuation.
    3) The action of the Conference of Bishops automatically grants the first year of extension of leave. The Synod Council must subsequently vote to grant the second year, upon written request of the rostered minister and

recommendation of the synod bishop.~~in approving the request of a Synod Council is valid for two years, if approved annually by the Synod Council.~~

C. Disability

7.71.05. **Disability.** Ministers of Word and Service may be granted disability status, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for designation of disability on the official roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted disability status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minster of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

~~**7.71.05. Disability.** Ministers of Word and Service may be granted disability status, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster.~~

~~a. The policies and procedures for designation of disability on the official roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.~~

~~b. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted disability status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

g. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if granted disability status, was listed when last called, or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Service for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church. ...

1. Introduction

Disability roster status is an ecclesial determination granted by the Synod Council upon endorsement by the synod bishop in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of disability status by any health plan or benefits provider.

2. Disability roster status

a. Disability roster status is discretionary, and there is no right or entitlement to such roster status even when disability benefits have been granted by a health plan or benefits provider.

b. A minister of Word and Service who seeks disability roster status shall submit a written request to the synod bishop for such status. The request from the minister should include the medical diagnosis, benefits decision, if any, of Portico Benefit Services or other benefits provider, and other pertinent information regarding the minister's disability. The synod bishop has sole discretion to determine whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether to grant disability roster status.

c. Disability roster status may be granted even though the minister has not submitted a request to the bishop or disability benefits have been denied by a health plan or benefits provider (*e.g.*, 7.75.c., †S14.18.c., *C9.05.c.).

d. The continuation of disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Service is subject to review at any time and shall be reviewed in the event that disability benefits are terminated. Disability roster status granted to a

minister of Word and Service may be terminated by the Synod Council upon recommendation by the synod bishop or in the event the minister accepts a call.

e. The transfer of the roster status of a minister with disability roster status may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

f. If the disability roster status ceases, a minister who is not under call or has not received and accepted a call, should request on-leave ~~from call~~ status or retired status, if eligible, in accordance with the established processes.

D. Retirement

7.71.04. Retirement. Ministers of Word and Service may retire upon attaining the earlier of age 60 or 30 years on a roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted retired status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

h. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if granted retired status, was listed when last called, or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Service for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

~~**7.71.04. Retirement.** Ministers of Word and Service may retire upon attaining the earlier of age 60 or 30 years on a roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster.~~

~~a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.~~

~~b. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted retired status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~

~~**7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:**~~

~~**...**~~

~~**h. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if granted retired status, was listed when last called, or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Service for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.**~~

1. Policy and procedures related to retired status

a. A minister of Word and Service who has attained the age of 60 or who has been on the roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies for 30 or more years may be granted retired status by this church. Retired status is an ecclesial determination which may be granted by the Synod Council ~~upon endorsement by the synod bishop~~ in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of benefits under any health or retirement plan in which the minister of Word and Service may be a member.

b. A minister of Word and Service who seeks retired roster status shall make a written request to the synod bishop no later than 45 days following the termination of the most recent call or of on-leave ~~from call~~ or disability status.

c. The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Service is eligible for retired status and whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. The bishop shall inform the

rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the synod bishop recommends granting retired status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted retired status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right to make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee) in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for retired status, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

~~The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Service is eligible for retired status and whether, in the bishop's sole discretion, to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the Synod Council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status.~~

d. A minister of Word and Service who has been granted retired status shall retain that roster status until (1) the minister is no longer on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, (2) the minister accepts a call, or (3) the Synod Council revokes retired status upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Such revocation of a minister's retired status may occur only upon a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council, present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting.
e. The Synod Council shall engage in a regular, periodic examination of all ministers of Word and Service on the retired roster such that each and every retired minister's status is reviewed at least once during a three-year cycle.

2. Guidelines for retired ministers of Word and Service

a. Roster of Ministers of Word and Service

A retired minister is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the minister resides. The retired minister remains accountable to the synod bishop where rostered, and the minister should regularly report to the synod bishop on any activities as a minister of Word and Service.

Unless bylaw 7.71.04.b. applies, a retired minister must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service and remains subject to the standards for ministers of Word and Service of this church.

b. Congregational membership

A retired congregation deacon should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. This provides an opportunity for the retired deacon to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the deacon's retired role.

c. Compensation

Retirement benefits provided through Portico Benefit Services, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to ministers in retirement. Neither retired deacons nor their spouses are entitled to any compensation from any congregation or ministry previously served solely by reason of being retired or having previously served in that congregation or ministry.

d. Consultation with synod bishop

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired ministers of Word and Service, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a minister at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the minister's new retired status, and its implications.

e. Transfer from one synod to another

The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is retired may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

IV. Removal from the roster

A. Reasons for removal

1. Death
Death of a minister of Word and Service removes the minister from the roster.

2. Resignation
A minister of Word and Service may voluntarily resign from the roster by giving written notice to the synod bishop. A resignation may not be withdrawn or rejected. No acceptance is necessary. The synod bishop responds to the notification with a letter describing the implications of resignation.

3. Lack of call or other roster status
If the call of a minister of Word and Service comes to an end and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted, on-leave ~~from call~~ status, retired status, or disability status, then the minister is no longer on the roster. Likewise, if a minister's on-leave ~~from call~~ status, retired status, or disability status comes to an end or is terminated, and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted, another roster status, then the minister is no longer on the roster.

4. Discipline
A minister of Word and Service may be removed from the roster pursuant to the disciplinary provisions in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

5. Lack of congregational membership
A minister of Word and Service who ceases to be a member of a congregation of this church, except as provided in ~~7.71.04.b.~~7.61.07.e., 7.71.04.b., and 7.71.05.b., shall be removed from the roster.

6. Dual rostering
According to ELCA bylaw 7.61.06., "Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." A minister of Word and Service of this church who enters the ministry of another church body, or who serves a group schismatic from this church or from a congregation thereof, shall cease to be a member of this church. The minister's name shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service by the synod bishop.

B. Reporting
The synod bishop shall promptly report all removals from the roster to the secretary of this church and to the next synod assembly. The synod's roster files of those removed from the roster shall be transmitted to the secretary of this church in a timely manner, except in the case of death, when the file should be transmitted to the synod or regional archives.

C. Guidelines for individuals formerly rostered as ministers of Word and Service

1. The ministry of the baptized
This church affirms the integrity and importance of the ministry of the baptized. Removal of a person's name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church reflects a change of calling and function within the ministry of the baptized.

2. The ministry of Word and Service
Some individuals are called by God in the church to the public ministry of Word and Service. For a variety of reasons, there may be a time in the life of these individuals when they are no longer called by this church to serve in this ministry.

a. When a person's name is removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges, rights, and responsibilities of that person to serve as a minister of Word and Service of the ELCA cease.
b. Individuals removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service may apply for reinstatement and may be reinstated.

c. Individuals who are not under call by this church, are not on its roster of Ministers of Word and Service, and are not under the discipline of the ELCA may not function as deacons in the name of this church.

3. The participation of formerly rostered ministers

Removal from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service ends the rights and privileges this church confers at ordination. Formerly rostered individuals may continue as members of this church. Several specific changes follow:

a. Use of this church's title of "Deacon" must be discontinued by the individual.
b. The gifts, training, and experience of a formerly rostered individual can be valuable to a congregation. The use of these gifts in the congregation should be discussed with the synod bishop at the time the rostered minister is removed and with that person's congregational pastor in consultation with the bishop.
c. The synod bishop is responsible to oversee and administer the work of the synod, including providing pastoral care and leadership to congregations and rostered ministers. It is, therefore, important that formerly rostered individuals consult with the synod bishop and observe synod guidelines regarding their service in this church.

See the model letters provided in the appendices.

V. Reinstatement to the roster

7.61.07. Reinstatement. A person seeking reinstatement as a minister of Word and Service shall be registered by the pastor and council of the congregation of which such a person is a member with the candidacy committee of the synod in which the person was last rostered or, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved, after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church, with the candidacy committee of the synod of current residence. The person then shall be interviewed, examined, and approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee under criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In this process, the committee shall review the circumstances related to the termination of earlier service together with subsequent developments. The person is reinstated after receiving and accepting a letter of call to serve as a minister of Word and Service in this church.

[Following is from the Candidacy Manual.]

A. Reinstatement Process

1. Reinstatement to the rosters of the ELCA is the responsibility of the candidacy committee of the synod where the applicant was last rostered.
2. If an applicant is seeking both reinstatement to a roster and a transfer to another synod, in accordance with *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,* the secretary of the ELCA and the synods involved must consent to the transfer. A transfer of candidacy that includes reinstatement requires the concurrence of both candidacy committees and both bishops.
3. In the case of an applicant whose previous rostered ministry was in one of the ELCA predecessor churches, the successor ELCA synod has the responsibility. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster or its successor.
4. In the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of one of the following:
   a. the official disciplinary process of this church,
   b. resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
   c. application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06, where the person was on leave from call after conduct or allegations that could lead to disciplinary charges,

   then a minimum of five consecutive years without call must elapse before an application for reinstatement may be considered. The passage of five years without call does not guarantee reconsideration.

B. Application for Reinstatement

1. The applicant provides to the appropriate synod the completed Application for Reinstatement to the Roster of the ELCA, and the synod sends a copy to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for information. A Candidacy Application and a Rostered Minister Profile must be submitted online.
2. Upon receipt of the Application for Reinstatement, the synod bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
3. With the approval of the ELCA secretary, the reinstatement process may be transferred from the synod of previous roster to the synod of current residence upon the written concurrence of both candidacy committee chairs (in consultation with members of the candidacy committee) and both synod bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
4. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered schedules an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant's eligibility to be a candidate in the synod. The bishop also determines whether the application is timely.
5. In the case of an applicant where inappropriate conduct or allegations of misconduct led to resignation or removal from the roster, the synod bishop examines the applicant for indications of repentance and amendment of life as well as indication of or attempts at reconciliation with those injured by the conduct. Before proceeding with reinstatement, the bishop also documents corrective actions that have occurred. The bishop should invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.
6. The candidacy committee considers an applicant for reinstatement when the synod bishop forwards the application to the committee. The bishop may, in their sole discretion, decline to forward the application to

the candidacy committee or may forward the application with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

C. Candidacy Committee

1. The candidacy committee will receive and review the Congregational Registration form from the congregation where the applicant is a member.
2. The committee shall determine that it has received all records and information concerning the applicant, including verification of synod records concerning the reason for removal from the roster. If synod records are incomplete, this verification may include conferring with the former bishop, with synod staff, or with the churchwide office.
3. The committee may request additional information from any source that it deems necessary to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement.
4. The applicant must prepare an Approval essay and submit it to the candidacy committee.
5. The committee may request a new psychological evaluation and background check when necessary. In the case of any applicant who has been off the roster or without call for more than five years, the candidacy committee will require the applicant to participate in a psychological evaluation. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
6. The candidacy committee follows the standards and procedures in the Candidacy Manual as its guide in considering a request for reinstatement. The candidacy committee interviews the applicant to explore all concerns related to reinstatement, including but not limited to:
   a. the circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
   b. the applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement, with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
   c. discussion of the applicant's understanding of the specific roster in the ELCA and the applicant's willingness to serve in response to the needs of this church; and
   d. discussion of the applicant's commitment to live according to the standards of this church, including *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.
7. The candidacy committee may request the Christian Community and Leadership home area to convene a Theological Review Panel to determine the applicant's theological readiness for Word and Service ministry. The Theological Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

D. Decision

1. The candidacy committee will decide the applicant's suitability to serve as a rostered minister of this church. This decision is one of the following:
   a. grant approval for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call,
   b. postpone approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement, or
   c. deny approval for reinstatement.
2. If the decision of the candidacy committee is to deny an applicant reinstatement, that decision is final. Any such applicant who desires reconsideration must begin the process again by applying.
3. In the case of an applicant who was removed from the roster under any of the circumstances listed in V.A.4.a–c. above, if the applicant is approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee, such approval is not effective unless affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the total membership of the executive committee of the Synod Council. After the candidacy committee reports its approval and the reasons for it to the executive committee of the Synod Council, the executive committee may obtain whatever additional information or advice, including legal advice, it deems necessary before affirming the decision of the candidacy committee.

E. Approval

If approved, the candidate will complete the normal First Call paperwork and will participate in the First Call process.

If the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the Christian Community and Leadership home area, following consultation with the synod bishop and the home area executive director, shall postpone the candidate's participation in the First Call process until all requirements are met.

1. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for a period of one year after Approval by the synod. Any delay occasioned by a postponement is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
2. The process for renewal of Approval is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.
3. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster.

See the form for "Application for Reinstatement" in the Candidacy Manual.

VI. The Deaconess Community

See "Relationships and Statement of Agreement of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada" in the appendices among "Agreements with certain churches outside the United States."

Part Three:
Non-roster Related Matters

I. Synod-authorized Ministries

7.31.10. **SYNOD-AUTHORIZED MINISTRY.** While it is preferable in most circumstances that Word and Sacrament ministry be provided by a minister of Word and Sacrament, when need exists, the synod bishop—acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer Word and Sacrament ministry as a synod-authorized minister. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop; such service shall be rendered during its duration under the authority of the bishop. Such an individual will be trained to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synod leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.

~~**7.31.10. Synod-authorized Ministry.** When need exists to render Word and Sacrament ministry for a congregation or ministry of this church where it is not feasible to provide rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament, the synod bishop—acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council—may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer this ministry. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop; such service shall be rendered during its duration under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod's pastor. Such an individual will be trained to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, remuneration, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synod leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.~~

Purpose

Synod-authorized ministry is intended to assist this church to respond pastorally and effectively to emerging opportunities in Christ's mission, to equip the baptized to live out their vocations for the sake of the world. Synod-authorized ministry honors and respects the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament within this church as well as the ministry of the baptized to serve in their local settings to proclaim the gospel and equip the believers.

Synod-authorized ministry recognizes and honors the office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession). While this church calls and ordains qualified persons to carry out the ministry of Word and Sacrament on behalf of the whole church, there may be times and contexts when qualified persons are called to carry out specific ministry only in their local settings for a designated period of time.

Synod-authorized ministry recognizes the need to be flexible and adapt to the ministry challenges and needs of smaller congregations and other ministry settings. And synod-authorized ministry recognizes that individuals may have the gifts and ability to serve this church through the proclamation of the gospel in a local context, but not the resources, ability or call to serve the whole church as ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. The purpose of synod-authorized ministry is to pair the gifts of individuals with the ministry needs of local communities in order to assist them to carry out their calling to be the church in the world.

A. Identification of need for ministry

The synod identifies a congregation or other ministry setting where synod-authorized ministry may be appropriate, such as smaller congregations that do not have the resources to call an ordained pastor, congregations that are geographically isolated making collaboration difficult, congregations that are part of multi-point parishes and in need of additional pastoral leadership, or ethnic-specific communities where a pastoral leader is already recognized.

Because of the relationship of such authorized lay ministry to those serving in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, ELCA pastors and pastors of our full communion partners serving congregations within the area where this ministry need is located normally will be consulted concerning this determination.

When determining the need for a pastor in a congregation or other identified ministry where a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church is not available, synods will first consider the utilization of an ordained minister from a full communion partner church, under the guidelines related to the orderly exchange of ordained ministers.

B. Qualifications

A person invited to prepare for a synod-authorized ministry must be an active member of an ELCA congregation, preferably for at least one year. (The synod bishop may approve an exception to this rule if the individual is a memberof a full communion partner congregation or ordained in another tradition.) In addition, prior to preparing to serve in synod-authorized ministry, an individual must have:

1. been recommended by the individual's pastor and Congregation Council;
2. met with and been interviewed by synod staff and/or the synod committee responsible for the synod's program of preparation;
3. demonstrated the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synod-authorized ministry or provided satisfactory evidence of prior preparation toward the goals and standards of the program outlined in this policy;
4. submitted written responses to the questions similar to those on the candidacy Entrance Form; and
5. obtained an in-depth background check, as outlined in the Candidacy Manual.

Any individual who has resigned or been removed from rostered ministry in the ELCA in connection with alleged misconduct, or who has been denied continuance in candidacy by reason of misconduct allegations, is precluded from serving as a synod-authorized minister.

C. Synod committee for authorized ministry

A committee may be appointed by the Synod Council to provide the synod bishop with recommendations concerning the authorization of and accountability for authorized ministries within the synod.

The Synod Council or, if appointed, the synod committee determines the educational program within the synod for individuals preparing for service in an authorized ministry; determines eligibility of individuals to enter this program of preparation; and advises the bishop on the suitability of an individual for authorization and service in a synod-authorized ministry.

D. Program of preparation

The synod defines the program of preparation for synod-authorized ministry consistent with this policy. The program of preparation can be accomplished in a variety of ways including: Select Learning (an ELCA resource with online courses facilitated by ELCA seminary and college faculty), synod educational programs that utilize current rostered ministers and/or ELCA seminary and college faculty, seminaries and continuing education centers. Such programs shall prepare individuals to have knowledge and abilities in the following areas:

1. Bible;
2. Lutheran theology, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Confession of Faith and polity of the ELCA;
3. worship;
4. spiritual discernment and faith development;
5. leadership expectations and identity;
6. contextual understanding; and
7. pastoral skills including preaching, catechetics, worship leadership, visitation, pastoral care, outreach, and administration.

E. Authorization for service

When the synod has determined that a specific need exists, and with the consent of the congregation to be served, an individual may be authorized for service within the synod by the synod bishop, in consultation with the Synod Council. The bishop will authorize for this ministry only those individuals who have been well prepared or are in the process of being prepared and who will serve under supervision. Completion of a program of preparation does not mean that authorization for service will follow. There is no guarantee of service within the synod. When authorized, such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities, and authorization shall be for a specific period of time not to exceed one year. Authorization must be reviewed annually and may be renewed on an annual basis.

Individuals who serve in synod-authorized ministry are to meet the following criteria:

1. evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
2. satisfactory participation in a synod program of preparation, and/or demonstration of appropriate ministry skills;
3. knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church; and

4. willingness to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of individuals serving in public ministry as described in "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers."

F. Letter of authorization

The bishop's authorization shall be evidenced by an appropriate letter describing the terms and conditions of the authorization. The description may limit the activities the person is authorized to perform.

G. Supervision and accountability

Accountability for synod-authorized ministry in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the Congregation Council. Accountability for a synod-authorized ministry in a non-congregational setting within a synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body of the entity that conducts that ministry, or if there is no such entity, the Synod Council. In all cases, a synod-authorized minister is to be under the direct supervision of a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop. The supervising minister of Word and Sacrament shall report to the governing body and seek the advice and counsel of the bishop or designated synod staff in relation to the synod-authorized minister.

H. Candidacy for rostered ministry

When, in the judgment of the authorizing bishop, synod-authorized ministers are well-suited and qualified for ordained ministry, they shall be encouraged to discern if they are being called into ordained ministry and consider entering the candidacy process. Individuals may remain active in candidacy and theological preparation while serving in a synod-authorized ministry. Individuals may discern that they are called and have the abilities to serve only in their local settings for specific periods of time. These individuals may be set apart for a different kind of ministry that still serves the needs of the faith community in a more limited and specific way that does not put them on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. A decision not to pursue candidacy does not preclude the need for ongoing faith formation and leadership development.

I. Renewal and revocation

Renewal of authorization after one year may be given when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synod bishop at the request and with the consent of the congregation or other ministry being served, consultation with the supervising minister of Word and Sacrament, and a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the authorized minister.

Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop, who need not specify the reason.

J. Marriage services

Where permitted by law, synod-authorized ministers may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation in which they are authorized to serve, with the concurrence of the congregation and the approval of the synod bishop.

K. Other matters

Individuals may serve in a synod-authorized ministry only within the synod that has authorized that ministry. A synod may consider for authorization an individual trained and authorized by another synod, based on the individual's qualifications and ability to meet the new synod's criteria for authorized ministry.

Individuals authorized for such ministries are not to wear clerical stoles and should not wear clerical collars unless authorized by the synod bishop. The title "Pastor" is reserved for ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synod-authorized ministers.

II. Synod/Congregation deacons

The title "deacon" is used by this church for those who are on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service. However, some synods use the term "deacon" to describe individuals trained in and recognized by local programs that focus on diaconal ministry, and some congregations use the term to describe individuals in certain governing roles. Care should be exercised in how this term is used and the expectations of those who may have this title. Ministers of Word and Service are on an official roster of this church. That means that they are eligible to serve in this church under call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council. They are under the oversight of the synod bishop and have voice and vote at synod assemblies.

Synod deacons are the responsibility of the synod that authorizes and oversees their service. Since they are not on a roster of this church, they cannot transfer from synod to synod through an established mobility process. Synods should be clear with their deacons that this title and responsibility comes from the synod and is valid only in that synod. The title "deacon" will not be used by the churchwide organization in communicating with synod deacons.

Congregational deacons serve the congregation that has selected them. Normally the title is not used in addressing them in written or verbal communication. The role of a congregational deacon is defined by the congregation's constitution and applies only during their term of service. These deacons are normally elected to a specific term and serve until their successors are elected. They have no responsibility outside of the congregation that elected them, unless the congregation elects them to serve in another capacity, i.e. voting member of a synod assembly.

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A. Agreements with certain churches outside the United States

1. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)

Inter-Lutheran Cooperation Between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Inasmuch as the churches that formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), constituted in 1985, and formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), constituted in 1987, have been integral parts of one another's life, continue to be one in faith and confession, and are determined to find as many ways as possible to work together and to strengthen one another as members of the Lutheran family of churches on the North American continent, it was determined that:

I. Mutual Recognition of Leadership

A. Each church body takes appropriate steps to provide for a mutual recognition of the ordained ministry of the other church, which will be evidenced by:
   1. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer upon receipt and acceptance of a call.
   2. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer in the retired status.
   3. making provision so that ordained ministers may remain on the roster of the ordained ministers of one church while serving in a social service or educational agency/institution or on the staff of the other church.
   4. covenanting with one another to refuse acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers persons who have been excluded from the ordained ministry or have been denied acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers of the other church.

B. Each church body takes the appropriate steps to recognize the seminaries of the other church as approved schools for the theological training of its candidates for the ordained ministry.

C. Each church body takes the appropriate steps to recognize the "Deaconess Community" of the ELCA as a community that will serve both churches.

D. Each church body takes the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the rostered laypersons that are "certified," "commissioned," or "consecrated" by the other church.

E. Each church body takes the appropriate steps to facilitate the mobility of pension-plan participants between the churches.

II. Interchurch Cooperation

A. Each church body will provide for consultations between their corresponding units.

B. Each church body will provide for the appropriate boards and program committees to explore the possibility of shared participation in the development and preparation of congregational materials.

C. Each church body will provide for periodic conferences of the full-time elected officers will be held and that the elected officers of other Lutheran churches in North America will be invited to attend.

D. Each church body will provide for the appropriate boards and program committees of the churches to explore the possibility of mutual cooperation in the preparation of social statements and the addressing of social concerns that have North American implications.

E. Each church body will provide for the possibility of cooperation in the training, preparation, and continuing education for missionaries and in other appropriate areas.

Action as adopted by the constituting convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1987):

Inasmuch as the churches that formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, constituted in 1985, and are forming the new Lutheran Church in the United States, to be constituted in 1987, have been an integral part of one another's life, continue to be one in faith and confession, and are determined to find as many ways as possible to work together and to strengthen one another as members of the Lutheran family of churches on the North American continent, it is recommended that:

A. Mutual Recognition of Leadership

1. Each commission take appropriate steps to provide for a mutual recognition of ordained ministry by the churches, which will be evidenced by:
   a. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer upon receipt and acceptance of a call.
   b. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer in the retired status.

c. making provision so that ordained ministers may remain on the roster of the ordained ministers of one church while serving in a social service or educational agency/institution or on the staff of the other church.
d. covenanting with one another to refuse acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers persons who have been excluded from the ordained ministry or have been denied acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers of the other church.

2. Each commission take the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the seminaries of the other church as approved schools for the theological training of its candidates for the ordained ministry.
3. Each commission take the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the "Deaconess Community" of the new Lutheran church in the U.S.A. as a community that will serve both churches.
4. Each commission take the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the lay professionals that have been "certified" or "commissioned" by the other church.
5. Each commission recommend to the pension committee/board that arrangements be made to facilitate the mobility of pension participants between the churches.

B. Interchurch Cooperation

1. Each commission recommend to the new churches that provision be made for consultations between their corresponding units.
2. Each commission recommend that the appropriate boards of the new churches explore the possibility of shared participation in the development and preparation of congregational materials.
3. Each commission recommend to the new churches that periodic conferences of the full-time elected officers be held and that the elected officers of other Lutheran churches in North America be invited to attend.
4. Each commission recommend that the appropriate boards of the new churches explore the possibility of mutual cooperation in the preparation of social statements and the addressing of social concerns that have North American implications.
5. Each commission recommend that the Global/World boards of the new churches explore the possibility of cooperation in the training, preparation and continuing education of missionaries and in other appropriate areas.
6. Each commission, where applicable, recommend to the ALC, AELC, LCA, and ELCIC that the recommendations listed above be honored during the period January 1, 1986-December 31, 1987.

Relationships and Statement of Agreement
Of the Deaconess Community of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The following statement was approved by the board of the Division for Ministry in October 1994 and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in November 1994.

A. Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) will be approved, set apart according to the entry rite of that church, and rostered by the ELCIC.
B. The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) will service both churches for the purpose of formation and community support and will relate to the candidacy process of both churches according to the guidelines established by each church.
C. The Deaconess Community of the ELCA will include members of both the ELCA and the ELCIC.
D. Deaconesses serving in the ELCIC shall be in a relationship of accountability for discipline, call, and mobility with the ELCIC according to the practices of that church.
E. There shall be mutual transferability for deaconesses who are members of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA between both churches as presently exists for ordained ministers.
F. The question of rostering needs to be determined by each church. While only members of the ELCA can be listed on the roster of the ELCA, it will be requested that the Yearbook listing of members of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA include ELCIC members with appropriate designation of which church roster they are a member. The ELCIC will determine how to list its deaconesses—which may be as "diaconal ministers."

Transfer of Ordained Ministers Between Synods
Of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
And Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

An ordained minister may be transferred by the bishop of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the roster of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in the same manner employed for the transfer of such an ordained minister between two synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *(See bylaw 7.42.01.)*

Likewise, an ordained minister in good standing on the roster of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada may be received through transfer by a bishop of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for service under call in this church. An ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada shall be received by transfer upon acceptance of a valid call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council of this church following the certification of their good standing on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, completion of a Rostered Minister Profile, and the approval of the bishop of the synod in which they are to serve.

The principle of full disclosure shall apply to all such transfers. It is recommended that the ELCA synod or calling body complete a criminal background check on the ordained minister. If a background check is done by the calling body, a copy should be shared with the synod.

2. Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD])

Guidelines on Candidacy Issues
For German Students or Pastors from the
Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has had an agreement since 1988 regarding cooperation with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), a federation of 23 regional Lutheran, Reformed, and United Protestant churches. In recent years these churches report having more students as theologically trained graduates than there are pastoral positions and compensation available for candidates for ordination. Students who have received theological degrees in Germany, as well as pastors from German churches, continue to express interest in serving in ELCA congregations in the United States.

Concern remains with the EKD about obligations of its churches should students come to the United States to become ordained and then return to Germany expecting positions. It is essential to honor the spirit of cooperation that has been present among our churches, and the appropriate churchwide unit encourages all synods to practice diplomacy in issues related to German students with theological degrees and pastors from these German churches seeking to serve as ordained ministers in the ELCA.

"Occasional service" or "Extended Service" for German pastors may not lead to or require "Transfer" to the roster of the ELCA. Candidacy committees consider the application of such pastors seeking to Transfer, and of students from Germany who have pursued U.S. degrees and who seek ordination and service on the roster of the ELCA. Careful attention should be given to the distinctions between short-term (Occasional or Extended service) and long-term (Transfer or ordination) placements in ELCA ministries.

The particular needs of this church are an important factor in determining who is approved for rostered ministry in the ELCA. The mission of this church involves outreach, worship, service, advocacy for justice, and nurture. While the scope of our mission is global, our particular responsibility is for ministry in the United States and the Caribbean. It is essential, therefore, to have leaders who thoroughly understand and are experienced with the cultural context of this diverse area.

I. Process for Short-Term Placement

The short-term availability of ordained ministers from churches of the EKD, as established by mutual agreement, falls within two categories: availability to serve in an occasional situation and availability to meet an extended need, including service in "yoked parish" settings.

A. Occasional Service: An occasional situation is defined as one in which an ordained minister of a church body of the EKD may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.

B. Extended Service: An ordained minister of a church body of the EKD may be invited, as authorized by the synod bishop, to serve as the pastor of an ELCA congregation for an extended period of time only with the consent of the member church of the EKD, and remains an ordained minister of that church body during such service. Such pastors are expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments within that ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of this church. Such service shall be rendered only in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of the ELCA in a given situation.

The employing ministry site must reach an agreement on employment according to the relevant provisions of the EKD, must make adequate accommodation available, and must cover the costs of repatriation for the pastor and his or her family on the expiry of the service (Agreement between the ELCA and the EKD, Section III, 4 and 5).

II. Process for ELCA Rostering

Prior to and during the application process for service on the ELCA roster, the synod must examine the desires and goals of applicants to determine their plans for the future. A written statement from the applicant of intent to remain in the ELCA for long-term service is to be retained with the candidacy file.

A. Pastors: The candidacy process for those who are "Ordained in Another Lutheran Church or Another Christian Tradition" is followed for ordained pastors of the EKD churches. All guidelines should be carefully followed in partnership with the synod Candidacy Committee. The prospective candidate first meets with an Initial Assessment Panel, which includes the synod bishop (or designee), the chair of the Candidacy Committee, and one additional Candidacy Committee member. The prospective candidate visits with this panel at his or her own expense for the purpose of mutual discernment. This meeting is held prior to the entrance interview for candidacy.

The appropriate churchwide unit convenes a review panel once an entrance/endorsement decision is made by the Candidacy Committee. An approval interview is scheduled once all recommendations have been met.

B. Students: Students from Germany who have theological degrees who are not ordained but desire to be rostered in the ELCA must follow the normal steps of candidacy (entrance, endorsement, ELCA seminary residency, approval, etc.) with the guidance of a synod Candidacy Committee. The Candidacy Committee must consult with the appropriate churchwide unit before any candidacy decisions are made. Once an applicant is approved for entrance into candidacy, the candidate affiliates with an ELCA seminary where the candidate's academic program will be reviewed by a panel convened by the appropriate churchwide unit. The panel makes a recommendation regarding recognition of prior academic or field work, including "Spezialvikariat" and other accomplishments and study. The seminary provides direction for supervised clinical ministry and internship placements as well as for any additional preparation that may be necessary.

After all practical and academic requirements have been completed by persons seeking ELCA rostering (including internship and clinical ministry [CPE] where required), the Candidacy Committee will schedule and conduct the approval interview. The timeline for this process will vary, depending upon the background of the candidate as well as familiarity with ELCA mission and ministry. Approved candidates participate in the First Call Process of Candidates under the direction of the appropriate churchwide unit. It is expected that candidates and synods will work together to balance the needs of this church with the needs of candidates during the First Call Process.

Cultural Immersion: Any time spent in the United States prior to serving should include an immersion in the life and culture of the ELCA, including active membership in an ELCA congregation. The normal requirement of one year membership in an ELCA congregation is the guideline for adequate time to become familiar with the practice of ministry in the ELCA. Providing opportunities for German students to develop familiarity and skills so that they may serve well in ways that are fulfilling and effective in the ELCA is part of the responsibility of the synod Candidacy Committee as well as the congregation. For those who have theological degrees from Germany seeking ordination and rostering in the ELCA, the policies of this church regarding ordination must be observed, and it is preferred that the service of ordination be in an ELCA congregation as a way of further assimilation into the life of this church.

Record Keeping: The appropriate churchwide unit maintains records for tracking German students and monitors the effectiveness of this cooperative effort. The synod Candidacy Committee should report such candidates and their progress to the appropriate churchwide unit. Candidacy decisions and recommendations from the Review Panel should be reported to the unit.

III. Consultation with the Parent Church in Germany

Extended service contracts can be authorized only with the consent of the EKD. Likewise, for admission to the ELCA roster, the synod bishop must request a letter of reference from the candidate's parent church body regarding any EKD pastor who seeks to transfer or German student who seeks to be approved for ordained ministry in the ELCA. The EKD will provide comments and observations regarding the individual's relationship with the church. This should occur at the beginning of the candidacy process.

Correspondence should be directed to:
Evangelical Church in Germany
Secretary for North America Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad
Herrenhäuser Strasse 12
30419 Hannover, Germany
Tel: (49) 0511-2796-0 Fax: (49) 0511-2796-707

A copy of this letter from the synod bishop must be sent to the Service and Justice unit, ELCA, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

IV. Immigration Issues

While applicants for service in ELCA ministry sites do not have to be U.S. citizens, they must pursue the appropriate immigration status with the government to allow for employment within the United States. The United States government has restrictions regarding those who seek change in status for religious purposes. It is essential that applicants address this issue and report their status to the synod bishop or, in the case of persons seeking admission to the roster of ordained ministers, to their Candidacy Committee.

Original policy adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America November 14, 1999 [CC99.11.83n]; revised policy adopted by the Church Council November 15, 2009 [CC09,11.97].

B. Effective dates of changes in status

I. Rostered Minister Leaving Call

a. For new call: If a rostered minister leaves a call for a new call, the first day of the new call shall be the first day worked at the new call, and the last day of the old call shall be the previous day.

b. Without new call:

1. If a rostered minister leaves a call without a new call, and does not apply for on-leave ~~-from-call~~, disability, or retired status within 45 days, the last day of the old call shall be the last day worked, and the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the first day after the last day of the old call.
2. If a rostered minister leaves a call without a new call, and applies for on-leave ~~-from-call~~, disability, or retired status within 45 days of the end of the old call:
   a) And the requested status is granted, then the last day of the old call shall be the last day worked, and the rostered minister shall be deemed to have the granted status effective the first day after the last day of the old call.
   b) And the requested status is denied, then the last day of the old call shall be the last day worked, and the rostered minister shall be deemed to no longer be on the roster effective the date that the requested status was denied.
3. In determining the last day worked at the old call, payment of severance or accrued vacation is not considered, and the focus is on the last day worked.
4. Rostered ministers should contact Portico Benefit Services or their benefits provider regarding the process for benefit changes.

II. Rostered Minister Leaving On-Leave ~~-from-Call~~, Disability or Retired Status

a. For new call: If a rostered minister leaves on-leave ~~-from-call~~, disability, or retired status for a new call, the first day of the new call shall be the first day worked at the new call and the last day of their prior status shall be the previous day.

b. Without new call:

1. If a rostered minister is removed from on-leave ~~-from-call~~, disability, or retired status and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and does not apply for a new status within 45 days, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of removal from the prior status, and the last day of the prior status shall be the previous day.
2. If a rostered minister is removed from on-leave ~~-from-call~~, disability, or retired status, and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and applies for a new status within 45 days from the removal from the prior status:
   a) And the requested status is granted, then the last day of the prior status shall be the date on which the rostered minister was removed from the prior status or on which the prior status expired, and the first day of the new status shall be the next day.
   b) And the requested status is denied, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of removal from the prior status, and the last day of the prior status shall be the previous day.
3. If a rostered minister's on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status expires without being renewed, and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and does not apply for retired or disability status prior to the expiration of the on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of the expiration of on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status, and the last day of the on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status shall be the previous day.
4. If a rostered minister's on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status expires without being renewed, and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and applies for retired or disability status prior to the expiration of the on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status:
   a) And the requested status is granted, then the first day of the new status shall be the day on which the new status was granted, and last day of on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status shall be the previous day.
   b) And the requested status is denied, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of expiration of on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status, and the last day of the on-leave ~~-from-call~~ status shall be the previous day.
5. Rostered ministers should contact Portico Benefit Services or their benefits provider regarding the process for benefit changes.

C. Resources for familiarization with the life and practice of the ELCA

Resources. In consultation with seminary faculties, the appropriate churchwide unit recommends resources such as these to assist synod bishops in familiarizing ordained ministers of another church body with the life and practice of the ELCA:

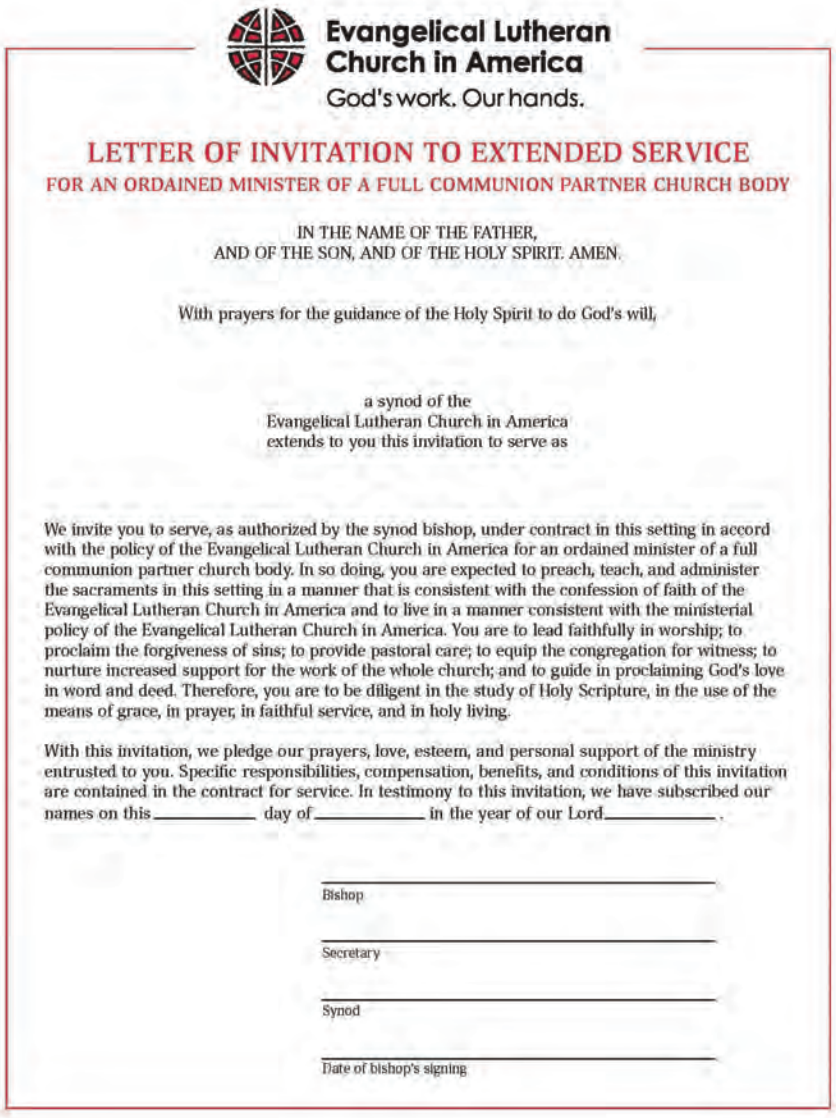
Resources of the ELCA

- *The Book of Concord*
- *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, particularly Chapters 2–7, and 9
- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
- *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Ordained Ministers*
- "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament"

Theological and historical perspectives

- *The Annotated Luther*, 6 volumes
- Single works of Martin Luther:
  - Kirsi Stjerna, ed. *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, 1529*
  - Mark D. Tranvik ed., *The Freedom of a Christian*
- Lowell G. Almen, *One Great Cloud of Witnesses! You and Your Congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
- Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen, eds., *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 vols.
- Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*
- Mark Granquist, *Lutherans in America: A New History*
- Jeff G. Johnson, *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story*
- Kathryn A. Kleinhans, ed., *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans*
- Craig Nessan, *Shalom Church: The Body of Christ as Ministering Community*
- L. DeAne Lagerquist, *The Lutherans (Denominations in America)*
- Martin Lohrmann, *Book of Harmony: Spirit and Service in the Lutheran Confessions*
- Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, eds., *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians*
- Kirsi Stjerna, *Women of the Reformation*
- Mary Streufert, ed., *Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Perspectives*
- Marit Trelstad, ed., *Cross Examinations*
- Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith*
- Timothy J. Wengert, *Reading the Bible with Martin Luther: An Introductory Guide*

D. Invitation to extended service



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

LETTER OF INVITATION TO EXTENDED SERVICE
FOR AN ORDAINED MINISTER OF A FULL COMMUNION PARTNER CHURCH BODY

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER,
AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

With prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to do God's will,

a synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
extends to you this invitation to serve as

We invite you to serve, as authorized by the synod bishop, under contract in this setting in accord with the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for an ordained minister of a full communion partner church body. In so doing, you are expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in this setting in a manner that is consistent with the confession of faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. You are to lead faithfully in worship; to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; to provide pastoral care; to equip the congregation for witness; to nurture increased support for the work of the whole church; and to guide in proclaiming God's love in word and deed. Therefore, you are to be diligent in the study of Holy Scripture, in the use of the means of grace, in prayer, in faithful service, and in holy living.

With this invitation, we pledge our prayers, love, esteem, and personal support of the ministry entrusted to you. Specific responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and conditions of this invitation are contained in the contract for service. In testimony to this invitation, we have subscribed our names on this _____ day of _____ in the year of our Lord _____.

_____
Bishop

_____
Secretary

_____
Synod

_____
Date of bishop's signing

E. Military chaplain returning to a congregation

Bureau for Federal Chaplaincy Ministries
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
218 D St SE, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20003
202-626-3846

Suggestions for Chaplain Reentry into the Congregation

Operational commitments assigned to the Armed Forces of the United States (Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard) in recent years have been at a level not experienced in several decades. Large numbers of Reserve and National Guard chaplains have been activated and had to leave their parishes for considerable periods of time, some up to 18 months.

Suggestions have been developed for chaplains and congregations in time of military involuntary call-up under the title "Suggestions for Chaplains and Congregations in Time of Military Involuntary Call-up" (Part One, p. 27).

Congregations whose pastors are members of the Reserve or National Guard should have a standing "Mobilization Agreement" to provide for the needs of the pastor and family as well as the congregation during periods of mobilization.

When the period of active duty has been completed and the pastor returns to the parish the critical process of reentry begins. The form it may take and the time required for its completion will vary with each pastor and congregation; some estimates are three to six months. The experiences may range from frequent boredom to long periods of tension and tragedy. The effects of these experiences can be long-lasting, and chaplains are not immune to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

As marriage partners are advised to have patience with each other as they both make their way through the reentry process, the same patience is needed on the parts of pastors and congregations. The most common instinct is the desire to "pick up where we left off and get on with it" as though nothing had changed in any of the relationships. Every effort should be made to resist this temptation since all persons in the relationships have changed and need time to get to know one another again. If a "returned chaplain" is available in the area, every effort should be made to invite the chaplain to meet with the congregation and Congregation Council to talk about the experience of deployment and reentry.

If possible, congregations are urged to make provision for the pastor and family to go away together for a couple of weeks and get reacquainted after the separation. This is the primary relationship and should be addressed first. It may also offer opportunity for the pastor to get body and emotions in the same place. With the rapid means of transportation available, it is possible for a person to be physically at home but emotionally still half a world away. Bishops should consider organizing retreats for returning chaplains and their spouses, perhaps on a regional level, led by a skilled counselor who would help the couples process their experiences and adjust to ministry in the parish.

Perhaps the next planned event would be a welcome-home celebration, a Sunday brunch event at church, or even an overnight retreat for the pastor, where the returning chaplain can listen as congregation council members describe how they experienced the time of separation, and the pastor's experience might also be shared. Special attention should be paid to the new agreements that have been worked out within the congregation during this period. If several functions formerly performed by the pastor have been assumed by members of the congregation, some renegotiation will probably be necessary. When done with care and sensitivity, this process may produce new models of ministry to the benefit of the congregation.

For the congregation, the "get-acquainted period" that was necessary when the pastor first arrived in the parish will need to be repeated in a shorter form at this time, perhaps the three to six months mentioned previously.

The pastor will experience some strong "pulls" in various directions:

- From the congregation. Some members of the congregation will require extended amounts of the pastor's time so the pastor can be brought up do date with the events in the member's life. The pastor must make special efforts to provide for this time.
- From the unit. Strong bonds are formed when people are together in a hostile environment. As the chaplain assisted the members of the unit to deal with events and experiences during the deployment, so she or he usually will feel the obligation to assist them in their family and community re-entry process that may be prolonged and quite difficult. A chaplain's presence is in greater demand following a deployment than preceding it. Congregations can render valuable ministry to the community through sharing their pastor and facilities to assist soldiers as they navigate their individual re-entry processes through such support activity.

The pastor will probably need to adjust to a different pace and focus upon return. Military operations are frequently characterized by a high level of activity and an intense focus on a task. The pace in most congregations is slower and the focus more diffuse compared with military operations. This will call for some adjustment on the part of the returning chaplain, who may experience the feeling of being "at loose ends" when the focus of activity is not as sharp.

The pastor may have experienced long periods of extreme tension produced by attempting to be aware of any imminent danger and to instantly react appropriately. Ordinary sounds that occur without warning may be interpreted differently by persons returning from a combat theater and may produce unusual reactions. It is not unusual for such persons to have trouble sleeping or have nightmares for a period following their return.

It would not be unusual for questions to arise in the hearts of both pastor and parishioners as to whether this relationship still fits and is workable. All parties are urged to withhold judgment for some time and let the re-entry process unfold.

A period of separation, be it between spouses or pastor and congregation, tends to amplify the existing relationship. If the relationship was warm, close, and caring prior to the separation it will probably be even more so upon return. By the same token, if the relationship was troubled prior to the deployment, it usually will be even more difficult at the end of the separation.

Excellent resources are provided by the Army Chief of Chaplains and Family Readiness resources. These can be found on the internet: https://www.army.mil/soldierresources/

Essential elements of the process:

- Be patient with one another.
- Listen intently to what the other person is saying.
- Speak candidly and lovingly to one another.
- Hold on to the unity you have been given in Christ.

F. Sample letters

*(Draft letter of **completion of call** of ministers of Word and Sacrament)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear Pastor *[Name]*:

Greetings in this season of *[name of season in church year].* Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Congratulations upon your acceptance of a new call to serve *[specify new call].* The weeks ahead will likely be filled with the excitement and anticipation that come from such a transition as you begin to envision what you can and should do in your new ministry context.

Please remember that members of your current congregation are still in the early stages of processing the announcement of your resignation. They have not had the same preparation for this transition that you have had, and some may be finding it difficult to conceive of anyone else providing their pastoral care. A few people may even approach you (if they have not done so already) to ask if you would return to the congregation to conduct a wedding or preside at a funeral.

While it may be tempting to agree to continue in such a pastoral relationship, upon the effective date of your resignation you are no longer the pastor of the congregation and do not have the authority to make such commitments. Receive these requests as affirmations of your past service to the congregation, but explain that, in light of †S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods*, you are not at liberty to accept their invitation. Assure the parishioner that pastoral care will be provided.

You may find it helpful to use the service of "Farewell and Godspeed" prior to your departure from the congregation. Whether incorporated into the usual Sunday liturgy or placed within a special service to celebrate your ministry within the congregation, consider including a moment when you return to representatives of the congregation those symbols of the ministerial office presented at your installation, along with a parallel response, "I am no longer called to be among you to baptize ... proclaim the Good News ... preside at Holy Communion." It sometimes is an emotional experience as the procession moves from font, to pulpit, to altar, but this signals an important change in your relationship with the members of the congregation and should help to discourage inappropriate invitations to return, allowing you to focus fully upon your new context for ministry.

Please take care to assure that the parochial record of pastoral acts you conducted within the congregation is up to date. As required by †S14.21. of this synod's constitution, the secretary of the congregation shall attest in writing to me that the record was received, in good order, before you can be installed in a new call. Also, be mindful of the necessity to "make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations" to this congregation (†S14.22.) before your departure.

Thank you for your years of service as a minister of Word and Sacrament. Be assured that this church remains grateful to you for your pastoral ministry. May God bless you in your new call.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

*(Draft letter regarding **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Sacrament. Therefore, you are to function as a layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination have ceased.

As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with ordained ministry. You are not to use the title "Pastor" or "the Rev." Neither are you to baptize, preside at Holy Communion, perform marriages (unless otherwise authorized by state law), or wear vestments or clothing normally associated with a minister of Word and Sacrament, such as a stole or clerical collar.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only as a layperson serving without clerical vestments in leading a Service of the Word. Only in the most unusual circumstance, and then **only** with the explicit permission of the synod bishop, could you preside for Holy Communion, in keeping with the policy of this church as defined in "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament."

You must not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your removal. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name]*, secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter to ministers **on leave from call**, informing them of their **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As required under the provisions that govern the rosters of this church, ministers of Word and Sacrament who are without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster by annual action of the Synod Council, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, for a maximum of three years. You have now reached the end of the privilege of that on-leave-~~from-call~~ status.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Sacrament. Therefore, you are to function as a layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination have ceased.

As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with ordained ministry. You are not to use the title "Pastor" or "the Rev." Neither are you to baptize, preside at Holy Communion, perform marriages (unless otherwise authorized by state law), or wear vestments or clothing normally associated with a minister of Word and Sacrament, such as a stole or clerical collar.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only as a layperson serving without clerical vestments in leading a Service of the Word. Only in the most unusual circumstance, and then **only** with the explicit permission of the synod bishop, could you preside for Holy Communion, in keeping with the policy of this church as defined in "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament."

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **resignation from roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write to acknowledge your letter of resignation from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[Name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Sacrament. Therefore, you are to function as a layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination have ceased.

As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with ordained ministry. You are not to use the title "Pastor" or "the Rev." Neither are you to baptize, preside at Holy Communion, perform marriages (unless otherwise authorized by state law), or wear vestments or clothing normally associated with a minister of Word and Sacrament, such as a stole or clerical collar.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only as a layperson serving without clerical vestments in leading a Service of the Word. Only in the most unusual circumstance, and then **only** with the explicit permission of the synod bishop, could you preside for Holy Communion, in keeping with the policy of this church as defined in "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament."

You must not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your resignation. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name,]* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **removal from roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament due to **joining another church body**—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[Name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer an ELCA pastor. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with the ministry of Word and Sacrament within the ELCA.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only with the explicit permission of the synod bishop.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]*

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of **completion of call** of ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear Deacon *[Name]*:

Greetings in this season of *[name of season in church year].* Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Congratulations upon your acceptance of a new call to serve *[specify new call].* The weeks ahead will likely be filled with the excitement and anticipation that come from such a transition as you begin to envision what you can and should do in your new ministry context.

Please remember that members of your current congregation are still in the early stages of processing the announcement of your resignation. They have not had the same preparation for this transition that you have had, and some may be finding it difficult to conceive of anyone else providing their *[specify role].* A few people may even approach you (if they have not done so already) to ask if you would return to the congregation to participate in various functions.

While it may be tempting to agree to continue in such a relationship, upon the effective date of your resignation you are no longer a deacon of the congregation and should not make such commitments. Receive these requests as affirmations of your past service to the congregation, but explain that, in light of †S14.44. in the *Constitution for Synods*, you are not at liberty to accept their invitation. Assure the parishioner that ministerial leadership will be provided.

You may find it helpful to use the service of "Farewell and Godspeed" prior to your departure from the congregation, whether incorporated into the usual Sunday liturgy or placed within a special service to celebrate your ministry within the congregation. It sometimes is an emotional experience, but this signals an important change in your relationship with the members of the congregation and should help to discourage inappropriate invitations to return, allowing you to focus fully upon your new context for ministry.

Please be mindful of the necessity to "make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations" to this congregation (†S14.45.) before your departure.

Thank you for your years of service as a minister of Word and Service. Be assured that this church remains grateful to you for your ministry. May God bless you in your new call.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

*(Draft letter regarding **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020))*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. Therefore, you are to function as a non-rostered layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination/consecration/commissioning have ceased. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you are not to use the title "Deacon."

You should not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your removal. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter to ministers **on leave from call**, informing them of their **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As required under the provisions that govern the rosters of this church, ministers of Word and Service who are without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster by annual action of the Synod Council, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, for a maximum of three years. You have now reached the end of the privilege of that on-leave ~~from call~~ status.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. Therefore, you are to function as a non-rostered layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination/consecration/commissioning have ceased. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you are not to use the title "Deacon."

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **resignation from roster** of Ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write to acknowledge your letter of resignation from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. Therefore, you are to function as a non-rostered layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination/consecration/commissioning have ceased. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you are not to use the title "Deacon."

You should not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your resignation. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **removal from roster** of Ministers of Word and Service due to **joining another church body** —revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with the ministry of Word and Service within the ELCA.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

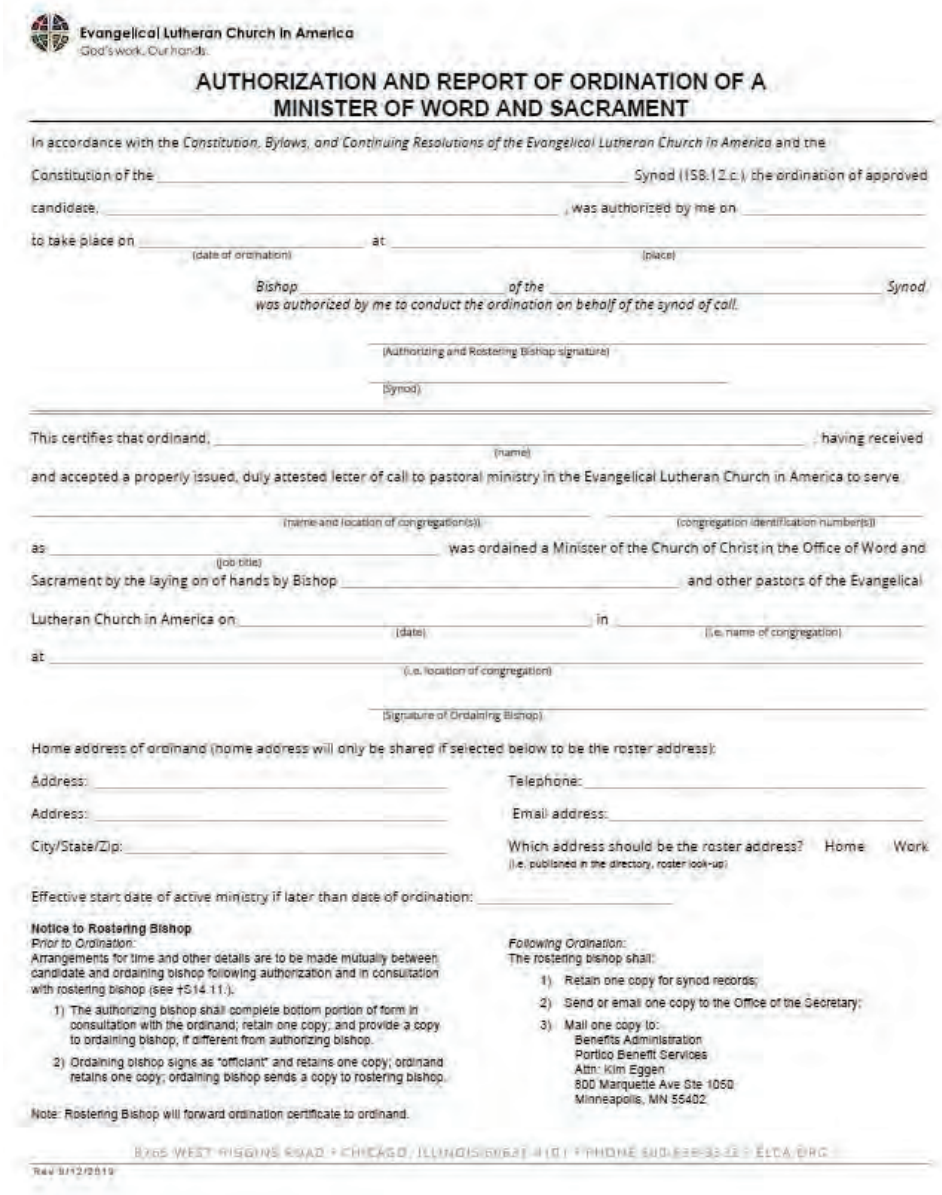
Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

G. Sample forms



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

AUTHORIZATION AND REPORT OF ORDINATION OF A MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

In accordance with the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and the Constitution of the _____ Synod (I5B.12.c.) the ordination of approved candidate, _____, was authorized by me on _____ to take place on _____ (date of ordination) at _____ (place)

Bishop _____ of the _____ Synod was authorized by me to conduct the ordination on behalf of the synod of call.

_____ (Authorizing and Rostering Bishop signature)

_____ (Synod)

This certifies that ordinand, _____ (name), having received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call to pastoral ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to serve _____ (name and location of congregation(s)) _____ (congregation identification number(s)) as _____ (job title) was ordained a Minister of the Church of Christ in the Office of Word and Sacrament by the laying on of hands by Bishop _____ and other pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on _____ (date) in _____ (i.e. name of congregation) at _____ (i.e. location of congregation)

_____ (Signature of Ordaining Bishop)

Home address of ordinand (home address will only be shared if selected below to be the roster address):

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Email address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Which address should be the roster address? Home Work (i.e. published in the directory, roster look-up)

Effective start date of active ministry if later than date of ordination: _____

Notice to Rostering Bishop

Prior to Ordination:
Arrangements for time and other details are to be made mutually between candidate and ordaining bishop following authorization and in consultation with rostering bishop (see +S14.11.).

1) The authorizing bishop shall complete bottom portion of form in consultation with the ordinand; retain one copy; and provide a copy to ordaining bishop, if different from authorizing bishop.
2) Ordaining bishop signs as "officiant" and retains one copy; ordinand retains one copy; ordaining bishop sends a copy to rostering bishop.

Note: Rostering Bishop will forward ordination certificate to ordinand.

Following Ordination:
The rostering bishop shall:

1) Retain one copy for synod records;
2) Send or email one copy to the Office of the Secretary;
3) Mail one copy to:
   Benefits Administration
   Portico Benefit Services
   Attn: Kim Eggen
   800 Marquette Ave Ste 1050
   Minneapolis, MN 55402

8765 WEST HIGGINS ROAD • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60631-4101 • PHONE 800.638.3522 • ELCA.ORG

Rev 9/12/2019

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AUTHORIZATION AND REPORT OF ORDINATION OF A MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE

In accordance with the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and the Constitution of the _____

Synod (†S8.12.d.), authorization is herewith granted to _____, presider,

for the ordination of candidate, _____

in _____
(name of congregation)

at _____
(location of congregation)

on _____
(date of ordination)

_____ _____
(date signed) (Bishop)

_____
(Synod)

This certifies that _____
(name)

having received and accepted a call as a minister of Word and Service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to serve

_____
(name and address of organization)

as _____, was ordained on _____
(job title) (date)

Home address of candidate:

_____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Effective date of call: _____ Which address should be the roster address? Home Work
(i.e. published in the directory, roster look-up)

_____ _____
(date signed) (Presider)

Notice to Bishop
Prior to Ordination:
1) Complete top portion of form;
2) Retain one copy;
3) Mail one copy to presider

Following Ordination:
1) Retain one copy;
2) Mail one copy to ELCA Secretary;
3) Mail one copy to:
Benefits Administration
Portico Benefit Services
800 Marquette Ave Ste 1050
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Notice to Presider
Prior to Ordination:
Arrangements for time and other details are to be made mutually between candidate and presider in consultation with synod bishop

Following Ordination:
1) Complete bottom portion of form in *consultation with the candidate.*
2) Presider retains one copy;
Candidate retains one copy.
3) Presider returns one copy to synod bishop.

Note: Synod bishop will forward ordination certificate to the minister of Word and Service.

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SYNOD TRANSFER FORM FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

The top part of this form is to be completed by the **bishop of the synod from which** the rostered minister is transferring.

_____ (name), minister of Word and Sacrament / minister of Word and Service

of the _____ (synod) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is transferred to the _____ (synod) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

_____
(Signature of the bishop of the **transferring synod**)

_____
(date of signing)

The bottom part of this form is to be completed **by the bishop of the synod into which** the rostered minister is transferring.

Effective date of transfer (the date the rostered minister begins service in accordance with the call)

_____
(effective date)

This minister has been called to congregational ministry at _____ (name of congregation) _____ (congregation ID)

has been called to noncongregational ministry at _____ (name of organization)

_____ (job title)

is retired, on leave, or on disability

_____ (mailing address)

_____ (city, state, zip code)

_____
(Signature of the bishop of the **receiving synod**)

_____
(date of signing)

After completing this form, the receiving synod office retains the original and sends the second copy to the Office of the Secretary. The third copy is returned to the synod office from which the rostered minister is transferred. The fourth copy should be sent to the transferred minister.

~~**H. Roster Committee Considerations**~~

~~**In reviewing requests for exceptions to the three-year congregational service bylaw, the Roster Committee will:**~~

~~**Expect a written request for an exception be submitted at least one month before a regular meeting of the Roster Committee.**~~

~~**Give consideration to the experience of the candidate including the length, breadth, and effective "pastoral" leadership experience of internship or other regular congregational experience.**~~

~~**Request, when appropriate, that a minister of Word and Sacrament receiving an exception give 5–10 hours of non-stipendiary service per month to a nearby congregation.**~~

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Commented [KF4]: Will need to update before publication.

Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

As adopted November, 2025
by the Church Council of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

(exclusive of quoted and highlighted constitutional provisions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions otherwise in force)

Revised 11/07/2025

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Part One:
Ministers of Word and Sacrament
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I. Constitutional description for Ministry of Word and Sacrament and Standards for Ministers of Word and Sacrament`

7.10. **MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED PEOPLE OF GOD**

7.11. **This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members. In its function and its structure this church commits itself to the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world and in this church. It is within this context of ministry that this church calls some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church.**

7.20. **MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**

7.21. **Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons.**

7.22. **A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to preach, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.**

7.23. **The standards for acceptance and continuance of ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be set forth in the bylaws.**

7.24. **The secretary of this church shall maintain a roster containing the names of ministers of Word and Sacrament who qualify on the basis of constitutional provisions 7.22., 7.23., and 7.31., and related bylaws.**

7.25. **Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be subject to discipline as set forth in Chapter 20 of this constitution.**

7.30. **STANDARDS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**

7.31. **In accordance with the description stated in 7.22., ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be governed by the following standards, policies, and procedures.**

7.31.01. **Basic Standards.** Persons admitted to and continued in the ministry of Word and Sacrament of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council:

a. commitment to Christ;
b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
g. membership in a congregation of this church.

7.31.02. **Responsibilities.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:
    1) preach the Word;
    2) administer the sacraments;
    3) conduct public worship;
    4) provide pastoral care;
    5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
    6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
    7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
    8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proclaiming God's love for the world, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
   1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
   2) relate to all schools and organizations of the congregation;
   3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
   4) with the council, administer discipline;
   5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and the synod; and
   6) encourage adherence to covenantal relationships with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

II. Admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament

A. Preparation and Approval

7.31.03. Preparation and Approval. Except as provided in 7.31.04., a candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament shall have:

a. either
   1) membership in a congregation of this church and registration, by its congregation council and the pastoral leadership of the congregation, of the candidate with the candidacy committee; or
   2) active participation in a Word and Sacrament ministry of this church and registration, by its governing body and the pastoral leadership of the ministry, of the candidate with the candidacy committee;

b. been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and supervision of the appropriate committee before being approved for call;

c. completed the academic and practical preparation according to the criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;

d. been examined and approved by the appropriate committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;

e. been recommended to a congregation or other entity by the bishop of the synod to which the candidate has been assigned for first call in accordance with the procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council; and

f. received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.

B. Bishop authorization of ordination

The bishop with the power to authorize an ordination is ***the bishop of the synod in which a candidate has accepted a call***. That bishop authorizes the ordination, even if the candidate comes from another synod and may have been approved by the multi-synod or synod Candidacy Committee of another synod.

1. **Power to ordain:** According to †S8.12.c. and f. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the bishop of a synod is to: "Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synod bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament;" and "Install (or provide for the installation of)" such pastors.
2. **Jurisdiction:** In receiving and accepting a valid call, the candidate comes under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the synod in which the call was issued. That bishop, on the basis of the record of such a valid call, authorizes the ordination, even if the ordination is to take place on the territory of another synod.
3. **Planning of ordination:** If the ordination is to occur on the territory of another synod (*e.g.*, at a candidate's home congregation), the bishop who authorizes the ordination ***shall*** consult with the bishop of the synod on whose territory the ordination may be held ***prior to*** approving any plans for such an ordination.
   a. No candidate shall make plans for ordination prior to consultation with the synod bishop under whose authority the candidate is to be ordained.
   b. If an ordination is planned on the territory of another synod, the *patterns and practices of the synod of jurisdiction shall prevail*. No ordination is to be scheduled without the prior approval of the bishop on whose territory the rite is to occur.
4. **Signing the certificate of ordination:** The bishop authorizing the ordination shall be the bishop who signs the certificate of ordination.

C. Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM)

This policy summarizes the process by which the ELCA approves for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament those individuals who are qualified to participate in an alternate route to ordination. Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) is a program by which the ELCA responds to the missional needs of this church. The program takes into consideration the leadership gifts and ministry skills of a candidate in determining a program of preparation.

Identification of TEEM settings and candidates

Synod bishops have primary responsibility for recommending people who may be suitable for the TEEM program, as well as providing oversight of any TEEM candidate's preparation process. An ethnic community or churchwide unit may assist the bishop in identifying a person who meets the criteria established for TEEM ministry. Those identified may include a lay mission developer already employed by the church or a person serving in an emerging ministry. It is important to note that TEEM candidates do not self-identify. Synod bishops work with the community where the candidate might be placed in identifying candidates.

[Following is from the Candidacy Manual]

TEEM candidates do not self-identify. Consideration for admittance into the TEEM process begins with the granting of Entrance by a candidacy committee, followed by a recommendation from a synod bishop. The director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area then grants acceptance of a candidate into the TEEM process when the criteria for acceptance listed below are met.

1. Criteria for Acceptance into TEEM

A person seeking to complete all the academic and practical requirements for Word and Sacrament ministry through the TEEM process will demonstrate the characteristics of a missional leader as understood through a Lutheran confessional lens (*Candidacy Manual 2.1*). Every candidate participating in the TEEM process must be serving in an emerging ministry site identified by a synod bishop.

2. Emerging Ministries

Emerging ministries of Word and Sacrament communities such as the ones listed below:

1. ethnic-specific, multicultural, or recent immigrant ministries;
2. small membership rural or urban congregations where a synod bishop has had difficulty identifying and placing a candidate for call;
3. new mission starts authorized through normal ELCA processes;
4. congregational renewal ministries authorized through normal ELCA processes; and
5. ministries with people who are differently abled.

3. The TEEM Process

TEEM candidates will complete all the steps in the candidacy process outlined in this manual. A candidate's admittance into TEEM will occur only after the steps listed below have been completed.

1. A synod bishop provides a letter recommending a candidate for admission into the TEEM process. The bishop's letter of recommendation must identify a specific ministry site where the candidate will serve. The same ministry site will serve as both the candidate's teaching parish experience and the location of a supervised internship.
2. The director for candidacy acts to accept the candidate into the TEEM process following the granting of Entrance.

After TEEM candidates complete the academic and practical ministry requirements and are granted Approval by a candidacy committee, they will normally serve their first call in the ministry site originally identified by the synod bishop. Following first call, the opportunities for mobility will be the same as for all ELCA rostered ministers.

4. Steps in Candidacy for TEEM

Candidates for the TEEM process must be granted Entrance by a candidacy committee. In preparation for an Entrance interview, the following are required:

1. Candidacy Application form, Entrance essay, and Entrance Information form;
2. Congregational Registration Form (Communal Discernment);

3. background check;
4. psychological evaluation;
5. personal financial worksheet;
6. personal health assessment;
7. transcripts, licenses, and certificates;
8. when appropriate, evidence of payment of the application fee; and
9. a consent form to release student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) must be completed by the candidate, at each step of the candidacy process, and shared with the seminary. The form authorizes the seminary to share information with the candidacy committee.

Following the granting of Entrance, a candidacy committee will send the following documentation to the director for candidacy:

1. the Entrance decision form,
2. the Entrance essay, and
3. a bishop's letter of recommendation identifying the ministry site where a candidate will be serving.

After review of the documentation, the director for candidacy will send the synod bishop and the candidacy committee a written notification of acceptance or rejection into TEEM with copies to the candidacy leadership manager. Candidates not accepted into TEEM may continue the candidacy process by applying for admission into a Master of Divinity program at an accredited seminary.

D. Admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of individuals ordained in another Lutheran church or another Christian tradition

7.31.04. Approval when Ordained in Another Church Body. Candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament who (a) have been ordained in another Lutheran church body or (b) have been ordained in another Christian church body, whether in North America or abroad, shall be approved by the candidacy committee for ordination or reception according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In preparing such criteria, policies, and procedures, the appropriate churchwide unit shall consult with the seminaries of this church and, as appropriate, with other churchwide units.

This policy summarizes the principles and process by which the ELCA approves for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament those individuals already ordained for such ministry in another church body. This policy shall apply to those who are resident in the United States as well as those who seek to immigrate to the United States. The process is designed to balance respect for those who have served in other settings with the specific life and needs of the ELCA:

> The mission of the ELCA involves worship, nurture, outreach, service, and advocacy for justice. While the scope of this mission is global, its particular focus is on ministry in the United States and the Caribbean. It is essential to have leaders who are familiar with and have experience in the cultural context of the ELCA. Candidates should appreciate and be familiar with ELCA teachings, polity, liturgy, and traditions (Candidacy Manual 5.2).

1. Basic standards for ministers of Word and Sacrament

According to ELCA bylaw 7.31.01., individuals admitted to the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall satisfactorily meet and maintain:

a. commitment to Christ;
b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
g. membership in a congregation of this church.

2. Role of candidacy committees

Candidacy committees are crucially involved in decisions concerning those seeking admission to the roster. The Candidacy Manual 5.2, "Admission of Applicants in an Ordained Word and Sacrament Ministry in Another Lutheran Church or in Another Christian Church Body," describes procedures for applicants (5.2.2-5.2.4) and clarifies expectations for a range of situations:

a. Full communion partners: A minister of Word and Sacrament in a full communion partner church seeking to be rostered in the ELCA will have a process followed by a Candidacy Committee. If such a minister has already served in an ELCA congregation, that experience should be acknowledged.
b. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) partner: A Candidacy Committee may consider the application of a minister of Word and Sacrament in an LWF member church seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Early consultation with the Service and Justice home area is essential in such cases. Any concerns related to agreements or implications for the churches involved can be identified and considered when there is open communication among the partners. The candidacy process should always include a deep respect for the credentials and background of those seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Credentials need to be examined to ensure that an applicant has good standing in the partner church and possesses good moral character. For applicants who come from outside the United States, there are additional factors to consider, such as length of time in the United States, familiarity with American culture, and prior service in the ELCA.
c. Other Lutheran church partners: Ministers of Word and Sacrament in other Lutheran churches should be treated with dignity and respect. The perspective of an individual with such credentials can enrich the ELCA and broaden an understanding of mission. The primary foci of the candidacy process in such situations are evaluation for suitability, screening, and orientation to the ELCA.

d. Other Christian traditions: Ministers of Word and Sacrament who serve in other Christian traditions may be admitted to the roster of the ELCA if they meet and maintain standards for such ministers and are committed to the confession of faith of this church.

Note that candidacy committees are not involved in the exchange of ministers of Word and Sacrament from churches with which the ELCA has an agreement of full communion, where the Guidelines for Orderly Exchange apply; or in short-term or temporary service in congregations or synods performed by ministers of Word and Sacrament in member churches of The Lutheran World Federation. (*See Candidacy Manual 5.2.*)

Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) shall be received by transfer upon acceptance of a valid call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council of this church following the certification of their status on the roster of the ELCIC, completion of a Rostered Minister Profile, and the approval of the bishop of the synod in which they are to serve.

3. Ordination or reception of the candidate

After a candidate has received and accepted a letter of call, the bishop of the synod of call consults with the Office of the Secretary to determine if ordination is necessary. The ELCA receives as ordained many ministers of Word and Sacrament ordained in other traditions. Those from churches not confessing the faith of the historic ecumenical creeds or those whose authority for ordination was from a single congregation will be ordained according to the ELCA Rite of Ordination. The Office of the Secretary will determine how this policy applies in the case of each candidate.

4. Pastoral care and support

For those who come to the ELCA from other Christian traditions, the beginning of service as an ELCA rostered minister is a time to establish significant relationships for support and growth. During the rostered minister's early years of service, the synod bishop may provide a mentor who supports and nurtures the newly rostered minister.

E. Policy for Ordination in Unusual Circumstances in the ELCA

7.31.08. Ordination in Unusual Circumstances. For pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances, a synod bishop may provide for the ordination by another minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America of an approved candidate who has received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. Prior to authorization of such an ordination, the bishop of the synod of the candidate's first call shall consult with the presiding bishop as this church's chief ecumenical officer and shall seek the advice of the Synod Council. The pastoral decision of the synod bishop shall be in accordance with policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

1. Introduction

a. Ordination to the office of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA is a rite of the church administered according to the practices of this church in order to extend the mission and ministry of the church. It is not a personal privilege to be determined by the candidate.
b. The purpose of this policy is to describe how a synod bishop may exercise pastoral judgment in unusual circumstances to allow an exception to this church's established ordination practices.
c. All requests for exceptions to this church's ordination practices shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2. Definitions

The term "for pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances" is broadly stated in order to allow the synod bishop and the presiding bishop to use their judgment in evaluating individual cases according to their particular circumstances. However, the following principles should be considered as decisions are made:

a. The decision should enhance and extend the ministry and mission purposes of this church.
b. The decision should contribute to the unity of the church.

3. Procedural steps

a. A candidate for ordination who seeks an exception to the ordination practices of this church will meet promptly after assignment with their bishop of candidacy and the bishop of the synod in which they are being considered for a first call promptly upon entering the First Call process to discuss the candidate's request for an exception, and for the bishop to interpret to the candidate the bishop's concerns. A written statement explaining why a pastoral exception is warranted shall be provided to the synod bishop. The statement shall deal with the principles as stated in 2.a. and b. above.
b. The synod bishop shall consult with the presiding bishop of the ELCA before granting any such request. The purpose of this consultation is to consider together whether such an exception to this church's ordination practices is consistent with the principles as stated in 2.a. and b. above. After such consultation, the synod bishop shall exercise pastoral judgment and determine whether to authorize the ordination by another pastor of the ELCA. There is no appeal to the synod bishop's decision.
c. The synod bishop shall seek the advice of Synod Council before granting any such request.
d. This policy shall be evaluated periodically by the appropriate churchwide unit and reviewed by the Conference of Bishops and by the Church Council.

4. Emergency circumstances

Should emergency circumstances prevent the presence of the synod bishop at an ordination, the bishop may authorize another ELCA bishop, or, with the approval of the presiding bishop, another ELCA pastor, to serve as ordinator.

III. Status on the roster

A. Calls for ministers of Word and Sacrament

1. Letters of Call and Service under Call

7.40. **CALLS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**

7.41. **Letters of Call. Letters of call to ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.**

7.41.01. **Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a Synod Council, a Synod Assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.44.A24.

b. A pastor serving under call to a congregation shall be a member of that congregation. In a parish of multiple congregations, a pastor shall be a member of one of the congregations being served.

7.43. **A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Sacrament, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.**

a. Issuance of a letter of call: Ministers of Word and Sacrament serve under call as stated in churchwide bylaw 7.41.01. An average of 10 hours of service per week is the minimum standard for a call to be issued.

b. Attesting signature: The appropriate synod bishop shall attest the letter of call (provisions †S8.12.e. and †S14.16.c. in the *Constitution for Synods* and provision *C9.04. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*). The bishop's signature confirms only that the call process has been followed, that the letter of call was properly extended, and that the minister of Word and Sacrament or candidate is eligible to accept the call.

2. Initial Call to Congregational Service/Exceptions

7.41.02. Initial Call to Congregational Service. Because the responsibilities of the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament are most clearly focused in the congregational pastorate, experience in which is deemed by this church to be invaluable for all other ministry of Word and Sacrament, initial service of at least three years shall be in a congregation of this church or, with the approval of the synod bishop, a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists. Exceptions to the three-year requirement may be granted under criteria and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

a. Requests for exceptions to the three-year requirement must be reviewed by the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. The Roster Committee will present its recommendation to the Conference of Bishops for approval/denial of the request.
   1) The Synod Council that desires to issue an initial call to a candidate for non-congregational service initiates the request to the Roster Committee. The synod bishop will make a recommendation to the Synod Council regarding approval or denial of the request to seek an exception from the Conference of Bishops. The bishop will communicate the recommendation to the candidate or rostered minister prior to the Synod Council vote. If the recommendation is for denial of the request, the candidate or rostered minister will be granted an opportunity to address a designated committee. After hearing from the candidate (or rostered minister) and the synod bishop, the committee may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate further and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The decision of the Synod Council is final. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for an exception request, the candidate (or rostered minister) would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.
   2) The request to the Roster Committee must include:
      a) a statement by the candidate outlining the circumstances and reasons for the request and how it will meet the Word and Sacrament ministry needs of this church;
      b) a letter from the synod bishop explaining the need for Word and Sacrament ministry in this context;
      c) a statement from the synod-related institution or organization that is seeking the person for service;
      d) action by the Synod Council indicating a willingness to issue a call if approved by the Conference of Bishops;
      e) written concurrence from the synod candidacy committee; and
      f) a plan for the candidate (or rostered minister) to provide concurrent, time-limited service in a local congregation in order to receive ongoing pastoral congregational formation.
b. Candidates who received an initial call to congregational service but are now seeking a subsequent call to non-congregational service prior to the completion of three years of service in a congregational setting must also request an exception in the same manner outlined above , omitting the concurrence of the synod candidacy committee).
c. In pressing circumstances, exceptions to the initial call to congregational service may be approved by the Roster Committee in the interim between Conference of Bishops meetings and be reported to the Conference of Bishops.
d. Service in the following categories of ministry shall be considered as congregational service under the terms of bylaw 7.41.02,, and does not require an exception:
   1) Hospital/hospice chaplaincy
   2) Campus ministry
   3) Mission development
   4) Federal chaplaincy
   5) Global service (other than Young Adults in Global Mission-related service)
e. For the purposes of initial calls, "mission development" is to be understood as a call to Word and Sacrament ministry with a Synod-Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC), and requires the approval of the executive director for Christian Community and Leadership. Calls to other developing ministries, such as Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministries (SAOMs), are still subject to an exception request and authorization by the Conference of Bishops, which will consider the degree to which sacramental ministry is part of the responsibilities of the call.
f. The senior director for federal chaplaincy, with the concurrence of the synod bishop, may request initial calls to federal chaplaincy (or subsequent calls for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not completed the three-year requirement) from the Executive Committee of the Church Council. The executive director of the Service and Justice unit, with the concurrence of the synod bishop, may request initial calls to global service (other than YAGM-related) (or subsequent calls for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not completed the three-year requirement) from the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

3)

3. Sources of Calls

7.44.A24. ***Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament***

a. Principles for Sources of Calls

1) A "call" is an action by expressions of this church, as specified in the "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament," through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a "letter of call."

2) Interdependence within the body of this church suggests that any action of one of its entities affects other entities. Therefore, interdependence is expressed in all calls extended within this church.

3) A call expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline.

4) A letter of call is issued by that expression of this church authorized to do so which is most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

5) Decisions on calls for ministries in unusual circumstances not otherwise provided for but deemed to be in the interests of this church's care of the Gospel are referred to the Conference of Bishops for recommendation to the appropriate calling body.

b. Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Setting	Calling Body
1.0 Congregational ministry	
1.1 Single congregation	*Congregation meeting*
1.11 Pastor	
1.12 Senior pastor	
1.13 Associate/assistant pastor	
1.14 Co-pastor	
1.15 Shared-time pastor	
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	*Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal*
1.21 Pastor	*One of the participating congregations*
1.22 Other pastoral arrangements	*One of the participating congregations*
1.3 Coalition and cluster ministry	*Synod Council*
1.4 Congregations beyond this church	
1.41 Independent Lutheran congregation	*Synod Council*
1.42 Overseas independent Lutheran congregation	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
1.43 Full communion congregation	*Synod Council*
1.44 Other	*Synod Council or Church Council*
1.5 Interim pastor	*Synod Council*
1.6 Pastor in a synod-authorized ministry	*Synod Council*
1.7 Supply ministry	*Synod Council*
2.0 Synod ministry	
2.1 Bishop	*Synod Assembly*
2.2 Assistant to bishop	*Synod Council*
2.3 Shared staff by two or more synods	*Synod Council of one of the participating synods*
2.4 Synod staff partially supported by grants from churchwide units	*Synod Council*
3.0 Regional ministry	
3.1 Staff	*Church Council*
3.2 Shared synod-churchwide staff	*Church Council*
4.0 Churchwide ministry	
4.1 Presiding bishop and secretary	*Churchwide Assembly*

4.2	*Treasurer*	*Church Council*
4.3	*Staff of the churchwide organization*	*Church Council*
5.0	*Chaplaincy and institutional ministry*	
5.1	*Institution/agency related or unrelated to a synod*	*Synod Council*
5.2	*Institution/agency related to more than one synod*	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
5.3	*ELCA-related institution/agency*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
5.4	*Federal agency/institution*	*Church Council*
5.5	*Military*	*Church Council*
6.0	*Campus ministry*	
6.1	*Staff*	*Synod Council*
7.0	*Outdoor ministry*	
7.1	*Staff*	*Synod Council*
8.0	*Ecumenical/Inter-Religious ministry*	
8.1	*Related to a synod*	*Synod Council*
8.2	*Related to more than one synod*	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
8.3	*National/international organization*	*Church Council*
9.0	*Inter-Lutheran ministry*	
9.1	*Related to a synod*	*Synod Council*
9.2	*Related to more than one synod*	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
9.3	*National/International*	*Church Council*
10.0	*Educational ministry*	
10.1	*ELCA-related seminary (incorporated or unincorporated) chaplain/faculty/ administrator*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.2	*Chaplain/faculty/ administrator of seminary unrelated to ELCA*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.3	*ELCA-related college chaplain/non-seminary faculty/non-seminary administrator*	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.4	*Chaplain/faculty/ administrator of a college unrelated to ELCA*	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.5	*ELCA-related school chaplain/faculty/ administrator*	*Congregation of which the school is a part or, if related to several congregations, Synod Council of the synod in which the school is located*
10.6	*Chaplain/faculty of a school unrelated to ELCA*	*Synod Council of the synod in which school is located*
10.7	*Director/staff of a continuing education center related to a churchwide unit*	*Synod Council in which the main office of center is located upon the request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.0	*Missionary ministry*	
11.1	*Outside United States*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.2	*Within United States*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
12.0	*Independent Lutheran Organization*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
13.0	*Separately Incorporated Ministry*	*Church Council*
14.0	*Other*	
14.1	*Non-stipendiary service under call*	*Synod Council upon approval by the Conference of Bishops*

14.2	*Unusual ministries (as in conjunction with occupations and in approved situations not otherwise specified)*	*Synod Council or Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops*

a. Calls to Non-Congregational Service

7.41.03. Calls to Non-Congregational Service. Calls to serve in institutions, agencies, and other entities inside and outside this church may be extended where there is an identifiable relationship of the work to the purpose of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Such calls involve, for example, the care of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, pastoral care, and activities closely associated with those tasks including oversight in the church and in inter-Lutheran and inter-church agencies and institutions. Care is to be exercised so that positions in the church and in the world that can be filled adequately and appropriately by the laity not be filled by ministers of Word and Sacrament for their convenience or status. Synod councils and the Church Council may seek the advice of the Conference of Bishops in specific situations.

1) The decision on the source of call is determined in accord with ELCA continuing resolution 7.44.A24.a. As the calling source for calls to non-congregational service, the Synod Council or Church Council must decide if the proposed call is appropriate. The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops may be consulted.
2) The synod in which the institution, agency, or other employing entity is located should be the synod that issues the call to non-congregational service. In the case of ministries/agencies that are multi-synod, the bishops involved should collectively decide which synod should issue the call.
3) The bishop of the synod in which the minister being called is rostered shall be consulted before a Church Council call to non-congregational service is issued.
4) Each rostered minister is required to report annually to the bishop of the synod in which the person is rostered.
5) Those under call to non-congregational service in predecessor church bodies were received onto the ELCA roster (7.41.06.) but came under annual review through the report form provided by and submitted to the synod bishop.
6) Responsibility for oversight of such non-congregational calls should be noted in the minutes of the appropriate Synod Council or Church Council.
7) Note churchwide constitutional provision 7.42. regarding rostering of individuals in non-congregational calls:

> Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:
> ...
> b. which issues a letter of call to the minister of Word and Sacrament; [or]
> c. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament was listed at the time of the issuance of a letter of call from the Church Council. ...

8) A minister who receives a letter of call issued by the Church Council normally shall remain on the roster of the synod in which she or he served prior to receiving the call through the Church Council. Specific exceptions exist, as noted in provision 7.42.:

> Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:
> ...
>
> **d. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if a seminary teacher or administrator, was assigned by the seminary leader in consultation with the board, subject to approval by the synod bishop in consultation with the Synod Council of each affected synod. This roster assignment should promote proportionate representation of faculty and administration in the synods of its region;**
> **e. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament was listed at the time of the issuance of a call to federal chaplaincy or on the roster of the synod of current address, if approved by the synod bishop and received by the Synod Council; …**

9) ELCA bylaw 7.42.01. indicates:

> If the service of a minister of Word and Sacrament who receives and accepts a letter of call from this church, under 7.42.c., would be enhanced through transfer of roster status from the previous synod of roster to the synod of current address, such a transfer may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

10) ELCA bylaw 7.42.02. provides:

> In certain circumstances for the sake of the ministry and mission needs of this church, the transfer of roster status of a minister of Word and Sacrament serving under call in the churchwide organization may be authorized, at the initiative of the presiding bishop of this church, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved in such a transfer after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

b. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call

7.41.04. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call. When it is deemed necessary for the mission needs of this church, a letter of call may be issued by the Synod Council—according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—to a minister of Word and Sacrament for non-stipendiary service after the Synod Council has sought and received approval by the Conference of Bishops. Care is to be exercised so that positions in the church and in the world that can be filled adequately and appropriately by the laity not be filled by ministers of Word and Sacrament for their convenience, status, or personal preference. A call to non-stipendiary service is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated by the Synod Council when it is no longer serving the mission needs of this church.

1) Definition and criteria for Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call
   a) Non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA is understood to be service as a rostered minister either without compensation, for reimbursed expenses only, or for a token stipend that is significantly below the typical salary received for similar ministry.
   b) Non-stipendiary calls are not eligible for participation in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program; therefore, such non-stipendiary service is possible only when there is clear evidence that the minister of Word and Sacrament has adequate alternative income and health insurance.
   c) A letter of call to non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA may be issued only by the Synod Council following approval by the Conference of Bishops.
   d) The minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a non-stipendiary call shall be accountable to the synod bishop and Synod Council in carrying out this ministry, and shall provide an annual ministry plan.
   e) A call to non-stipendiary service shall be a one-year term call that may be renewed by the Synod Council only on the basis of the satisfactory fulfillment of the established criteria.
   f) A call to non-stipendiary ministry neither qualifies as an initial call to congregational service required for ordination nor does it imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation to the Synod Council. (*See ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.43. and bylaw 7.43.01.*)

2) Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council

When the synod bishop and Synod Council believe that the criteria for a non-stipendiary letter of call are met by a specific ministry, the Synod Council may propose by a majority vote a letter of call.

   a) The Synod Council must determine that a call to non-stipendiary service is extended in order to carry out a specific ministry on behalf of the synod.
   b) The Synod Council forwards its request for a call to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. The request shall include a clearly defined statement of the need for this minister to provide for Word and Sacrament ministry in the synod and a rationale for this call to be for non-stipendiary service, along with affirmation that the rostered minister has adequate alternative income and health insurance.
   c) The Conference of Bishops takes action to approve or deny the request.
   d) Should the Conference of Bishops approve the request and the Synod Council issue the call, the Synod Council will conduct an annual review of the non-stipendiary call.
   e) Annual Synod Council action is required in order to continue the call to non-stipendiary service.

3) Action by the Conference of Bishops

The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops receives all requests from synod councils for calls to non-stipendiary service.

   a) The Roster Committee reviews these requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
   b) The Conference of Bishops, in a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for calls to non-stipendiary service. It reports its decision to the synod seeking such approval.
   c) When approval is given by the Conference of Bishops, the Synod Council may proceed to issue a letter of call to non-stipendiary service and may annually renew such a call without subsequent action by the Conference of Bishops.

c. Shared-time ministries

7.41.01. Service under Call. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a Synod Council, a Synod Assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.44.A24. ...

1) Definition of shared-time ministry

The ELCA understands shared-time ministry to exist when a rostered minister is called to serve in one or more settings of this church while earning income from other employment or while devoting substantial time to other activities. Some examples of contexts and settings for which shared-time ministries may be appropriate are:

- *Small-membership congregations* with significant opportunities for mission and service.
- *New ministries* so limited in size or slow in development that they would require a disproportionate and unwise investment of time and money, if the more typical mission-development approach were employed.
- *Ministries* (e.g., *inner city, ethnic, and rural*) where the community's expectation is that the rostered minister will receive primary financial support from secular employment.
- *Multi-staff congregations* looking for ministry specialties, in addition to the services of rostered ministers and contracted laypersons.
- *Parishes that would benefit from having two or more individuals serving a single congregation or multiple congregations* but that cannot afford full-time salaries for several individuals.
- *Specialized pastoral or ministry needs* of institutions and agencies that may call for a high degree of training and skill but that may neither warrant investment of appropriate full-time salary nor justify the engagement of a full-time staff person in that position.

2) Criteria for shared-time ministry

a) Individuals eligible for shared-time ministry must be on the roster of this church or have been recently approved for initial call. Initial calls to Ministry of Word and Sacrament normally are in a congregational setting.
b) Experienced individuals, whose ability to work in complex settings has already been tested, are preferred.
c) A minister of Word and Sacrament engaged in shared-time ministry shall have a significant responsibility for a ministry of Word and Sacrament in a congregation, institution, or other expression of this church *(churchwide bylaws 7.41.01. and 7.41.03.).*
d) A rostered minister may be under call to only ONE church entity. Other employment is by agreement, not under call.
e) The work-load for the call must be no less than an average of 10 hours per week.
f) Compensation shall be commensurate with synod compensation guidelines that apply to individuals in full-time positions.
g) Any contemplated non-church employment for the rostered minister shall be subject to the review and approval of the synod bishop.
h) Part-time reserve component military chaplaincy alone does not normally meet the threshold for minimum work-load hours as a shared-time call.

3) Procedures for call to shared-time ministry

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* provides principles and procedures for the calling of ministers of Word and Sacrament (churchwide continuing resolution 7.44.A19.). In addition to the regular procedures, a letter of call for shared-time ministry shall include the following:

a) The range of duties and responsibilities shall be specified by adding appendices to the "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities," related to the letter of call (*C9.09.).
   i. If a minister of Word and Sacrament is called as the only pastor of a congregation, it shall be to the full range of such duties. If the call is to a congregational staff position, the shared-time pastor shall have significant responsibility for preaching and administration of the sacraments.
   ii. If a minister of Word and Sacrament is called to a ministry in a non-congregational setting, specialization of function may be appropriate, provided opportunity for Word and Sacrament ministry is included.
b) The decision to seek a shared-time pastor shall be based upon a study of mission and ministry needs in the particular setting. Appropriate synod or churchwide leaders must participate in the study and decision.

c) A periodic evaluation by the calling entity shall be encouraged by the appropriate synod bishop or churchwide leaders so that the called person is held accountable for the ministry in that particular situation. The calling entity is accountable for adequate professional and financial support.
d) Any exceptions to the guidelines governing time and compensation must be requested from the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.

4) Appropriate candidates for shared-time ministry

Shared-time ministry demands the ability to use time efficiently, the flexibility to adjust to altering circumstances, and the willingness to make a positive contribution to church and society through secular employment or other interests. The effective shared-time leader has a clear sense of personal ministry and professional integrity. He or she has a concept of ministry that values extensive shared leadership with laity.

It is appropriate for ministers of Word and Sacrament to offer themselves for shared-time ministry, as with all specific ministries, on the basis of their own sense of vocation and their sense of the needs of this church. It is not appropriate, however, for this dual-vocational interest to take priority over the mission needs of this church.

5) Support and accountability in shared-time ministry

The nature of shared-time ministry requires that the employing entity pay particular attention to such matters as compensation and benefits, setting of non-working times for meetings, and specifying shared expectations, which acknowledge the special dynamics of this style of ministry.

a) Accountability of the shared-time person is the same as with all rostered ministers.
b) Evaluation of the ministry should be based upon the stated goals and conditions established for that ministry at the time of call.
c) The entity of this church that calls the individual will review the ministry annually to evaluate the ongoing appropriateness of the shared-time style for that particular mission opportunity.

d. Calls to Serve in Unusual Circumstances

7.41.05. Calls to Serve in Unusual Circumstances. When it is deemed to be in the interests of this church in the care of the Gospel, ministers of Word and Sacrament may be called for a stated period of time, not to exceed three years, to minister on behalf of this church while employed in an occupation outside the traditional range of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Such calls may be extended by a Synod Council or the Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops according to criteria and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. A call to serve in unusual circumstances is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council or Church Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated when it is no longer serving the mission needs of this church.

1) Requests to serve under "Unusual Circumstances" are submitted to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops by the rostered minister's bishop. The request should include a letter from the rostered minister describing the reasons for making this request and a letter from the bishop that supports this request.
2) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops must first determine that the proposed call does not fall within any other category of call available in the church and only then shall determine the appropriate source of call.
3) The appropriateness of a potential call to serve in unusual circumstances should be examined using the following questions:
   a) Does the proposed call advance the interest of the church in the care of the gospel?
   b) What aspects of the position require that the worker be a minister of Word and Sacrament?
   c) How would a minister of Word and Sacrament serving in this position provide a distinct advantage for this church?
   d) Is there adequate provision for ecclesial accountability by the minister to the synod bishop?
   e) Is there realistic potential for abuse of the call for the personal or financial benefit of the minister or for business advantage?

e. Interim ministry

7.41.03. **Calls to Interim Ministry.** Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in interim ministry shall normally serve under a letter of call, according to policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council. A call to interim ministry shall be a term call extended by the Synod Council upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have retired status may be appointed by the synod bishop without a letter of call.

†S14.23. During service to a congregation, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of this synod. The interim pastor and any rostered minister who may assist shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop of this synod that the congregation records, for the period for which the interim pastor was responsible, are in order.

***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in this congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any rostered minister providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.

1) Congregations in transition
   a) Because of the importance of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the ELCA seeks to ensure appropriate pastoral leadership for congregations during a time of pastoral vacancy. Interim ministry may be provided by synods during the time of transition following the completion of service by the congregation's former pastor and prior to the calling of a new pastor. This may also be provided for in a congregation served by a multiple staff when a congregation's senior pastor leaves, or when an associate pastor or other pastoral staff leaves. The interim period is thus a time in which pastoral care is arranged for a congregation by the synod as the congregation moves through a process of self-study and change toward new pastoral leadership.
   b) The synod bishop may arrange for the congregation to receive Word and Sacrament leadership during the period prior to the regular calling of a pastor through the appointment of an interim pastor.
   c) A congregation in a situation of significant concerns and stress related to a pastoral transition may benefit from the leadership of an experienced and trained interim pastor. Situations in which this is particularly appropriate include the transition following a long pastorate, a congregation facing new mission opportunities and/or a changed context for ministry, a transition following the resignation of a pastor related to disciplinary action by the synod, or a transition marked by significant discord or upheaval within a congregation.

2) Appointment
   a) An interim pastor may be appointed by the synod bishop (*see *C9.06. above*) and shall normally serve under a term call extended by the Synod Council, unless the pastor has retired roster status. (*See bylaw 7.41.03. above.*)
      i. Calls to interim ministry may not be extended by a congregation.
      ii. A pastor serving under appointment by the bishop serves the congregation in a contracted and compensated arrangement.
   b) Unless previously agreed to by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served during this time of transition and shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor (*see *C9.07. above*).

3) Guidelines for called interim pastoral ministry
   a) Initial issuance of a call to interim ministry by the Synod Council shall be upon the recommendation of the synod bishop.
   b) A called interim pastor shall serve under contract with a congregation, providing a minimum of 10 hours per week to the congregation and be compensated in accordance with synod guidelines. The initial interim ministry agreement with a congregation may be reviewed by the bishop or synod staff prior to the acceptance of the contractual arrangement by the interim pastor.

i. A call to interim ministry shall be primarily for the benefit of the congregation served, not for the status of the minister of Word and Sacrament.
ii. Such a call is issued by the Synod Council and may be either a term call to a specific congregation or a general term call to interim ministry in the synod.

c) Prior to being eligible for a call to interim ministry, the pastor shall normally receive appropriate training for interim ministry. The appropriate churchwide unit will review interim ministry training programs and serve as consultant to synods in evaluating such programs.

d) Only pastors who have served in a regular called congregational ministry for a minimum of three years are eligible to serve in a called interim ministry without an exception to the three-year congregational service bylaw from the Conference of Bishops. Interim calls will not be granted to candidates for ordination as a first call.

e) In issuing a call to interim ministry, the synod assumes no responsibility for guaranteeing continuous employment, compensation, or benefits for the pastor under call (ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.43.).
i. Compensation and benefits are normally provided entirely by the congregation or ministry setting being served. Where possible, continuation of the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program will be advocated by the synod.
ii. It is explicitly understood that the synod is the calling body and not the employer of record at any time during the service of an interim pastor under call from the Synod Council.

f) Calls to general interim service within a synod may be issued for a one-year to three-year term of service, with an annual review by the Synod Council or its designated committee.
i. If a pastor under a term call to interim ministry has not served in a congregation during the preceding 12 months, however, the call shall be terminated by the Synod Council.
ii. A term letter of call issued by the Synod Council may also be coterminous with the duration of service within a specific congregation *(ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.43.)*.
iii. The term call may be terminated by action of the Synod Council.

4) Guidelines for appointed interim ministry

a) An appointed interim pastor is authorized to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to a congregation by the synod bishop with the concurrence of the Congregation Council or congregation.
i. The interim pastor assumes the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor.
ii. The appointed interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the synod bishop (†S14.23. in the *Constitution for Synods*).

b) A retired pastor or a pastor on leave who serves an interim ministry is recommended by the bishop and signs an interim ministry agreement with the congregation which provides for the compensation, benefits, and the specific goals and expectations related to the period of interim ministry.

f. Supply ministry

7.41.04. **Calls to Supply Ministry.** When it is deemed necessary for the mission needs of this church, and upon recommendation of the synod bishop, a letter of call may be issued by the Synod Council—according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—to a minister of Word and Sacrament for supply ministry. The minister of Word and Sacrament shall include a description of this ministry in the annual report to the synod bishop. A call to supply ministry is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated by the Synod Council when it no longer fulfills the criteria under which it was issued.

1) Purpose

Calls to supply ministry are intended to help meet the needs of congregations for temporary or occasional Word and Sacrament leadership either because of temporary absence of the regularly called pastor or because of unavailability of an interim pastor during a pastoral vacancy. These calls are intended primarily for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who are without regular call but who seek to be actively engaged in ministry and remain on the active roster. However, **such calls are not intended to preclude occasional supply ministry performed by those who have on-leave, disability, or retired roster status.** Calls to supply ministry are to serve the care of the gospel in the synod, and are not to be issued solely for the status of the rostered minister.

2) Eligibility

Calls to supply ministry are to be issued only to rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament who have left a previous call. Such calls may not be issued as a first call to candidates for ordination, candidates for reception, those seeking reinstatement after leaving the roster for matters related to discipline, or those rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament who have not fulfilled three years of initial service in a congregation or approved equivalent ministry setting. They may not be issued to rostered ministers who are eligible for retired status, as those ministers typically are free to perform occasional or interim pastoral ministry without need of a letter of call.

3) Guidelines for supply ministry

a) Requests for calls to supply ministry shall be presented to the Synod Council by the synod bishop, who will make a recommendation concerning approval or denial. The bishop will communicate the recommendation to the rostered minister prior to the Synod Council vote. If the recommendation is for denial of the request, the minister will be granted an opportunity to address a designated committee. After hearing from the minister and the synod bishop, the committee may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate further and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The decision of the Synod Council is final. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for a letter of call, the minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

b) Calls to supply ministry are term calls of no more than one year, renewable annually after review and action by the Synod Council. Calls may be withdrawn by the Synod Council at any time. If the call is not renewed or is withdrawn, the minister may be invited to apply for leave.

c) The synod shall establish clear guidelines with expectations for supply ministry calls. Normally, the expectation will be for the minister to offer at least two weeks of supply ministry per month, but the expectation will differ according to context within a given synod, dependent on such factors as the number of congregations and rostered ministers available for supply, distance between congregations, and individual circumstances of the minister. Ministers with calls to supply ministry are expected to remain actively involved in the life of the synod and in continuing education for ministry.

d) Each year, every minister of Word and Sacrament with a call to supply ministry shall provide as part of the required annual report to the synod bishop a written accounting of the supply ministry provided that year, along with an accounting of involvement in the life of the synod and continuing education, which shall serve as information for the Synod Council's annual review for possible renewal of the call.

e) Supply ministry is to be centered in the worship life of the congregations of the synod and is not intended for ministry offered primarily through occasional services such as weddings and funerals.

f) Supply ministry should be limited to occasional or short-term engagements and is not intended for long-term situations. Supply for extended periods normally should be the subject of a call to interim ministry.

g) Synods should establish guidelines for compensation and expense reimbursement for supply ministry.

h) Ministers who provide supply ministry across synod borders should have a letter of call from the synod in which they primarily serve. If a minister is invited to offer supply ministry occasionally in a neighboring synod, they should consult with that synod bishop before offering such ministry.

g. Ecclesiastical endorsement for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (MCPCCE)

Background: *This resource is intended for use by synod bishops and synod staff in working with individuals considering service in a ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education. Following all other applicable call guidelines, a synod may issue a letter of call to a rostered minister to serve in such ministries even if that person does not have ecclesiastical endorsement or professional certification. However, synods are encouraged to seek endorsed and certified individuals for such ministries. Those individuals serving in these ministries who are not endorsed and certified should be encouraged and supported to seek MCPCCE ecclesiastical endorsement. This section describes both the values and limitations of such endorsement and certification as well as an overview of the process.*

Introduction

The ecclesiastical endorsement process in the ELCA for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education (MCPCCE) provides the basis for a recommendation to the synod bishop and Synod Council concerning a rostered minister's suitability, readiness, aptitude, pastoral identity and competence, and theological integration for a particular ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical pastoral education. The professional certification process follows ecclesiastical endorsement.

1) Definition of ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification

a) Professional certification: The recognition by a professional chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical pastoral education organization that a person has met a level of professional competence of ministry in a specific setting.

b) Ecclesiastical endorsement: The recognition that a rostered minister has met ELCA endorsement standards for theological and pastoral competence to serve in ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

Ecclesiastical endorsement is a necessary pre-requisite for certification by a professional organization. Ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification are both normally required by an employing agency/institution. ELCA rostered ministers who seek ecclesiastical endorsement are expected to seek and obtain professional certification.

The MCPCCE program is located in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

Ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincies is required for a minister of Word and Sacrament to apply for positions in the Departments of Defense (military), Veterans Affairs (VA), Justice (Bureau of Prisons) and any other federal departments, agencies, bureaus, and services. Each federal department establishes minimum standards for applicants to apply, and all require a valid, current ecclesiastical endorsement specifically for chaplaincy service in that department. Applications for ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincy are obtained through the Christian Community and Leadership unit, senior director for federal chaplaincy.

The following are recognized professional organizations:
Association of Professional Chaplains (APC); American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC); American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT); American Psychological Association (APA); Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE); American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA); National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC);National Association of Certified Mental Health Counselors (NACMHC); Association of Certified Social Workers (ACSW).

2) MCPCCE endorsement process

The document "Endorsement Standards and Procedures, Call Criteria and Program Guidelines for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education" (ELCA.org/Resources/Specialized-Pastoral-Care):

- Establishes standards for theological and pastoral competence for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Sets forth criteria for calls and appointments to ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Presents guidelines for pastoral ministry programs in all affiliated or recognized social ministry organizations

Based upon material submitted by the candidate and a meeting with a consultation committee, a recommendation is provided to the synod bishop regarding the readiness of the rostered minister for a specific ministry. The synod bishop and the Synod Council have sole authority to grant or revoke the ecclesiastical endorsement.

3) Values of ecclesiastical endorsement

a) Seeks to establish accountability between individuals serving in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education and their respective judicatories and to emphasize the importance of appropriate conduct and practice of those who serve in these ministries.

b) Seeks to emphasize the importance of ecclesiastical endorsement in a synod's consideration of a call to service in one of these ministries.

c) Enables synod councils to issue a term call that permits a non-endorsed candidate engaging in the ecclesiastical endorsement process to serve while completing the endorsement process.

d) Provides a standard set of expectations for rostered ministers who seek to serve in a specific area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

4) Endorsement consultation outcomes

a) Renders an assessment of the readiness, pastoral competence, and theological integration of rostered ministers who seek to enter a specific field of ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

b) Utilizes the professional gifts of rostered ministers who have long ministered in a specific area to assist in rendering a professional recommendation for ecclesiastical endorsement.

c) Renders a recommendation on the professional pastoral competence of candidates to employing agencies and institutions that seek to meet national professional accreditation standards.

d) Serves as a referral source and consultation to bishops and seeks to provide resources for rostered ministers exploring vocational and training options in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

5) Limitations of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Does not imply or guarantee that professional certification will be achieved or that a call to serve in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education will be issued.
   b) Does not establish an employment, agency, or supervisory relationship between the endorsing synod and the rostered minister receiving the endorsement.
   c) Does not imply or assure that the endorsed individual has undergone any background or reference checks, screening, psychological testing, or evaluation as part of the ecclesiastical endorsement process.

6) Initiating the ELCA ecclesiastical endorsement process

When a rostered minister contacts the synod regarding the ecclesiastical endorsement process, or when a synod is considering issuing a call to a ministry within the synod of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education, questions related to ecclesiastical endorsement in the ELCA or for military, VA, or federal corrections applications may be directed to the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

Any individual seeking ecclesiastical endorsement for a federal chaplaincy will contact the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit. The application from the individual requires a letter from the synod bishop on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed.

g. Military service

Involuntary call-up for military chaplains is a term applied: (a) to a reserve component chaplain who is assigned to a reserve unit that is activated for federal duty, or (b) to an individual reserve chaplain who is called to active duty when he or she has not requested it. The suggestions provided here for chaplains serving under call to congregations may be used as guidance for other employing entities, institutions, or agencies where ministers are serving under call outside of the congregational setting.

1) Procedures for pastors
   a) If you have not already done so, make your congregation aware of your status as a military reservist.
   b) Notify your Congregation Council president and Executive Committee and arrange for a meeting with the Congregation Council to discuss your involuntary call-up to military service.
   c) Notify your synod bishop and invite the bishop or a member of the bishop's staff to participate in the Congregation Council meeting where the issues related to your call-up will be considered.
   d) Contact the ELCA senior director for federal chaplaincy.
   e) Contact the Board of Pensions of the ELCA (hereafter referred to as Portico Benefit Services) for essential ELCA Retirement Plan and ELCA Health Benefits Plan information.
   f) Note that no new ecclesiastical endorsement is necessary in order for you to respond to the call-up.

2) Considerations for congregations
   a) The federal Uniformed Service Employment and Re-employment Act (USERRA) was passed in 1994 to encourage military service by making it easier for service personnel to return to civilian life after duty. While it is doubtful that this law is directly applicable to pastors under call to congregations, efforts should be made to ensure that ministers of Word and Sacrament are not placed at a disadvantage by their involuntary call-up.
   b) For a call-up of 18 months or less, a leave of absence should be granted to the pastor by the Congregation Council. The synod should assist the congregation in arranging for interim or supply pastoral care during the leave of absence.
   c) If the call-up extends for more than 18 months, the situation should be reviewed and possibly renegotiated. The leave of absence may be extended, or the pastor could submit a letter of resignation, allowing a new pastor to be called by the congregation.
   d) The salary of the pastor should continue until military pay is received by the pastor or the pastor's family.
   e) Although the congregation cannot sponsor the pastor in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program during her/his active-duty service, the congregation should continue the health benefits coverage of the pastor and the pastor's family until health benefits coverage is provided by the military. If the congregation does not continue the health benefits coverage, USERRA does give employees on leave the right to continue their health insurance for 18 months at their own expense.
   f) The congregation should consider accumulating make-up contributions for the pastor's ELCA Retirement Plan account for at least the 18 months of the leave of absence. It is necessary to confer with Portico Benefit Services to determine what is appropriate and permissible under these circumstances.

3) Other considerations
   a) There will be a delay of approximately 30 days for the chaplain's family members to be incorporated into the military medical system. For this reason, it is important that family members have copies of both (a) the military member's orders activating him or her to active duty, and (b) a reserve identification card. These items could help a family member to receive medical care during the 30-day period.
   b) Medical services for military members and their families are administered under the Tricare System. Further information on this system is available at www.tricare.mil.
   c) While on leave of absence, the pastor's housing allowance should continue until the military housing allowance is activated. If a pastor's family is living in a parsonage, arrangements should be made for their continuing in that setting during the leave of absence, or until a new pastor is called. When the military housing allowance is received, that amount should either be offered to the congregation in lieu of rent for the parsonage or used to pay utility costs.

4. Termination of call

7.43. A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Sacrament, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.

7.43.01. When the Synod Council or the Church Council, as the calling source, determines that the service or employment no longer fulfills the criteria under which a call was issued, the Synod Council or the Church Council shall vacate the call and direct that the individual be placed on leave from call or, if such leave status is not granted, the individual shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

7.43.02. Ministers of Word and Sacrament previously under call to the churchwide organization or to a synod shall respect the integrity of the ministry in which they no longer serve and shall not interfere with or exercise the functions of the office or position in which they no longer serve unless invited to do so by the presiding bishop or Church Council in the churchwide organization or, in the synods, by the bishop or the Synod Council.

7.46. The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and a congregation shall be as follows:

a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the pastor's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:

1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;
4) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the pastor;
5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;
6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;
7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.

b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.

c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address

whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, the congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

a. Termination of congregational call: A letter of call from a congregation to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated only as provided for in constitutional provisions 7.46., †S14.18., and *C9.05. If a minister of Word and Sacrament resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the pastor nor be rejected by the congregation. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the congregation agrees to a later date.

b. Termination of Synod Council or Church Council call: A letter of call from the Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated by: 1) the conclusion of the service or employment for which the call was granted; 2) resignation; 3) resignation or removal of the minister from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church; or 4) by decision of the calling authority to vacate the call. If a minister of Word and Sacrament resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the pastor nor rejected by the calling authority. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the calling authority agrees to a later date.

5. Completion of responsibilities

The role of pastors in congregations to which they are not (or are no longer) called is governed by †S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods,* which states, "Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council."

Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have completed their pastoral call to a particular congregation change their role in how they relate to that congregation, and care should be taken to provide for an orderly transition. Certain ministerial functions are specific to and performed on behalf of the congregation, not the individual, and are therefore the responsibility of the minister of Word and Sacrament serving under call (or one appointed by the synod bishop or contracted by the Congregation Council for such ministry). Although to be regarded as affirmations of the pastor's past service to the congregation, requests from members for the former pastor to preside at weddings, baptisms, funerals, and the like should be politely refused. Regardless of whether the pastor has accepted a call to another congregation or another expression of this church, the completion of pastoral responsibilities must be marked clearly and carefully.

The following guidelines are for pastors, the congregations they served, and synod bishops in understanding the new status of a pastor who has resigned a call. They are intended to affirm the past ministry of such pastors, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves during transitions, and to point to constructive and healthful interactions in the future.

a. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the minister of Word and Sacrament is no longer a pastor of the congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in that congregation.
b. Care must be taken by the pastor to assure that the record of pastoral acts conducted within the congregation is up to date. As required by *C9.14. in the *Model Constitution for Congregations* and †S14.21. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the secretary of the congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop that the record was received, in good order, before the departing pastor can be installed in a new charge or be granted retired status. Attention also must be given to "make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations" to the congregation before departure (*C.9.08. and †S14.22.).
c. Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of the resignation as is practicable, the minister of Word and Sacrament may make use of the rite of "Farewell and Godspeed" during which the pastor may return to representatives of the congregation the signs of the ministerial office that were given at the pastor's installation.
d. If invited to exercise a ministerial role by a member of a congregation to which they were formerly called, ministers of Word and Sacrament should indicate that they are not (or are no longer) authorized to take such a role. If invited to exercise such a role by the current pastor, care must be taken to assure that the parameters and limited scope of the activity are clear.
e. As part of the bishop's pastoral care, especially during times of transition, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to discuss these guidelines and their implications either in person or in correspondence.

B. On Leave from Call

7.31.07. **On Leave.** A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call and who requests a temporary leave from active ministry, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church by action of the Synod Council of the synod on whose roster the minister is listed, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such leave shall be reviewed annually and may be terminated by the Synod Council if it no longer meets the criteria under which it was granted.

a. Regular Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament who is without a current letter of call and who has requested temporary leave from active ministry may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

b. Study Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Sacrament who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Sacrament or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

d. Extensions of these time limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.

e. Ministers who have been granted on-leave status are expected to maintain membership in a congregation of this church. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted on-leave status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

1. Definition and criteria for on-leave status

a. At the termination of the call of a rostered minister, if the rostered minister has not received and accepted a subsequent call, the following procedure is to be followed:

1) The rostered minister must inform the bishop of the date the current call is coming to an end. The bishop shall, in a timely manner, make sure that the rostered minister is aware of the necessity to comply with these guidelines.

2) A rostered minister seeking on-leave status shall make a written request to the synod bishop within 45 days following the termination of a prior call, providing a rationale as to why on-leave status should be granted. Failure to do so may result in removal from the roster.

3) The request for on-leave status must include:

a) a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call;

b) a statement of how the rostered minister's gifts and abilities can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;

c) the anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a letter of call;

d) a statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services while on leave at the direction of the synod bishop;

e) the rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave; and

f) a statement describing the rostered minister's current and intended participation in a congregation of this church, or, if the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, a request for permission to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

4) The synod bishop shall make a recommendation to the Synod Council whether to grant or deny on-leave status, and shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council

taking action. If the bishop recommends granting on-leave status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant that status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted on-leave status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for leave, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

5) On-leave-from call status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.31.07., and †S8.12.i.9. in *the Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop within 90 days of receiving a recommendation from the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.

6) The effective date for on-leave status, if granted by the Synod Council, begins the day the rostered minister is no longer serving under a regularly issued letter of call. This date is not affected by severance payments.
7) Synod Council action related to a rostered minister's on-leave- status is reported as information to the annual Synod Assembly in the report of the bishop or the Synod Council.
8) Written notification is sent to the rostered minister requesting on-leave status reporting the action of the Synod Council.
9) The action of the Synod Council in granting on-leave status must be reported to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services. Similar notification is given by the synod to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services when such status is ended.
10) Prior to the annual anniversary of the effective date of the rostered minister's on-leave- status, the rostered minister must request renewal of the on-leave status. Annual action by the Synod Council is necessary for the continuation of that status.
11) While on leave, a rostered minister must be an active member of a congregation of this church., If the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
12) A rostered minister on leave from call remains accountable to the synod bishop and must be willing to meet the criteria and standards of this church for its rostered ministers.

b. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may be retained on the roster of this church for a maximum of six years by annual action of the Synod Council, in consultation with the appropriate unit. (*See bylaw 7.31. 07.b.*)
A person already granted regular on-leave status whose life circumstances change may apply for a change to study leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

c. Family Leave: On-leave status for family responsibilities is available to rostered ministers with demonstrated circumstances that fulfill the criteria for this status. A rostered minister may request on-leave- status for family responsibilities for a maximum of six years, by annual action of the Synod Council, based upon either of the following reasons *(See bylaw 7.31.07.c.)*:
1) For the birth or care of a child or children of the rostered minister.
2) For the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health problem. A serious health problem is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either a period of incapacity or treatment with inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility, or a period of incapacity or subsequent treatment following inpatient care. A medical certification of such a serious health problem must be submitted to the Synod Council as part of the request for on-leave status.

A person already granted regular on-leave status whose life circumstances change may apply for a change to family leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

d. With approval of the Synod Council, either by general policy or by specific authorization, the synod bishop may place limitations or restrictions upon the availability for service of a rostered minister who is on leave. At least three months prior to the end of a rostered minister's on-leave status, the bishop or bishop's designee will contact the rostered minister to review:
   1) Pension and health insurance implications, with a recommendation that Portico Benefit Services be contacted.
   2) The criteria for continuation of on-leave status beyond six years, if applicable.
   3) The implications and expectations of being removed from the roster.
   4) The process for reinstatement to the roster.

f. The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is on leave may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

g. The secretary of this church shall report semi-annually to the Conference of Bishops any person whose on-leave status is coming to an end within the next six months.

2. Criteria for extension of on-leave status

a. A rostered minister may remain on leave from call beyond six years when such an extension contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the on-leave status warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. Such continuation on the roster of this church beyond the sixth year is contingent upon action of both the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops.

b. A rostered minister who is eligible for retired status should not be considered for extension of on-leave status.

c. A rostered minister who seeks to remain on leave beyond six years must provide a written request to the synod bishop and Synod Council for an extension of that status. This request should be received no later than six months prior to the end of the sixth year of on-leave status.

d. This request must state clearly the reason(s) for such a request and how these reasons relate to this church's ministry and mission.

e. The request must include the following information:
   1) The rationale for the rostered minister to remain on leave, including a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call, and an articulation of how the rostered minister's gifts and circumstances can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;
   2) The anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a call;
   3) A statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services at the direction of the synod bishop, consistent with the ministry and mission needs of the synod;
   4) The rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave from call;
   5) A statement describing the rostered minister's current congregational participation.

f. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may remain on study leave beyond six years when such continuation contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the study leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of on leave (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the educational goals of the rostered minister, the time line for completion of study, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of study. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council after notice to the rostered minister.

g. Family Leave: A rostered minister on leave for care-giving responsibilities may remain on family leave beyond six years when the particular circumstances of the family leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave from call (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the continuing care-giving needs of the rostered minister, the possible time line for conclusion, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of these circumstances. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council after notice to the rostered minister.

h. Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council
   1) The synod bishop reviews the request for continuation of the on-leave-from-call status beyond six years and forwards that request to the Synod Council together with the bishop's evaluation of the request. The rostered minister shall be notified of the nature of the bishop's recommendation. If the bishop recommends not to approve the request, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation.

2) The Synod Council considers the request of the rostered minister and how it relates to the mission and ministry of the synod. Should the decision of the Synod Council be to recommend approval, the Synod Council shall make such a request to the Conference of Bishops.
3) On behalf of the Synod Council, the synod bishop forwards the request and rationale to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.
4) A rostered minister on leave must provide an annual written request to the synod bishop for recommendation to the Synod Council for continuation of that status.
5) The Synod Council must review and act annually on requests for continuance of on-leave-from-call status beyond the six-year norm .

i. Action by the Conference of Bishops
1) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops reviews such requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
2) The Conference of Bishops, at a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for continuation of on-leave-from-call status. It shall report its decision to the synod seeking such a continuation.
3) The action of the Conference of Bishops automatically grants the first year of extension of leave. The Synod Council must subsequently vote to grant the second year, upon written request of the rostered minister and recommendation of the synod bishop.

C. Disability

7.41.08. Disability. Ministers of Word and Sacrament may be granted disability status and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for designation of disability on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted disability status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.42. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

h. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if granted disability status, was listed when last called or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Sacrament for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church. ...

1. Introduction

Disability roster status is an ecclesial determination granted by the Synod Council upon endorsement by the synod bishop in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of disability status by any health plan or benefits provider.

2. Disability roster status

a. Disability roster status is discretionary, and there is no right or entitlement to such roster status even when disability benefits have been granted by a health plan or benefits provider.

b. A minister of Word and Sacrament who seeks disability roster status shall submit a written request to the synod bishop for such status. The request from the minister should include the medical diagnosis, benefits decision, if any, of Portico Benefit Services or other benefits provider, and other pertinent information regarding the minister's disability. The synod bishop has sole discretion to determine whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether to grant disability roster status.

c. Disability roster status may be granted even though the minister has not submitted a request to the bishop or disability benefits have been denied by a health plan or benefits provider (*e.g.*, 7.46.c., †S14.18.c., *C9.05.c.).

d. The synod bishop shall act to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation or for those previously served by the minister.

e. The continuation of disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Sacrament is subject to review at any time and shall be reviewed in the event that disability benefits are terminated. Disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated by the Synod Council upon recommendation by the synod bishop or in the event the minister accepts a call.

f. The transfer of the roster status of a minister with disability roster status may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

g. If the disability roster status ceases, a minister who is not under call or has not received and accepted a call, should request on-leave status or retired status, if eligible, in accordance with the established processes.

D. Retirement

7.41.07. Retirement. Ministers of Word and Sacrament may retire upon attaining the earlier of age 60 or 30 years on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted retired status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.42. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

i. on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if granted retired status, was listed when last called or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Sacrament for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

1. Policy and procedures related to retired status

a. A minister of Word and Sacrament who has attained the age of 60 or who has been on the roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies for 30 or more years may be granted retired status by this church. Retired status is an ecclesial determination which may be granted by the Synod Council in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of benefits under any health or retirement plan in which the minister of Word and Sacrament may be a member.

b. A minister of Word and Sacrament who seeks retired roster status shall make a written request to the synod bishop no later than 45 days following the termination of the most recent call or of on-leave or disability status.

c. The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Sacrament is eligible for retired status and whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. The bishop shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the synod bishop recommends granting retired status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted retired status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right to make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee) in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for retired status, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

d. The synod bishop shall act to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation or for those previously served by the retiring minister.

e. A minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted retired status shall retain that roster status until (1) the minister is no longer on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, (2) the minister accepts a call, or (3) the Synod Council revokes retired status upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Such revocation of a minister's retired status may occur only upon a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council, present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting.

f. The Synod Council shall engage in a regular, periodic examination of all ministers of Word and Sacrament on the retired roster such that each and every retired minister's status is reviewed at least once during a three-year cycle.

2. Guidelines for retired ministers of Word and Sacrament

a. Roster of ministers of Word and Sacrament

A retired minister is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the minister resides. The retired minister remains accountable to the synod bishop where rostered, and the minister should regularly report to the synod bishop on any activities as a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Unless bylaw 7.41.09.b. applies, a retired minister must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and remains subject to the standards for ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church.

b. Congregational membership

A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one's membership to another congregation allows the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor's retired role.

c. Pastoral service

At the time of retirement, a minister of Word and Sacrament is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in any congregation previously served unless specifically authorized to do so. Ministers of Word and Sacrament must respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve as well as the authority of the current pastors of such congregations.

The service of retired pastors is governed by the *Constitution for Synods* [†S14.19.], which describes the role of pastors in congregations in which they do not serve: "Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council" (†S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods*).

The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

d. Interim ministry

One area of potential service for the retired minister is interim ministry. Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. The ELCA invites retired pastors to consider this important arena of ministry.

A retired pastor may serve under contract as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only upon appointment by and authorization of the synod bishop. Retired pastors who serve under call in an interim ministry return to the active roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

e. Compensation

Retirement benefits provided through Portico Benefit Services, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to ministers in retirement. Neither retired pastors nor their spouses are entitled to any compensation from any congregation or ministry previously served solely by reason of being retired or having previously served in that congregation or ministry.

f. Consultation with synod bishop

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired ministers of Word and Sacrament, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a minister at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the minister's new retired status, and its implications.

g. Transfer from one synod to another

The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is retired may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

IV. Removal from the roster

A. Reasons for removal

1. Death

Death of a minister of Word and Sacrament removes the minister from the roster.

2. Resignation

A minister of Word and Sacrament may voluntarily resign from the roster by giving written notice to the synod bishop. A resignation may not be withdrawn or rejected. No acceptance is necessary. The synod bishop responds to the notification with a letter describing the implications of resignation.

3. Lack of call or other roster status

If the call of a minister of Word and Sacrament comes to an end and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted, on-leave-from-call status, retired status, or disability status, then the minister is no longer on the roster. Likewise, if a minister's on-leave-from-call status, retired status, or disability status comes to an end or is terminated, and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted another roster status, then the minister is no longer on the roster.

4. Discipline

A minister of Word and Sacrament may be removed from the roster pursuant to the disciplinary provisions in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

5. Lack of congregational membership

A minister of Word and Sacrament who ceases to be a member of a congregation of this church, except as provided in 7.31.07.b., 7.41.09, and 7.41.10.., shall be removed from the roster.

6. Dual rostering

7.31.05. Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As required by constitutional provision 7.22. and bylaw 7.31.01., ministers on the Word and Sacrament roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must accept and adhere to this church's Confession of Faith, as well as abide by this church's standards and policies for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

In accordance with bylaw 7.31.05., a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church who enters the ordained ministry of another church body, or who serves a group schismatic from this church or from a congregation thereof, shall cease to be a member of this church. The minister's name shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament by the synod bishop.

B. Reporting

The synod bishop shall promptly report all removals from the roster to the secretary of this church and to the next Synod Assembly. The synod's roster files of those removed from the roster shall be transmitted to the secretary of this church in a timely manner, except in the case of death when the file should be transmitted to the synod or regional archives.

C. Guidelines for individuals formerly rostered as ministers of Word and Sacrament

1. The ministry of the baptized

This church affirms the integrity and importance of the ministry of the baptized. Removal of a person's name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church reflects a change of calling and function within the ministry of the baptized.

2. The ministry of Word and Sacrament

Some individuals are called by God in the church to the public ministry of Word and Sacrament. For a variety of reasons, there may be a time in the life of these individuals when they are no longer called by this church to serve in this ministry.

a. When a person's name is removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges, rights, and responsibilities of that person to serve as a minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA cease.

b. Individuals removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament may apply for reinstatement and may be reinstated.
c. Individuals who are not under call by this church, are not on its roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and are not under the discipline of the ELCA may not function as pastors in the name of this church.
d. For the sake of the gospel, there may be occasional exceptions to this rule. For instance, formerly rostered individuals may be authorized for a stated place and period of time by the synod bishop to preside at the sacraments and provide other pastoral ministry when, in the bishop's judgment, this will best serve the gospel in this church.

3. The participation of formerly rostered ministers

Removal from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament ends the rights and privileges this church confers at ordination. Formerly rostered individuals may continue as members of this church. Several specific changes follow:

a. Use of the stole, sacramental vestments, and other clothing or symbols associated with the public ministry of Word and Sacrament is prohibited.
b. Use of titles such as "Pastor" or "the Reverend" must be discontinued by the individual.
c. Formerly rostered individuals may not preside at the sacraments and rites of this church unless specifically authorized by the synod bishop for the sake of the gospel. The gifts, training, and experience of a formerly rostered individual can be valuable to a congregation. The use of these gifts in the congregation should be discussed with the synod bishop at the time the rostered minister is removed and with that person's congregational pastor in consultation with the bishop. When preaching, a formerly rostered individual functions as a lay preacher and not as a supply pastor.
d. The synod bishop is responsible to oversee and administer the work of the synod, including providing pastoral care and leadership to congregations and rostered ministers. It is, therefore, important that formerly rostered individuals consult with the synod bishop and observe synod guidelines regarding their service in this church.

See the model letters provided in the appendices.

V. Reinstatement to the roster

7.31.06. Reinstatement. A person seeking reinstatement as a minister of Word and Sacrament, whether having served previously in this church or in one of its predecessor bodies, shall be registered by the pastor and council of the congregation of which such a person is a member with the candidacy committee of the synod in which the person was last rostered or, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved, after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church, with the candidacy committee of the synod of current residence. The person then shall be interviewed, examined, and approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee under criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In this process, the committee shall review the circumstances related to the termination of earlier service together with subsequent developments. The person is reinstated after receiving and accepting a letter of call to serve as a minister of Word and Sacrament in this church.

[Following is from the Candidacy Manual.]

A. Reinstatement Process

1. Reinstatement to the rosters of the ELCA is the responsibility of the candidacy committee of the synod where the applicant was last rostered.
2. If an applicant is seeking both reinstatement to a roster and a transfer to another synod, in accordance with *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,* the secretary of the ELCA and the synods involved must consent to the transfer. A transfer of candidacy that includes reinstatement requires the concurrence of both candidacy committees and both bishops.
3. In the case of an applicant whose previous rostered ministry was in one of the ELCA predecessor churches, the successor ELCA synod has the responsibility. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster or its successor.
4. In the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of one of the following:
   a. the official disciplinary process of this church,
   b. resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
   c. application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06, where the person was on leave after conduct or allegations that could lead to disciplinary charges,

   then a minimum of five consecutive years without call must elapse before an application for reinstatement may be considered. The passage of five years without call does not guarantee reconsideration.

B. Application for Reinstatement

1. The applicant provides to the appropriate synod the completed Application for Reinstatement to the Roster of the ELCA, and the synod sends a copy to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for information. A Candidacy Application and a Rostered Minister Profile must be submitted online.
2. Upon receipt of the Application for Reinstatement, the synod bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
3. With the approval of the ELCA secretary, the reinstatement process may be transferred from the synod of previous roster to the synod of current residence upon the written concurrence of both candidacy committee chairs (in consultation with members of the candidacy committee) and both synod bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
4. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered schedules an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant's eligibility to be a candidate in the synod. The bishop also determines whether the application is timely.
5. In the case of an applicant where inappropriate conduct or allegations of misconduct led to resignation or removal from the roster, the synod bishop examines the applicant for indications of repentance and amendment of life as well as indication of or attempts at reconciliation with those injured by the conduct. Before proceeding with reinstatement, the bishop also documents corrective actions that have occurred. The bishop should invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.
6. The candidacy committee considers an applicant for reinstatement when the synod bishop forwards the application to the committee. The bishop may, in their sole discretion, decline to forward the application to the candidacy committee or may forward the application with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

C. Candidacy Committee

1. The candidacy committee will receive and review the Congregational Registration form from the congregation where the applicant is a member.
2. The committee shall determine that it has received all records and information concerning the applicant, including verification of synod records concerning the reason for removal from the roster. If synod records are incomplete, this verification may include conferring with the former bishop, with synod staff, or with the churchwide office.
3. The committee may request additional information from any source that it deems necessary to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement.
4. The applicant must prepare an Approval essay and submit it to the candidacy committee.
5. The committee may request a new psychological evaluation and background check when necessary. In the case of any applicant who has been off the roster or without call for more than five years, the candidacy committee will require the applicant to participate in a psychological evaluation. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
6. The candidacy committee follows the standards and procedures in the Candidacy Manual as its guide in considering a request for reinstatement. The candidacy committee interviews the applicant to explore all concerns related to reinstatement, including but not limited to:
   a. the circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
   b. the applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement, with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
   c. discussion of the applicant's understanding of the specific roster in the ELCA and the applicant's willingness to serve in response to the needs of this church; and
   d. discussion of the applicant's commitment to live according to the standards of this church, including *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.
7. The candidacy committee may request the Christian Community and Leadership home area to convene a Theological Review Panel to determine the applicant's theological readiness for Word and Sacrament ministry. The Theological Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

D. Decision

1. The candidacy committee will decide the applicant's suitability to serve as a rostered minister of this church. This decision is one of the following:
   a. grant approval for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call,
   b. postpone approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement, or
   c. deny approval for reinstatement.
2. If the decision of the candidacy committee is to deny an applicant reinstatement, that decision is final. Any such applicant who desires reconsideration must begin the process again by applying.
3. In the case of an applicant who was removed from the roster under any of the circumstances listed in V.A.4.a–c. above, if the applicant is approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee, such approval is not effective unless affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the total membership of the executive committee of the Synod Council. After the candidacy committee reports its approval and the reasons for it to the executive committee of the Synod Council, the executive committee may obtain whatever additional information or advice, including legal advice, it deems necessary before affirming the decision of the candidacy committee.

E. Approval

If approved, the candidate will complete the normal First Call paperwork and will participate in the First Call process.

If the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the Christian Community and Leadership home area, following consultation with the synod bishop and the home area executive director, shall postpone the candidate's participation in the First Call process until all requirements are met.

1. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for a period of one year after Approval by the synod. Any delay occasioned by a postponement is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
2. The process for renewal of Approval is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.

3. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster.

See the form for "Application for Reinstatement" in the Candidacy Manual.

VI. Cooperation with other church bodies in the exercise of Word and Sacrament ministry

A. With church bodies in the United States

1. Full communion partners

In 1991, the ELCA defined characteristics of a relationship of full communion which are "theological and missiological implications of the gospel that allow variety and flexibility" and "stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone." Among these characteristics is "a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject to the disciplinary regulations of other churches" ("Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA").

Since then, the ELCA has entered into four agreements establishing full communion relations: "A Formula of Agreement" (1997) with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ; "Called to Common Mission" (1999) with The Episcopal Church; "Following our Shepherd to Full Communion" (1999) with the Moravian Church in America Northern and Southern Provinces; and "Confessing our Faith Together" (2009) with the United Methodist Church. While the designations for "ordained ministers" have varied slightly among the partner churches, the agreements provide for the recognition and exchangeability of what the ELCA now calls "ministers of Word and Sacrament."

8.63.01. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church or a minister of Word and Service, serving temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be retained on the roster—upon endorsement by the synod bishop and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister is listed on the roster—under policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

a. A letter of call may be issued to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving temporarily in such a church body, by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a Synod Council, in accord with the Table of Sources of Calls (7.44.A24.b.).

...

c. A letter of call issued by the Church Council or a Synod Council for service in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established by the Churchwide Assembly shall be governed by provision 7.43. and bylaw 7.43.01.

8.63.02. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be authorized by the synod bishop to serve in a congregation or employing entity of this church. Such service shall be rendered under a contract between the congregation or employing entity and the minister of Word and Sacrament in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by the congregation or employing entity. Any such service shall be in accord with churchwide policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

8.63.03. Whenever a rostered minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to serve or is serving in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly, or whenever a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been so declared and established is to serve or is serving in this church, a full sharing of relevant information concerning such rostered minister's experience and fitness for ministry is expected between the synod bishop (or other appropriate office or entity) of this church and the appropriate person, office, or entity in the other church. Relevant information related to fitness for ministry shall include, but is not limited to, any information concerning disciplinary proceedings or allegations that could result, or could have resulted, in disciplinary proceedings.

8.63.04. A minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be granted the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church, in accord with bylaw 8.63.02.

8.63.05. The availability of a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in America shall be understood normally in three categories: availability to serve in an occasional situation; availability to meet an extended need, including service in "yoked parish" settings; and availability for a transfer of roster status.

a. *Occasional service:* An occasional situation is defined as one in which a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in a congregation of this church on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.

b. *Extended service:* A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be invited to serve as the pastor of a congregation of this church for an extended period of time, yet remain a minister of Word and Sacrament of the minister's present church body. Such a person would be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in a congregation of this church in a manner that is consistent with the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of this church. Such service shall be rendered only as authorized by the synod bishop in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of this church in a given situation.

c. *Transfer:* A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists who seeks to serve indefinitely within the ministry of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may apply for admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and be approved through the candidacy process for admission to the roster. Such a minister would then become a minister on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church upon receipt and acceptance of a regular call and installation in a congregation or other setting in this church.

8.63.06. Rostered ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, while serving in an ecumenical setting, remain subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists is understood by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the church body in which the minister is rostered or holds ministerial membership. Such a minister, while serving in a congregation or other ministry of this church, is expected to abide by the standards and policies of this church related to ministers of Word and Sacrament.

8.63.07. When a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America completes a contract for extended service, the synod file on that minister shall be sent to and retained by the Office of the Secretary.

7.31.05. Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As required by constitutional provision 7.22. and bylaw 7.31.01., ministers on the Word and Sacrament roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must accept and adhere to this church's Confession of Faith, as well as abide by this church's standards and policies for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

9.21.02. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synod bishop and the concurrence of the congregation, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which this church officially has established a relationship of full communion by action of a Churchwide Assembly may serve temporarily under contract as pastor of a congregation of this church.

Background: In accordance with the governing documents of the ELCA, policy related to the orderly exchange of ministers of Word and Sacrament between the participating church bodies is developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such policy would apply to ministers of Word and Sacrament in this church who, while being retained on the roster of the ELCA, would serve temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established, and to ministers of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established who would serve temporarily in a congregation or other ministry setting of this church without being admitted to the roster of the ELCA.

See "Admission to the Roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of Persons Ordained in Another Christian Tradition" for the process by which a minister of Word and Sacrament in a full communion partner church body, intending to serve indefinitely in the ELCA, may apply for admission to the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Such a person would then become an ELCA pastor upon receipt and acceptance of a regular call and installation in an ELCA congregation or other approved setting.

Roster status in more than one church body at a time is precluded in the ELCA.

Manuals for the "Orderly Exchange" of ministers of Word and Sacrament, with guidance for each full communion agreement, are available online: ELCA.org/Resources/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations.

a. Ministers of Word and Sacrament of another church body serving in the ELCA

NOTE: A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church serves in an ELCA congregation UNDER CONTRACT, NOT UNDER CALL by the congregation.

1) *Occasional service*. A minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.
2) *Extended service*. A minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as the pastor of an ELCA congregation for an extended period of time, yet remain an ordained minister of that church body. Such a person will be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the "Confession of Faith" of the ELCA, and to live in a manner consistent with the expectations of this church. Such service shall be rendered only as authorized by the synod bishop in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of the ELCA or its ecumenical partners in a given situation.

   Service in a congregation of this church or employing entity shall be rendered under a contract between the congregation or employing entity and the minister of Word and Sacrament, for a stated period of time in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by the congregation. Extended service is reviewed annually by the Synod Council or Church Council.

   Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by the Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry.

   a) Upon such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, "Invitation to Extended Service," which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or other setting of ministry in this church.
      The Rite of Installation is ***NOT*** used as that rite is for use only for a regularly called minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.
   b) A minister of Word and Sacrament who is approved to serve in an extended service ministry in the ELCA may be granted voice and vote in a synod assembly.

   At any time for the sake of the ongoing ministry, the synod bishop may withdraw authorization for service (or the congregation, employing agency or the minister may terminate a contract for extended service) after consultation with the other parties to the contract.

   Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have ceased to be "rostered" or the equivalent by a full communion partner church body are not considered eligible for such service unless or until they are received on the roster of the ELCA or of another full communion church.

b. ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in another church body

A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving for an extended period of time in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister is listed on the roster.

Congregations that cease to be rostered by a full communion partner church body are not eligible for service by a pastor of the ELCA until the congregation is received by the ELCA or another church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established.

c. Procedures

1) Assessment. Authorization for extended service is given by the Synod Council, on the basis of the synod bishop's assessment of the suitability for service of the minister of Word and Sacrament. The bishop may wish to appoint a panel to assist in this determination. The appropriate churchwide unit recommends that this not be a responsibility of the full synod Candidacy Committee, although members of the committee may serve on the panel.
2) Pension and medical insurance. A determination of the medical and disability insurance for the minister of Word and Sacrament will be made. The guiding principle has become that a minister of Word and Sacrament serving under provisions of a full communion agreement remains in his or her parent church body's pension and benefits plan, and the congregation or other ministry setting contributes to that plan.

It is anticipated that a congregation of this church will be able to contribute to the plan of another church body in order to provide appropriate medical coverage and a pension plan. Similarly, a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in another church body will need to determine that Portico Benefit Services (or another comparable plan) coverage is provided by the employing body.

3) Accountability and pastoral care. A minister of Word and Sacrament in another church body is accountable to the jurisdiction or judicatory in which that person is "rostered" or in other ways a member. Similarly, a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in another church body remains on the roster of this church and is accountable to the bishop of the synod in which rostered. The synod bishop is responsible for appropriate pastoral care and leadership for all ELCA congregations, including those served by ministers of Word and Sacrament of other church bodies (ELCA constitutional provision 10.31.a.3.).
4) Exchange of information. The assessments, authorizations, and reviews necessary to the "orderly exchange of ordained ministers" between church bodies with which a relationship of full communion exists require the complete and continuing disclosure to the synod of all information concerning the past and present ministry of these ministers serving in the ELCA, or of ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving under call from a synod council or the Church Council. Such disclosure must include any disciplinary proceedings, including discipline related to conduct during service in the ELCA by a minister of another church body.
5) Source of call. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in a congregation, local, or regional ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the Synod Council in which that minister is rostered. An ELCA minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a national ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the ELCA Church Council. This call is subject to annual review by the Synod Council or Church Council.
6) Titles. The usual title "pastor of (insert name of congregation)" would be used for ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in an ELCA congregation. The recognized professional title of "The Rev." for an ordained minister also would be applicable, in view of the officially recognized status of that minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which the ELCA has a relationship of full communion.

2. Other Lutheran bodies

8.64. This church, in accord with constitutional provision 2.05., acknowledges as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that accept the teaching of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and understands that altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations and other entities of such churches may be locally practiced. Local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship, in accord with churchwide constitutional provision 2.05., is subject to the approval of the Synod Council, upon endorsement by the synod bishop. Notice of such approval is to be given to the presiding bishop as the chief ecumenical officer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

8.64.01. The approval is granted initially for one year only and must be reviewed and approved annually by the Synod Council. Any time that the local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship no longer serves the mission and ministry needs of this church, the synod bishop may withdraw endorsement and the Synod Council may withdraw the approval.

3. Other church bodies in local practice of pulpit and altar fellowship

8.64.02. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body not in full communion with this church, while serving in a ministry involving the local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship with a congregation of this church is understood to be subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the church body in which the minister is rostered or holds ministerial membership. Such a minister, while serving a congregation or other ministry of this church, is expected to abide by the standards and policies of this church related to ministers of Word and Sacrament. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, while serving in a ministry involving the local practice of altar and pulpit fellowship with a non-ELCA congregation, remains subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

B. With church bodies outside the United States

1. Churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

3.04. This church, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in The Lutheran World Federation as a global communion of churches, engaging in faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and in service for the sake of God's mission in the world.

As a member of "The Lutheran World Federation, A Communion of Churches," the ELCA is in "altar and pulpit fellowship" with all other LWF member churches. This communion relation provides that this church recognizes the ministry of Word and Sacrament in all members of the LWF.

Global partnerships and connections at synod, congregation, and churchwide levels of the ELCA have helped make visible the relationships of the worldwide Lutheran communion. Synods and others working with LWF member churches are encouraged to collaborate with the Service and Justice unit and other appropriate units of the churchwide organization.

When an ordained minister from a member church of the LWF wishes to be considered for missionary service in a congregation or synod of the ELCA, the following protocols are to be respected:

a. Request for contact with companion church. At the point that the minister has an interview with an employing body in a synod of the ELCA, the synod bishop will contact the Service and Justice unit to formally request that the Service and Justice unit make official contact with the companion church. The request must come from the synod bishop and not from an individual congregation.
b. Exchange of information. The assessments, authorizations, and reviews necessary for the exchange of ordained ministers between church bodies require the complete and continuing disclosure to the synod of all information concerning the past and present ministry of a minister who wishes to serve in the ELCA. Such disclosure must include any disciplinary proceedings and an assessment of the minister's suitability for service in the ELCA. The Service and Justice unit will request this disclosure from the companion church judicatory. The synod bishop will be given full access to the information contained in such disclosure.
c. Visas and work authorization. All issues concerning visas, work permits, and taxes are the sole responsibility of the congregation or other employing body and the synod. The churchwide organization will not be involved in this process. The congregation and synod are to consult with competent legal counsel that specializes in immigration law and must abide by all laws and regulations concerning religious workers. All costs are to be borne by the congregation or other employing body and/or the synod.
d. Suitability. The minister will be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the "Confession of Faith" of the ELCA, and to live in a manner consistent with the expectations of this church. In assessing suitability, preference may be given to ministers who have completed three years of initial service in a congregation of the sending church.
e. Invitation to missionary service. Once the synod bishop has been assured of suitability and of the minister's legal right to serve, the bishop may issue to the minister a letter of invitation to missionary service.
f. Contract. The minister is to serve under a contract with the employing body that specifies responsibilities, compensation, and the term of service. The term of service should be determined in consultation with legal counsel, as it depends on visa status. Compensation is to be commensurate with synod guidelines. Pension and health benefits are to be provided. Typically, such benefits should be provided through the system in which the minister already participates. Any questions concerning the possibility of Portico benefits are to be addressed directly to Portico.
g. Memorandum of Understanding. Once an invitation to missionary service has been approved, the synod will, in consultation with the Service and Justice unit, draft a Memorandum of Understanding with the sending church that outlines the details of the missionary service, compensation, and accountabilities.
h. Roster status. The minister is to remain on the roster or official list of ordained ministers of the sending companion church. An invitation to missionary service is not to serve as a means of transition to the rosters of the ELCA. Ministers are expected to return to their sending churches at the end of their term of service.
i. Accountability. The minister will have multiple accountabilities: to the sending church, the synod bishop, and the congregation or other employing body.
j. Entry rite. Upon authorization the minister enters missionary service through the entry rite, "Invitation to Extended Service," which acknowledges the service of the minister as pastor in a congregation or in another setting of ministry in this church. The Rite of Installation is NOT used, as that rite is for use only for a regularly called minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.

k. Synod assembly status. A minister who is approved for missionary service in the ELCA may be granted voice and vote in a synod assembly.

l. Termination. At any time for the sake of the ongoing ministry, the synod bishop may withdraw authorization for service (or the congregation, employing body, or the minister may terminate a contract for missionary service) after consultation with the other parties to the contract and with the Service and Justice unit. At the end of the specified term, the invitation to missionary service will terminate. Any extensions are limited to those allowed by immigration status.

2. Particular agreements

a. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)
Among other Lutheran churches, the ELCIC has always had a uniquely close relationship with the ELCA that is grounded in proximity, common history, and continuing shared life. The "Statement of Inter-Lutheran Cooperation Between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" provides in detail for mutual recognition of ministry, as well as other matters. *(See the appendix.)*

b. Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD])
The EKD is a federation of regional Lutheran, Reformed, and United Protestant churches. With the Lutheran churches, the ELCA is already in communion through its membership in the LWF. Through an agreement with the EKD it is further recognized that "pulpit and altar fellowship, which includes the mutual recognition of ordination, exists between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and all member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany" ("Agreement between the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America"). Guidelines have been agreed upon for cases in which EKD ministers of Word and Sacrament, or students preparing for such ministry, consider service in the ELCA. *(See the appendix.)*

Part Two:
Ministers of Word and Service
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I. Constitutional description for Ministry of Word and Service and Standards for Ministers of Word and Service

7.50. **MINISTRY OF WORD AND SERVICE**

7.51. **This church calls and receives onto the roster qualified persons to provide a ministry of Word and Service, exemplifying the life of Christ-like service to all persons and creation: nurturing, healing, leading, advocating dignity and justice, and equipping the whole people of God for their life of witness and service within and beyond the congregation for the sake of God's mission in the world.**

7.52. **A minister of Word and Service of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to serve, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Service shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.**

7.53. **The standards for acceptance and continuance of ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be set forth in the bylaws.**

7.54. **The secretary of this church shall maintain a roster containing the names of ministers of Word and Service who qualify on the basis of constitutional provisions 7.52., 7.53., and 7.61., and related bylaws.**

7.54.01. Ministers of Word and Service shall be known as deacons.

7.54.A16. *Those persons previously rostered as associates in ministry, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be retained as deacons of this church (except for removals in accord with the governing documents, criteria, policies, and procedures of this church). Accountability for specific calls shall be exercised according to the policies and procedures of this church.*

7.55. **Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be subject to discipline as set forth in Chapter 20 of this constitution.**

7.60. **STANDARDS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE**

7.61. **In accordance with the description stated in 7.52, ministers of Word and Service shall be governed by the following standards, policies, and procedures.**

7.61.01. **Basic Standards.** Persons admitted to and continued in the ministry of Word and Service of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in policies developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council:

a. commitment to Christ;
b. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
c. willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
d. academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
e. commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
f. receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
g. membership in a congregation of this church.

7.61.02. **Responsibilities.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

a. be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
b. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
c. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proclaiming God's love for the world, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;
d. equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
e. encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
f. practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
g. be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;

h. share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
i. identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

II. Admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service

A. Preparation and Approval

7.61.03. Preparation and Approval. A candidate who is to be called and received onto the roster as a minister of Word and Service shall have:

a. either
   1) membership in a congregation of this church and registration, by its congregation council and the pastoral leadership of the congregation, of the candidate with the candidacy committee; or
   2) active participation in a Word and Sacrament ministry of this church and registration, by its governing body and the pastoral leadership of the ministry, of the candidate with the candidacy committee;
b. been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and supervision of the appropriate committee before being approved for call;
c. completed the academic and practical preparation according to criteria and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;
d. been examined and approved by the appropriate committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;
e. been recommended to a congregation or other entity by the bishop of the synod in which the candidate is being considered for first call in accordance with the procedures developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council; and
f. received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.

B. Bishop authorization of ordination

The bishop with the power to authorize an ordination is ***the bishop of the synod in which a candidate has accepted a call***. That bishop authorizes the ordination, even if the candidate comes from another synod and may have been approved by the multi-synod or synod Candidacy Committee of another synod.

1. **Provision for ordination:** According to †S8.12.d. and f. in the *Constitution for Synods*, the bishop of a synod is to: "Ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service of this church;" and shall "install (or provide for the installation of)" such deacons.
2. **Jurisdiction:** In receiving and accepting a valid call, the candidate comes under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the synod in which the call was issued. That bishop, on the basis of the record of such a valid call, authorizes the ordination, even if the ordination is to take place on the territory of another synod.
3. **Planning of ordination:** If the ordination is to occur on the territory of another synod (*e.g.*, at a candidate's home congregation), the bishop who authorizes the ordination ***shall*** consult with the bishop of the synod on whose territory the ordination may be held ***prior to*** approving any plans for such an ordination.
   a. No candidate shall make plans for ordination prior to consultation with the synod bishop under whose authority the candidate is to be ordained.
   b. If an ordination is planned on the territory of another synod, the *patterns and practices of the synod of jurisdiction shall prevail*. No ordination is to be scheduled without the prior approval of the bishop on whose territory the rite is to occur.
4. **Signing the certificate of ordination:** The bishop authorizing the ordination shall be the bishop who signs the certificate of ordination.

III. Status on the roster

A. Calls for ministers of Word and Service

1. Letters of Call and Service under Call

7.70. **CALLS FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE**

7.71. **Letters of Call. Letters of call to ministers of Word and Service of this church or properly approved candidates for this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be issued in keeping with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions as well as policies regarding such calls developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.**

7.71.01. **Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Service of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a synod council, a synod assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.74.A24.

b. A minister of Word and Service serving under call to a congregation shall be a member of that congregation. In a parish of multiple congregations, a minister of Word and Service shall be a member of one of the congregations being served.

a. Issuance of a letter of call: Ministers of Word and Service serve under call as stated in churchwide bylaw 7.71.01. An average of 10 hours of service per week is the minimum standard for a call to be issued.

b. Attesting signature: The appropriate synod bishop shall attest the letter of call (provisions †S8.12.e. and †S14.41.c. in the *Constitution for Synods* and provision *C9.24. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*). The bishop's signature confirms only that the call process has been followed, that the letter of call was properly extended, and that the minister of Word and Service or candidate is eligible to accept the call.

2. Sources of Calls

7.74.A24. ***Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service***

a. Principles for Sources of Calls

1) A "call" is an action by expressions of this church, as specified in the "Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service," through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a "letter of call."

2) Interdependence within the body of this church suggests that any action of one of its entities affects other entities. Therefore, interdependence is expressed in all calls extended within this church.

3) A call expresses a relationship between this church and the person called involving mutual service, support, accountability, supervision, and discipline.

4) A letter of call is issued by that expression of this church authorized to do so which is most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

5) Decisions on calls for ministries in unusual circumstances not otherwise provided for but deemed to be in the interests of this church's care of the Gospel are referred to the Conference of Bishops for recommendation to the appropriate calling body.

b. Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service

Setting	Calling Body
1.0 Congregational ministry	
1.1 Single congregation	*Congregation meeting*
1.2 Multiple-congregation parish	*Congregation meetings, acting on a common proposal, with one of the participating congregations issuing the call*
1.3 Coalition and cluster ministry	*Synod Council*
1.4 Congregations beyond this church	
1.41 Independent Lutheran congregations	*Synod Council*
1.42 Full communion congregation	*Synod Council*
1.43 Deacon in a synod-authorized ministry	*Synod Council*
1.44 Other	*Synod Council*
1.5 Interim congregation deacon	*Synod Council*
2.0 Synod ministry	
2.1 Assistant to the Bishop	*Synod Council*
2.2 Shared staff of two or more synods	*Synod Council*
2.3 Staff partially supported by grants from churchwide units	*Synod Council*
3.0 Regional ministry	
3.1 Staff	*Church Council*
3.2 Shared synod- churchwide staff	*Church Council*
4.0 Churchwide ministry	
4.1 Secretary	*Churchwide Assembly*
4.2 Treasurer	*Church Council*
4.3 Staff of the churchwide organization	*Church Council*

5.0	*Institutional ministry*	
5.1	*Institution/agency related or unrelated to a synod*	*Synod Council*
5.2	*Institution/agency related to more than one synod*	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
5.3	*ELCA-related institution/agency*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
5.4	*Other*	*Church Council*
6.0	*Campus ministry*	
6.1	*Staff*	*Synod Council*
7.0	*Outdoor ministry*	
7.1	*Staff*	*Synod Council*
8.0	*Ecumenical/Inter-Religious ministry*	
8.1	*Related to a synod*	*Synod Council*
8.2	*Related to more than one synod*	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
8.3	*National/international organization*	*Church Council*
9.0	*Inter-Lutheran ministry*	
9.1	*Related to a synod*	*Synod Council*
9.2	*Related to more than one synod*	*Synod Council of one of the synods*
9.3	*National/International*	*Church Council*
10.0	*Educational ministry*	
10.1	*ELCA-related seminary*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.2	*Seminary unrelated to ELCA*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
10.3	*ELCA-related college*	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.4	*College unrelated to ELCA*	*Synod Council of the synod in which college is located*
10.5	*ELCA-related school*	*Congregation of which the school is a part or, if related to several congregations, Synod Council of the synod in which the school is located*
10.6	*School unrelated to ELCA*	*Synod Council of the synod in which school is located*
10.7	*Director/staff of a continuing education center related to a churchwide unit*	*Synod Council in which the center's main office is located upon the request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.0	*Missionary ministry*	
11.1	*Outside United States*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
11.2	*Within United States*	*Church Council upon request of appropriate churchwide unit*
12.0	*Independent Lutheran Organization*	*Church Council upon request of the appropriate churchwide unit*
13.0	*Separately Incorporated Ministry*	*Church Council*
14.0	*Other*	
14.1	*Non-stipendiary service under call*	*Synod Council upon approval by the Conference of Bishops*
14.2	*Unusual ministries (as in conjunction with occupations and in approved situations not otherwise specified)*	*Synod Council or Church Council upon recommendation by the Conference of Bishops*

a. Calls to non-congregational service

1) The decision on the source of call is determined in accord with ELCA continuing resolution 7.74.A24. As the calling source for calls to non-congregational service, the Synod Council or Church Council must decide if the proposed call is appropriate. The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops may be consulted.
2) The synod in which the institution, agency, or other employing entity is located should be the synod which issues the call to non-congregational service. In the case of ministries/agencies that are multi-synod, the bishops involved should collectively decide which synod should issue the call.
3) The bishop of the synod in which the minister being called is rostered should be consulted before a Church Council call to non-congregational service is issued.
4) Each rostered minister is required to report annually to the bishop of the synod in which the minister is rostered.
5) Responsibility for oversight of such non-congregational calls should be noted in the minutes of the appropriate Synod Council or Church Council.
6) Note churchwide constitutional provision 7.72. regarding rostering of individuals in non-congregational calls:

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:

…

b. which issues a letter of call to the minister of Word and Service;

c. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service was listed at the time of the issuance of a letter of call from the Church Council; …

7) A minister who receives a letter of call issued by the Church Council normally shall remain on the roster of the synod in which she or he served prior to receiving the call through the Church Council. Specific exceptions exist, as noted in provision 7.72.:

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:

…

d. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if a seminary teacher or administrator, was assigned by the seminary board, subject to approval by the synod bishop and Synod Council of each affected synod, to promote proportionate representation of faculty and administration in each synod of its region; ...

8) ELCA bylaw 7.72.01. indicates:

If the service of a minister of Word and Service who receives and accepts a letter of call from this church, under 7.72.c., would be enhanced through transfer of roster status from the previous synod of roster to the synod of current address, such a transfer may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

9) ELCA bylaw 7.72.02. provides:

In certain circumstances for the sake of the ministry and mission needs of this church, the transfer of roster status of a minister of Word and Service serving under call in the churchwide organization may be authorized, at the initiative of the presiding bishop of this church, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved in such a transfer after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

b. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call

7.71.02. Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call. When it is deemed necessary for the mission needs of this church, a letter of call may be issued by the Synod Council—according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—to a minister of Word and Service for non-stipendiary service after the Synod Council has sought and received approval by the Conference of Bishops. A call to non-stipendiary service is to be reviewed at least annually by the Synod Council and continued only as warranted for the ministry needs of this church. Such a call may be terminated by the Synod Council when it is no longer serving the mission needs of this church.

1) Definition and criteria for Non-Stipendiary Service Under Call

a) Non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA is understood to be service as a rostered minister either without compensation, for reimbursed expenses only, or for a token stipend that is significantly below the typical salary received for similar ministry.
b) Non-stipendiary calls are not eligible for participation in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program; therefore, such non-stipendiary service is possible only when there is clear evidence that the minister of Word and Service has adequate alternative income and health insurance.
c) A letter of call to non-stipendiary ministry in the ELCA may be issued only by the Synod Council following approval by the Conference of Bishops.
d) The minister of Word and Service serving in a non-stipendiary call shall be accountable to the synod bishop and Synod Council in carrying out this ministry.
e) A call to non-stipendiary service shall be a one-year term call that may be renewed by the Synod Council only on the basis of the satisfactory fulfillment of the established criteria.

2) Action by the Synod Bishop and Synod Council

When the synod bishop and Synod Council believe that the criteria for a non-stipendiary letter of call are met by a specific ministry, the Synod Council may propose by a majority vote a letter of call.

a) The Synod Council must determine that a call to non-stipendiary service is extended in order to carry out a specific ministry on behalf of the synod.
b) The Synod Council forwards its request for a call to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops. The request shall include a clearly defined statement of the need for this minister to provide for Word and Service ministry in the synod and a rationale for this call to be for non-stipendiary service, along with affirmation that the rostered minister has adequate alternative income and health insurance. c) The Conference of Bishops takes action to approve or deny the request.
d) Should the Conference of Bishops approve the request and the Synod Council issue the call, the Synod Council will conduct an annual review of the non-stipendiary call.
e) Annual Synod Council action is required in order to continue the call to non-stipendiary service.

3) Action by the Conference of Bishops

The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops receives all requests from synod councils for calls to non-stipendiary service.

a) The Roster Committee reviews these requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
b) The Conference of Bishops, in a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for calls to non-stipendiary service. It reports its decision to the synod seeking such approval.
c) When approval is given by the Conference of Bishops, the Synod Council may proceed to issue a letter of call to non-stipendiary service and may annually renew such a call without subsequent action by the Conference of Bishops.

c. Shared-time ministries

7.71.01. **Service under Call.** A minister of Word and Service of this church shall serve under a letter of call properly extended by a congregation, a synod council, a synod assembly, the Church Council, or the Churchwide Assembly.

a. Calls may be extended for stated periods of time and for shared-time ministry by the appropriate calling body under criteria developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council for service in a congregation, synod, or churchwide unit, in an institution or agency of this church, or in another setting in a category of work as provided by continuing resolution 7.74.A24. …

1) Definition of shared-time ministry

The ELCA understands shared-time ministry to exist when a rostered minister is called to serve in one or more settings of this church while earning income from other employment or while devoting substantial time to other activities. Some examples of contexts and settings for which shared-time ministries may be appropriate are:

- *Small-membership congregations* with significant opportunities for mission and service.
- *New ministries* so limited in size or slow in development that they would require a disproportionate and unwise investment of time and money, if the more typical mission-development approach were employed.
- *Ministries* (e.g., *inner city, ethnic, and rural*) where the community's expectation is that the rostered minister will receive primary financial support from secular employment.
- *Multi-staff congregations* looking for ministry specialties, in addition to the services of rostered ministers and contracted laypersons.
- *Parishes that would benefit from having two or more individuals serving a single congregation or multiple congregations* but that cannot afford full-time salaries for several individuals.
- *Specialized ministry needs* of institutions and agencies that may call for a high degree of training and skill but that may neither warrant investment of appropriate full-time salary nor justify the engagement of a full-time staff person in that position.

2) Criteria for shared-time ministry

a) Individuals eligible for shared-time ministry must be on the roster of this church or have been recently approved for initial call.
b) Experienced individuals, whose ability to work in complex settings has already been tested, are preferred.
c) A rostered minister may be under call to only ONE church entity. Other employment is by agreement, not under call.
d) The work-load for the call must be no less than an average of 10 hours per week.
e) Compensation shall be commensurate with synod compensation guidelines that apply to individuals in full-time positions.
f) Any contemplated non-church employment for the rostered minister shall be subject to the review and approval of the synod bishop.

3) Procedures for call to shared-time ministry

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* provides principles and procedures for the calling of ministers of Word and Service (churchwide continuing resolution 7.74.A24.). In addition to the regular procedures, a letter of call for shared-time ministry shall include the following:

a) The range of duties and responsibilities shall be specified by adding appendices to the "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities," related to the letter of call (*C9.27.).
b) The decision to seek a shared-time deacon shall be based upon a study of mission and ministry needs in the particular setting. Appropriate synod or churchwide leaders must participate in the study and decision.
c) A periodic evaluation by the calling entity shall be encouraged by the appropriate synod bishop or churchwide leaders so that the called minister is held accountable for the ministry in that particular situation. The calling entity is accountable for adequate professional and financial support.
d) Any exceptions to the guidelines governing time and compensation must be requested from the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.

4) Appropriate candidates for shared-time ministry

Shared-time ministry demands the ability to use time efficiently, the flexibility to adjust to altering circumstances, and the willingness to make a positive contribution to church and society through secular employment or other interests. The effective shared-time minister has a clear sense of personal ministry and professional integrity. He or she has a concept of ministry that values extensive shared leadership with laity.

It is appropriate for ministers of Word and Service to offer themselves for shared-time ministry, as with all specific ministries, on the basis of their own sense of vocation and their sense of the needs of this church. It is not appropriate, however, for this dual-vocational interest to take priority over the mission needs of this church.

5) Support and accountability in shared-time ministry

The nature of shared-time ministry requires that the employing entity pay particular attention to such matters as compensation and benefits, setting of non-working times for meetings, and specifying shared expectations, which acknowledge the special dynamics of this style of ministry.

a) Accountability of the shared-time minister is the same as with all rostered ministers.
b) Evaluation of the ministry should be based upon the stated goals and conditions established for that ministry at the time of call.
c) The entity of this church that calls the minister will review the ministry annually to evaluate the ongoing appropriateness of the shared-time style for that particular mission opportunity.

d. Ecclesiastical endorsement for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (MCPCCE)

Background: *This resource is intended for use by synod bishops and synod staff in working with individuals considering service in a ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education. Following all other applicable call guidelines, a synod may issue a letter of call to a rostered minister to serve in such ministries even if that person does not have ecclesiastical endorsement or professional certification. However, synods are encouraged to seek endorsed and certified individuals for such ministries. Those individuals serving in these ministries who are not endorsed and certified should be encouraged and supported to seek MCPCCE ecclesiastical endorsement. This section describes both the values and limitations of such endorsement and certification as well as an overview of the process.*

Introduction

The ecclesiastical endorsement process in the ELCA for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical education (MCPCCE) provides the basis for a recommendation to the synod bishop and Synod Council concerning a rostered minister's suitability, readiness, aptitude, pastoral identity and competence and theological integration for a particular ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling or clinical pastoral education. The professional certification process follows ecclesiastical endorsement.

1) Definition of ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification
   a) Professional certification: The recognition by a professional chaplaincy, pastoral counseling or clinical pastoral education organization that a person has met a level of professional competence of ministry in a specific setting.
   b) Ecclesiastical endorsement: The recognition that a rostered minister has met ELCA endorsement standards for theological and pastoral competence to serve in ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education.

      Ecclesiastical endorsement is a necessary pre-requisite for certification by a professional organization. Ecclesiastical endorsement and professional certification are both normally required by an employing agency/institution. ELCA rostered ministers who seek ecclesiastical endorsement are expected to seek and obtain professional certification.

      The MCPCCE program is located in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

      Ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincies is required for a minister of Word and Service to apply for positions in the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Justice (Bureau of Prisons) and any other federal departments, agencies, bureaus, and services. Each federal department establishes minimum standards for applicants to apply, and all require a valid, current ecclesiastical endorsement specifically for chaplaincy service in that department. Applications for ecclesiastical endorsement for federal chaplaincy are obtained through the Christian Community and Leadership unit, senior director for federal chaplaincy.

The following are recognized professional organizations:
Association of Professional Chaplains (APC); American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC); American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT); American Psychological Association (APA); Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE); American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA); National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC);National Association of Certified Mental Health Counselors (NACMHC); Association of Certified Social Workers (ACSW).

2) MCPCCE endorsement process

The document "Endorsement Standards and Procedures, Call Criteria and Program Guidelines for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education" (ELCA.org/Resources/Specialized-Pastoral-Care):

- Establishes standards for theological and pastoral competence for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Sets forth criteria for calls and appointments to ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education
- Presents guidelines for pastoral ministry programs in all affiliated or recognized social ministry organizations

Based upon material submitted by the candidate and a meeting with a consultation committee, a recommendation is provided to the synod bishop regarding the readiness of the rostered minister for a specific ministry. The synod bishop and the Synod Council have sole authority to grant or revoke the ecclesiastical endorsement.

3) Values of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Seeks to establish accountability between individuals serving in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education and their respective judicatories and to emphasize the importance of appropriate conduct and practice of those who serve in these ministries.
   b) Seeks to emphasize the importance of ecclesiastical endorsement in a synod's consideration of a call to service in one of these ministries.
   c) Enables synod councils to issue a term call that permits a non-endorsed candidate engaging in the ecclesiastical endorsement process to serve while completing the endorsement process.
   d) Provides a standard set of expectations for rostered ministers who seek to serve in a specific area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

4) Endorsement consultation outcomes
   a) Renders an assessment of the readiness, pastoral competence, and theological integration of rostered ministers who seek to enter a specific field of ministry in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.
   b) Utilizes the professional gifts of rostered ministers who have long ministered in a specific area to assist in rendering a professional recommendation for ecclesiastical endorsement.
   c) Renders a recommendation on the professional pastoral competence of candidates to employing agencies and institutions that seek to meet national professional accreditation standards.
   d) Serves as a referral source and consultation to bishops and seeks to provide resources for rostered ministers exploring vocational and training options in the area of ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education.

5) Limitations of ecclesiastical endorsement
   a) Does not imply or guarantee that professional certification will be achieved or that a call to serve in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education will be issued.
   b) Does not establish an employment, agency, or supervisory relationship between the endorsing synod and the rostered minister receiving the endorsement.
   c) Does not imply or assure that the endorsed individual has undergone any background or reference checks, screening, psychological testing, or evaluation as part of the ecclesiastical endorsement process.

6) Initiating the ELCA ecclesiastical endorsement process

When a rostered minister contacts the synod regarding the ecclesiastical endorsement process, or when a synod is considering issuing a call to a ministry within the synod of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education, questions related to ecclesiastical endorsement in the ELCA or for military, VA, or federal corrections applications may be directed to the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit.

Any individual seeking ecclesiastical endorsement for a federal chaplaincy will contact the senior director for federal chaplaincy in the Christian Community and Leadership unit. The application from the individual requires a letter from the synod bishop on whose roster the minister of Word and Service is listed.

3. Termination of a call

7.73. **A letter of call issued by a Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Service of this church shall be either coterminous with, or not longer than, the duration of the service or employment for which the call was issued. With the exception of persons designated as employees of a synod or the churchwide organization, such a call does not imply any employment relationship or contractual obligation in regard to employment on the part of the Synod Council or Church Council issuing the call. The recipient of such a call remains subject to this church's standards and discipline for ministry of Word and Service, as contained in this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions and in the policy and procedure documents of this church.**

7.73.01. When the Synod Council or the Church Council, as the calling source, determines that the service or employment no longer fulfills the criteria under which a call was issued, the Synod Council or the Church Council shall vacate the call and direct that the individual be placed on leave from call or, if such leave status is not granted, the individual shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.

7.73.02. Ministers of Word and Service previously under call to the churchwide organization or to a synod shall respect the integrity of the ministry in which they no longer serve and shall not interfere with or exercise the functions of the office or position in which they no longer serve unless invited to do so by the presiding bishop or Church Council in the churchwide organization or, in the synods, by the bishop or the Synod Council.

7.75. **The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and a congregation shall be as follows:**

a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a minister of Word and Service, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the deacon's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:

1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
2) resignation of the minister of Word and Service, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
3) inability to conduct the office to which they have been called effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;
4) inability to conduct the office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the minister of Word and Service;
5) suspension of the minister of Word and Service through discipline for more than three months;
6) resignation or removal of the minister of Word and Service from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church;
7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.

b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the deacon under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one non-rostered person, or
2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one non-rostered person.

c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the minister of Word and Service's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant. When the position is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the deacon on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take

steps to enable the minister of Word and Service to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the minister of Word and Service and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the minister of Word and Service's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the minister of Word and Service, if appropriate. If the minister of Word and Service and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the minister of Word and Service's call, the congregation may dismiss the minister of Word and Service only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

a. Termination of congregational call: A letter of call from a congregation to a minister of Word and Service may be terminated only as provided for in constitutional provisions 7.75., †S14.43. and *C9.25. If a minister of Word and Service resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the deacon nor rejected by the congregation. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the congregation agrees to a later date.

b. Termination of Synod Council or Church Council call: A letter of call from the Synod Council or the Church Council to a minister of Word and Service may be terminated by: 1) the conclusion of the service or employment for which the call was granted; 2) resignation; 3) resignation or removal of the minister from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church; or 4) by decision of the calling authority to vacate the call. If a minister of Word and Service resigns from a call, the resignation may not be withdrawn by the deacon nor rejected by the calling authority. No acceptance of the resignation is necessary. The call ends no later than 30 days after the date the resignation was submitted, unless the calling authority agrees to a later date.

4. Completion of responsibilities

The role of deacons in congregations to which they are not (or are no longer) called is governed by provision †S14.44. in the *Constitution for Synods*, which states, "Ministers of Word and Service shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the Congregation Council."

Ministers of Word and Service who have completed their call to a particular congregation change their role in how they relate to that congregation, and care should be taken to provide for an orderly transition. Certain ministerial functions are specific to, and performed on behalf of, the congregation not the individual, and are therefore the responsibility of the minister of Word and Service serving under call, or one appointed by the synod bishop or contracted by the Congregation Council for such ministry. Although to be regarded as affirmations of the deacon's past service to the congregation, requests from members for the former deacon to preside at weddings, funerals, and the like should politely be refused. Regardless of whether the deacon has accepted a call to another congregation or another expression of this church, the completion of responsibilities must be marked clearly and carefully.

The following guidelines are for deacons, the congregations they served, and synod bishops in understanding the new status of a deacon who has resigned a call. They are intended to affirm the past ministry of such deacons, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves during transitions, and to point to constructive and healthful interactions in the future.

a. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the minister of Word and Service no longer is a deacon of the congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of that office in that congregation.
b. Prior to, but as near to, the effective date of the resignation as is practicable, the minister of Word and Service may make use of the rite of "Farewell and Godspeed."
c. If invited to exercise a ministerial role by a member of a congregation to which they were formerly called, ministers of Word and Service should indicate that they are not (or are no longer) authorized to take such a role. If invited to exercise such a role by the current rostered ministers, care must be taken to assure that the parameters and limited scope of the activity are clear.
d. As part of the bishop's pastoral care, especially during times of transition, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to discuss these guidelines and their implications either in person or in correspondence.

B. On Leave from Call

7.61.07. **On Leave.** A minister of Word and Service of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call and who requests a temporary leave from active ministry, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church by action of the Synod Council of the synod on whose roster the minister is listed, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such leave shall be reviewed annually and may be terminated by the Synod Council if it no longer meets the criteria under which it was granted.

a. Regular Leave: A minister of Word and Service who is without a current letter of call and who has requested temporary leave from active ministry, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

b. Study Leave: A minister of Word and Service engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Service in this church, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Service who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Service or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.

d. Extensions of these time limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.

e. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted on-leave status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

1. Definition and criteria for on-leave status

a. At the termination of the call of a rostered minister, if the rostered minister has not received and accepted a subsequent call, the following procedure is to be followed:

1) The rostered minister must inform the bishop of the date the current call is coming to an end. The bishop shall, in a timely manner, make sure that the rostered minister is aware of the necessity to comply with these guidelines.

2) A rostered minister seeking on-leave status shall make a written request to the synod bishop within 45 days following the termination of a prior call, providing a rationale as to why on-leave-from-call status should be granted. Failure to do so may result in removal from the roster.

3) The request for on-leave status must include:

a) a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call;

b) a statement of how the rostered minister's gifts and abilities can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;

c) the anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a letter of call;

d) a statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services while on leave from call at the direction of the synod bishop;

e) the rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave from call; and

f) a statement describing the rostered minister's current and intended participation in a congregation of this church, or, if the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, a request for permission to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

4) The synod bishop shall make a recommendation to the Synod Council whether to grant or deny on-leave status, and shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the bishop recommends granting on-leave status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its

discretion, whether to grant that status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted on-leave status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for leave, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

5) On-leave-from call status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.61.08., and †S8.12.i.9. in *the Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop within 90 days of receiving a recommendation from the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.
6) The effective date for on-leave status, if granted by the Synod Council, begins the day the rostered minister is no longer serving under a regularly issued letter of call. This date is not affected by severance payments.
7) Synod Council action related to a rostered minister's on-leave status is reported as information to the annual Synod Assembly in the report of the bishop or the Synod Council.
8) Written notification is sent to the rostered minister requesting on-leave status reporting the action of the Synod Council.
9) The action of the Synod Council in granting on-leave status must be reported to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services. Similar notification is given by the synod to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services when such status is ended.
10) Prior to the annual anniversary of the effective date of the rostered minister's on-leave status, the rostered minister must request renewal of the on-leave status. Annual action by the Synod Council is necessary for the continuation of that status.
11) While on leave, a rostered minister must be an active member of a congregation of this church. If the minister resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
12) A rostered minister on leave remains accountable to the synod bishop and must be willing to meet the criteria and standards of this church for its rostered ministers.

b. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may be retained on the roster of this church for a maximum of six years by annual action of the Synod Council, in consultation with the appropriate unit. *(See bylaw 7.61.07.b.)*
A person already granted regular on-leave status whose life circumstances change may apply for a change to study leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

c. Family Leave: On-leave for family responsibilities is available to rostered ministers with demonstrated circumstances that fulfill the criteria for this status. A rostered minister may request on-leave- status for family responsibilities for a maximum of six years, by annual action of the Synod Council, based upon either of the following reasons. *(See bylaw 7.61.07.)*
1) For the birth or care of a child or children of the rostered minister.
2) For the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health problem. A serious health problem is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either a period of incapacity or treatment with inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility, or a period of incapacity or subsequent treatment following inpatient care. A medical certification of such a serious health problem must be submitted to the Synod Council as part of the request for on-leave status.

A person already granted regular on-leave status whose life circumstances change may apply for a change to family leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.

d. With approval of the Synod Council, either by general policy or by specific authorization, the synod bishop may place limitations or restrictions upon the availability for service of a rostered minister who is on leave.
e. At least three months prior to the end of a rostered minister's on-leave status, the bishop or bishop's designee will contact the rostered minister to review:
   1) Pension and health insurance implications, with a recommendation that Portico Benefit Services be contacted.
   2) The criteria for continuation of on-leave status beyond six years, if applicable.
   3) The implications and expectations of being removed from the roster.
   4) The process for reinstatement to the roster.
f. The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is on leave may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.
g. The secretary of this church shall report semi-annually to the Conference of Bishops any person whose on-leave status is coming to an end within the next six months.

2. Criteria for extension of on-leave-from-call status

a. A rostered minister may remain on leave from call beyond six years when such an extension contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the on-leave- status warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. Such continuation on the roster of this church beyond the sixth year is contingent upon recommendation by the synod bishop and action of both the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops.
b. A rostered minister who is eligible for retired status should not be considered for extension of on-leave status.
c. A rostered minister who seeks to remain on leave from call beyond six years must provide a written request to the synod bishop and Synod Council for an extension of that status. This request should be received no later than six months prior to the end of the sixth year of on-leave-from-call status.
d. This request must state clearly the reason(s) for such a request and how these reasons relate to this church's ministry and mission.
e. The request must include the following information:
   1) The rationale for the rostered minister to remain on leave, including a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call, and an articulation of how the rostered minister's gifts and circumstances can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;
   2) The anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a call;
   3) A statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services at the direction of the synod bishop, consistent with the ministry and mission needs of the synod;
   4) The rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave;
   5) A statement describing the rostered minister's current congregational participation.
f. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may remain on study leave beyond six years when such continuation contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the study leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave from call (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the educational goals of the rostered minister, the time line for completion of study, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of study. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council after notice to the rostered minister.
g. Family Leave: A rostered minister on leave for care-giving responsibilities may remain on family leave beyond six years when the particular circumstances of the family leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the continuing care-giving needs of the rostered minister, the possible time line for conclusion, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of these circumstances. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council after notice to the rostered minister.
h. Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council
   1) The synod bishop reviews the request for continuation of the on-leave-from-call status beyond six years and forwards that request to the Synod Council together with the bishop's evaluation of the request. The rostered minister shall be notified of the nature of the bishop's recommendation. If the bishop recommends not to approve the request, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee), in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation.

2) The Synod Council considers the request of the rostered minister and how it relates to the mission and ministry of the synod. Should the decision of the Synod Council be to recommend approval, the Synod Council shall make such a request to the Conference of Bishops.
3) On behalf of the Synod Council, the synod bishop forwards the request and rationale to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops.
4) A rostered minister on leave must provide an annual written request to the synod bishop for recommendation to the Synod Council for continuation of that status.
5) The Synod Council must review and act annually on requests for continuance of on-leave-from-call status beyond the six-year norm.

i. Action by the Conference of Bishops
1) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops reviews such requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
2) The Conference of Bishops, at a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for continuation of on-leave status. It shall report its decision to the synod seeking such a continuation.
3) The action of the Conference of Bishops automatically grants the first year of extension of leave. The Synod Council must subsequently vote to grant the second year, upon written request of the rostered minister and recommendation of the synod bishop.

C. Disability

7.71.05. Disability. Ministers of Word and Service may be granted disability status, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for designation of disability on the official roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted disability status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minster of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.72. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:

...

g. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if granted disability status, was listed when last called, or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Service for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church. ...

1. Introduction

Disability roster status is an ecclesial determination granted by the Synod Council upon endorsement by the synod bishop in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of disability status by any health plan or benefits provider.

2. Disability roster status

a. Disability roster status is discretionary, and there is no right or entitlement to such roster status even when disability benefits have been granted by a health plan or benefits provider.

b. A minister of Word and Service who seeks disability roster status shall submit a written request to the synod bishop for such status. The request from the minister should include the medical diagnosis, benefits decision, if any, of Portico Benefit Services or other benefits provider, and other pertinent information regarding the minister's disability. The synod bishop has sole discretion to determine whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether to grant disability roster status.

c. Disability roster status may be granted even though the minister has not submitted a request to the bishop or disability benefits have been denied by a health plan or benefits provider (*e.g.*, 7.75.c., †S14.18.c., *C9.05.c.).

d. The continuation of disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Service is subject to review at any time and shall be reviewed in the event that disability benefits are terminated. Disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Service may be terminated by the Synod Council upon recommendation by the synod bishop or in the event the minister accepts a call.

e. The transfer of the roster status of a minister with disability roster status may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

f. If the disability roster status ceases, a minister who is not under call or has not received and accepted a call, should request on-leave status or retired status, if eligible, in accordance with the established processes.

D. Retirement

7.71.04. **Retirement.** Ministers of Word and Service may retire upon attaining the earlier of age 60 or 30 years on a roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster.

a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

b. If a minister of Word and Service who has been granted retired status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no congregations of this church in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Service to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.72. **Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church shall be related to that synod:**

…

h. on whose roster the minister of Word and Service, if granted retired status, was listed when last called, or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Service for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

1. Policy and procedures related to retired status

a. A minister of Word and Service who has attained the age of 60 or who has been on the roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies for 30 or more years may be granted retired status by this church. Retired status is an ecclesial determination which may be granted by the Synod Council in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of benefits under any health or retirement plan in which the minister of Word and Service may be a member.

b. A minister of Word and Service who seeks retired roster status shall make a written request to the synod bishop no later than 45 days following the termination of the most recent call or of on-leave or disability status.

c. The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Service is eligible for retired status and whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. The bishop shall inform the rostered minister of the nature of the recommendation prior to the Synod Council taking action. If the synod bishop recommends granting retired status, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the bishop recommends that the rostered minister not be granted retired status, the bishop shall inform the rostered minister that the minister has the right to make a personal statement to the Synod Council (or its designated committee) in the manner of the Synod Council's determination, before it acts on the bishop's recommendation. The rostered minister shall be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to this notification. The Synod Council (or its designated committee) may request that the bishop convene a consultation panel to investigate the situation more fully and make recommendations to the Synod Council. The Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status. If the Synod Council wishes to override the synod bishop's positive recommendation for retired status, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.

d. A minister of Word and Service who has been granted retired status shall retain that roster status until (1) the minister is no longer on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, (2) the minister accepts a call, or (3) the Synod Council revokes retired status upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Such revocation of a minister's retired status may occur only upon a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council, present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting.

e. The Synod Council shall engage in a regular, periodic examination of all ministers of Word and Service on the retired roster such that each and every retired minister's status is reviewed at least once during a three-year cycle.

2. Guidelines for retired ministers of Word and Service

a. Roster of Ministers of Word and Service

A retired minister is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the minister resides. The retired minister remains accountable to the synod bishop where rostered, and the minister should regularly report to the synod bishop on any activities as a minister of Word and Service.

Unless bylaw 7.71.04.b. applies, a retired minister must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service and remains subject to the standards for ministers of Word and Service of this church.

b. Congregational membership

A retired congregation deacon should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. This provides an opportunity for the retired deacon to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the deacon's retired role.

c. Compensation

Retirement benefits provided through Portico Benefit Services, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to ministers in retirement. Neither retired deacons nor their spouses are entitled to any compensation from any congregation or ministry previously served solely by reason of being retired or having previously served in that congregation or ministry.

d. Consultation with synod bishop

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired ministers of Word and Service, a synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a minister at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the minister's new retired status, and its implications.

e. Transfer from one synod to another

The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is retired may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

IV. Removal from the roster

A. Reasons for removal

1. Death

Death of a minister of Word and Service removes the minister from the roster.

2. Resignation

A minister of Word and Service may voluntarily resign from the roster by giving written notice to the synod bishop. A resignation may not be withdrawn or rejected. No acceptance is necessary. The synod bishop responds to the notification with a letter describing the implications of resignation.

3. Lack of call or other roster status

If the call of a minister of Word and Service comes to an end and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted, on-leave status, retired status, or disability status, then the minister is no longer on the roster. Likewise, if a minister's on-leave status, retired status, or disability status comes to an end or is terminated, and the minister does not have another call and either does not apply for, or is not granted, another roster status, then the minister is no longer on the roster.

4. Discipline

A minister of Word and Service may be removed from the roster pursuant to the disciplinary provisions in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

5. Lack of congregational membership

A minister of Word and Service who ceases to be a member of a congregation of this church, except as provided in 7.61.07.e., 7.71.04.b., and 7.71.05.b., shall be removed from the roster.

6. Dual rostering

According to ELCA bylaw 7.61.06., "Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." A minister of Word and Service of this church who enters the ministry of another church body, or who serves a group schismatic from this church or from a congregation thereof, shall cease to be a member of this church. The minister's name shall be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service by the synod bishop.

B. Reporting

The synod bishop shall promptly report all removals from the roster to the secretary of this church and to the next synod assembly. The synod's roster files of those removed from the roster shall be transmitted to the secretary of this church in a timely manner, except in the case of death, when the file should be transmitted to the synod or regional archives.

C. Guidelines for individuals formerly rostered as ministers of Word and Service

1. The ministry of the baptized

This church affirms the integrity and importance of the ministry of the baptized. Removal of a person's name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church reflects a change of calling and function within the ministry of the baptized.

2. The ministry of Word and Service

Some individuals are called by God in the church to the public ministry of Word and Service. For a variety of reasons, there may be a time in the life of these individuals when they are no longer called by this church to serve in this ministry.

a. When a person's name is removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges, rights, and responsibilities of that person to serve as a minister of Word and Service of the ELCA cease.
b. Individuals removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service may apply for reinstatement and may be reinstated.

c. Individuals who are not under call by this church, are not on its roster of Ministers of Word and Service, and are not under the discipline of the ELCA may not function as deacons in the name of this church.

3. The participation of formerly rostered ministers

Removal from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service ends the rights and privileges this church confers at ordination. Formerly rostered individuals may continue as members of this church. Several specific changes follow:

a. Use of this church's title of "Deacon" must be discontinued by the individual.
b. The gifts, training, and experience of a formerly rostered individual can be valuable to a congregation. The use of these gifts in the congregation should be discussed with the synod bishop at the time the rostered minister is removed and with that person's congregational pastor in consultation with the bishop.
c. The synod bishop is responsible to oversee and administer the work of the synod, including providing pastoral care and leadership to congregations and rostered ministers. It is, therefore, important that formerly rostered individuals consult with the synod bishop and observe synod guidelines regarding their service in this church.

See the model letters provided in the appendices.

V. Reinstatement to the roster

7.61.07. Reinstatement. A person seeking reinstatement as a minister of Word and Service shall be registered by the pastor and council of the congregation of which such a person is a member with the candidacy committee of the synod in which the person was last rostered or, upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved, after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church, with the candidacy committee of the synod of current residence. The person then shall be interviewed, examined, and approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee under criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. In this process, the committee shall review the circumstances related to the termination of earlier service together with subsequent developments. The person is reinstated after receiving and accepting a letter of call to serve as a minister of Word and Service in this church.

[Following is from the Candidacy Manual.]

A. Reinstatement Process

1. Reinstatement to the rosters of the ELCA is the responsibility of the candidacy committee of the synod where the applicant was last rostered.
2. If an applicant is seeking both reinstatement to a roster and a transfer to another synod, in accordance with *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,* the secretary of the ELCA and the synods involved must consent to the transfer. A transfer of candidacy that includes reinstatement requires the concurrence of both candidacy committees and both bishops.
3. In the case of an applicant whose previous rostered ministry was in one of the ELCA predecessor churches, the successor ELCA synod has the responsibility. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster or its successor.
4. In the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of one of the following:
   a. the official disciplinary process of this church,
   b. resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
   c. application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06, where the person was on leave from call after conduct or allegations that could lead to disciplinary charges,

   then a minimum of five consecutive years without call must elapse before an application for reinstatement may be considered. The passage of five years without call does not guarantee reconsideration.

B. Application for Reinstatement

1. The applicant provides to the appropriate synod the completed Application for Reinstatement to the Roster of the ELCA, and the synod sends a copy to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for information. A Candidacy Application and a Rostered Minister Profile must be submitted online.
2. Upon receipt of the Application for Reinstatement, the synod bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
3. With the approval of the ELCA secretary, the reinstatement process may be transferred from the synod of previous roster to the synod of current residence upon the written concurrence of both candidacy committee chairs (in consultation with members of the candidacy committee) and both synod bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
4. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered schedules an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant's eligibility to be a candidate in the synod. The bishop also determines whether the application is timely.
5. In the case of an applicant where inappropriate conduct or allegations of misconduct led to resignation or removal from the roster, the synod bishop examines the applicant for indications of repentance and amendment of life as well as indication of or attempts at reconciliation with those injured by the conduct. Before proceeding with reinstatement, the bishop also documents corrective actions that have occurred. The bishop should invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.
6. The candidacy committee considers an applicant for reinstatement when the synod bishop forwards the application to the committee. The bishop may, in their sole discretion, decline to forward the application to

the candidacy committee or may forward the application with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

C. Candidacy Committee

1. The candidacy committee will receive and review the Congregational Registration form from the congregation where the applicant is a member.
2. The committee shall determine that it has received all records and information concerning the applicant, including verification of synod records concerning the reason for removal from the roster. If synod records are incomplete, this verification may include conferring with the former bishop, with synod staff, or with the churchwide office.
3. The committee may request additional information from any source that it deems necessary to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement.
4. The applicant must prepare an Approval essay and submit it to the candidacy committee.
5. The committee may request a new psychological evaluation and background check when necessary. In the case of any applicant who has been off the roster or without call for more than five years, the candidacy committee will require the applicant to participate in a psychological evaluation. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
6. The candidacy committee follows the standards and procedures in the Candidacy Manual as its guide in considering a request for reinstatement. The candidacy committee interviews the applicant to explore all concerns related to reinstatement, including but not limited to:
   a. the circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
   b. the applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement, with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
   c. discussion of the applicant's understanding of the specific roster in the ELCA and the applicant's willingness to serve in response to the needs of this church; and
   d. discussion of the applicant's commitment to live according to the standards of this church, including *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.
7. The candidacy committee may request the Christian Community and Leadership home area to convene a Theological Review Panel to determine the applicant's theological readiness for Word and Service ministry. The Theological Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

D. Decision

1. The candidacy committee will decide the applicant's suitability to serve as a rostered minister of this church. This decision is one of the following:
   a. grant approval for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call,
   b. postpone approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement, or
   c. deny approval for reinstatement.
2. If the decision of the candidacy committee is to deny an applicant reinstatement, that decision is final. Any such applicant who desires reconsideration must begin the process again by applying.
3. In the case of an applicant who was removed from the roster under any of the circumstances listed in V.A.4.a–c. above, if the applicant is approved for reinstatement by the candidacy committee, such approval is not effective unless affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the total membership of the executive committee of the Synod Council. After the candidacy committee reports its approval and the reasons for it to the executive committee of the Synod Council, the executive committee may obtain whatever additional information or advice, including legal advice, it deems necessary before affirming the decision of the candidacy committee.

E. Approval

If approved, the candidate will complete the normal First Call paperwork and will participate in the First Call process.

If the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the Christian Community and Leadership home area, following consultation with the synod bishop and the home area executive director, shall postpone the candidate's participation in the First Call process until all requirements are met.

1. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for a period of one year after Approval by the synod. Any delay occasioned by a postponement is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
2. The process for renewal of Approval is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.
3. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster.

See the form for "Application for Reinstatement" in the Candidacy Manual.

VI. The Deaconess Community

See "Relationships and Statement of Agreement of the Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada" in the appendices among "Agreements with certain churches outside the United States."

Part Three:
Non-roster Related Matters

I. Synod-authorized Ministries

7.31.10. **SYNOD-AUTHORIZED MINISTRY.** While it is preferable in most circumstances that Word and Sacrament ministry be provided by a minister of Word and Sacrament, when need exists, the synod bishop—acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer Word and Sacrament ministry as a synod-authorized minister. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop; such service shall be rendered during its duration under the authority of the bishop. Such an individual will be trained to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synod leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.

Purpose

Synod-authorized ministry is intended to assist this church to respond pastorally and effectively to emerging opportunities in Christ's mission, to equip the baptized to live out their vocations for the sake of the world. Synod-authorized ministry honors and respects the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament within this church as well as the ministry of the baptized to serve in their local settings to proclaim the gospel and equip the believers.

Synod-authorized ministry recognizes and honors the office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession). While this church calls and ordains qualified persons to carry out the ministry of Word and Sacrament on behalf of the whole church, there may be times and contexts when qualified persons are called to carry out specific ministry only in their local settings for a designated period of time.

Synod-authorized ministry recognizes the need to be flexible and adapt to the ministry challenges and needs of smaller congregations and other ministry settings. And synod-authorized ministry recognizes that individuals may have the gifts and ability to serve this church through the proclamation of the gospel in a local context, but not the resources, ability or call to serve the whole church as ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. The purpose of synod-authorized ministry is to pair the gifts of individuals with the ministry needs of local communities in order to assist them to carry out their calling to be the church in the world.

A. Identification of need for ministry

The synod identifies a congregation or other ministry setting where synod-authorized ministry may be appropriate, such as smaller congregations that do not have the resources to call an ordained pastor, congregations that are geographically isolated making collaboration difficult, congregations that are part of multi-point parishes and in need of additional pastoral leadership, or ethnic-specific communities where a pastoral leader is already recognized.

Because of the relationship of such authorized lay ministry to those serving in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, ELCA pastors and pastors of our full communion partners serving congregations within the area where this ministry need is located normally will be consulted concerning this determination.

When determining the need for a pastor in a congregation or other identified ministry where a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church is not available, synods will first consider the utilization of an ordained minister from a full communion partner church, under the guidelines related to the orderly exchange of ordained ministers.

B. Qualifications

A person invited to prepare for a synod-authorized ministry must be an active member of an ELCA congregation, preferably for at least one year. (The synod bishop may approve an exception to this rule if the individual is a memberof a full communion partner congregation or ordained in another tradition.) In addition, prior to preparing to serve in synod-authorized ministry, an individual must have:

1. been recommended by the individual's pastor and Congregation Council;
2. met with and been interviewed by synod staff and/or the synod committee responsible for the synod's program of preparation;

3. demonstrated the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synod-authorized ministry or provided satisfactory evidence of prior preparation toward the goals and standards of the program outlined in this policy;
4. submitted written responses to the questions similar to those on the candidacy Entrance Form; and
5. obtained an in-depth background check, as outlined in the Candidacy Manual.

Any individual who has resigned or been removed from rostered ministry in the ELCA in connection with alleged misconduct, or who has been denied continuance in candidacy by reason of misconduct allegations, is precluded from serving as a synod-authorized minister.

C. Synod committee for authorized ministry

A committee may be appointed by the Synod Council to provide the synod bishop with recommendations concerning the authorization of and accountability for authorized ministries within the synod.

The Synod Council or, if appointed, the synod committee determines the educational program within the synod for individuals preparing for service in an authorized ministry; determines eligibility of individuals to enter this program of preparation; and advises the bishop on the suitability of an individual for authorization and service in a synod-authorized ministry.

D. Program of preparation

The synod defines the program of preparation for synod-authorized ministry consistent with this policy. The program of preparation can be accomplished in a variety of ways including: Select Learning (an ELCA resource with online courses facilitated by ELCA seminary and college faculty), synod educational programs that utilize current rostered ministers and/or ELCA seminary and college faculty, seminaries and continuing education centers. Such programs shall prepare individuals to have knowledge and abilities in the following areas:

1. Bible;
2. Lutheran theology, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Confession of Faith and polity of the ELCA;
3. worship;
4. spiritual discernment and faith development;
5. leadership expectations and identity;
6. contextual understanding; and
7. pastoral skills including preaching, catechetics, worship leadership, visitation, pastoral care, outreach, and administration.

E. Authorization for service

When the synod has determined that a specific need exists, and with the consent of the congregation to be served, an individual may be authorized for service within the synod by the synod bishop, in consultation with the Synod Council. The bishop will authorize for this ministry only those individuals who have been well prepared or are in the process of being prepared and who will serve under supervision. Completion of a program of preparation does not mean that authorization for service will follow. There is no guarantee of service within the synod. When authorized, such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities, and authorization shall be for a specific period of time not to exceed one year. Authorization must be reviewed annually and may be renewed on an annual basis.

Individuals who serve in synod-authorized ministry are to meet the following criteria:

1. evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
2. satisfactory participation in a synod program of preparation, and/or demonstration of appropriate ministry skills;
3. knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church; and
4. willingness to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of individuals serving in public ministry as described in "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers."

F. Letter of authorization

The bishop's authorization shall be evidenced by an appropriate letter describing the terms and conditions of the authorization. The description may limit the activities the person is authorized to perform.

G. Supervision and accountability

Accountability for synod-authorized ministry in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the Congregation Council. Accountability for a synod-authorized ministry in a non-congregational setting within a synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body of the entity that conducts that ministry, or if there is no such entity, the Synod Council. In all cases, a synod-authorized minister is to be under the direct supervision of a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop. The supervising minister of Word and Sacrament shall report to the

governing body and seek the advice and counsel of the bishop or designated synod staff in relation to the synod-authorized minister.

H. Candidacy for rostered ministry

When, in the judgment of the authorizing bishop, synod-authorized ministers are well-suited and qualified for ordained ministry, they shall be encouraged to discern if they are being called into ordained ministry and consider entering the candidacy process. Individuals may remain active in candidacy and theological preparation while serving in a synod-authorized ministry. Individuals may discern that they are called and have the abilities to serve only in their local settings for specific periods of time. These individuals may be set apart for a different kind of ministry that still serves the needs of the faith community in a more limited and specific way that does not put them on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. A decision not to pursue candidacy does not preclude the need for ongoing faith formation and leadership development.

I. Renewal and revocation

Renewal of authorization after one year may be given when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synod bishop at the request and with the consent of the congregation or other ministry being served, consultation with the supervising minister of Word and Sacrament, and a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the authorized minister.

Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop, who need not specify the reason.

J. Marriage services

Where permitted by law, synod-authorized ministers may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation in which they are authorized to serve, with the concurrence of the congregation and the approval of the synod bishop.

K. Other matters

Individuals may serve in a synod-authorized ministry only within the synod that has authorized that ministry. A synod may consider for authorization an individual trained and authorized by another synod, based on the individual's qualifications and ability to meet the new synod's criteria for authorized ministry.

Individuals authorized for such ministries are not to wear clerical stoles and should not wear clerical collars unless authorized by the synod bishop. The title "Pastor" is reserved for ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synod-authorized ministers.

II. Synod/Congregation deacons

The title “deacon” is used by this church for those who are on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service. However, some synods use the term “deacon” to describe individuals trained in and recognized by local programs that focus on diaconal ministry, and some congregations use the term to describe individuals in certain governing roles. Care should be exercised in how this term is used and the expectations of those who may have this title. Ministers of Word and Service are on an official roster of this church. That means that they are eligible to serve in this church under call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council. They are under the oversight of the synod bishop and have voice and vote at synod assemblies.

Synod deacons are the responsibility of the synod that authorizes and oversees their service. Since they are not on a roster of this church, they cannot transfer from synod to synod through an established mobility process. Synods should be clear with their deacons that this title and responsibility comes from the synod and is valid only in that synod. The title “deacon” will not be used by the churchwide organization in communicating with synod deacons.

Congregational deacons serve the congregation that has selected them. Normally the title is not used in addressing them in written or verbal communication. The role of a congregational deacon is defined by the congregation’s constitution and applies only during their term of service. These deacons are normally elected to a specific term and serve until their successors are elected. They have no responsibility outside of the congregation that elected them, unless the congregation elects them to serve in another capacity, i.e. voting member of a synod assembly.

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A. Agreements with certain churches outside the United States

1. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)

Inter-Lutheran Cooperation Between the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and
the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Inasmuch as the churches that formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), constituted in 1985, and formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), constituted in 1987, have been integral parts of one another's life, continue to be one in faith and confession, and are determined to find as many ways as possible to work together and to strengthen one another as members of the Lutheran family of churches on the North American continent, it was determined that:

I. Mutual Recognition of Leadership

A. Each church body takes appropriate steps to provide for a mutual recognition of the ordained ministry of the other church, which will be evidenced by:
   1. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer upon receipt and acceptance of a call.
   2. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer in the retired status.
   3. making provision so that ordained ministers may remain on the roster of the ordained ministers of one church while serving in a social service or educational agency/institution or on the staff of the other church.
   4. covenanting with one another to refuse acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers persons who have been excluded from the ordained ministry or have been denied acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers of the other church.

B. Each church body takes the appropriate steps to recognize the seminaries of the other church as approved schools for the theological training of its candidates for the ordained ministry.

C. Each church body takes the appropriate steps to recognize the "Deaconess Community" of the ELCA as a community that will serve both churches.

D. Each church body takes the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the rostered laypersons that are "certified," "commissioned," or "consecrated" by the other church.

E. Each church body takes the appropriate steps to facilitate the mobility of pension-plan participants between the churches.

II. Interchurch Cooperation

A. Each church body will provide for consultations between their corresponding units.

B. Each church body will provide for the appropriate boards and program committees to explore the possibility of shared participation in the development and preparation of congregational materials.

C. Each church body will provide for periodic conferences of the full-time elected officers will be held and that the elected officers of other Lutheran churches in North America will be invited to attend.

D. Each church body will provide for the appropriate boards and program committees of the churches to explore the possibility of mutual cooperation in the preparation of social statements and the addressing of social concerns that have North American implications.

E. Each church body will provide for the possibility of cooperation in the training, preparation, and continuing education for missionaries and in other appropriate areas.

Action as adopted by the constituting convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1987):

Inasmuch as the churches that formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, constituted in 1985, and are forming the new Lutheran Church in the United States, to be constituted in 1987, have been an integral part of one another's life, continue to be one in faith and confession, and are determined to find as many ways as possible to work together and to strengthen one another as members of the Lutheran family of churches on the North American continent, it is recommended that:

A. Mutual Recognition of Leadership

1. Each commission take appropriate steps to provide for a mutual recognition of ordained ministry by the churches, which will be evidenced by:
   a. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer upon receipt and acceptance of a call.
   b. acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers by transfer in the retired status.

c. making provision so that ordained ministers may remain on the roster of the ordained ministers of one church while serving in a social service or educational agency/institution or on the staff of the other church.
d. covenanting with one another to refuse acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers persons who have been excluded from the ordained ministry or have been denied acceptance on the roster of ordained ministers of the other church.

2. Each commission take the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the seminaries of the other church as approved schools for the theological training of its candidates for the ordained ministry.
3. Each commission take the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the "Deaconess Community" of the new Lutheran church in the U.S.A. as a community that will serve both churches.
4. Each commission take the appropriate steps so that each church will recognize the lay professionals that have been "certified" or "commissioned" by the other church.
5. Each commission recommend to the pension committee/board that arrangements be made to facilitate the mobility of pension participants between the churches.

B. Interchurch Cooperation

1. Each commission recommend to the new churches that provision be made for consultations between their corresponding units.
2. Each commission recommend that the appropriate boards of the new churches explore the possibility of shared participation in the development and preparation of congregational materials.
3. Each commission recommend to the new churches that periodic conferences of the full-time elected officers be held and that the elected officers of other Lutheran churches in North America be invited to attend.
4. Each commission recommend that the appropriate boards of the new churches explore the possibility of mutual cooperation in the preparation of social statements and the addressing of social concerns that have North American implications.
5. Each commission recommend that the Global/World boards of the new churches explore the possibility of cooperation in the training, preparation and continuing education of missionaries and in other appropriate areas.
6. Each commission, where applicable, recommend to the ALC, AELC, LCA, and ELCIC that the recommendations listed above be honored during the period January 1, 1986-December 31, 1987.

Relationships and Statement of Agreement
Of the Deaconess Community of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The following statement was approved by the board of the Division for Ministry in October 1994 and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in November 1994.

A. Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) will be approved, set apart according to the entry rite of that church, and rostered by the ELCIC.
B. The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) will service both churches for the purpose of formation and community support and will relate to the candidacy process of both churches according to the guidelines established by each church.
C. The Deaconess Community of the ELCA will include members of both the ELCA and the ELCIC.
D. Deaconesses serving in the ELCIC shall be in a relationship of accountability for discipline, call, and mobility with the ELCIC according to the practices of that church.
E. There shall be mutual transferability for deaconesses who are members of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA between both churches as presently exists for ordained ministers.
F. The question of rostering needs to be determined by each church. While only members of the ELCA can be listed on the roster of the ELCA, it will be requested that the Yearbook listing of members of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA include ELCIC members with appropriate designation of which church roster they are a member. The ELCIC will determine how to list its deaconesses—which may be as "diaconal ministers."

Transfer of Ordained Ministers Between Synods
Of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
And Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

An ordained minister may be transferred by the bishop of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the roster of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in the same manner employed for the transfer of such an ordained minister between two synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *(See bylaw 7.42.01.)*

Likewise, an ordained minister in good standing on the roster of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada may be received through transfer by a bishop of a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for service under call in this church. An ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada shall be received by transfer upon acceptance of a valid call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council of this church following the certification of their good standing on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, completion of a Rostered Minister Profile, and the approval of the bishop of the synod in which they are to serve.

The principle of full disclosure shall apply to all such transfers. It is recommended that the ELCA synod or calling body complete a criminal background check on the ordained minister. If a background check is done by the calling body, a copy should be shared with the synod.

2. Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD])

Guidelines on Candidacy Issues
For German Students or Pastors from the
Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has had an agreement since 1988 regarding cooperation with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), a federation of 23 regional Lutheran, Reformed, and United Protestant churches. In recent years these churches report having more students as theologically trained graduates than there are pastoral positions and compensation available for candidates for ordination. Students who have received theological degrees in Germany, as well as pastors from German churches, continue to express interest in serving in ELCA congregations in the United States.

Concern remains with the EKD about obligations of its churches should students come to the United States to become ordained and then return to Germany expecting positions. It is essential to honor the spirit of cooperation that has been present among our churches, and the appropriate churchwide unit encourages all synods to practice diplomacy in issues related to German students with theological degrees and pastors from these German churches seeking to serve as ordained ministers in the ELCA.

"Occasional service" or "Extended Service" for German pastors may not lead to or require "Transfer" to the roster of the ELCA. Candidacy committees consider the application of such pastors seeking to Transfer, and of students from Germany who have pursued U.S. degrees and who seek ordination and service on the roster of the ELCA. Careful attention should be given to the distinctions between short-term (Occasional or Extended service) and long-term (Transfer or ordination) placements in ELCA ministries.

The particular needs of this church are an important factor in determining who is approved for rostered ministry in the ELCA. The mission of this church involves outreach, worship, service, advocacy for justice, and nurture. While the scope of our mission is global, our particular responsibility is for ministry in the United States and the Caribbean. It is essential, therefore, to have leaders who thoroughly understand and are experienced with the cultural context of this diverse area.

I. Process for Short-Term Placement

The short-term availability of ordained ministers from churches of the EKD, as established by mutual agreement, falls within two categories: availability to serve in an occasional situation and availability to meet an extended need, including service in "yoked parish" settings.

A. Occasional Service: An occasional situation is defined as one in which an ordained minister of a church body of the EKD may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.

B. Extended Service: An ordained minister of a church body of the EKD may be invited, as authorized by the synod bishop, to serve as the pastor of an ELCA congregation for an extended period of time only with the consent of the member church of the EKD, and remains an ordained minister of that church body during such service. Such pastors are expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments within that ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of this church. Such service shall be rendered only in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of the ELCA in a given situation.

The employing ministry site must reach an agreement on employment according to the relevant provisions of the EKD, must make adequate accommodation available, and must cover the costs of repatriation for the pastor and his or her family on the expiry of the service (Agreement between the ELCA and the EKD, Section III, 4 and 5).

II. Process for ELCA Rostering

Prior to and during the application process for service on the ELCA roster, the synod must examine the desires and goals of applicants to determine their plans for the future. A written statement from the applicant of intent to remain in the ELCA for long-term service is to be retained with the candidacy file.

A. Pastors: The candidacy process for those who are "Ordained in Another Lutheran Church or Another Christian Tradition" is followed for ordained pastors of the EKD churches. All guidelines should be carefully followed in partnership with the synod Candidacy Committee. The prospective candidate first meets with an Initial Assessment Panel, which includes the synod bishop (or designee), the chair of the Candidacy Committee, and one additional Candidacy Committee member. The prospective candidate visits with this panel at his or her own expense for the purpose of mutual discernment. This meeting is held prior to the entrance interview for candidacy.

The appropriate churchwide unit convenes a review panel once an entrance/endorsement decision is made by the Candidacy Committee. An approval interview is scheduled once all recommendations have been met.

B. Students: Students from Germany who have theological degrees who are not ordained but desire to be rostered in the ELCA must follow the normal steps of candidacy (entrance, endorsement, ELCA seminary residency, approval, etc.) with the guidance of a synod Candidacy Committee. The Candidacy Committee must consult with the appropriate churchwide unit before any candidacy decisions are made. Once an applicant is approved for entrance into candidacy, the candidate affiliates with an ELCA seminary where the candidate's academic program will be reviewed by a panel convened by the appropriate churchwide unit. The panel makes a recommendation regarding recognition of prior academic or field work, including "Spezialvikariat" and other accomplishments and study. The seminary provides direction for supervised clinical ministry and internship placements as well as for any additional preparation that may be necessary.

After all practical and academic requirements have been completed by persons seeking ELCA rostering (including internship and clinical ministry [CPE] where required), the Candidacy Committee will schedule and conduct the approval interview. The timeline for this process will vary, depending upon the background of the candidate as well as familiarity with ELCA mission and ministry. Approved candidates participate in the First Call Process of Candidates under the direction of the appropriate churchwide unit. It is expected that candidates and synods will work together to balance the needs of this church with the needs of candidates during the First Call Process.

Cultural Immersion: Any time spent in the United States prior to serving should include an immersion in the life and culture of the ELCA, including active membership in an ELCA congregation. The normal requirement of one year membership in an ELCA congregation is the guideline for adequate time to become familiar with the practice of ministry in the ELCA. Providing opportunities for German students to develop familiarity and skills so that they may serve well in ways that are fulfilling and effective in the ELCA is part of the responsibility of the synod Candidacy Committee as well as the congregation. For those who have theological degrees from Germany seeking ordination and rostering in the ELCA, the policies of this church regarding ordination must be observed, and it is preferred that the service of ordination be in an ELCA congregation as a way of further assimilation into the life of this church.

Record Keeping: The appropriate churchwide unit maintains records for tracking German students and monitors the effectiveness of this cooperative effort. The synod Candidacy Committee should report such candidates and their progress to the appropriate churchwide unit. Candidacy decisions and recommendations from the Review Panel should be reported to the unit.

III. Consultation with the Parent Church in Germany

Extended service contracts can be authorized only with the consent of the EKD. Likewise, for admission to the ELCA roster, the synod bishop must request a letter of reference from the candidate's parent church body regarding any EKD pastor who seeks to transfer or German student who seeks to be approved for ordained ministry in the ELCA. The EKD will provide comments and observations regarding the individual's relationship with the church. This should occur at the beginning of the candidacy process.

Correspondence should be directed to:

Evangelical Church in Germany
Secretary for North America Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad
Herrenhäuser Strasse 12
30419 Hannover, Germany
Tel: (49) 0511-2796-0 Fax: (49) 0511-2796-707

A copy of this letter from the synod bishop must be sent to the Service and Justice unit, ELCA, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

IV. Immigration Issues

While applicants for service in ELCA ministry sites do not have to be U.S. citizens, they must pursue the appropriate immigration status with the government to allow for employment within the United States. The United States government has restrictions regarding those who seek change in status for religious purposes. It is essential that applicants address this issue and report their status to the synod bishop or, in the case of persons seeking admission to the roster of ordained ministers, to their Candidacy Committee.

Original policy adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America November 14, 1999 [CC99.11.83n]; revised policy adopted by the Church Council November 15, 2009 [CC09,11.97].

B. Effective dates of changes in status

I. Rostered Minister Leaving Call

a. For new call: If a rostered minister leaves a call for a new call, the first day of the new call shall be the first day worked at the new call, and the last day of the old call shall be the previous day.

b. Without new call:

1. If a rostered minister leaves a call without a new call, and does not apply for on-leave , disability, or retired status within 45 days, the last day of the old call shall be the last day worked, and the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the first day after the last day of the old call.
2. If a rostered minister leaves a call without a new call, and applies for on-leave, disability, or retired status within 45 days of the end of the old call:
    a) And the requested status is granted, then the last day of the old call shall be the last day worked, and the rostered minister shall be deemed to have the granted status effective the first day after the last day of the old call.
    b) And the requested status is denied, then the last day of the old call shall be the last day worked, and the rostered minister shall be deemed to no longer be on the roster effective the date that the requested status was denied.
3. In determining the last day worked at the old call, payment of severance or accrued vacation is not considered, and the focus is on the last day worked.
4. Rostered ministers should contact Portico Benefit Services or their benefits provider regarding the process for benefit changes.

II. Rostered Minister Leaving On-Leave, Disability or Retired Status

a. For new call: If a rostered minister leaves on-leave, disability, or retired status for a new call, the first day of the new call shall be the first day worked at the new call and the last day of their prior status shall be the previous day.

b. Without new call:

1. If a rostered minister is removed from on-leave, disability, or retired status and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and does not apply for a new status within 45 days, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of removal from the prior status, and the last day of the prior status shall be the previous day.
2. If a rostered minister is removed from on-leave, disability, or retired status, and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and applies for a new status within 45 days from the removal from the prior status:
    a) And the requested status is granted, then the last day of the prior status shall be the date on which the rostered minister was removed from the prior status or on which the prior status expired, and the first day of the new status shall be the next day.
    b) And the requested status is denied, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of removal from the prior status, and the last day of the prior status shall be the previous day.
3. If a rostered minister's on-leave status expires without being renewed, and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and does not apply for retired or disability status prior to the expiration of the on-leave status, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of the expiration of on-leave status, and the last day of the on-leave status shall be the previous day.
4. If a rostered minister's on-leave status expires without being renewed, and the rostered minister does not have a new call, and applies for retired or disability status prior to the expiration of the on-leave status:
    a) And the requested status is granted, then the first day of the new status shall be the day on which the new status was granted, and last day of on-leave status shall be the previous day.
    b) And the requested status is denied, then the rostered minister shall be deemed to have no longer been on the roster effective the date of expiration of on-leave status, and the last day of the on-leave status shall be the previous day.
5. Rostered ministers should contact Portico Benefit Services or their benefits provider regarding the process for benefit changes.

C. Resources for familiarization with the life and practice of the ELCA

Resources. In consultation with seminary faculties, the appropriate churchwide unit recommends resources such as these to assist synod bishops in familiarizing ordained ministers of another church body with the life and practice of the ELCA:

Resources of the ELCA

- *The Book of Concord*
- *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, particularly Chapters 2–7, and 9
- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
- *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Ordained Ministers*
- "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament"

Theological and historical perspectives

- *The Annotated Luther*, 6 volumes
- Single works of Martin Luther:
  - Kirsi Stjerna, ed. *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, 1529*
  - Mark D. Tranvik ed., *The Freedom of a Christian*
- Lowell G. Almen, *One Great Cloud of Witnesses! You and Your Congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
- Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen, eds., *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 vols.
- Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*
- Mark Granquist, *Lutherans in America: A New History*
- Jeff G. Johnson, *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story*
- Kathryn A. Kleinhans, ed., *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans*
- Craig Nessan, *Shalom Church: The Body of Christ as Ministering Community*
- L. DeAne Lagerquist, *The Lutherans (Denominations in America)*
- Martin Lohrmann, *Book of Harmony: Spirit and Service in the Lutheran Confessions*
- Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, eds., *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians*
- Kirsi Stjerna, *Women of the Reformation*
- Mary Streufert, ed., *Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Perspectives*
- Marit Trelstad, ed., *Cross Examinations*
- Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith*
- Timothy J. Wengert, *Reading the Bible with Martin Luther: An Introductory Guide*

D. Invitation to extended service



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

LETTER OF INVITATION TO EXTENDED SERVICE

FOR AN ORDAINED MINISTER OF A FULL COMMUNION PARTNER CHURCH BODY

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER,
AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

With prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to do God's will,

a synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
extends to you this invitation to serve as

We invite you to serve, as authorized by the synod bishop, under contract in this setting in accord with the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for an ordained minister of a full communion partner church body. In so doing, you are expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in this setting in a manner that is consistent with the confession of faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. You are to lead faithfully in worship; to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; to provide pastoral care; to equip the congregation for witness; to nurture increased support for the work of the whole church; and to guide in proclaiming God's love in word and deed. Therefore, you are to be diligent in the study of Holy Scripture, in the use of the means of grace, in prayer, in faithful service, and in holy living.

With this invitation, we pledge our prayers, love, esteem, and personal support of the ministry entrusted to you. Specific responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and conditions of this invitation are contained in the contract for service. In testimony to this invitation, we have subscribed our names on this _____ day of _____ in the year of our Lord_____ .

_____
Bishop

_____
Secretary

_____
Synod

_____
Date of bishop's signing

E. Military chaplain returning to a congregation

Bureau for Federal Chaplaincy Ministries
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
218 D St SE, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20003
202-626-3846

Suggestions for Chaplain Reentry into the Congregation

Operational commitments assigned to the Armed Forces of the United States (Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard) in recent years have been at a level not experienced in several decades. Large numbers of Reserve and National Guard chaplains have been activated and had to leave their parishes for considerable periods of time, some up to 18 months.

Suggestions have been developed for chaplains and congregations in time of military involuntary call-up under the title "Suggestions for Chaplains and Congregations in Time of Military Involuntary Call-up" (Part One, p. 27).

Congregations whose pastors are members of the Reserve or National Guard should have a standing "Mobilization Agreement" to provide for the needs of the pastor and family as well as the congregation during periods of mobilization.

When the period of active duty has been completed and the pastor returns to the parish the critical process of reentry begins. The form it may take and the time required for its completion will vary with each pastor and congregation; some estimates are three to six months. The experiences may range from frequent boredom to long periods of tension and tragedy. The effects of these experiences can be long-lasting, and chaplains are not immune to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

As marriage partners are advised to have patience with each other as they both make their way through the reentry process, the same patience is needed on the parts of pastors and congregations. The most common instinct is the desire to "pick up where we left off and get on with it" as though nothing had changed in any of the relationships. Every effort should be made to resist this temptation since all persons in the relationships have changed and need time to get to know one another again. If a "returned chaplain" is available in the area, every effort should be made to invite the chaplain to meet with the congregation and Congregation Council to talk about the experience of deployment and reentry.

If possible, congregations are urged to make provision for the pastor and family to go away together for a couple of weeks and get reacquainted after the separation. This is the primary relationship and should be addressed first. It may also offer opportunity for the pastor to get body and emotions in the same place. With the rapid means of transportation available, it is possible for a person to be physically at home but emotionally still half a world away. Bishops should consider organizing retreats for returning chaplains and their spouses, perhaps on a regional level, led by a skilled counselor who would help the couples process their experiences and adjust to ministry in the parish.

Perhaps the next planned event would be a welcome-home celebration, a Sunday brunch event at church, or even an overnight retreat for the pastor, where the returning chaplain can listen as congregation council members describe how they experienced the time of separation, and the pastor's experience might also be shared. Special attention should be paid to the new agreements that have been worked out within the congregation during this period. If several functions formerly performed by the pastor have been assumed by members of the congregation, some renegotiation will probably be necessary. When done with care and sensitivity, this process may produce new models of ministry to the benefit of the congregation.

For the congregation, the "get-acquainted period" that was necessary when the pastor first arrived in the parish will need to be repeated in a shorter form at this time, perhaps the three to six months mentioned previously.

The pastor will experience some strong "pulls" in various directions:

- From the congregation. Some members of the congregation will require extended amounts of the pastor's time so the pastor can be brought up do date with the events in the member's life. The pastor must make special efforts to provide for this time.
- From the unit. Strong bonds are formed when people are together in a hostile environment. As the chaplain assisted the members of the unit to deal with events and experiences during the deployment, so she or he usually will feel the obligation to assist them in their family and community re-entry process that may be prolonged and quite difficult. A chaplain's presence is in greater demand following a deployment than preceding it. Congregations can render valuable ministry to the community through sharing their pastor and facilities to assist soldiers as they navigate their individual re-entry processes through such support activity.

The pastor will probably need to adjust to a different pace and focus upon return. Military operations are frequently characterized by a high level of activity and an intense focus on a task. The pace in most congregations is slower and the focus more diffuse compared with military operations. This will call for some adjustment on the part of the returning chaplain, who may experience the feeling of being "at loose ends" when the focus of activity is not as sharp.

The pastor may have experienced long periods of extreme tension produced by attempting to be aware of any imminent danger and to instantly react appropriately. Ordinary sounds that occur without warning may be interpreted differently by persons returning from a combat theater and may produce unusual reactions. It is not unusual for such persons to have trouble sleeping or have nightmares for a period following their return.

It would not be unusual for questions to arise in the hearts of both pastor and parishioners as to whether this relationship still fits and is workable. All parties are urged to withhold judgment for some time and let the re-entry process unfold.

A period of separation, be it between spouses or pastor and congregation, tends to amplify the existing relationship. If the relationship was warm, close, and caring prior to the separation it will probably be even more so upon return. By the same token, if the relationship was troubled prior to the deployment, it usually will be even more difficult at the end of the separation.

Excellent resources are provided by the Army Chief of Chaplains and Family Readiness resources. These can be found on the internet: https://www.army.mil/soldierresources/

Essential elements of the process:

- Be patient with one another.
- Listen intently to what the other person is saying.
- Speak candidly and lovingly to one another.
- Hold on to the unity you have been given in Christ.

F. Sample letters

*(Draft letter of **completion of call** of ministers of Word and Sacrament)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear Pastor *[Name]*:

Greetings in this season of *[name of season in church year]*. Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Congratulations upon your acceptance of a new call to serve *[specify new call]*. The weeks ahead will likely be filled with the excitement and anticipation that come from such a transition as you begin to envision what you can and should do in your new ministry context.

Please remember that members of your current congregation are still in the early stages of processing the announcement of your resignation. They have not had the same preparation for this transition that you have had, and some may be finding it difficult to conceive of anyone else providing their pastoral care. A few people may even approach you (if they have not done so already) to ask if you would return to the congregation to conduct a wedding or preside at a funeral.

While it may be tempting to agree to continue in such a pastoral relationship, upon the effective date of your resignation you are no longer the pastor of the congregation and do not have the authority to make such commitments. Receive these requests as affirmations of your past service to the congregation, but explain that, in light of †S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods*, you are not at liberty to accept their invitation. Assure the parishioner that pastoral care will be provided.

You may find it helpful to use the service of "Farewell and Godspeed" prior to your departure from the congregation. Whether incorporated into the usual Sunday liturgy or placed within a special service to celebrate your ministry within the congregation, consider including a moment when you return to representatives of the congregation those symbols of the ministerial office presented at your installation, along with a parallel response, "I am no longer called to be among you to baptize ... proclaim the Good News ... preside at Holy Communion." It sometimes is an emotional experience as the procession moves from font, to pulpit, to altar, but this signals an important change in your relationship with the members of the congregation and should help to discourage inappropriate invitations to return, allowing you to focus fully upon your new context for ministry.

Please take care to assure that the parochial record of pastoral acts you conducted within the congregation is up to date. As required by †S14.21. of this synod's constitution, the secretary of the congregation shall attest in writing to me that the record was received, in good order, before you can be installed in a new call. Also, be mindful of the necessity to "make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations" to this congregation (†S14.22.) before your departure.

Thank you for your years of service as a minister of Word and Sacrament. Be assured that this church remains grateful to you for your pastoral ministry. May God bless you in your new call.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

*(Draft letter regarding **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date]*.

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Sacrament. Therefore, you are to function as a layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination have ceased.

As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with ordained ministry. You are not to use the title "Pastor" or "the Rev." Neither are you to baptize, preside at Holy Communion, perform marriages (unless otherwise authorized by state law), or wear vestments or clothing normally associated with a minister of Word and Sacrament, such as a stole or clerical collar.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only as a layperson serving without clerical vestments in leading a Service of the Word. Only in the most unusual circumstance, and then **only** with the explicit permission of the synod bishop, could you preside for Holy Communion, in keeping with the policy of this church as defined in "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament."

You must not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your removal. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name]*, secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter to ministers **on leave from call**, informing them of their **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As required under the provisions that govern the rosters of this church, ministers of Word and Sacrament who are without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster by annual action of the Synod Council, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, for a maximum of three years. You have now reached the end of the privilege of that on-leave-from-call status.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date]*.

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Sacrament. Therefore, you are to function as a layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination have ceased.

As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with ordained ministry. You are not to use the title "Pastor" or "the Rev." Neither are you to baptize, preside at Holy Communion, perform marriages (unless otherwise authorized by state law), or wear vestments or clothing normally associated with a minister of Word and Sacrament, such as a stole or clerical collar.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only as a layperson serving without clerical vestments in leading a Service of the Word. Only in the most unusual circumstance, and then **only** with the explicit permission of the synod bishop, could you preside for Holy Communion, in keeping with the policy of this church as defined in "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament."

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name]*, secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **resignation from roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write to acknowledge your letter of resignation from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[Name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date]*.

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Sacrament. Therefore, you are to function as a layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination have ceased.

As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with ordained ministry. You are not to use the title "Pastor" or "the Rev." Neither are you to baptize, preside at Holy Communion, perform marriages (unless otherwise authorized by state law), or wear vestments or clothing normally associated with a minister of Word and Sacrament, such as a stole or clerical collar.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only as a layperson serving without clerical vestments in leading a Service of the Word. Only in the most unusual circumstance, and then **only** with the explicit permission of the synod bishop, could you preside for Holy Communion, in keeping with the policy of this church as defined in "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament."

You must not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your resignation. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name,]* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **removal from roster** of Ministers of Word and Sacrament due to **joining another church body**—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[Name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, effective *[specify date]*.

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.41.09. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer an ELCA pastor. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with the ministry of Word and Sacrament within the ELCA.

If you were asked to substitute due to the absence of a pastor, you could do so only with the explicit permission of the synod bishop.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]*

xc: *[Name]*, secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of **completion of call** of ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear Deacon *[Name]*:

Greetings in this season of *[name of season in church year]*. Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Congratulations upon your acceptance of a new call to serve *[specify new call]*. The weeks ahead will likely be filled with the excitement and anticipation that come from such a transition as you begin to envision what you can and should do in your new ministry context.

Please remember that members of your current congregation are still in the early stages of processing the announcement of your resignation. They have not had the same preparation for this transition that you have had, and some may be finding it difficult to conceive of anyone else providing their *[specify role]*. A few people may even approach you (if they have not done so already) to ask if you would return to the congregation to participate in various functions.

While it may be tempting to agree to continue in such a relationship, upon the effective date of your resignation you are no longer a deacon of the congregation and should not make such commitments. Receive these requests as affirmations of your past service to the congregation, but explain that, in light of †S14.44. in the *Constitution for Synods*, you are not at liberty to accept their invitation. Assure the parishioner that ministerial leadership will be provided.

You may find it helpful to use the service of "Farewell and Godspeed" prior to your departure from the congregation, whether incorporated into the usual Sunday liturgy or placed within a special service to celebrate your ministry within the congregation. It sometimes is an emotional experience, but this signals an important change in your relationship with the members of the congregation and should help to discourage inappropriate invitations to return, allowing you to focus fully upon your new context for ministry.

Please be mindful of the necessity to "make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations" to this congregation (†S14.45.) before your departure.

Thank you for your years of service as a minister of Word and Service. Be assured that this church remains grateful to you for your ministry. May God bless you in your new call.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

*(Draft letter regarding **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020))*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. Therefore, you are to function as a non-rostered layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination/consecration/commissioning have ceased. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you are not to use the title "Deacon."

You should not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your removal. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter to ministers **on leave from call**, informing them of their **removal from the roster** of Ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As required under the provisions that govern the rosters of this church, ministers of Word and Service who are without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster by annual action of the Synod Council, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, for a maximum of three years. You have now reached the end of the privilege of that on-leave-from-call status.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date]*.

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. Therefore, you are to function as a non-rostered layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination/consecration/commissioning have ceased. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you are not to use the title "Deacon."

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name]*, secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **resignation from roster** of Ministers of Word and Service—revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write to acknowledge your letter of resignation from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name],* secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date].*

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. Therefore, you are to function as a non-rostered layperson in a congregation. Because you are no longer on this church's roster of Ministers of Word and Service, the privileges and responsibilities conveyed at ordination/consecration/commissioning have ceased. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you are not to use the title "Deacon."

You should not remain a member of the congregation that you were serving at the time of your resignation. Transferring your membership to another congregation assists the current leaders and members in carrying out their ministry. It also provides an opportunity for you to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about your role. It is your responsibility to sever ties with your former congregation.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name],* secretary of the ELCA

*(Draft letter of notice of **removal from roster** of Ministers of Word and Service due to **joining another church body** —revised version March 2020)*

[Date]

[Name]
[Address]

Dear *[Name]*:

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to inform you of the removal of your name from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA. This action has been taken in keeping with the constitutional and bylaw provisions that govern the roster of Ministers of Word and Service.

By a copy of this letter, I am notifying *[name]*, secretary of this church, that your name is to be removed from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service, effective *[specify date]*.

Your roster file will be retained by the secretary of this church, as prescribed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.71.06. If you so desire, you may provide annually to the secretary of this church your current address and other appropriate information for that roster file.

Please bear in mind that, from the perspective of this church, you are no longer a minister of Word and Service. As someone who is not on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, you must no longer perform any duties or acts associated with the ministry of Word and Service within the ELCA.

Should you desire at some point in the future to seek reinstatement to the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the ELCA, application will need to be made to the bishop of this synod for referral to the Candidacy Committee. The possibility of reinstatement is governed by ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.61.07. and other applicable policies that outline steps in that process.

Removal of your name from the roster brings to a close, in some sense, a particular chapter in your life. May our gracious God grant you wisdom, strength, and courage in your future endeavors.

In Christ,

[Name]
Bishop of the *[name of synod]* Synod

xc: *[Name]*, secretary of the ELCA

G. Sample forms

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

AUTHORIZATION AND REPORT OF ORDINATION OF A MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

In accordance with the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and the Constitution of the _____ Synod (I\S8.12.c.), the ordination of approved candidate, _____, was authorized by me on _____ to take place on _____ (date of ordination) at _____ (place)

Bishop _____ of the _____ Synod was authorized by me to conduct the ordination on behalf of the synod of call.

_____
(Authorizing and Rostering Bishop signature)

_____
(Synod)

This certifies that ordinand, _____ (name), having received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call to pastoral ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to serve

_____ (name and location of congregation(s)) _____ (congregation identification number(s))

as _____ (job title) was ordained a Minister of the Church of Christ in the Office of Word and Sacrament by the laying on of hands by Bishop _____ and other pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on _____ (date) in _____ (i.e. name of congregation) at _____ (i.e. location of congregation)

_____
(Signature of Ordaining Bishop)

Home address of ordinand (home address will only be shared if selected below to be the roster address):

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Email address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Which address should be the roster address? Home Work
(i.e. published in the directory, roster look-up)

Effective start date of active ministry if later than date of ordination: _____

Notice to Rostering Bishop

Prior to Ordination:
Arrangements for time and other details are to be made mutually between candidate and ordaining bishop following authorization and in consultation with rostering bishop (see †S14.11.).

1) The authorizing bishop shall complete bottom portion of form in consultation with the ordinand; retain one copy; and provide a copy to ordaining bishop, if different from authorizing bishop.
2) Ordaining bishop signs as "officiant" and retains one copy; ordinand retains one copy; ordaining bishop sends a copy to rostering bishop.

Following Ordination:
The rostering bishop shall:

1) Retain one copy for synod records;
2) Send or email one copy to the Office of the Secretary;
3) Mail one copy to:
   Benefits Administration
   Portico Benefit Services
   Attn: Kim Eggen
   800 Marquette Ave Ste 1050
   Minneapolis, MN 55402

Note: Rostering Bishop will forward ordination certificate to ordinand.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

AUTHORIZATION AND REPORT OF ORDINATION OF A MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE

In accordance with the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and the Constitution of the _____ Synod (†S8.12.d.), authorization is herewith granted to _____, presider, for the ordination of candidate, _____ in _____ (name of congregation) at _____ (location of congregation) on _____ (date of ordination).

_____ (date signed)

_____ (Bishop)

_____ (Synod)

This certifies that _____ (name) having received and accepted a call as a minister of Word and Service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to serve

_____ (name and address of organization)

as _____ (job title), was ordained on _____ (date).

Home address of candidate:

_____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Effective date of call: _____ Which address should be the roster address? Home Work
(i.e. published in the directory, roster look-up)

_____ (date signed)

_____ (Presider)

Notice to Bishop
Prior to Ordination:
1) Complete top portion of form;
2) Retain one copy;
3) Mail one copy to presider

Following Ordination:
1) Retain one copy;
2) Mail one copy to ELCA Secretary;
3) Mail one copy to:
Benefits Administration
Portico Benefit Services
600 Marquette Ave Ste 1050
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Notice to Presider
Prior to Ordination:
Arrangements for time and other details are to be made mutually between candidate and presider in consultation with synod bishop

Following Ordination:
1) Complete bottom portion of form in consultation with the candidate.
2) Presider retains one copy;
Candidate retains one copy.
3) Presider returns one copy to synod bishop.

Note: Synod bishop will forward ordination certificate to the minister of Word and Service.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

SYNOD TRANSFER FORM FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

The top part of this form is to be completed by the **bishop of the synod from which** the rostered minister is transferring.

_____ (name), minister of Word and Sacrament / minister of Word and Service

of the _____ (synod) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in America, is transferred to the _____ (synod)

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

_____
(Signature of the bishop of the **transferring synod**)

_____
(date of signing)

The bottom part of this form is to be completed **by the bishop of the synod into which** the rostered minister is transferring.

Effective date of transfer (the date the rostered minister begins service in accordance with the call)

_____
(effective date)

This minister has been called to congregational ministry at _____ (name of congregation) _____ (congregation ID)

has been called to noncongregational ministry at _____
(name of organization)

_____
(job title)

is retired, on leave, or on disability

_____
(mailing address)

_____
(city, state, zip code)

_____
(Signature of the bishop of the **receiving synod**)

_____
(date of signing)

After completing this form, the receiving synod office retains the original and sends the second copy to the Office of the Secretary. The third copy is returned to the synod office from which the rostered minister is transferred. The fourth copy should be sent to the transferred minister.

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Updates to ELCA Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies

4.1. Core Hours

Employees are to organize their work schedules within the limits of specified hours, subject to approval of their ~~home area~~ unit/office. Full-time employees will normally work an eight-hour period (part-time employees, pro-rated hours) between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. It is expected that employees are online working and accessible during the hours of 10:00 am to 3:00 pm Central Time as part of their regular core hours schedule. The hours of operation may change. Also, an employee's hours may vary depending on particular assigned duties or flexibility of schedule approved by their supervisor during any given day.

The needs of the job must be given appropriate priority. Staff members are expected to be flexible in the accommodation of workplace needs and work earlier or later when necessary.

4.7. ~~People First~~ Hybrid Workplace Model

The churchwide organization has adopted ~~the People First~~ a hybrid workplace model as a way to engage together in our work. ~~The model focuses on people first – this includes our colleagues and those we serve. Although classifications of our jobs default toward being remote, the model also includes classifications for jobs that are location-dependent.~~ Job classifications are determined by ~~People Solutions~~ Human Resources in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop ~~and are as follows~~. The model has three classifications for job locations.

- Hybrid: ~~Location dependent. Position responsibilities currently include office-based duties that require less than 50% time in physical office.~~ Positions where responsibilities require in-office presence up to 50% of the time.
- Office-Based: ~~Location dependent. Work involves responsibilities that require being in the office more than 50% of the time.~~ Positions where responsibilities require in-office presence more than 50% of the time.
- Remote: ~~Location independent. Current responsibilities of these positions do not involve any office-based duties.~~ Positions where responsibilities require a person live in a specific geographic location.

~~Employees whose jobs have been classified as remote or hybrid may request a change to hybrid or office based with the approval of the home area and People Solutions.~~

ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plan

Presented July 2025; Effective January 1, 2026

REASON: **Adding health benefit options recommended following Benefits reExamined initiative**

APPROVAL LEVEL: **BOT121 July 2025**

Section 9.01 **Members Who Have ELCA-Primary Benefits**. Except as provided in Section 9.01(b), 9.02, 17.13, 17.14 and 17.15, a Member who meets the eligibility requirements of the Plan is an ELCA-Primary Member and shall have ELCA- Primary Benefits.

ELCA-Primary Benefits includes ELCA Medical and Mental Health Benefits, ELCA Prescription Drug Benefits and Enhanced Option Dental Benefits described in Articles X, XII, XIII and XV.

Dependents eligible for ELCA-Primary Benefits will have the same ELCA-Primary Option as a Sponsored Member, Retired Member or Coverage Continuation Member who is covered by an ELCA-Primary Option. A Sponsored Member, Retired Member or Coverage Continuation Member who is covered by ELCA Medicare-Primary Benefits will choose the ELCA-Primary Option for her or his Dependents who are not eligible for ELCA Medicare-Primary Benefits in accordance with the procedures established by Portico Benefit Services.

The ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plan provides the following four (4) ELCA-Primary Options for eligible Members under the Traditional Benefits Program: Select Copay 2000, Select HDHP 2000, Value Copay 4000, Value HDHP 4000. ~~five (5) ELCA-Primary Options for eligible Members: ELCA-Primary Platinum+ Option, ELCA-Primary Gold+ Option, ELCA-Primary Value Copay Option, ELCA-Primary Silver+ Option and ELCA-Primary Bronze+ Option.~~ The ELCA-Primary ~~Silver+ Option and ELCA-Primary Bronze+ Option~~ Select HDHP 2000 and Value HDHP 4000 Options are high deductible health plans as defined by the IRS. See Appendix for details of each ELCA-Primary Option.

Notwithstanding the foregoing:

(a) An Eligible Employee described in Section 3.01(e) may also have access to ~~an~~ additional ELCA-Primary Options under the Flexible Benefits Program if the Participating Employer is eligible to offer the options, as determined by Portico Benefit Services, and elects to offer the ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, Bronze+, and Essential Copay 2500.~~Select Copay Option~~.

(b) An Eligible Employee described in Section 3.01(e) will not be automatically enrolled in Dental Benefits described in Article XIII if she or he is eligible to

enroll in ELCA-Primary Benefits. If the Participating Employer is eligible to offer Dental Benefits, as determined by Portico Benefit Services, and were selected for the Sponsored Member by the Participating Employer, such Sponsored Member can enroll in ELCA-Primary Benefits and either elect or decline Dental Benefits during Annual Enrollment or upon initial midyear enrollment in the ELCA Flexible Benefits Program. A Sponsored Member who elects the Enhanced Option, ~~or~~ Basic Option, or Economy Option Dental Benefits and remains covered as a Sponsored Member will have the same Dental Benefits for the rest of the Plan Year. If a Sponsored Member elects Dental Benefits for herself or himself, she or he can elect Dental Benefits for some or all Dependents with ELCA-Primary Benefits.

Section 9.04 **Mid-Year Changes**. Members may have mid-year changes in coverage due to changes in employment or status.

(a) If a Member has a mid-year change of benefits and the change occurs without a break in coverage, due to (i) the Eligible Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner becomes the designated Sponsored Member and the Sponsored Member becomes the Eligible Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner in accordance with Section 7.03(a), or (ii) a child is no longer the designated Sponsored Member's Eligible Child but becomes the Eligible Child of another Member, or (iii) an Eligible Child of the designated Sponsored Member becomes a Sponsored Member, Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses incurred prior to such mid-year change shall be ascribed to the Member and applied during the same calendar year for such Member as follows:

(i) From ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000 or ~~Value Copay Options~~Essential Copay 2500 to ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000, or ~~Value Copay Options~~ Essential Copay 2500:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses shall be applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Member Cost-Share shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share.

(ii) From ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000 or ~~Value~~

~~Copay~~ Essential Copay 2500 Options to ELCA-Primary Bronze+ or Silver+ Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses shall be applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of- Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses.

(iii) From ELCA-Primary Bronze+ or Silver+ Options to ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000, or ~~Value Copay~~ Essential Copay 2500 Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share.

(iv) From ELCA-Primary Bronze+ or Silver+ Options to ELCA-Primary Bronze+ or Silver+ Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses.

(v) From ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000 or Value Copay 4000 Options to ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000 or Value Copay 4000 Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses shall be applied toward the

Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Member Cost-Share shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share.

(vi) From ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000 or Value Copay 4000 Options to ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000 or Value HDHP 4000 Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses shall be applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses.

(vii) From ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000 or Value HDHP 4000 Options to ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000 or Value Copay 4000 Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share.

(viii) From ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000 or Value HDHP 4000 Options to ELCA-Primary Value HDHP 4000 or Select HDHP 2000 Options:

(A) The Deductible Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be

applied toward the Deductible Amount for In-network Eligible Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses.

(B) The Out-of-Pocket Amount for Eligible In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses shall be applied toward the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Eligible Prescription Drug Cost-Share.

Section 10.03 **Eligible Expenses for Preventive Services and Certain Other Services**

(a) In-network Provider. ~~-~~For services specified in Section 12.06 and rendered by an In-network Eligible Medical Provider, the Plan's benefit is one hundred percent (100%) for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, Select HDHP 2000, Value Copay 4000, Value HDHP 4000, Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, Bronze+, and Essential Copay 2500 Options. ~~The Member will not pay a Copay for In-network Eligible Preventive Services Expenses.~~

(b) Out-of-network Provider. For eligible services specified in Section 12.06 and rendered by an Out-of-network Eligible Medical Provider:

(i) The Plan's benefit is sixty percent (60%) after the deductible is met and one hundred percent (100%) after the combined out-of-pocket limit is met for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, or Bronze+ Options.

(ii) The Plan pays only the allowed amount for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Options. The allowed amount is the maximum the Plan will pay for medical services when there are not negotiated rates. The member is responsible for paying the amount exceeding the allowed amount.

~~The Member will pay Coinsurance equal to forty percent (40%) of Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses for Preventive Services specified in Section 12.06 until the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses has been met.~~

Section 10.04 **Deductibles, Coinsurance, and Copays for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses**. The Deductible Amount is the amount of covered expenses a Member incurs in the calendar year before the Plan pays a percentage of

Eligible Expenses. For all Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses other than services specified in Section 12.06, after the Member has incurred In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses subject to and equal to the In- network Deductible Amount in the calendar year, the Member will pay Coinsurance equal to twenty percent (20%) of such expenses in excess of the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In-network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached. The Member is responsible for the applicable per-Member In- network Medical and Mental Health Deductible Amount which is shown in the Appendix.

(a) Traditional Benefits Program.

(i) For the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000 and Value HDHP 4000 Options~~s~~, the In-network Deductible Amount for Members with individual (single) coverage is specified in the Appendix. For Members with family coverage (i.e. more than one family member is covered), there is no individual Deductible Amount; the sum of In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Eligible Expenses for the Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the family In-network Deductible Amount before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses. Deductible Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

[(ii) omitted]

For the ELCA-Primary Gold+ and ~~Option and the ELCA-Primary~~ Platinum+ Options, an individual Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses that meet the individual In-network Deductible Amount before the entire family In-network Deductible Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the In-network Medical and Mental Health Deductible Amounts for the Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's Family must equal the Maximum In-network Deductible Amount for the type of family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses unless the amounts were incurred by an individual Family Member who has already satisfied the individual In-network Deductible Amount. Deductible Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(ii) For the ELCA-Primary Bronze+ ~~Option~~ and ~~the ELCA-Primary~~ Silver+ Options, the In-network Deductible Amount for Members with individual (single) coverage is specified in the Appendix. For Members with family coverage (i.e. more than one family member is covered), there is no individual Deductible Amount; the sum of In-network Medical, Mental Health and Prescription Drug Eligible Expenses for the Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible

Children of the Member's family must equal the family In-network Deductible Amount before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses. Deductible Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(iii) For the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000 ~~Option~~ and ~~the ELCA-Primary~~ Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Options, Copays shown in the Appendix will apply to:

[balance omitted]

Section 10.05 **Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses**. The Maximum In-network Out-of- Pocket Amount the Member must pay pursuant to Section 10.04 for Deductibles, Coinsurance and Copays, for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Cost-Share for Prescription Drug Expenses incurred in a calendar year is shown in the Appendix.

The Member is responsible for the applicable per-Member In-network Medical and Mental Health Out-of-Pocket Amount listed in the Appendix.

(a) For the ELCA-Primary Gold+ ~~Option~~ and ~~the ELCA-Primary~~ Platinum+ Options, an individual family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Prescription Drug Cost-Share that meet the individual Out-of-Pocket Amount before the entire family Out-of-Pocket Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the In- network Medical and Mental Health Out-of-Pocket Amounts and Prescription Drug Cost-Share for each Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for the family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays one hundred percent (100%) of Eligible Expenses. Out-of-Pocket Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(b) For the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Bronze+ ~~Option~~ and ~~the ELCA-Primary~~ Silver+ Options, the In-network Out-of-Pocket Amount for Members with individual (single) coverage is specified in the Appendix. For Members with family coverage (i.e., more than one family member is covered), an individual family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Prescription Drug Expenses that meet the individual Out-of-Pocket Amount before the entire family Out-of-Pocket Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the In-network Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Out-of-Pocket Amounts for each Member, Spouse and Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for the family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays one hundred

percent (100%) of Eligible Expenses. Out-of-Pocket Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(c) For the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, ~~Option and the ELCA-Primary~~ Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Options, an individual family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Deductible, Coinsurance, and Copays, and Prescription Drug Cost-Share that meet the individual In-Network Out- of-Pocket Amount before the entire family Out-of-Pocket Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the In-network Medical and Mental Health Out-~~-~~of-Pocket Amounts and Prescription Drug Cost-Share for each Member, Spouse, and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for the family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays one hundred percent (100%) of Eligible Expenses. Out-of-Pocket Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

Section 10.06 **Deductibles, Coinsurance, and Copays for Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses**. For all Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses other than services specified in Section 12.06, after the Member has incurred Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses equal to the Out-of-network Deductible Amount in the calendar year, the Member will pay Coinsurance equal to forty percent (40%) of such expenses in excess of the Out-of- network Deductible Amount until the Maximum Out-of-network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached if the Member has the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Gold+, Platinum+, Bronze+, or Silver+ O~~o~~ption; and twenty percent (20%) if the Member has the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, ~~or~~ Value Copay 4000 or Essential Copay 2500 O~~o~~ption.

The Member is responsible for the applicable per-Member Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health Out-of-Pocket Amount listed in the Appendix.

(a) For the ELCA-Primary Gold+ Option and the ELCA-Primary Platinum+ Option an individual family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses that meet the individual Deductible Amount before the entire family Deductible Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health Deductible Amounts for each Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's Family must equal the Maximum Deductible Amount for the type of family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses. Deductible Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(b) For the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Bronze+, ~~Option~~

and ~~the ELCA-Primary~~ Silver+ Option, the Out-of-network Deductible Amount for Members with individual (single) coverage is specified in the Appendix. For Members with family coverage (i.e. more than one (1) family member is covered), there is no individual Deductible Amount; the sum of Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Deductible Amounts for the Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the family Out-of-network Deductible Amount before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses. Deductible Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(c) For the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, ~~Option and ELCA-Primary~~ Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Option, an individual Family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses that meet the individual Deductible Amount before the entire family Deductible Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health Deductible Amounts for each Member, Spouse, and Eligible Children of the Member's Family must equal the Maximum Deductible Amount for the type of family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses. Deductible Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

[balance omitted]

Section 10.07 **Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Expenses**. The Out-of-Pocket Amount is the amount of covered expenses a Member incurs in the calendar year before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses. The Maximum Out-of-network Out- of-Pocket Amount the Member must pay pursuant to Section 10.06 for Deductibles, Coinsurance and Copays for Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Cost-Share incurred in the calendar year for Out-of-network Prescription Drug Expenses is shown in the Appendix.

The Member is responsible for the applicable per-Member Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health Out-of-Pocket Amount listed in the Appendix.

(a) For the ELCA-Primary Gold+ Option and the ELCA-Primary Platinum+ Option, an individual family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Prescription Drug Cost-Share that meet the individual Out-of-Pocket Amount before the entire family Out-of-Pocket Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the Out-of- network Medical and Mental Health Out-of-Pocket Amounts and Prescription Drug Cost-Share for each Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for the family coverage elected by the Member before the

Plan pays one hundred percent (100%) of Eligible Expenses. Out-of-Pocket Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(b) For the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Bronze+, ~~Option~~ and ~~the ELCA-Primary~~ Silver+ Option, the Out-of-network Out-of-Pocket Amount for Members with individual (single) coverage is specified in the Appendix. For Members with family coverage (i.e., more than one family member is covered), an individual family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health expenses and Prescription Drug Expenses that meet the individual Out-of- Pocket Amount before the entire family Out-of-Pocket Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health and Prescription Drug Out-of-Pocket Amounts for each Member, Spouse or Eligible Same Gender Partner and Eligible Children of the Member's Family must equal the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for the Family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays one hundred percent (100%) of Eligible Expenses. Out-of-Pocket Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

(c) For the Select Copay 2000, ~~Option and~~ Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Options, an individual Family Member can incur Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses and Prescription Drug Cost-Share that meet the individual Out-of-Pocket Amount before the entire family Out-of-Pocket Amount is met. For Members with family coverage, the sum of the Out-of-network Medical and Mental Health Out-of-Pocket Amounts and Prescription Drug Cost-Share for each Member, Spouse, and Eligible Children of the Member's family must equal the Maximum Out-of-Pocket Amount for the family coverage elected by the Member before the Plan pays one hundred percent (100%) of Eligible Expenses. Out-of-Pocket Amounts are specified in the Appendix.

Section 10.11 **Center of Excellence**. If a Member who is age eighteen (18) or older requires an organ transplant in accordance with Section 12.05, bariatric surgery, knee replacement surgery, hip replacement surgery, or spine surgery, the services must be approved in advance by the Care Coordinator. Such services must be performed at a Center of Excellence, as defined by the Medical and Mental Health Benefits Administrator or at an In-network Hospital or Facility, in order to be an Eligible Medical Expense. All Hospital and Facility Medical Expenses related to an approved transplant, bariatric surgery, knee replacement surgery, hip replacement surgery, and spine surgery, for such Member will be reimbursed as follows:

(a) For a Center of Excellence, ~~the Member~~ a Member with ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, or Bronze+ Options will pay Coinsurance equal to twenty percent (20%) of eligible Hospital and Facility Medical Expenses in excess of the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In- network Out-of-

Pocket Amount has been reached. In addition, the Plan will reimburse up to ten thousand dollars ($10,000) for travel and lodging expenses, except meals, for the Member and her/her companion, provided that such expenses are approved in advance by the Care Coordinator.

(b) For a Center of Excellence, a Member with ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Select Copay 2000, Value Copay 4000 or Essential Copay 2500 Options will pay Coinsurance equal to thirty percent (30%) of eligible Hospital and Facility Medical Expenses in excess of the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In- network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached. In addition, the Plan will reimburse up to ten thousand dollars ($10,000) for travel and lodging expenses, except meals, for the Member and her/her companion, provided that such expenses are approved in advance by the Care Coordinator.

[balance omitted]

Section 15.05 **Cost-Share for Prescription Drugs**. Member Cost-Share, including Copays, Coinsurance, Deductible Amounts and Out-of-Pocket Limits for Eligible Prescription Drug Expenses shall be determined in accordance with the following:

(a) A Member with the ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000, ~~or~~ Value Copay 4000, or Essential Copay 2500 Options who purchases:

(i) Prescription Drugs from a retail pharmacy that participates in the pharmacy network of the Prescription Drug Benefits Administrator, from the Specialty Drug Pharmacy, or from the Prescription Drug Mail Order Pharmacy, the Member shall pay the Cost-Share for each prescription. Such Cost-Share is dependent upon whether the Prescription Drug is a generic drug, a preferred (formulary) brand-name drug or a non-preferred (non-formulary) brand-name drug, as determined by the Prescription Drug Benefits Administrator. (See Appendix for applicable Cost-Share amounts). Members with the ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000, ~~or~~ Value Copay 4000, or Essential Copay 2500 Options shall pay the Prescription Drug Cost-Share until the ELCA-Primary Out-of-Pocket Limit is met. (See Appendix for applicable Out-of-Pocket Limit amounts).

[(ii)-(iv) omitted]

Notwithstanding the foregoing, for a Member enrolled in the ELCA- Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Select Copay 2000, ~~or~~ Value Copay 4000, or Essential Copay 2500 Options, the cost of certain specialty prescription drugs, considered nonessential drugs under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, will not apply toward satisfying the Member's Out-of-

Pocket Amount. Cost-Share for these specialty drugs may be set to the maximum of the Plan's Cost-Share amount or to the available manufacturer-funded Cost-Share assistance.

(b) A Member with the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Bronze+, ~~Option~~ or Silver+ Options who purchases:

[balance omitted]

Section 20.02 **Definitions**. Certain terms are specific to this Article XX and are defined below. Except for the terms defined below, terms that are capitalized throughout the Plan are defined terms, the definitions for which are set forth in various Plan sections.

[(a)-(d) omitted]

(e) **PWA Member**. A "PWA Member" is an individual designated as the account holder under the rules and regulations of Portico Benefit Services who is a Sponsored Member, or his or her Eligible Spouse, Eligible Same Gender Partner if s/he is a tax dependent as defined in Code § 105(b) or eligible Dependent covered under this Plan in the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Bronze+, or ~~Option or ELCA-Primary~~ Silver+ Options and the Sponsored Member is not eligible to participate in the Health Savings Account of the ELCA Flexible Benefits Plan due to enrollment in Medicare and, the Sponsored Member's Participating Employer has elected to contribute to Health Savings Accounts of the ELCA Flexible Benefits Plan for Sponsored Members.

ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plan

Presented November 2025; Effective January 1, 2026

REASON: **Recommended changes to health benefit options under the Benefits reExamined initiative**

APPROVAL LEVEL: **BOT122 November 2025**

Section 10.03 **Eligible Expenses for Preventive Services and Certain Other Services**

(a) In-network Provider. For services specified in Section 12.06 and rendered by an In-network Eligible Medical Provider, the Plan's benefit is one hundred percent (100%) for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, Select HDHP 2000, Value Copay 4000, Value HDHP 4000, Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, Bronze+, and Essential Copay 2500 Options.

(b) Out-of-network Provider. For eligible services specified in Section 12.06 and rendered by an Out-of-network Eligible Medical Provider:

i. The Plan's benefit is sixty percent (60%) after the deductible is met and one hundred percent (100%) after the combined out-of-pocket limit is met for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary ~~Select HDHP 2000~~, ~~Value HDHP 4000,~~ Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, or Bronze+ Options.

ii. The Plan's benefit is fifty percent (50%) after the deductible is met and one hundred percent (100%) after the combined out-of-pocket limit is met for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000 and Value HDHP 4000 Options.

iii. The Plan pays only the allowed amount for Members enrolled in the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Options. The allowed amount is the maximum the Plan will pay for medical services when there are not negotiated rates. The member is responsible for paying the amount exceeding the allowed amount.

Section 10.04 **Deductibles, Coinsurance, and Copays for In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses**. The Deductible Amount is the amount of covered expenses a Member incurs in the calendar year before the Plan pays a percentage of Eligible Expenses.

~~For all Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses other than services specified in Section 12.06, after the Member has incurred In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses subject to and equal to the In- network Deductible Amount in the calendar year, the Member will pay Coinsurance equal to twenty percent (20%) of such expenses in excess of the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In-network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached.~~

For ELCA-Primary Platinum+, Gold+, Silver+, Bronze+, and Essential Copay 2500 Options, all Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses - except those specifically detailed in Section 12.06 - are subject to the following: After a Member has incurred In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses equal to the In-network Deductible Amount within a calendar year, the Member will be responsible for Coinsurance equal to twenty percent (20%) of expenses exceeding the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In-network Out-of-Pocket Amount is reached.

For ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, Value Copay 4000, Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000 option, all Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses – except those specifically detailed in Section 12.06 – are subject to the following: After the Member has incurred In-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses equal to the In-network Deductible Amount within a calendar year, the Member will be responsible for Coinsurance equal to thirty percent (30%) of expenses exceeding the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In-network Out-of-Pocket Amount is reached.

The Member is responsible for the applicable per-Member In-~~-~~network Medical and Mental Health Deductible Amount which is shown in the Appendix.

[(a)(i)(A)-(L) omitted] *(note: this is Traditional Benefits Section)*

A Copay~~s will~~ appl~~y~~ies to Emergency Room Visits for the Select Copay 2000 Option, but it is waived if admitted. For other Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses, the Deductible and Coinsurance shown in the Appendix will apply.

[balance of (a) omitted]

[(b)(i)-(iii)(A)-(L) omitted] *(note: this is Flexible Benefits Section)*

A Copay~~s will~~ applies~~y~~ to Emergency Room Visits for the Select Copay 2000 Option, but it is waived if admitted. For other Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses, the Deductible and Coinsurance shown in the Appendix will apply.

[balance of (b) omitted]

Section 10.06 **Deductibles, Coinsurance, and Copays for Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses**. For all Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses other than services specified in Section 12.06, after the Member has incurred Out-of-network Eligible Medical and Mental Health Expenses equal to the Out-of-network Deductible Amount in the calendar year, the Member will pay Coinsurance equal to ~~forty percent (40%)~~ fifty percent (50%) of such expenses in excess of the Out-of-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum Out-of-network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached if the Member has the ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000 or~~,~~ Value HDHP 4000 option;~~,~~ forty percent (40%) if the Member has the Gold+, Platinum+, Bronze+, or Silver+ Option; ~~and twenty percent (20%)~~ thirty percent (30%) if the Member has the ~~ELCA-Primary~~ Select Copay 2000 or~~,~~ Value Copay 4000; and, twenty percent (20%) if the Member has the ~~or~~ Essential Copay 2500 Option.

[balance omitted]

Section 10.09 **Certain Definitions Applicable to ELCA-Primary Medical and Mental Health Benefits**.

[(a)-(h) omitted]

(i) "Laboratory Testing" means a medical procedure that involves testing a sample of blood, urine, microbiological cultures, or other substance from the body. For the ELCA-Primary Select Copay 2000, ~~Option and ELCA-Primary~~ Value Copay 4000, and Essential Copay 2500 Options, a Copay applies for laboratory testing performed in conjunction with an Office Visit, Urgent Care Visit, Retail Health Clinic Visit, Specialist Office Visit, Chiropractic Visit, Telemedicine Provider Visit, Outpatient Mental Health Visit, or Substance Use Visit, or when billed separately.

[balance omitted]

Section 10.11 **Center of Excellence**. If a Member who is age eighteen (18) or older requires an organ transplant in accordance with Section 12.05, bariatric surgery, knee replacement surgery, hip replacement surgery, or spine surgery, the services must be approved in advance by the Care Coordinator. Such services must be performed at a Center of Excellence, as defined by the Medical and Mental Health Benefits Administrator or at an In-network Hospital or Facility, in order to be an Eligible Medical Expense. All Hospital and Facility Medical Expenses related to an approved transplant, bariatric surgery, knee replacement surgery, hip replacement surgery, and spine surgery, for such Member will be reimbursed as follows:

~~(a)~~(c) For a Center of Excellence, a Member with ELCA-Primary Gold+, Platinum+, Silver+, ~~or~~ Bronze+, or Essential Copay 2500 Options will pay Coinsurance equal to twenty percent (20%) of eligible Hospital and Facility Medical

Expenses in excess of the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In-~~-~~network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached. In addition, the Plan will reimburse up to ten thousand dollars ($10,000) for travel and lodging expenses, except meals, for the Member and her/her companion, provided that such expenses are approved in advance by the Care Coordinator.

~~(b)~~(d) For a Center of Excellence, a Member with ELCA-Primary Select HDHP 2000, Value HDHP 4000, Select Copay 2000, or Value Copay 4000 ~~or Essential Copay 2500~~ Options will pay Coinsurance equal to thirty percent (30%) of eligible Hospital and Facility Medical Expenses in excess of the In-network Deductible Amount until the Maximum In-~~-~~network Out-of-Pocket Amount has been reached. In addition, the Plan will reimburse up to ten thousand dollars ($10,000) for travel and lodging expenses, except meals, for the Member and her/her companion, provided that such expenses are approved in advance by the Care Coordinator.

[balance omitted]

ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plan

Presented November 2025; Effective January 1, 2026

REASON: **Excluding GLP-1 drugs for weight loss from eligible medical expenses**
APPROVAL LEVEL: **BOT122**

Section 12.08 **Exclusions from Eligible Medical Expenses**. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this Article XII, the Medical and Dental Benefits Plan does not cover the following as Eligible Medical Expenses:

[(a)-(r) omitted]

(s) Weight loss treatments and programs, unless rendered by an Eligible Medical Provider; GLP-1 drugs for weight loss remain ineligible even if prescribed by an Eligible Medical Provider.

[balance omitted]

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES TO AMEND ITS BYLAWS

WHEREAS, the *Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* require amendments to provide clarity on when a trustee's position shall be deemed vacant under Section 4.3.

WHEREAS, Section 4.3 of the Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be amended to permit changes to removal if trustees as stated below.

SECTION 4.3 Removal of Trustee. A trustee's position shall be deemed vacant following:

i. three (3) absences during any rolling three (3) ~~two (2)~~ years, commencing with the first absence; or

ii. ~~. In accordance with the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, upon~~ two (2) consecutive absences.

Alternatively, a ~~that have not been excused by the Board of Trustees, a trustee's position shall be vacant. A~~ trustee may be removed from office, with or without cause, by affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the trustees present at a duly held meeting; provided that not less than five (5) days' notice of such meeting shall be given to each trustee~~,~~ stating that removal of such trustee is to be on the agenda for such meeting~~, shall be given to each trustee~~; provided further, ~~however,~~ no such removal of a trustee shall be effective without the approval of the Church Council.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the staff is authorized and directed to take all actions necessary to amend the Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to provide clarity on when a trustee's position shall be deemed vacant under Section 4.3 as stated herein.

Theological Ethics Staff Assessment of Pending Requests for Development of Social Teaching Documents

Fall 2025

This report and recommendation considers three requests for the development of ELCA social teaching documents and provides a staff recommendation regarding each. It is organized into three parts: I) Background, II) Recommendation, and III) Specific Factors used in staff assessment. This assessment is provided in full so that the reasoning behind recommendations is transparent and explicit.

I. Background

Pending Requests

The following two requests have been deferred for several years by Church Council action. Both concern reconsiderations of prior social messages.

Request for reconsideration of the social message on "Homelessness" (1990)

Timeline

1990 – Church Council adopted social message

2022 – Churchwide Assembly adopted Memorial C4:

- *"To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Sierra Pacific Synod concerning development of a social statement on Homelessness;*
- *To request that the Church Council consider authorizing the revision of the 1990 social message on 'Homelessness' to reflect contemporary analysis of the plight and cause of the homeless."*

2023 – Church Council maintained request as pending

2024 – Church council maintained request as pending

Request for Reconsideration of Subsection of "End-Of-Life Decisions" Social Message (1992)

Timeline

1992 – Church Council adopted social message

Sept. 2023 – Florida-Bahamas Synod submitted synod council resolution to ELCA Church Council requesting authorization of reconsideration of social message, in light of legalization of physician-assisted suicide and increasing privatization of hospice care

Nov. 2023 – ELCA Church Council "…defer[red] the question of reconsidering the selected paragraph."

2025 – Churchwide Assembly approved response to Memorial C5:

- *"To receive with gratitude the request of the Saint Paul Area Synod for reconsideration of the social message on 'End-of-Life Decisions';*
- *To forward this request to the ELCA Church Council, acting in consultation with Theological Discernment staff of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, as the appropriate body to authorize a reconsideration;*
- *To identify the section titled 'Physician-Assisted Death' for a substantive reconsideration in light of legal, medical, and social changes in end-of-life care and medical assistance in dying. While focused on that section, other references connected to that topic in the social message could be reconsidered."*

New Request

Development of New Social Message on White Supremacy

Timeline

Spring 2025 – Church Council adopted resolution:

- *"To thank the Office of the Presiding Bishop for urging the ELCA Church Council to consider the use of existing resources to create a social message on White Supremacy;*
- *To direct the Theological Discernment Team in the Churchwide Office to review the request for a social message on Confronting White Supremacy and bring a recommendation to the Fall 2025 Church Council meeting on what means should be authorized to address the social questions involved."*

Options

There are several possible options in response to requests for addressing a social concern:

1) **Authorize** request for development as the year's priority (new message due in November 2026).
2) **Hold** a request for future consideration as a message.
3) **Recommend social policy resolution** as alternative social teaching.
4) **Recommend alternative means** for addressing request (e.g. educational resource, *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* issue, yearlong ELCA-wide emphasis, etc.)
5) Determine that **no action** of any kind is supportable on this topic at this time —this could be for lack of capacity, insufficient social teaching, limited significance, etc.

Capacity

There is capacity for development or reconsideration of approximately one social message every 12-18 months. This is due to both staffing capacity and the capacity of the whole church for participation in the process and of ELCA leadership bodies for review and action.

Staffing – Several writing projects will continue to be underway in 2026, including the development of study resources related to ongoing work on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* reconsiderations. In addition, Theological Ethics staff will be working in response to a request for theological analysis of artificial intelligence (AI) from the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, developing study resources related to previously adopted social teachings, and navigating significant team transitions.

Whole Church – Adoption of social teaching documents involves the time and energy of the wider ELCA "system." In the interest of the ELCA's commitment to the principle of participation, and as suggested by the Church Council's "Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force," the practice of social message development now includes an online comment period of about three months. The development or reconsideration of a social message requires work from the whole church, including significant leadership from Church Council and the Conference of Bishops, as well as work from communications staff in the churchwide organization and, of course, congregations as they learn, review, and provide comments on drafts.

Special Capacity Concerns – One important consideration for staff capacity is that the ELCA has adopted (or is likely to adopt) several new social teachings in the past two years, including a social message on "Gun-related Violence and Trauma" (2024), the social statement *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025), and a social message on child protection (scheduled for Church Council action November 2025). Study resources to encourage the use and implementation of these new social teachings have not yet been developed.

In light of these concerns, some conversation partners recommended focusing in 2026 on the development of educational resources to engage the church with recently-adopted social teachings and laying the groundwork for reconsidering or developing a new social message. This would delay development of a new social message or reconsideration of a previous one until 2027, while providing staff and the whole church time to engage other recent social teachings.

Cost – The financial costs of developing a new social message include hiring a writer, research-related costs, consulting group expenses, contracting for research and data analysis during the public comment period, design, translation, copyediting, and printing. The cost for a new social message is thus approximately $10,000-15,000. Substantive reconsiderations of social messages involve many of the same costs and would be approximately the same amount.

II. Recommendations

FSIC Recommended Action
To recommend Church Council approve the following action:

To authorize the substantive reconsideration of the sections on "Remembering the Reality" and "Walking with People Who Are Homeless" and other relevant references in the social message on "Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment" (1990) with attention to contemporary and systemic issues affecting housing in the United States and impacting individuals experiencing homelessness. These issues may include, though are not limited to, matters such as the definition of homelessness, the right to housing, the needs and responsibilities of local communities, intersectional issues impacting homelessness, and the calling of this church. This work shall be done in light of existing social teaching and in accordance with "Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns" (2018).

The other two requests will remain pending and will be considered for action by Church Council in Fall 2026. However, as noted below, as part of Theological Ethics staff's typical responsibilities for developing study resources based on or in preparation toward social teachings, Theological Ethics will assess the development of study resources in 2026 relevant to the request for a social message on white supremacy. This work will be based on the framing provided in the social statement *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025) and in conversation with the Racial Justice team, diverse networks of the ELCA, and others. This would provide for a period of engaged learning and discernment specific to social teaching by the whole church similar to the extended development period of other social teachings, such as *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) and *Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility* (2011).

Therefore, the Director further recommends the following:

FSIC Recommended Action
To recommend Church Council approve the following action:

To direct the Theological Discernment team to develop study resources for this church on the issue of white supremacy. These efforts would call on such resources as insight from the Racial Justice team, diverse networks within the ELCA, the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* and others in order to engage the whole church in communal moral discernment and learning, with a report on progress to the Church Council in April 2026.

III. Specific Assessment Factors

Specific criteria guide the Director's recommendation (from *Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns*, approved by Church Council, 2018):

a. Relevance and implications for this church's ongoing mission.
b. Significance in society.
c. Timeliness and urgency.
d. Need for address in light of existing social teaching or policy.
e. Capacity issues affecting adequate address including ELCA-wide constraints, churchwide staff and finances.

1. Reconsideration of "Homelessness"

- Evidence of Need: The current social message on homelessness does not address the current realities of homelessness in the United States and thus limits the ELCA's ability to respond from official social teaching to requests for comment or public voice. Importantly, the current social message does not include attention to the emergency housing system in the U.S., which is threatened by actions of the current federal Administration, or the increase in criminalization of homelessness. Nor does the social message address substantively affordability of housing. Significant, ethically relevant changes to housing and responses to homelessness have occurred since the adoption of this social message, including development of Housing First models and the growth of ELCA ministries addressing homelessness or accompanying people who are unhoused. These developments point to a clear need for reconsideration of the social message.
- Relevant Existing Social Teaching: The social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (1999) names housing as an issue of justice, though does not build on this in a substantive way. Likewise, the social statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (1993) names the intersection of racism and affordable housing an issue that the church is called to address but does not analyze that intersection.
- Implications for Church's Mission: Recent and foreseeable legislation at the local, state, and federal level *significantly and directly* impacts the ability of the church to accompany people who are unhoused and to address homelessness. The current social message does not provide robust guidance for the church's public witness on these issues.

2. Development of new social message on white supremacy

- Evidence of Need: The social and political context of the U.S. and the ecclesial context of the ELCA suggest the need for the ELCA to address issues related to white supremacy. This could include attention to the contradiction between recent additions to ELCA *Constitution* on diversity, equity, and inclusion on theological grounds and the current U.S. presidential administration's campaign to discredit these views. In addition, work of the Office of the Bishop's Racial Justice team awaits theological themes and guidance.
- Relevant Existing Social Teaching: The ELCA has condemned white supremacy, including racist rhetoric and ideologies, in the 2019 social policy resolution "Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric" (adopted by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.) The social statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (1993) provides theological framing and commitment to ground this work, and the recent social statement *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All* (2025) extends prior social teaching to condemn white supremacy and critique it within the context of Christian nationalism. The report "How Strategic and Authentic Is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing

Action" (also adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly) names the need for "theological framing and equipping" of the church, including a theological statement on "deconstructing whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy." Importantly, this report does not call for a social teaching specifically, though a social message could be an appropriate vehicle for theological framing.

- Timeliness and Urgency: Two prior social teachings provide the framework and grounding for addressing white supremacy and developing study resources for the whole church. With the adoption of *Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All*, Theological Ethics, consistent with other social statement processes, will assess opportunities for study resources on white supremacy in 2025 to engage the church in learning and discernment. Prior social teachings, such as the social statements *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) and *Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility* (2011), have benefitted from extended development periods that included the creation and sharing of resources to lay strong foundations for the final social teaching document. Prior social statements have also led to the development of educational resources, either on the statements as a whole or selected topics within.

3. Reconsideration of "End-of-life Decisions"

- Evidence of Need: The memorial notes societal changes in end-of-life care, particularly legislation of medical aid in dying, however, the memorial does not seem to raise substantive concerns about the basic theological approach, Christian perspectives, and ministry insights in the social message. The changes in legislative context do not imply a necessary change in ethical approach.
- Relevant Existing Social Teaching: Some of the concerns in the memorial, such as avoiding suffering near the end of life and the role of advance directives, are adequately addressed in the ELCA's social statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003), which provides a robust analysis of patient autonomy in medical care, including the freedom to refuse medical treatment. Thus, many of the concerns highlighted for attention in a reconsidered social message are already addressed in subsequent social teaching.

A Proposed Social Message on Child Protection

"Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'" —Matthew 19:14

Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America rejoices that as "Jesus invited the children (Mark 10:13-16; cf., Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17), and so we are to welcome children, teaching and learning from them in ways that recognize their dignity and complexity."[1] The stark, tragic realities of child abuse and neglect in the U.S. today demand renewed commitment to this church's sacred calling.

This social message draws on Holy Scripture, Lutheran traditions, research, and the experiences of ELCA Lutherans to deepen this church's understanding of child maltreatment, to offer a theological vision of childhood, and to call all members of the ELCA to strengthen their commitment to the dignity and well-being of children.

There are four sections in this social message:

I. Understanding Child Maltreatment
II. The Church and Child Protection
III. Elements of a Lutheran Theology of Childhood
IV. Guidance for Protecting Children

Section I, "Understanding Child Maltreatment," provides information on various forms of child maltreatment, including definitions, rates of prevalence within the United States, intersecting factors, and potential long-term consequences for children.

Section II, "The Church and Child Protection," laments the ways faith communities have contributed to or failed to prevent child maltreatment and points in hope to new ways of being through God.

Section III, "Elements of a Lutheran Theology of Childhood," describes some grounding principles of a Lutheran theology of childhood and describes some of the requirements of justice for all children.

Section IV, "Guidance for Protecting Children," describes some basic principles of the ELCA's commitment to child protection, recommends policies for worshiping communities and ministries within the ELCA, and describes policies related to pastoral care, reporting, and responses to child maltreatment within the ELCA. The section further encourages members and ministries of the ELCA to advocate for just public policies to protect children.

An appendix at the end of this social message provides more information on child protection policies for worshiping communities.

I. Understanding child maltreatment[2]

In the United States, at least 1 in 7[3]—and as many as 1 in 4[4]—children experience abuse or neglect. Even these rates may be too low, given that child maltreatment is often unreported. Both abuse and

neglect can take many forms, some of which are described below. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it is intended to provide a broader understanding of some forms of neglect and abuse.

Regardless of its specific form or the relationship or age of the perpetrator, all types of maltreatment represent a violation of the child and a violation of responsibilities for care, protection, and justice, as later sections describe.

What are some forms of child maltreatment?

Neglect

More than 75% of children who died as a result of maltreatment suffered neglect.[5] Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment in the U.S.[6] and involves the failure to meet a child's basic needs, such as "housing, food, clothing, education, access to medical care, and having feelings validated and appropriately responded to."[7] Neglect in early childhood is associated with later impairments in language development, cognition, and long-term physical health.[8]

Physical or material neglect involves the failure of a responsible adult to provide for the child's bodily needs, including but not limited to adequate food, water, shelter, and clean clothing. Examples of physical or material neglect include (but are not limited to) insufficient nutrition, unsafe or unsanitary housing conditions, or a lack of weather-appropriate clothing.

Poverty, coupled with inadequate public support, makes it difficult for loving parents or caregivers to provide for a child's needs, but poverty or food insecurity alone are not forms of neglect. Legally and ethically, physical neglect of a child is different from conditions created solely by household poverty or food insecurity.

Medical neglect is the refusal "to provide prescribed medical care or treatment or failure to seek appropriate medical care in a timely manner" and disproportionately affects children with chronic illnesses and disabilities.[9] This form of neglect is challenging to determine and is often subjective. Parents and guardians have the responsibility to make difficult choices about medical care, and at times, this can legitimately involve the refusal of certain forms of care.[10] When adults forego necessary medical care for children, however, the consequences can be fatal.[11]

Medical neglect can be complicated by religious beliefs. Some believe that faith and prayer give individuals power over disease. Some believe that reliance on trained medical care reflects distrust of God or a lack of faith. The freedom of parents or guardians to follow their religious beliefs can conflict with the rights of children to adequate, needed medical care.

While recognizing the complexity of this conflict, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that "parents may be free to become martyrs themselves. But it does not follow they are free, in identical circumstances, to make martyrs of their children."[12] Despite this, the physical health of children in the U.S. and around the world continues to be at risk due to religious beliefs about healing.

Abuse

Neglect involves a person (typically an adult) with responsibility for the care or well-being of a child. Abuse, on the other hand, can be perpetrated by anyone, including (but not limited to) parents. Potential perpetrators can include extended family members, trusted adults, strangers, individuals

in positions of power or authority, siblings, or other children. It can occur in a variety of settings, including homes, schools, care centers, churches, and other public or private spaces. Though abuse can happen anywhere, child abuse most commonly occurs in the home and is perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when parents or caregivers repeatedly fail to provide the emotional support, nurturing, or availability that children need. It occurs when others undermine a child's basic psychological needs, such as the need for safety and support. This abuse can include ignoring children, repeatedly shaming or threatening them, or dismissing their emotions. Other forms include being emotionally unavailable or distant toward them or denying comfort during distress.[13]

As they develop, children need emotional connection and support, including the opportunities to feel safe and to build trust through caring relationships with adults, older youth, and peers. When this does not happen because of emotional abuse or neglect, the long-term consequences can be similar to the effects of physical abuse.

Physical abuse is the use of physical force that can inflict injury or harm. In some definitions, this includes threats of injury or harm, which can have the same psychological and emotional effects as physical injury.[14] Nearly 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. reports experiencing physical abuse as a child.[15] Physical abuse in the home or institutional settings often starts as an attempt at discipline that escalates into harm that threatens the physical safety of the child.[16] The use of physical punishment, such as spanking or hitting, is often rooted in family and religious culture and tradition. Parents or caregivers may learn spanking from their own experiences of physical or corporal punishment.

Sexual abuse can include but is not limited to inappropriate touching, exposure to pornography, exposing genitals to children or inducing children to do the same, sexual or genital activity, or sexual conversations, flirting, or sexual innuendos shared with children or youth, either in person, online, or via phone or texting.

In the U.S., more than 12%—*nearly 1 in 8*—adults report experiencing sexual abuse as children.[17] More than 15% of children experience online sexual abuse.[18] Online sexual abuse takes many forms, including receiving unwanted sexual images, the use of coercion or threats to force sharing of sexual images of oneself or another child, or sexual conversations with adults or older youth.

Due to the high prevalence of child sexual abuse in the U.S., this church recognizes the likelihood that nearly every worshiping community within the ELCA includes people who are survivors of child sexual abuse.

How do other ethical or social issues influence child maltreatment?

Many ethical and social issues intersect with child maltreatment. These factors provide a broader understanding of the reality of maltreatment within the context of other social realities and point to solutions for reducing risk. Some of these factors increase the prevalence of neglect and abuse, while others can inhibit prevention and appropriate responses when neglect or abuse occur.

Some factors directly impact adults' ability to care for and protect children and point to the need for public support for parents and caregivers.

Inadequate knowledge or preparation for raising children, for example, can contribute to neglect, as when a new parent or caregiver simply does not know how best to meet a child's needs. In some cases, a child may be abused by a sibling or an unrelated adult, and parents or caregivers may not know how to respond effectively. This is especially true when the abuser is also a child.[19] In some cases, a parent or caregiver may themselves be victims of violence and may fear reporting their own abuse or the abuse of a child.

The substance abuse and addiction of parents and caregivers increase the risk of child neglect, because adults may be unable to provide care due to incapacitation or addiction. Substance abuse by adults in the home also increases the risk that children in the home will experience abuse.[20]

Financial uncertainty, unemployment, and a lack of paid parental leave can exacerbate parental stress and increase the risk of physical abuse and neglect.[21] Similarly, poverty and a lack of adequate health insurance increase the risk that a child will not receive needed medical care.[22]

Though children living in poverty have an increased risk of abuse or neglect,[23] child maltreatment happens in families of any socioeconomic status. Identifying abuse and neglect in affluent families and intervening to protect children can be particularly challenging due to complex power dynamics between wealthy parents, social workers, and child protection authorities.[24]

Families in poverty receive more scrutiny from researchers, law enforcement, and child protective services, which may obscure neglect and abuse in wealthier families. The lack of attention to maltreatment in affluent families and barriers to effective intervention can make it difficult for children in affluent families to get the support they need.

In part due to these disparities, poverty is also tied to increasingly punitive responses to maltreatment. For example, household poverty is a strong predictor of decisions by child protective services to remove a child from a home, despite laws in most U.S. states that prohibit defining poverty on its own as evidence of neglect.[25] Removing a child from their home is a serious decision that, even when done with good intentions, can have debilitating consequences for the health and well-being of the child and their family.

Racial bias and structural racism can also impact decisions to remove children from homes, despite federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.[26] Black children, for example, are twice as likely as white children to be removed from a home even when the circumstances of maltreatment are otherwise similar.[27] Because of experiences of racism and discrimination, many parents of color are justifiably distrustful of law enforcement and child protection systems. This may make them less likely to seek help when they need it, fearful that asking for help may lead to punitive rather than supportive responses.

Children with disabilities are more likely to experience physical abuse, medical neglect, and sexual abuse. They are also vulnerable to placement in care situations without adequate protection from abuse.[28] In some cases, lack of medical insurance or inadequate social support can threaten the ability of a family to care for a child living with disabilities.

In too many cases, however, maltreatment arises from ableism, which is prejudice or discrimination arising from the refusal to recognize the worth and dignity of people with disabilities. Acknowledging this, the ELCA has called upon congregations to "find appropriate ways to support caregivers of people who live with disabilities" and affirms the rights of children with disabilities to equal protection and freedom from abuse or neglect.[29]

Treatment based on a child's sex, gender, or sexuality can profoundly shape the risk and experience of child maltreatment. Cases of reported sexual abuse are more likely to involve girls as victims.[30] Girls are also substantially more likely to experience online sexual abuse.[31]

LGBTQIA+ children are at much higher risk of experiencing sexual, physical, and emotional or psychological abuse from adults and peers.[32] Some may also experience physical or material neglect when parents or caregivers force LGBTQIA+ children or youth out of the home due to their sex, gender, or sexuality.

Barriers to reporting may also differ by gender. Based on experiences of other victims during investigations or court cases, girls may fear that reporting sexual abuse will lead to them being portrayed as promiscuous and thus complicit in their own victimization. Transgender children may fear that they will not be listened to or that they will be revictimized.

Boys may fear that adults and other children will question their masculinity, strength, or sexuality.[33] Media depictions of abuse of boys by female adults often portray the perpetrators as seductive or coy and the male victims as willing participants in the abuse. This harmful narrative contributes to the stigma boys face as victims of child sexual abuse and makes boys less likely to report abuse and more likely to delay disclosure—and thus less likely to get the emotional and psychological support they need.[34]

These factors point to the need for a variety of responses. These include robust public support for parents, services to reduce poverty and food insecurity, increased access to addiction treatment, increased attention to the needs of children in affluent families, and ongoing education and support for parents, including new adoptive or foster parents. The disparities in outcomes for children also point to the need for more just approaches to child protection.

What are the consequences of maltreatment for children?

In the Gospels, Jesus warns the disciples of their responsibility for the spiritual harm that can result from mistreatment of children, admonishing them of the consequences should "any of you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble" (Matthew 18:6; see also Mark 9:36-42).[35] Martin Luther, reflecting on his own experiences of physical beatings, observed, "It's a bad thing if children and pupils lose their spirit on account of their parents and teachers."[36]

Modern research into "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) confirms and broadens our understanding that child neglect and abuse can have significant, long-term consequences that inhibit healthy psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual development. ACEs such as neglect and abuse place children at higher risk of severe, long-term emotional and psychological harm, including anger, guilt, and shame, and higher rates of suicidal ideation and self-harm, even years after the maltreatment has ended. Research has found long-term physical risks of ACEs, too,

including higher rates of cancer, heart disease, liver disease, sexually transmitted infections, obesity, smoking, substance abuse, and sleep disturbances.[37]

The ripple effects of trauma caused by abuse and neglect can impact victims of abuse, their families, and the wider community. Moreover, trauma's effects can linger across generations.[38]

Children victimized by abuse also can experience deep spiritual injury, such as guilt, anger at God or the church, and persistent beliefs that God is unfair. This is more likely if the perpetrator is a leader in the church or if church teachings or the Bible are used to justify abuse, maintain secrecy, or deny justice to victims.[39]

This risk of spiritual injury points to the importance of supportive pastoral and spiritual care of survivors, which many professional clinicians are not equipped to provide. Care that attends to the spiritual needs of survivors may be able to moderate symptoms of trauma and can be an important step toward healing.[40]

This church mourns the alarming rates of children abused or neglected. Each of these numbers represents a child, created by God, whose present and future well-being is threatened. Yet this church also recognizes the many other children who are not represented in these numbers due to vast underreporting of abuse and neglect. Despite valid concerns for justice for those who are falsely accused of harming a child, abuse is far more likely to be unreported than to be falsely reported. Each unreported case represents a vulnerable child who may not receive the support, care, and protection they need to recover from this trauma.

II. The church and child protection

While this church recognizes with gratitude the work many are doing to care for, educate, nurture, and protect children, this social message also recognizes with lament the Christian Church's own responsibility for the spiritual injury of survivors of child abuse and the harm caused by child maltreatment. We hear the voices crying out for the ELCA to follow the example of Christ in welcoming and caring for children with love and safety.

The ELCA recognizes that, too often, the Christian Church has:

- Allowed abusers access to vulnerable children.
- Allowed theological and scriptural justification for abuse, neglect, and threats to children.
- Failed to recognize the fullness of the image of God in children.
- Failed to welcome and care for children as Jesus would have us.
- Allowed racism and white supremacy to justify abuse under the guise of "child protection."

How has the Christian Church contributed to the prevalence of child maltreatment?

Some Christians have used narrow interpretations of the Bible or misguided religious beliefs to excuse or cover up sexual abuse.[41] Some verses of the Bible—taken out of textual and historical context—have been used to justify or encourage physical abuse. Religious descriptions of parental authority as absolute have left children feeling powerless when victimized. Leadership in the ELCA have too often not confronted these harmful teachings with reminders about appropriate limits to the exercise of authority and the priority of loving care of children found in Holy Scripture.

The teachings of this church too often have neglected the experiences, perspectives, and needs of children.[42]

Some congregations, including within the ELCA, have allowed perpetrators access to children, both through insufficient protection policies and unclear or inconsistent responses to allegations of abuse. Indeed, some experts suggest that sexual abusers of children may seek out faith communities due to a lack of policies and easy access to children.[43]

Even when clear teaching and official policy exist, as in the ELCA's expectation that all suspected abuse is to be reported, leaders often are not equipped to act responsibly. Thus many rostered ministers and lay leaders feel called to minister to and support victims of abuse but may lack training and awareness of what to do if they suspect a child has been abused. They often do not know how to access resources or information, and resources may not be available or easy to find.[44]

Inauthentic and disingenuous actions, taken under the guise of "child protection" and supported by the church, also have caused grievous harm. The Indian boarding school era in the U.S. and Canada, made possible by the leadership of churches and their collaboration with the government, enabled the abuse of thousands of children for decades. This movement was publicly justified by misleading appeals to the "best interests" of Native and Indigenous children, who were separated from their families, communities, and culture, and placed in residential centers of rampant abuse.

Though boarding schools have closed, Native Americans today carry in their bodies and communities the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Healing continues to be needed by the many people impacted by this history.[45]

This church's failure to respond effectively to the consequences of abuse has perpetuated the harm done to victims. Church leaders who abuse children are often treated with tolerance and forgiveness, even though their victims may be treated with suspicion. Churches have often encouraged victims to rush to forgiveness without paying sufficient attention to their trauma, the complexity of forgiveness, or the future safety of other children. Failure to address the spiritual harm caused by abuse is a serious and grievous abdication of the church's responsibility to care for "these little ones" and their faith.

While acknowledging the ways the ELCA and the Christian Church have fallen short of our responsibilities to children, this church turns in hope to God's power of enabling confession and new ways of being. In that spirit, this church recommits to its calling to protect children and to witness to the good news of the gospel for all.

III. Elements of a Lutheran theology of childhood

The second great commandment—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39)—lays the foundation for the church's treatment of children. Too often, Lutheran theology has conceived of the "neighbor" as an adult and neglected the responsibilities inherent in loving children as oneself. Protecting children begins with perceiving all children as images of God and as neighbors whom the church is called to love and to serve.[46]

This perspective on children is echoed in Jesus' welcome and affirmation of children. Jesus' teachings in the first century were revolutionary transformations in how adults are to view children and to exercise loving authority. In contrast to the neglect or commodification of children (cf. 2 Kings 4:1), Jesus viewed children as signs of the coming reign of God (Matthew 18:3-6). In contrast to views of children as disobedient and deserving of punishment, Jesus rebukes those who refuse to welcome and care for children (Matthew 19:13-15).

This model of authority counters punitive and abusive exercises of authority that some Christians base on biblical verses, especially verses about the use of "the rod" in Proverbs 22:15, 13:24. The use of "the rod" in the Bible should be understood in the context of treatment of children that was, at times, brutal and inhumane.[47]

This church lifts up Jesus' model of loving authority, as reflected in the gospels and the Lutheran Confessions, to parents and caregivers, who exercise authority as "God's representatives" to their children.[48] Though the Lutheran Confessions name obedience to parents as a "great, good, and holy work … assigned to children," parental authority is subject to God and is not without limits. [49] In the Large Catechism, Luther reminds us that God "does not want scoundrels or tyrants in this office or authority [of parents]."[50]

The affirmation of parental authority and the counsel for children to obey parents, found in the Large Catechism, depend on two foundations. First, parents or caregivers are expected to provide adequate physical, emotional, and spiritual care for children. Second, they are not to rule in a tyrannical way that harms the spirit of the child.[51]

The ELCA has affirmed the responsibilities of parents, caregivers, the church, and society to children in *Our Calling in Education*:

> Christians enrich our welcoming of children to a life of faith by holding together … diverse perspectives on [who] they are. … Remembering that Jesus saw children as teachers of the faith, we will listen attentively to them, honor their insights and questions, and learn from them. We will give special attention to children who are most vulnerable and those who have been wounded, and we will become stronger advocates for them. [52]

What grounding principles for a Lutheran theology of childhood can be drawn from the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions and theology, and ELCA social teaching?

A Lutheran theology of childhood, grounded in the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, ELCA social teachings, and Lutheran theology, can deepen the church's appreciation of the humanity of children and the church's responsibilities toward them. This social message offers several foundational principles toward a Lutheran theology of childhood.[53]

Children are "gifts of God[, and] God entrusts parents, the Church, and society to welcome and care for children as full participants of their communities."[54] Luther referred to children as "eternal treasure[s]"[55] and regarded the care and education of children as sacred responsibilities. In the Bible, children are sources of joy and celebration (Genesis 21:6-7; Luke 1:14).

The giftedness of children is not a transactional transfer of ownership that might allow for exploitation. Rather, "as gifts of God, children are sources of hope, joy, delight, and also obligation."[56] In the Lutheran traditions, this includes the responsibility to provide for children's education and to celebrate and foster the ways children's gifts and strengths can contribute to the common good of families and communities, even at a young age.

Children are "fully human and made in the image of God [and,] therefore, are worthy of the dignity and respect due to all human beings."[57] Their right to protection and care is rooted in their creation in the image of God, which endows them with dignity that "society should not deny … for any reason."[58] Children's dignity and value are not merely potential traits that children earn by the kinds of adults they may become.[59]

Children are both "models and teachers of faith" and developing beings, whom adults are to instruct and guide, that children may be "formed for their vocation … with gentleness and love."[60] In the Bible, children often serve as examples of bold, daring faith and morality.[61] Jesus preaches that adults should look to children as exemplars of what it means to live in the coming reign of God (Matthew 18:3-6).

Yet children are also still developing—physically, emotionally, spiritually, and morally—and adults are called to teach and guide them. Through word and example, adults should instruct all children in the unconditional love and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ. As children learn about sin, adults are called to share the grace of the gospel and to remind children that "all have sinned," and yet all are "justified by [God's] grace as a gift" (Romans 3:23-24.)

Adults, especially rostered leaders, in the ELCA are also called to teach children that this gift of grace neither justifies nor excuses abuse or neglect. Child abuse and neglect are sins of the people who harm children. In faith formation and education, children should be reminded of God's concern for their well-being and safety and supported with appropriate pastoral care.

Children are vulnerable neighbors, and adults are called to provide for, protect, and seek justice for all children. In the Bible, the faithfulness of the people of God is judged by their treatment of orphans and other vulnerable neighbors (Isaiah 10:1-2). Through the prophet Isaiah, God commands the people to "defend the orphan" (Isaiah 1:17). God's treatment of children provides a model for compassionate care of children (1 Kings 17:8-16).

Recognizing the church's calling to defend and care for vulnerable neighbors, this church has declared, "The needs of the vulnerable and marginalized must be represented and given particular and vigorous attention."[62] This teaching is especially relevant to children, who remain vulnerable to and dependent on adults in their households, the church, and the community.

In previous social teachings, the ELCA has recognized the particular vulnerability of children caught in social, political, and economic systems outside their control. For example, this church has:

- Called for an end to the "trying, sentencing, and incarceration [of] children in the adult [criminal justice] system."[63]
- Urged protection of the rights of Palestinian children against detention and torture.[64]
- Affirmed the church's accompaniment and advocacy for migrant children through the ELCA's AMMPARO strategy.[65]

The ELCA gives thanks to leaders and ministries that support children and families caught in these systems.

What does it mean to treat children with dignity and justice?

"Jesus reinforced the dignity of all children by welcoming and blessing them and saying that to them belongs the kingdom of heaven."[66] This inherent dignity entitles children to justice and to freedom from exploitation and maltreatment.

The ELCA has consistently articulated four principles of justice:

- "The principle of *sufficiency* means meeting the basic needs of all humanity and all creation.
- "The principle of *sustainability* means providing an acceptable quality of life for present generations without compromising that of future generations.
- "The principle of *participation* means all are entitled to be heard and to have their interests considered when decisions are made.
- "The principle of *solidarity* means that we stand together with all of God's creation."[67]

These principles provide insight into what justice demands for children.

Sufficiency: Children have the right to have their basic needs met. Parents and caregivers should be supported when they cannot meet children's needs due to poverty or incapacity.

Sustainability: Adults have the responsibility to respect and promote[68] children's long-term well-being, which includes protecting them from the long-term consequences of maltreatment.

Participation: Children have the right to be treated as human beings with dignity, regardless of their age.[69] They have the right to be educated and informed as appropriate for their stage of development.[70]

Solidarity: Solidarity demands that children have advocates for their rights in public policy and within law enforcement and child protection systems. Within the church, leaders are called to act in solidarity with children, especially when they are potentially threatened by adults, and to provide for their safety and security.[71]

Some situations require careful moral discernment of what justice requires. The principle of sufficiency, for example, obliges adults to provide necessary medical care for children. However, justice also requires special discernment when the burden of care to the patient might outweigh potential benefits.[72]

The principles of justice also inform this church's teaching that child labor—when children are forced to work or placed by adults in unsafe industries or jobs—is exploitative. [73] The principle of solidarity grounds this church's deep concern at the relaxation of child labor laws in the U.S. and advocacy for laws that protect children from exploitation. However, the principle of participation also grounds support for youth who choose to work in safe, age-appropriate jobs, where they develop important skills and contribute to the community.

IV. Guidance for protecting children

What are some basic commitments of the ELCA to child protection?

Reporting

The ELCA expects all leaders in the church—rostered and lay, volunteer and paid—to report suspected child neglect or abuse to the appropriate secular authorities, who are equipped to investigate allegations.[74] This includes reporting child maltreatment that occurs in the church, the home, or other settings.

Countering violence with peace

This church is called to address scriptural misinterpretations that have been used to justify violence and promote physical punishment of children. This arises from God's call for the whole body of Christ to model peace and for Christians to be peacemakers.[75] Worshiping communities are called to be safe spaces, free of violence, where physical intimidation or the use of force—including physical discipline—are specifically prohibited.

In their public witness, Christians are called to advocate against violent conflict that leaves children more vulnerable, especially in situations of war or forced displacement. This includes collective efforts to hold accountable perpetrators of abuse or violence against children.

Discerning forgiveness

Christians are called to share the good news of God's grace through Jesus Christ. Lutherans affirm that we are set free from sin by God's loving word of forgiveness and called to share the gospel of grace with all the world.

In the Bible, forgiveness assumes a recognition of guilt (often public) and the active pursuit of reconciliation (Matthew 5:23). Forgiveness does not imply a complete absence of accountability. Indeed, even the criminal on the cross whom Jesus forgave first confronted his own sin and guilt (Luke 23:39-43). Though we are saved by God's grace and neither by our confession of sin nor our works of repetance, Lutherans understand grace as freeing us to love and serve the neighbor and to confront the many ways we fall short of that responsibility.

Too often, the promise of forgiveness becomes a harmful burden when God's church urges victims of child abuse to rush to forgiveness of their abusers. Christians, through the act of forgiving others, strive for a moral ideal that reflects God's free gift of grace to us. When we demand that others forgive, however, it risks transforming this gift of God into a new religious law. Under such a law, victims may experience guilt, a fear that they themselves will not be forgiven, and anger at the church and God for demanding such a sacrifice.

Leaders in the ELCA must exercise care when supporting victims of child maltreatment through the process of forgiveness, including when victims are not ready to forgive. Though some acknowledge the potential therapeutic release from bonds of anger and resentment, for child victims, the trauma of abuse creates its own bonds.

This church expects leaders providing pastoral care to make clear to victims of child maltreatment that being unable to forgive is not a rejection of faith or the gospel. Rather, forgiveness is a lengthy

process of transforming the relationship between the offender and the victim and between the victim, the offender, and the community.[76] It is neither a straight path nor a single act.

Trauma-informed Ministry

This church is called to accompany victims toward healing with an awareness of the deep and lasting impacts of trauma. Though trauma may not be resolved completely, this church calls itself to learn and practice effective responses to trauma and to exercise trauma-informed and healing-centered ministry.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) outlines six principles of a trauma-informed approach: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues.[77]

A trauma-informed approach will look different in different settings. Some examples of trauma-informed practices include:

- Creating a welcoming, nonjudgmental environment.
- Letting people who have experienced trauma lead their process of healing.
- Recognizing that trauma may cause unexpected emotional reactions to situations.
- Clearly communicating and adhering to policies for safety.
- Considering how sermons, songs, or Scripture readings may be heard by someone experiencing trauma.
- Helping survivors of abuse to advocate for themselves.[78]

This social message encourages congregational leaders to seek training in trauma-informed care. In support, ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries should find ways to provide trauma-informed care for students and trauma-informed training for emerging leaders.[79]

Victims are more than their trauma, and those who minister to them share in holy yearning for the fullness of God's promise of a time when "crying and pain will be no more" (Revelation 21:3-4).[80]

How can church policy help prevent and address child maltreatment?[81]

Many rostered ministers, lay leaders, members, and survivors of maltreatment in the ELCA yearn for clear policies and guidance for preventing and addressing child maltreatment. This section outlines such policies, though it is not exhaustive.[82]

For more information on these policies, see the appendix to this social message.

Congregations, ministries, and other worshiping communities within the ELCA are strongly encouraged to implement and clearly communicate the following policies *at a minimum*:

- Screenings and background checks for all staff and volunteers working with children or youth.
- A waiting period of involvement with the church before new members or volunteers are permitted to accompany children or youth on trips or overnight events.
- Annual training for leaders on recognizing and reporting signs of maltreatment.

- Public posting of written information (for children *and* adults) about how to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- A "two-deep" policy requiring at least two adults to be present whenever children and youth are transported and at activities involving children or youth, including having at least two adults involved in any online communications with children or youth, such as text threads, chats, or emails.
- Sign-in and sign-out lists for events with children and youth, and clear limits on who can sign a child out from an event.
- Sensitivity to food insecurity, including avoiding behaviors that shame children for eating too much or taking food home from events.
- Policies on photography or video recording of children and youth, including limiting photography or video recording to authorized adults and requiring signed permission forms for the sharing of photographs or video.
- Limited access to private or nonvisible areas of a building during events or overnights.

In addition to these policies, congregations, synods, ministries, and institutions of the ELCA are called upon to collaborate in raising awareness of existing ELCA resources on sexual misconduct and child abuse, to provide ongoing training and resources for children, youth, and family ministers, and to involve children, youth, and family ministers in substantive decision-making about child protection policies at the congregational, synodical, and churchwide level.

Some congregations are concerned that a lack of volunteers, staff, or funding can hinder implementation of policies. Synods and the churchwide organization of the ELCA should consider providing financial support, information about free or low-cost training available from organizations and agencies, and avenues for leaders to share creative ideas for implementation in different settings.

A congregation's capacity to implement policies should inspire creativity, thoughtful discernment, and dialogue. However, it should not end in inaction toward this church's commitment to protect all people from harm.

What policies should guide pastoral care and worship?

This church and its rostered ministers have a responsibility to provide pastoral care for children and youth and see to the safety of children and youth in all settings. Pastoral counseling of children and youth should be done in a publicly visible place. Leaders should also maintain written records or reports on one-on-one counseling sessions with children and youth. Care must be taken to balance privacy and safety in such situations.

Counseling perpetrators of child abuse, especially child sexual abuse, requires specific skills and training that few rostered leaders have. In humility, leaders providing pastoral care must urge perpetrators to instead seek professional counseling. This church gives thanks for seminaries and organizations that provide training in this specialized area and encourages all rostered leaders to avail themselves of this training.

As a community rooted in the gospel, the ELCA affirms that those who commit crimes and harm others "are still human beings" and "are in need of accompaniment and of receiving the gift of the

gospel in word and sacrament."[83] This church teaches that adults who harm children are not separated from the grace of God.

However, the church is also called to protect those who are vulnerable. This requires "extraordinary care" and prayerful discernment.[84] Worshiping communities are encouraged to utilize resources from the ELCA churchwide organization's misconduct prevention staff or their synod in their discernment and planning.

What does this church teach about confidentiality in pastoral care and reporting?

The ELCA expects all leaders in the church—rostered and lay, volunteer and paid—to report suspected child neglect or abuse to the appropriate secular authorities, who are equipped to investigate allegations.[85] This includes reporting child maltreatment that occurs in the church, the home, or other settings.

Love and justice call the church to consider long-term consequences of maltreatment and obligate the church to take steps to reduce the long-term harm victims can experience. The ELCA has stated its support for the reporting and prosecution of adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse, including noncontact sexual abuse.[86] This social message extends this support to all forms of child maltreatment. Reporting is one way in which survivors of abuse can access the care and treatment they need.

This, of course, presents special concerns for confidentiality within private confession to a rostered minister. Some fear that perpetrators of abuse will not confess if a requirement to report exists. Others fear that without such a requirement, perpetrators may use confession as spiritual absolution, allowing them to continue the abuse without guilt.

The ELCA constitution, in general, supports the confidentiality of confession and pastoral counseling as an important element of spiritual care. Confidentiality fosters the trust necessary for people to seek spiritual care when overwhelmed by guilt, shame, or fear. However, when a person seeking pastoral care or confession "intends great harm to self or others," this church recognizes an exception to the protection of confidentiality.[87]

Overwhelming research points to the long-term negative effects of child maltreatment on the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of children. The connection between these experiences and future ill effects is so strong that it should be considered when evaluating what constitutes "great harm" and an exception to confidentiality.

Though state laws vary on rostered ministers' status as mandated reporters, in this church, the right to confidentiality in pastoral counseling or individual confession does not override the body of Christ's clear biblical mandate to protect the vulnerable. Rostered ministers thus have an obligation to report child maltreatment. In situations of counseling or confession when someone may disclose that they have harmed a child, the rostered minister should inform them of the limits of confidentiality.

What is the ELCA's response to abuse that occurs within the church?

Child abuse that is perpetrated by trusted people within the church can be especially traumatizing to victims and faith communities. These tragedies threaten trust in the church and in God. Accordingly, the ELCA's "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" explicitly provides that abuse of another, including child abuse, sexual abuse, and abuse of family members, is conduct incompatible with the ministerial office.[88]

Because of the gravity of the violation, when a rostered minister is reported for suspected child abuse, the minister should be administratively removed from their call during the investigation out of an abundance of caution for the whole community.[89] If the allegations involve a volunteer or lay leader, they should also be removed from their role during an investigation.

In addition to reporting suspected child maltreatment by a rostered minister to law enforcement or child protective services, the ELCA synod should promptly commence appropriate disciplinary proceedings.[90] In these proceedings, this church urges disciplinary committees to consider permanent removal from the roster when appropriate.

This church also acknowledges that victims can be retraumatized during investigations. Care and advocacy for a victim's rights should be provided for the protection of victims during investigations and disciplinary proceedings.

What training and resources are needed to protect and nurture children?

Many people throughout the ELCA are inspired by the Holy Spirit to do more to protect children and yearn for the training and resources to do so.

Synods and the churchwide organization are urged to collaborate in providing training and resources for rostered ministers and lay leaders in recognizing and reporting abuse as well as guidance for preaching and teaching on the topic of child maltreatment.

The ELCA benefits from the resources on sexual misconduct that many synods and the churchwide organization already provide. At the same time, we acknowledge a need for greater awareness and ease of access to these resources.[91] Synods and the churchwide organization are encouraged to continue developing new resources as needed and to find means to ensure that such resources are easily accessible.

Synods and the churchwide organization are also encouraged to provide resources for parents and caregivers on effective forms of nonphysical discipline and theological resources that can equip the church to address child maltreatment, including speaking out against religiously motivated medical neglect.

In addition to providing resources and training, synods can be key partners in providing pastoral care to the community when child abuse occurs.

Seminaries are encouraged to provide coursework related to ministry with victims and perpetrators. Where possible, seminaries should equip rostered leaders for this type of specialized counseling. Because Scripture is often manipulated to justify or excuse child abuse, and because of the great

spiritual harm done to victims, seminaries and lay training schools are encouraged to equip students to interpret the Bible and theology in ways that correct these distortions.

Congregations, outdoor ministries, schools, and campus ministries are encouraged to continue to provide training for new staff in recognizing and reporting child abuse and child neglect. This church supports their efforts to remove from leadership any adult accused of harming a child and gives thanks for ministries providing trauma-informed spiritual care and development for young people. Congregations with related schools or campus ministries are urged to support the efforts of schools or campus ministries in implementing effective policies.

Rostered ministers and congregational leaders are urged to familiarize themselves with existing ELCA resources on sexual misconduct, including resources on reporting child abuse and preventing sexual misconduct.

What public policies are needed to protect and care for children?

Recognizing society's role in protecting and caring for children, the ELCA encourages individual members and the ELCA's Witness in Society to advocate for just, effective public policies, including:

- Funding and support for households facing poverty or food insecurity.[92]
- Living wage, paid family leave,[93] and paid sick leave laws,[94] which allow caregivers resources and time to care for their children and which reduce the risk of abuse or neglect.
- Support for families of children with disabilities as well as oversight of schools and care facilities attending to children living with disabilities.
- Support for and protection of children in the foster care system, including as youth "age out" of the system and begin life on their own.
- Oversight of agencies empowered to remove children from homes, including robust antidiscrimination measures.
- Robust child labor laws that prevent children from being placed in hazardous working conditions.
- Effective child trafficking laws and support for migrant and immigrant children.
- Ratification by the U.S. of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Legislation that addresses bullying and harassment, including when it occurs online.

During investigations of suspected child maltreatment, children can be retraumatized by encounters with law enforcement, attorneys, and investigators. For this reason, the ELCA recognizes the role of child advocates to accompany and shelter children during the process.

This church also recognizes the important role of trained chaplains[95] in addressing the spiritual trauma children can face both from their victimization and during investigations and court proceedings. The ELCA thus encourages public policy advocacy to support the work of both child advocates and trained chaplains and urges increased funding for both these important roles.

V. Conclusion: Guided by the good news of Jesus Christ

This church draws hope from the promise of God's love and from the many people, organizations, and ministries both within and outside the ELCA that serve, care for, nurture, and protect children, including:

- Leaders of children, youth, and family ministry, including outdoor ministries and ELCA schools and learning centers.
- Therapists, counselors, teachers, health care professionals, and advocates who meet the needs of children in the U.S. facing trauma or instability.
- Ministries and social service organizations that accompany new parents and caregivers.
- Organizations, communities, and movements that support victims in advocacy for justice, healing, and legal protection.
- Workers who protect and enhance the dignity of children, including social workers, teachers, child abuse investigators, prosecutors, child advocates, and those providing licensing and training for professionals who work with children.
- Lutheran social ministry organizations that support families and children.

In concluding this message, we reflect on the words of Paul: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Drawing on those words, this church declares to victims of all forms of child maltreatment:
We are convinced that neither your trauma, nor your pain, nor your grief, nor the injustice done to you, nor the sin of adults around you, nor your anger, nor your doubt, nor your fear can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. You were created in God's own image, and you remain God's beloved child.

This church's public witness will be guided by this promise. We will speak with vulnerable children when they can speak, and we will speak on their behalf when they cannot find the words. We will establish policies and practices to prevent harm, and we will accompany victims as they seek healing. We will support justice for all children, and we will exercise the sacred responsibility to which God calls the Christian Church, to nurture and protect these precious gifts.

In so doing, this church will bear witness to the coming reign of God—and to the fullness of peace, healing, and wholeness that awaits children, youth, adults, and all of creation.

APPENDIX — Child Protection Policies

The most important way worshiping communities can protect children from harm is by establishing and following clear policies. Below, we offer more information about the policies recommended in this social message.

1. **Screenings and background checks for all staff and volunteers working with children or youth.**

Though screening and background checks are not a perfect way to prevent harm, they are an essential step toward protecting children in the church. They "should be considered as one part of a comprehensive *process* that has multiple components" and will not look exactly the same in every worshiping community.[96]

Practices to consider include: adding to job postings a statement about the church's commitment to child protection, asking interview questions about a candidate's approach to managing children's behavior, requiring staff or volunteers to read and sign a child protection policy, and reviewing criminal background checks on staff and volunteers.

2. **A waiting period of involvement with the church before new members or volunteers are permitted to accompany children or youth on trips or overnight events.**

Most child abuse occurs in the home and is perpetrated by someone the child knows well and trusts. However, abuse can occur in any setting, including worshiping communities, where abusers have access to children. A waiting period before working directly with children is an imperfect but important preventative measure that allows the community to get to know a new person before allowing them increased access to spaces or events involving children. This waiting period can also provide time for the community to recognize and address concerns before a new person has increased access to children.

3. **Annual training for all leaders on recognizing and reporting signs of maltreatment.**

As this social message notes, many staff and volunteers in the church want to protect children but often are unsure how to do so. Many are burdened by uncertainty about whether or how to report what they have witnessed or heard. Differences in state laws make this more complex.

The ELCA is clear in its teaching that all instances of suspected child maltreatment are to be reported by church leaders to appropriate authorities. The ELCA churchwide organization and most ELCA synods provide information about reporting, and congregational leaders are encouraged to avail themselves of this information. The churchwide organization and synods are encouraged to provide access to ongoing training, including for worshiping communities that may not have the capacity or funding to access training on their own.

4. **Public posting of written information (for children *and* adults) about how to report abuse or neglect.**

Given the high rates of child maltreatment in the United States, it is likely that every ELCA worshiping community includes someone who is experiencing or has experienced abuse or

neglect. Many victims of abuse or neglect do not know how to seek help or may be afraid of seeking help.

Posting this information accomplishes two related goals. First, it provides people with the information they need to protect themselves or others. Second, public posting of information communicates the community's commitment to child protection.

5. **A "two-deep" policy requiring at least two leaders to be present whenever children and youth are transported and at activities involving children or youth, including having at least two adults involved in any online communications with children or youth, such as text threads, chats, or emails.**

Having more than one leader present during children's activities reduces the risk of abuse and can provide other benefits. In emergencies, two-deep leadership can ensure sufficient leadership to protect children and respond to the emergency. In cases of suspected child abuse, two-deep leadership also can ensure mutual accountability and support when a leader makes a report. For text threads and online communications, leaders can utilize technologies that automatically create a record of communications that other leaders can review. Similarly, leaders can communicate with an email address that other adults have access to.

6. **Sign-in and sign-out lists for events with children and youth, and clear limits on who can sign a child out from an event.**

The church can play an important role in preventing child maltreatment outside of church activities. Sign-in and sign-out lists can help ensure that children are in the care of safe, trusted adults. This is especially important if a child may be at risk from a specific adult due to past abuse or neglect.

7. **Sensitivity to food insecurity, including avoiding behaviors that shame children for eating too much or taking food home from events.**

Schools and churches are vital sources of nutritious, sufficient food for children experiencing food insecurity. Taking extra food, either to consume immediately or to take home, can be a sign of food insecurity. Yet many children who experience food insecurity also feel stigmatized or isolated and may not ask for the food they need. At events involving food, actively welcoming all children to take what they need (including "seconds") can reduce stigma or shame and ensure that children who are hungry are fed.

8. **Policies on photography or video recording of children and youth, including limiting photography or video recording to authorized adults and requiring signed permission forms for the sharing of photographs or video.**

Recording and sharing images of children raises several issues of moral concern for the church, including privacy, ownership of an image, and safety.

The internet and social media grant the ability to share images and video with friends and strangers. Once shared, though, no one—including the subject in the image or video and the person who took it—can fully control how an image or video is used. Companies may use images for commercial purposes. Abusers of children may use or share images and recordings for predatory purposes.

Revealing a child's name and location can expose them to significant risk, especially when the child has been a victim of past abuse or may be targeted by an adult who means them harm.

Clear policies about the recording and sharing of images or videos of children can reduce these risks. Most policies include stipulations such as not using a child's full name when sharing images; limiting identifiable information (such as age, name of school, or city of residence); allowing parents, caregivers, or youth to opt out of recording; and limiting who can take photos, especially during children's events.[97]

9. Limited access to private or nonvisible areas of a building during events or overnights.

Abusers of children often seek ways to isolate a child from their peers or from trusted leaders. At church events, a child should never be alone and out-of-view of others with an unrelated adult. However, it is important to remember that abuse can be perpetrated by anyone, including an older youth or a peer. Limiting access to private or nonvisible areas of a building can reduce the risk that a child is alone with someone who may harm them. In addition to protecting children from abuse, this policy can ensure that other emergencies receive immediate attention from leaders.

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[1] *Our Calling in Education* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2007), 14.

[2] "Child maltreatment" is a broad term that includes "all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." "Child Maltreatment," World Health Organization, last modified November 5, 2024, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment. Though the specific legal definition of child maltreatment is left to individual states in the U.S., federal law defines maltreatment as "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation … or an act of failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" to a child. See U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, "Child Maltreatment 2022," 2024, www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment.

[3] David Finkelhor, Heather A. Turner, and Anne Shattuck, "Prevalence of Childhood Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: Results From the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence," *JAMA Pediatrics* 169, no. 8 (2015): 746–754, doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.0676.

[4] Casey L. Brown, Musa Yilanli, and Angela L. Rabbitt, et al., *Child Physical Abuse and Neglect* (StatPearls Publishing, 2024).

[5] HHS, "Child Maltreatment 2022," 55.

[6] Nearly 80% of maltreated children experience either neglect alone or in combination with other forms of maltreatment. Brown et al.

[7] Ileana Arias, Rebecca T. Leeb, Cindi Melanson. Leonard J. Paulozzi, et al., "Child Maltreatment Surveillance: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements," U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 2008, stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/11493.

[8] John Stirling, "Understanding Medical Neglect: When Needed Care Is Delayed or Refused," *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 13 (2020): 271, doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00260-6.

[9] Lori D. Frasier, Nicole Smith, and Kathryn Crowell, "When Medical Care and Parents Collide—Parents Who Refuse Testing and/or Treatment for Children," *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 13 (2020): 277, doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00271-3. See also Stirling, "Understanding Medical Neglect," 273.

[10] Medical decisions are complex and involve a variety of factors and people. In the ELCA's social statement on *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2003), this church acknowledges, "Human healing activities in all their variety … can be avenues of healing blessed and empowered by God. Because human beings are finite, none of these activities will produce perfect health;

because of sin, each of them can be abused" (p. 5). Due to the complex and personal nature of medical decision-making, this church teaches, "Simply because a treatment or procedure exists does not mean that it should be used in every instance. The patient, family, and health-care providers need to make thoughtful decisions that serve the patient's goals and well-being and that take seriously the limits of health care resources. … We encourage people to talk together with their families and health care providers about treatment goals and types of care, and to make decisions that reflect their responsibility to be good stewards of their health and the resources that are available" (p. 8). Though this church supports individual freedom to make health care decisions—whether for oneself or on behalf of or in consideration of another person—this freedom should be understood within the context of the relationship between self and others, and self and God (see *Caring for Health*, p. 22.)

[11] Over 8% of child maltreatment fatalities involve medical neglect. See HHS, "Child Maltreatment 2022," 55.

[12] Prince v. Massachusetts, 321 U.S. 158 (1944), cited in Stirling, "Understanding Medical Neglect," 274.

[13] American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) Taskforce, "Practice Guidelines: The Investigation and Determination of Suspected Psychological Maltreatment of Children and Adolescents," APSAC, 2025, apsac.org/practice-guidelines/. A list of possible forms of psychological maltreatment can be found at apsac.org/apsac-announces-revisions-to-its-definitions-of-psychological-maltreatment/.

[14] See for example "Physical Abuse" in "Recognize the Signs of Child Abuse," Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, www.dfps.texas.gov/child_protection/child_safety/recognize_abuse.asp.

[15] Elizabeth A. Swedo, Maria V. Aslam, Linda L. Dahlberg, Phyllis Holditch Niolon, et al., "Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences Among U.S. Adults—Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011-2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 72, no. 26 (June 30, 2023): 707-715, doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7226a2.

[16] Victor I. Vieth, *On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 40.

[17] Swedo et al., "Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences," 713.

[18] David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, and Deirdre Colburn, "The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse With Online Sexual Abuse Added," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 149 (2024), doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106634. This church recognizes online child abuse as "one of the most important child-protection issues of our time" and calls for care and vigilance on behalf of parents, caregivers, society, and lawmakers. See *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009), 26.

[19] Parents of children who abuse their siblings often experience the interconnected challenges of protecting the child who has been abused, loving the child who committed the abuse, and confronting their own trauma at learning about the abuse. See Tova Lewin, Brandy Black, Maria Socolof, and Anat Talmon, "The Parental Experience and Emotional Response to Sibling Sexual Abuse: When a Parent's Most Valuable Gift Becomes a Source of Trauma," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 162, no. 3 (April 2025), doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.107079.

[20] Laura Lander, Janie Howsare, and Marilyn Byrne, "The Impact of Substance Use Disorders on Families and Children: From Theory to Practice," *Social Work in Public Health* 28, no. 3-4 (2013): 194-205, doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2013.759005.

[21] "Unemployment Linked With Child Maltreatment," American Academy of Pediatrics, ScienceDaily, last modified October 5, 2010, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101003081452.htm.

[22] Frasier et al., "Medical Care and Parents," 279.

[23] Mark A. Bellis, Karen Hughes, Nicola Leckenby, Clare Perkins, et al., "National Household Survey of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Their Relationship With Resilience to Health-harming Behaviors in England," *BMC Medicine* 12, no. 1 (2014): 1-10, doi.org/10.1186/1741-7015-12-72; Andrea J. Sedlak, Jane Mettenburg, Monica Basena, Ian Peta, et al., "Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4)," Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services 9 (2010): 2010, cap.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/sedlaknis.pdf; and Kathryn Maguire-Jack and Kierra Sattler, "Neighborhood Poverty, Family Economic Well-being, and Child Maltreatment," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, no. 5-6 (Sept 4, 2022): 4814-4831, doi.org/10.1177/08862605221119522.

[24] Claudia Bernard and Tom Greenwood, "Recognizing and Addressing Child Neglect in Affluent Families," Child & Family Social Work 24, no. 2 (May 2019): 340-347, doi.org/10.1111%2Fcfs.12619.

[25] R.L. Stollar, *The Kingdom of Children: A Liberation Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Inc., 2023), 215.

[26] Children's Bureau, "Child Welfare Practice to Address Racial Disproportionality and Disparity," Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (April 2021), available at govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-HE-PURL-gpo159394/pdf/GOVPUB-HE-PURL-gpo159394.pdf.
[27] Lincoln Rice, *The Ethics of Protection: Reimagining Child Welfare in an Anti-Black Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), xix.
[28] See Lori A. Legano, Larry W. Desch, Stephen A. Messner, et al., "Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities," *Pediatrics* 147, no. 5 (May 2021), doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-050920.
[29] "People Living With Disabilities" (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011), 9, 15.
[30] HHS, "Child Maltreatment 2022."
[31] David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, and Deirdre Colburn, "Prevalence of Online Sexual Offenses Against Children in the U.S.," *JAMA Network Open* 5, no. 10 (October 14, 2022), doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.34471.
[32] Ibid.
[33] John C. Thomas and Jonathan Kopel, "Male Victims of Sexual Assault: A Review of the Literature," *Behavioral Sciences* 13, no. 4 (April 2023). doi.org/10.3390/bs13040304.
[34] Victor I. Vieth, Rita Farrell, Rachel Johnson, Tomiko Mackey, et al. "Where the Boys Are: Investigating and Prosecuting Cases of Child Sexual Abuse When the Victim Is Male," Zero Abuse Project, accessed January 15, 2025, tinyurl.com/dhk8x2ed.
[35] See Victor I. Vieth, "Child Abuse and the Lutheran Confessional: A Call to Elevate Christ's Teachings on Children Above Church Traditions," in Craig L. Nessan and Victor I. Vieth, eds., *Here We Stand: A Lutheran Response to Child Abuse* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2025), 221.
[36] "My parents kept me under very strict discipline, even to the point of making me timid. For the sake of a mere nut my mother beat me until the blood flowed. By such strict discipline they finally forced me into the monastery; though they meant it heartily well, I was only made timid by it. They weren't able to keep a right balance between temperament and punishment. … It's a bad thing if children and pupils lose their spirit on account of their parents and teachers." Martin Luther, Table Talk, No. 3566A, "Children Must Be Disciplined With Understanding," in Theodore G. Tappert and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds. *Luther's Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967), 54:234-235.
[37] See Vincent J. Felitti, Robert F. Anda, Dale Nordenberg, et al., "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14, no. 4 (1998): 245-258; Christopher M. Jones, Melissa T. Merrick, and Debra E. Houry, "Identifying and Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 323, no. 1 (2019): 25-26; and Swedo et al., "Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences." For more information on ACEs, see cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html.
[38] "Gun-related Violence and Trauma" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2024), 6.
[39] Victor I. Vieth and Pete Singer, "Wounded Souls: The Need for Child Protection Professionals and Faith Leaders to Recognize and Respond to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse," *Mitchell Hamline Law Review* 45, no. 4, Article 6 (2019).
[40] Donald F. Walker, Henri Webb Reed, Tiffany O'Neill, et al., "Changes in Personal Religion/Spirituality During and After Childhood Abuse: A Review and Synthesis," *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1, no. 2 (2009): 130–145, doi.org/10.1037/a0016211.
[41] Adam Saradjian and Dany Nobus, "Cognitive Distortions of Religious Professionals Who Sexually Abuse Children," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 18, no. 8 (2003): 905-923, doi.org/10.1177/0886260503253881.
The following sources offer examples of such misuses of the Bible and theology. Some of these sources contain graphic descriptions of sexual abuse that may be disturbing to some readers. Sexual Ause Advisory Group, *Caring Well: A Report From the SBC [Southern Baptist Convention] Sexual Abuse Advisory Group* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2018); and Victor I. Vieth, "Lessons From the SBC Sexual Abuse Crisis," *Faith & Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Winter 2023), p. 61-73, www.civicresearchinstitute.com/online/PDF/FIPV-1503-06-Vieth-SBC.pdf. See also Basyle Tchividjian and Victor Vieth, "When the Child Abuser Has a Bible: Investigating Child Maltreatment Sanctioned or Condoned by a Religious Leader" *Faculty Publications and Presentations* 53 (2011), digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lusol_fac_pubs/53; and Victor I. Vieth, "The Need for a Trauma-informed

Lutheran Theology: A Case Study on Lutheran Study Bibles," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 51, no. 3 (July 2024), 52-66, currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/472.

[42] See Marcia J. Bunge, "Lutheran Foundations for Promoting Child Well-being and Addressing Child Maltreatment," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 24, no. 2 (April/May 2024), learn.elca.org/jle/lutheran-foundations-for-promoting-child-well-being-and-addressing-child-maltreatment/; Timothy J. Wengert, "'No Saxon Children Were Harmed in the Making of This Catechism': Luther's Catechisms of 1529 and Child Abuse," in Nessan and Vieth, eds., *Here We Stand*, 28-44, and Martin J. Lohrmann, "Support for Children in the Lutheran Confessions," in Nessan and Vieth, eds., *Here We Stand*, 45-57; and Vieth, "Lutheran Study Bibles."

[43] See Stephen L. Smallbone, William L. Marshall, and Richard Wortley, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy, and Practice* (Willan Publishing, 2008), 9-10; and Cory Jewell Jensen, "Understanding and Working With Adult Sex Offenders in the Church," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45, no. 3 (July 2018): 38, currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/133; and Stephanie Kewley, Anthony R. Beech, and Leigh Harkins, "Examining the Role of Faith Community Groups With Sexual Offenders: A Systematic Review," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 25 (2015): 147, dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.07.016.

[44] For example, a 2023 study found that only 35 of 65 ELCA synod websites provided policies specifically addressing child sexual abuse, and only 17 synods had information on reporting suspected abuse that included up-to-date contact information for law enforcement. ELCA Quality of Call Initiative for Women in Ministry, "Sexual Boundary Violations in the ELCA: Prevalence, Policy and Prevention" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), July 10, 2023, resources.elca.org/quality-of-call-initiative/elca-sexual-boundary-violations-full-report.

[45] For more on this history and current work being done to identify victims and provide opportunities for healing, visit the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative at elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/ministries-of-diverse-cultures-and-communities/indigenous-ministries-and-tribal-relations/indian-boarding-schools.

[46] As Lutheran theologian Marcia J. Bunge notes, "The neighbor includes all people, regardless of age or other distinctions, and all have equal worth." Bunge, "Lutheran Foundations," para. 9.

[47] Indeed, the punishments described in some verses of the Bible are unthinkable today. Deuteronomy 21:18-21, for example, teaches that a "stubborn and rebellious son" should be stoned to death by the men of the city. Proverbs calls for punishments that "wound" those in error (Proverbs 20:30). This punitive and violent model of authority was challenged by early Jewish commentators, whose translations of "lashes" or "flogging" referred to the use of words rather than weapons. See Michael Avioz, "The Law of the Disrespectful Son and Daughter," *The Torah* (2015), thetorah.com/article/the-law-of-the-disrespectful-son-and-daughter; and Vieth, *On This Rock*, 12. See also Cindy Miller-Perrin and Robin Perrin, "Changing Attitudes About Spanking Among Conservative Christians Using Interventions That Focus on Empirical Research Evidence and Progressive Biblical Interpretations," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 71 (2017): 516, doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.03.015. Infanticide and exposure (leaving a vulnerable child, often an infant, exposed without shelter so that they would die) were common enough in the ancient world that Jewish and Christian writers specifically condemned the practice.

[48] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 401.108.

[49] "If God's Word and will are placed first and are observed, nothing ought to be considered more important than the will and word of our parents, provided that these, too, are subordinated to God and are not set into opposition to the preceding commandments," Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 402.116.

[50] Ibid, 409.168.

[51] Ibid, 407.150.

[52] *Our Calling in Education*, 16.

[53] This section of this social message draws substantially and at times directly on the extensive work of Lutheran theologian Marcia J. Bunge. From among her many writings, see especially "Lutheran Foundations," 2024; "The Child, Religion, and the Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood," *Journal of Religion* 86, no. 4 (October 2006), 549-578; Marcia J. Bunge, ed., *The Child in Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); and Marica J. Bunge, ed., *Child Theology: Diverse Methods and Global Perspectives* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2021). See also Bunge's chapter and other chapters in Nessan and Vieth, *Here We Stand*. Some of these principles are also found in the ELCA's social

statement *Our Calling in Education* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2007), which also drew heavily on Bunge's work.
[54] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.
[55] Tappert and Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, 44:13, "A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage."
[56] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.
[57] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.
[58] "Human Rights," 4.
[59] The ELCA further affirms, "Human life in all phases of its development is God-given and, therefore, has intrinsic value, worth, and dignity." ELCA, *Abortion* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991), 2. Theologian Karl Rahner echoed this view of children's dignity as inherent, writing, "The grace of childhood is not merely the pledge of the grace of adulthood." Karl Rahner, "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 8, trans. David Bourke (Seabury Press, 1977), 37.
[60] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.
[61] Through the shepherd boy David, God teaches an important lesson about strength and leadership (1 Samuel 17). Young Elihu, whose youth made him "timid," speaks a bold word of faith and truth to Job and his friends (Job 32:6-9). The unnamed girl held captive in Namaan's household (2 Kings 5:1-14) risks her own safety to declare to the Aramean Namaan that the God of Israel can cure his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14).
[62] "Human Rights" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2017), 11.
[63] *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2012), 12.
[64] "Protecting the Civil Rights of Palestinian Children," ELCA social policy resolution CA19.02.06h, 2019.
[65] "Affirming AMMPARO Strategy," ELCA social policy resolution CA16.02.03m, 2016.
[66] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.
[67] "Human Rights," 11-12. See also *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993), 6-7; and *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999), 10-17.
[68] For a discussion of the moral demands of respecting and promoting well-being in the community of life, see *Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011), 16-20.
[69] "Human Rights," 6.
[70] *Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility*, 25.
[71] "This church will work with all people to craft fair and comprehensive laws particularly aimed at protecting the weakest and most vulnerable among us, especially children, from sexual harm." *Human Sexuality*, 35.
[72] "Patients have a right to refuse unduly burdensome treatments which are disproportionate to the expected benefits." "End-of-life Decisions" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1992), 3.
[73] This church calls for government enforcement of regulations and names child labor as an "exploitative … labor practice." *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood*, 10.
[74] ELCA teaching supports the prosecution of "any individual who commits a sexual crime against a minor, including people in leadership positions in the church … [and] expects that all church leaders will report all instances of suspected child abuse." *Human Sexuality*, 25.
[75] See *For Peace in God's World* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1995).
[76] Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[77] *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*, HHS Publication No. 14-4884, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), Rockville, Md., 10. Available at samhsa.gov/mental-health/trauma-violence/trauma-informed-approaches-programs. A trauma-informed approach empowers people experiencing trauma to define when these principles are present. For example, "safety is not defined by leadership or those with more power; it is defined by the person who experienced the trauma"; see Pete Singer, "Toward a More Trauma-informed Church: Equipping Lutheran Congregations to Prevent and Respond to Abuse," in Nessan and Vieth, eds. *Here We Stand*, 373.
[78] For these and many more examples of trauma-informed practices, see Singer, "Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church," 363-391.
[79] The ELEA, a ministry of ELCA schools and learning centers, provides a wide array of resources related to child protection and trauma-informed ministry with children. See elcaschools.org/educational-resources/.
[80] *The Church and Criminal Justice*, 21.

[81] "This church calls for the adoption of preventive measures, including educational programs, appropriate policies, and screening of individuals who care for, supervise, or work with children within this church" (*Human Sexuality*, 25).
[82] The Office of the Secretary of the ELCA provides resources, including sample policies for child abuse prevention and information on making a report, online at elca.org/about/churchwide/office-of-the-secretary/legal-issues/sexual-misconduct-prevention. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have policy recommendations for organizations serving children and youth. See Janet Saul and Natalie C. Audage, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures" (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007), cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/programs/index.html.
[83] *The Church and Criminal Justice*, 25, 29.
[84] "Congregations that contemplate allowing anyone who has been convicted of a sexual offense or who the congregation believes may present a danger to children or others should prayerfully realize that we also are called to protect the innocent and vulnerable. When relating to those who present such a concern, congregations should act with extraordinary care"; see *The Church and Criminal Justice*, 27.
[85] *Human Sexuality*, 25.
[86] *Human Sexuality*, 25.
[87] ELCA, "Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions," 7.45, 37.
[88] "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2021), definition 16 and sections B.4, B.5, B.9, and B.11.
[89] See ELCA, "Constitution, Bylaws," 20.22.23 and 20.23.06. The trauma of child abuse allegations within a worshiping community should be considered as "adversely affecting" the local community.
[90] See Chapter 20 of ELCA, "Constitution, Bylaws" and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline."
[91] Most experts suggest that online resources be "one click away" from a homepage for ease of access.
[92] Such programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, and school breakfast and lunch programs.
[93] Recent research found that publicly funded paid family leave led to significantly lower reports of child maltreatment and a reduction in removal of children from their homes. Lindsey Rose Bullinger, Kerri M. Raissian, Bart Klika, Melissa Merrick, at al., "More Than Snuggles: The Effect of Paid Family Leave on Infant Maltreatment," *Child Maltreatment* (2026), published online ahead of print, doi.org/10.1177/10775595251318939.
[94] Researchers from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that, during the years 2011-2022, child maltreatment reports declined 11% following the adoption of a state paid sick leave mandate. Monica Deza, Johanna Catherine Maclean, and Alberto Ortega, "Paid Sick Leave and Maltreatment," National Bureau of Economic Research (May 2025), doi.org/10.3386/w33758.
[95] As part of a multidisciplinary team, chaplains can play a vital role in providing spiritual support to survivors of abuse. This role requires specialized training. See Vieth and Singer, "Wounded Souls" (2019), 1228-1230.
[96] Massachusetts Legislative Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, "Guidelines and Tools for the Development of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Intervention Plans by Youth-serving Organizations in Massachusetts," June 2017, 34, safekidsthrive.org/the-report/key-sections/section-2-screening-and-background-checks-for-selecting-employees-and-volunteers/.
[97] For more information, see the ELCA's "Photo Guidelines for Congregations," available at resources.elca.org.

Amendments are highlighted in yellow.

A Proposed Social Message on Child Protection

"Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'" —Matthew 19:14

Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America rejoices that as "Jesus invited the children (Mark 10:13-16; cf., Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17), and so we are to welcome children, teaching and learning from them in ways that recognize their dignity and complexity."[1] The stark, tragic realities of child abuse and neglect in the U.S. today demand renewed commitment to this church's sacred calling.

This social message draws on Holy Scripture, Lutheran traditions, research, and the experiences of ELCA Lutherans to deepen this church's understanding of child maltreatment, to offer a theological vision of childhood, and to call all members of the ELCA to strengthen their commitment to the dignity and well-being of children.

There are four sections in this social message:

I. Understanding Child Maltreatment
II. The Church and Child Protection
III. Elements of a Lutheran Theology of Childhood
IV. Guidance for Protecting Children

Section I, "Understanding Child Maltreatment," provides information on various forms of child maltreatment, including definitions, rates of prevalence within the United States, intersecting factors, and potential long-term consequences for children.

Section II, "The Church and Child Protection," laments the ways faith communities have contributed to or failed to prevent child maltreatment and points in hope to new ways of being and acting through God.

Section III, "Elements of a Lutheran Theology of Childhood," describes some grounding principles of a Lutheran theology of childhood and describes some of the requirements of justice for all children.

Section IV, "Guidance for Protecting Children," describes some basic principles of the ELCA's commitment to child protection, recommends policies for worshiping communities and ministries within the ELCA, and describes policies related to pastoral care, reporting, and responses to child maltreatment within the ELCA. The section further encourages members and ministries of the ELCA to advocate for just public policies to protect children.

An appendix at the end of this social message provides more information on child protection policies for worshiping communities.

I. Understanding child maltreatment[2]

In the United States, at least 1 in 7[3]—and as many as 1 in 4[4]—children experience abuse or neglect. Even these rates may be too low, given that child maltreatment is often unreported. Both abuse and

neglect can take many forms, some of which are described below. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it is intended to provide a broader understanding of some forms of neglect and abuse.

Regardless of its specific form or the relationship or age of the perpetrator, all types of maltreatment represent a violation of the child and a violation of responsibilities for care, protection, and justice, as later sections describe.

What are some forms of child maltreatment?

Neglect

More than 75% of children who died as a result of maltreatment suffered neglect.[5] Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment in the U.S.[6] and involves the failure to meet a child's basic needs, such as "housing, food, clothing, education, access to medical care, and having feelings validated and appropriately responded to."[7] Neglect in early childhood is associated with later impairments in language development, cognition, and long-term physical health.[8]

Physical or material neglect involves the failure of a responsible adult to provide for the child's bodily needs, including but not limited to adequate food, water, shelter, and clean clothing. Examples of physical or material neglect include (but are not limited to) insufficient nutrition, unsafe or unsanitary housing conditions, or a lack of weather-appropriate clothing.

Poverty, coupled with inadequate public support, makes it difficult for loving parents or caregivers to provide for a child's needs, but poverty or food insecurity alone are not forms of neglect. Legally and ethically, physical neglect of a child is different from conditions created solely by household poverty or food insecurity.

Medical neglect is the refusal "to provide prescribed medical care or treatment or failure to seek appropriate medical care in a timely manner" and disproportionately affects children with chronic illnesses and disabilities.[9] This form of neglect is challenging to determine and is often subjective. Parents and guardians have the responsibility to make difficult choices about medical care, and at times, this can legitimately involve the refusal of certain forms of care.[10] When adults forego necessary medical care for children, however, the consequences can be fatal.[11]

Medical neglect can be complicated by religious beliefs. Some believe that faith and prayer give individuals power over disease. Some believe that reliance on trained medical care reflects distrust of God or a lack of faith. The freedom of parents or guardians to follow their religious beliefs can conflict with the rights of children to adequate, needed medical care.

While recognizing the complexity of this conflict, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that "parents may be free to become martyrs themselves. But it does not follow they are free, in identical circumstances, to make martyrs of their children."[12] Despite this, the physical health of children in the U.S. and around the world continues to be at risk due to religious beliefs about healing.

Abuse

Neglect involves a person (typically an adult) with responsibility for the care or well-being of a child. Abuse, on the other hand, can be perpetrated by anyone, including (but not limited to) parents. Potential perpetrators can include extended family members, trusted adults, strangers, individuals

in positions of power or authority, siblings, or other children. It can occur in a variety of settings, including homes, schools, care centers, churches, and other public or private spaces. Though abuse can happen anywhere, child abuse most commonly occurs in the home and is perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when parents or caregivers repeatedly fail to provide the emotional support, nurturing, or availability that children need. It occurs when others undermine a child's basic psychological needs, such as the need for safety and support. This abuse can include ignoring children, repeatedly shaming or threatening them, or dismissing their emotions. Other forms include being emotionally unavailable or distant toward them or denying comfort during distress.[13]

As they develop, children need emotional connection and support, including the opportunities to feel safe and to build trust through caring relationships with adults, older youth, and peers. When this does not happen because of emotional abuse or neglect, the long-term consequences can be similar to the effects of physical abuse.

Physical abuse is the use of physical force that can inflict injury or harm. In some definitions, this includes threats of injury or harm, which can have the same psychological and emotional effects as physical injury.[14] Nearly 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. reports experiencing physical abuse as a child.[15] Physical abuse in the home or institutional settings often starts as an attempt at discipline that escalates into harm that threatens the physical safety of the child.[16] The use of physical punishment, such as spanking or hitting, is often rooted in family and religious culture and tradition. Parents or caregivers may learn spanking from their own experiences of physical or corporal punishment.

Sexual abuse can include but is not limited to inappropriate touching, exposure to pornography, exposing genitals to children or inducing children to do the same, sexual or genital activity, or sexual conversations, flirting, or sexual innuendos shared with children or youth, either in person, online, or via phone or texting.

In the U.S., more than 12%—*nearly 1 in 8*—adults report experiencing sexual abuse as children.[17] More than 15% of children experience online sexual abuse.[18] Online sexual abuse takes many forms, including receiving unwanted sexual images, the use of coercion or threats to force sharing of sexual images of oneself or another child, or sexual conversations with adults or older youth.

Due to the high prevalence of child sexual abuse in the U.S., this church recognizes the likelihood that nearly every worshiping community within the ELCA includes people who are survivors of child sexual abuse.

How do other ethical or social issues influence child maltreatment?

Many ethical and social issues intersect with child maltreatment. These factors provide a broader understanding of the reality of maltreatment within the context of other social realities and point to solutions for reducing risk. Some of these factors increase the prevalence of neglect and abuse, while others can inhibit prevention and appropriate responses when neglect or abuse occur.

Some factors directly impact adults' ability to care for and protect children and point to the need for public support for parents and caregivers.

Inadequate knowledge or preparation for raising children, for example, can contribute to neglect, as when a new parent or caregiver simply does not know how best to meet a child's needs. In some cases, a child may be abused by a sibling or an unrelated adult, and parents or caregivers may not know how to respond effectively. This is especially true when the abuser is also a child.[19] In some cases, a parent or caregiver may themselves be victims of violence and may fear reporting their own abuse or the abuse of a child.

The substance abuse and addiction of parents and caregivers increase the risk of child neglect~~,~~ because adults may be unable to provide care due to incapacitation or addiction. Substance abuse by adults in the home also increases the risk that children in the home will experience abuse.[20]

Financial uncertainty, unemployment, and a lack of paid parental leave can exacerbate parental stress and increase the risk of physical abuse and neglect.[21] Similarly, poverty and a lack of adequate health insurance increase the risk that a child will not receive needed medical care.[22]

Though children living in poverty have an increased risk of abuse or neglect,[23] child maltreatment happens in families of any socioeconomic status. Identifying abuse and neglect in affluent families and intervening to protect children can be particularly challenging due to complex power dynamics between wealthy parents, social workers, and child protection authorities.[24]

Families in poverty receive more scrutiny from researchers, law enforcement, and child protective services, which may obscure neglect and abuse in wealthier families. The lack of attention to maltreatment in affluent families and barriers to effective intervention can make it difficult for children in affluent families to get the support they need.

In part due to these disparities, poverty is also tied to increasingly punitive responses to maltreatment. For example, household poverty is a strong predictor of decisions by child protective services to remove a child from a home, despite laws in most U.S. states that prohibit defining poverty on its own as evidence of neglect.[25] Removing a child from their home is a serious decision that, even when done with good intentions, can have debilitating consequences for the health and well-being of the child and their family.

Racial and cultural bias and structural racism can also impact decisions to remove children from homes, despite federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.[26] Black children, for example, are twice as likely as white children to be removed from a home even when the circumstances of maltreatment are otherwise similar.[27] Because of experiences of racism and discrimination, many parents of color are justifiably distrustful of law enforcement and child protection systems. This may make them less likely to seek help when they need it, fearful that asking for help may lead to punitive rather than supportive responses.

Children with disabilities are more likely to experience physical abuse, medical neglect, and sexual abuse. They are also vulnerable to placement in care situations without adequate protection from abuse.[28] In some cases, lack of medical insurance or inadequate social support can threaten the ability of a family to care for a child living with disabilities.

In too many cases, however, maltreatment arises from ableism, which is prejudice or discrimination arising from the refusal to recognize the worth and dignity of people with disabilities. Acknowledging this, the ELCA has called upon congregations to "find appropriate ways to support caregivers of people who live with disabilities" and affirms the rights of children with disabilities to equal protection and freedom from abuse or neglect.[29]

Treatment based on a child's sex, gender, or sexuality can profoundly shape the risk and experience of child maltreatment. Cases of reported sexual abuse are more likely to involve girls as victims.[30] Girls are also substantially more likely to experience online sexual abuse.[31]

LGBTQIA+ children are at much higher risk of experiencing sexual, physical, and emotional or psychological abuse from adults and peers.[32] Some may also experience physical or material neglect when parents or caregivers force LGBTQIA+ children or youth out of the home due to their sex, gender, gender identity, or sexuality.

Barriers to reporting may also differ by gender. Based on experiences of other victims during investigations or court cases, girls may fear that reporting sexual abuse will lead to them being portrayed as promiscuous and thus complicit in their own victimization. Transgender children may fear that they will not be listened to or that they will be revictimized.

Boys may fear that adults and other children will question their masculinity, strength, or sexuality.[33] Media depictions of abuse of boys by female adults often portray the perpetrators as seductive or coy and the male victims as willing participants in the abuse. This harmful narrative contributes to the stigma boys face as victims of child sexual abuse and makes boys less likely to report abuse and more likely to delay disclosure—and thus less likely to get the emotional and psychological support they need.[34]

These factors point to the need for a variety of responses. These include robust public support for parents, services to reduce poverty and food insecurity, increased access to addiction treatment, increased attention to the needs of children in affluent families, and ongoing education and support for parents, including new adoptive or foster parents. The disparities in outcomes for children also point to the need for more just approaches to child protection.

What are the consequences of maltreatment for children?

In the Gospels, Jesus warns the disciples of their responsibility for the spiritual harm that can result from mistreatment of children, admonishing them of the consequences should "any of you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble" (Matthew 18:6; see also Mark 9:36-42).[35] Martin Luther, reflecting on his own experiences of physical beatings, observed, "It's a bad thing if children and pupils lose their spirit on account of their parents and teachers."[36]

Modern research into "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) confirms and broadens our understanding that child neglect and abuse can have significant, long-term consequences that inhibit healthy psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual development. ACEs such as neglect and abuse place children at higher risk of severe, long-term emotional and psychological harm, including anger, guilt, and shame, and higher rates of suicidal ideation and self-harm, even years after the maltreatment has ended. Research has found long-term physical risks of ACEs, too,

including higher rates of cancer, heart disease, liver disease, sexually transmitted infections, obesity, smoking, substance abuse, and sleep disturbances.[37]

The ripple effects of trauma caused by abuse and neglect can impact victims of abuse, their families, and the wider community. Moreover, trauma's effects can linger across generations.[38]

Children victimized by abuse also can experience deep spiritual injury, such as guilt, anger at God or the church, and persistent beliefs that God is unfair. This is more likely if the perpetrator is a leader in the church or if church teachings or the Bible ~~are~~ is used to justify abuse, maintain secrecy, or deny justice to victims.[39]

This risk of spiritual injury points to the importance of supportive pastoral and spiritual care of survivors, which many professional clinicians are not equipped to provide. Care that attends to the spiritual needs of survivors may be able to moderate symptoms of trauma and can be an important step toward healing.[40]

This church mourns the alarming rates of children abused or neglected. Each of these numbers represents a child, created by God, whose present and future well-being is threatened. Yet this church also recognizes the many other children who are not represented in these numbers due to vast underreporting of abuse and neglect. Despite valid concerns for justice for those who are falsely accused of harming a child, abuse is far more likely to be unreported than to be falsely reported. Each unreported case represents a vulnerable child who may not receive the support, care, and protection they need to recover from this trauma.

II. The church and child protection

While this church recognizes with gratitude the work many are doing to care for, educate, nurture, and protect children, this social message also recognizes with lament the Christian Church's own responsibility for the spiritual injury of survivors of child abuse and the harm caused by child maltreatment. We hear the voices crying out for the ELCA to follow the example of Christ in welcoming and caring for children with love and safety.

The ELCA recognizes that, too often, the Christian Church has:

- Allowed abusers access to vulnerable children.
- Allowed theological and scriptural justification for abuse, neglect, and threats to children.
- Failed to recognize the fullness of the image of God in children.
- Failed to welcome and care for children as Jesus would have us.
- Allowed racism and white supremacy to justify abuse under the guise of "child protection."

How has the Christian Church contributed to the prevalence of child maltreatment?

Some Christians have used narrow interpretations of the Bible or misguided religious beliefs to excuse or cover up sexual abuse.[41] Some verses of the Bible—taken out of textual and historical context—have been used to justify or encourage physical abuse. Religious descriptions of parental authority as absolute have left children feeling powerless when victimized. Leadership in the ELCA have too often not confronted these harmful teachings with reminders about appropriate limits to the exercise of authority and the priority of loving care of children found in Holy Scripture.

The teachings of this church too often have neglected the experiences, perspectives, and needs of children.[42]

Some congregations, including within the ELCA, have allowed perpetrators access to children, both through insufficient protection policies and unclear or inconsistent responses to allegations of abuse. Indeed, some experts suggest that sexual abusers of children may seek out faith communities due to a lack of policies and easy access to children.[43]

Even when clear teaching and official policy exist, as in the ELCA's expectation that all suspected abuse is to be reported, leaders often are not equipped to act responsibly. Thus many rostered ministers and lay leaders feel called to minister to and support victims of abuse but may lack training and awareness of what to do if they suspect a child has been abused. They often do not know how to access resources or information, and resources may not be available or easy to find.[44]

Inauthentic and disingenuous actions, taken under the guise of "child protection" and supported by the church, also have caused grievous harm. The Indian boarding school era in the U.S. and Canada, made possible by the leadership of churches and their collaboration with the government, enabled the abuse of thousands of children for decades. This movement was publicly justified by misleading appeals to the "best interests" of Native and Indigenous children, who were separated from their families, communities, and culture, and placed in residential centers of rampant abuse.

Though boarding schools have closed, Native Americans today carry in their bodies and communities the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Healing continues to be needed by the many people impacted by this history.[45]

This church's failure to respond effectively to the consequences of abuse has perpetuated the harm done to victims. Church leaders who abuse children are often treated with tolerance and forgiveness, even though their victims may be treated with suspicion. Churches have often encouraged victims to rush to forgiveness without paying sufficient attention to their trauma, the complexity of forgiveness, or the future safety of other children. Failure to address the spiritual harm caused by abuse is a serious and grievous abdication of the church's responsibility to care for "these little ones" and their faith.

While acknowledging the ways the ELCA and the Christian Church have fallen short of our responsibilities to children, this church turns in hope to God's power of enabling confession and new ways of being. In that spirit, this church recommits to its calling to protect children and to witness to the good news of the gospel for all.

III. Elements of a Lutheran theology of childhood

The second great commandment—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39)—lays the foundation for the church's treatment of children. Too often, Lutheran theology has conceived of the "neighbor" as an adult and neglected the responsibilities inherent in loving children as oneself. Protecting children begins with perceiving all children as images of God and as neighbors whom the church is called to love and to serve.[46]

This perspective on children is echoed in Jesus' welcome and affirmation of children. Jesus' teachings in the first century were revolutionary transformations in how adults are to view children and to exercise loving authority. In contrast to the neglect or commodification of children (cf. 2 Kings 4:1), Jesus viewed children as signs of the coming reign of God (Matthew 18:3-6). In contrast to views of children as disobedient and deserving of punishment, Jesus rebukes those who refuse to welcome and care for children (Matthew 19:13-15).

This model of authority counters punitive and abusive exercises of authority that some Christians base on biblical verses, especially verses about the use of "the rod" in Proverbs 22:15, 13:24. The use of "the rod" in the Bible should be understood in the context of treatment of children that was, at times, brutal and inhumane.[47]

This church lifts up Jesus' model of loving authority, as reflected in the gospels and the Lutheran Confessions, to parents and caregivers, who exercise authority as "God's representatives" to their children.[48] Though the Lutheran Confessions name obedience to parents as a "great, good, and holy work … assigned to children," parental authority is subject to God and is not without limits. [49] In the Large Catechism, Luther reminds us that God "does not want scoundrels or tyrants in this office or authority [of parents]."[50]

The affirmation of parental authority and the counsel for children to obey parents, found in the Large Catechism, depend on two foundations. First, parents or caregivers are expected to provide adequate physical, emotional, and spiritual care for children. Second, they are not to rule in a tyrannical way that harms the spirit of the child.[51]

The ELCA has affirmed the responsibilities of parents, caregivers, the church, and society to children in *Our Calling in Education*:

> Christians enrich our welcoming of children to a life of faith by holding together … diverse perspectives on [who] they are. … Remembering that Jesus saw children as teachers of the faith, we will listen attentively to them, honor their insights and questions, and learn from them. We will give special attention to children who are most vulnerable and those who have been wounded, and we will become stronger advocates for them. [52]

What grounding principles for a Lutheran theology of childhood can be drawn from the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions and theology, and ELCA social teaching?

A Lutheran theology of childhood, grounded in the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, ELCA social teachings, and Lutheran theology, can deepen the church's appreciation of the humanity of children and the church's responsibilities toward them. This social message offers several foundational principles toward a Lutheran theology of childhood.[53]

Children are "gifts of God[, and] God entrusts parents, the Church, and society to welcome and care for children as full participants of their communities."[54] Luther referred to children as "eternal treasure[s]"[55] and regarded the care and education of children as sacred responsibilities. In the Bible, children are sources of joy and celebration (Genesis 21:6-7; Luke 1:14).

The giftedness of children is not a transactional transfer of ownership that might allow for exploitation. Rather, "as gifts of God, children are sources of hope, joy, delight, and also obligation."[56] In the Lutheran traditions, this includes the responsibility to provide for children's education and to celebrate and foster the ways children's gifts and strengths can contribute to the common good of families and communities, even at a young age.

Children are "fully human and made in the image of God [and,] therefore, are worthy of the dignity and respect due to all human beings."[57] Their right to protection and care is rooted in their creation in the image of God, which endows them with dignity that "society should not deny … for any reason."[58] Children's dignity and value are not merely potential traits that children earn by the kinds of adults they may become.[59]

Children are both "models and teachers of faith" and developing beings, whom adults are to instruct and guide, that children may be "formed for their vocation … with gentleness and love."[60] In the Bible, children often serve as examples of bold, daring faith and morality.[61] Jesus preaches that adults should look to children as exemplars of what it means to live in the coming reign of God (Matthew 18:3-6).

Yet children are also still developing—physically, emotionally, spiritually, and morally—and adults are called to teach and guide them. Through word and example, adults should instruct all children in the unconditional love and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ. As children learn about sin, adults are called to share the grace of the gospel and to remind children that "all have sinned," and yet all are "justified by [God's] grace as a gift" (Romans 3:23-24.)

Adults, especially rostered leaders, in the ELCA are also called to teach children that this gift of grace neither justifies nor excuses abuse or neglect. Child abuse and neglect are sins of the people who harm children. In faith formation and education, children should be reminded of God's concern for their well-being and safety and supported with appropriate pastoral care.

Children are vulnerable neighbors, and adults are called to provide for, protect, and seek justice for all children. In the Bible, the faithfulness of the people of God is judged by their treatment of orphans and other vulnerable neighbors (Isaiah 10:1-2). Through the prophet Isaiah, God commands the people to "defend the orphan" (Isaiah 1:17). God's treatment of children provides a model for compassionate care of children (1 Kings 17:8-16).

Recognizing the church's calling to defend and care for vulnerable neighbors, this church has declared, "The needs of the vulnerable and marginalized must be represented and given particular and vigorous attention."[62] This teaching is especially relevant to children, who remain vulnerable to and dependent on adults in their households, the church, and the community.

In previous social teachings, the ELCA has recognized the particular vulnerability of children caught in social, political, and economic systems outside their control. For example, this church has:

- Called for an end to the "trying, sentencing, and incarceration [of] children in the adult [criminal justice] system."[63]
- Urged protection of the rights of Palestinian children against detention and torture.[64]
- Affirmed the church's accompaniment and advocacy for migrant children through the ELCA's AMMPARO strategy.[65]

The ELCA gives thanks to leaders and ministries that support children and families caught in these systems.

What does it mean to treat children with dignity and justice?

"Jesus reinforced the dignity of all children by welcoming and blessing them and saying that to them belongs the kingdom of heaven."[66] This inherent dignity entitles children to justice and to freedom from exploitation and maltreatment.

The ELCA has consistently articulated four principles of justice:

- "The principle of *sufficiency* means meeting the basic needs of all humanity and all creation.
- "The principle of *sustainability* means providing an acceptable quality of life for present generations without compromising that of future generations.
- "The principle of *participation* means all are entitled to be heard and to have their interests considered when decisions are made.
- "The principle of *solidarity* means that we stand together with all of God's creation."[67]

These principles provide insight into what justice demands for children.

Sufficiency: Children have the right to have their basic needs met. Parents and caregivers should be supported when they cannot meet children's needs due to poverty or incapacity.

Sustainability: Adults have the responsibility to respect and promote[68] children's long-term well-being, which includes protecting them from the long-term consequences of maltreatment.

Participation: Children have the right to be treated as human beings with dignity, regardless of their age.[69] They have the right to be educated and informed as appropriate for their stage of development.[70]

Solidarity: Solidarity demands that children have advocates for their rights in public policy and within law enforcement and child protection systems. Within the church, leaders are called to act in solidarity with children, especially when they are potentially threatened by adults, and to provide for their safety and security.[71]

Some situations require careful moral discernment of what justice requires. The principle of sufficiency, for example, obliges adults to provide necessary medical care for children. However, justice also requires special discernment when the burden of care to the patient might outweigh potential benefits.[72]

The principles of justice also inform this church's teaching that child labor—when children are forced to work or placed by adults in unsafe industries or jobs—is exploitative. [73] The principle of solidarity grounds this church's deep concern at the relaxation of child labor laws in the U.S. and advocacy for laws that protect children from exploitation. However, the principle of participation also grounds support for youth who choose to work in safe, age-appropriate jobs, where they develop important skills and contribute to the community.

IV. Guidance for protecting children

What are some basic commitments of the ELCA to child protection?

Reporting

The ELCA expects all leaders in the church—rostered and lay, volunteer and paid—to report suspected child neglect or abuse to the appropriate secular authorities, who are equipped to investigate allegations.[74] This includes reporting child maltreatment that occurs in the church, the home, or other settings.

Countering violence with peace

This church is called to address scriptural misinterpretations that have been used to justify violence and promote physical punishment of children. This arises from God's call for the whole body of Christ to model peace and for Christians to be peacemakers.[75] Worshiping communities are called to be safe spaces, free of violence, where physical intimidation or the use of force—including physical discipline—are specifically prohibited.

In their public witness, Christians are called to advocate against violent conflict that leaves children more vulnerable, especially in situations of war or forced displacement. This includes collective efforts to hold accountable perpetrators of abuse or violence against children.

Discerning forgiveness

Christians are called to share the good news of God's grace through Jesus Christ. Lutherans affirm that we are set free from sin by God's loving word of forgiveness and called to share the gospel of grace with all the world.

In the Bible, forgiveness assumes a recognition of guilt (often public) and the active pursuit of reconciliation (Matthew 5:23). Forgiveness does not imply a complete absence of accountability. Indeed, even the criminal on the cross whom Jesus forgave first confronted his own sin and guilt (Luke 23:39-43). Though we are saved by God's grace and neither by our confession of sin nor our works of repentance, Lutherans understand grace as freeing us to love and serve the neighbor and to confront the many ways we fall short of that responsibility.

Too often, the promise of forgiveness becomes a harmful burden when God's church urges victims of child abuse to rush to forgiveness of their abusers. Christians, through the act of forgiving others, strive for a moral ideal that reflects God's free gift of grace to us. When we demand that others forgive, however, it risks transforming this gift of God into a new religious law. Under such a law, victims may experience guilt, a fear that they themselves will not be forgiven, and anger at the church and God for demanding such a sacrifice.

Leaders in the ELCA must exercise care when supporting victims of child maltreatment through the process of forgiveness, including when victims are not ready to forgive. Though some acknowledge the potential therapeutic release from bonds of anger and resentment, for child victims, the trauma of abuse creates its own bonds.

This church expects leaders providing pastoral care to make clear to victims of child maltreatment that being unable to forgive is not a rejection of faith or the gospel. Rather, forgiveness is a lengthy

process of transforming the relationship between the offender and the victim and between the victim, the offender, and the community.[76] It is neither a straight path nor a single act.

Trauma-informed Ministry

This church is called to accompany victims toward healing with an awareness of the deep and lasting impacts of trauma. Though trauma may not be resolved completely, this church calls itself to learn and practice effective responses to trauma and to exercise trauma-informed and healing-centered ministry.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) outlines six principles of a trauma-informed approach: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues.[77]

A trauma-informed approach will look different in different settings. Some examples of trauma-informed practices include:

- Creating a welcoming, nonjudgmental environment.
- Letting people who have experienced trauma lead their process of healing.
- Recognizing that trauma may cause unexpected emotional reactions to situations.
- Clearly communicating and adhering to policies for safety.
- Considering how sermons, songs, or Scripture readings may be heard by someone experiencing trauma.
- Helping survivors of abuse to advocate for themselves.[78]

This social message encourages congregational leaders to seek training in trauma-informed care. In support, ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries should find ways to provide trauma-informed care for students and trauma-informed training for emerging leaders.[79]

Victims are more than their trauma, and those who minister to them share in holy yearning for the fullness of God's promise of a time when "crying and pain will be no more" (Revelation 21:3-4).[80]

How can church policy help prevent and address child maltreatment?[81]

Many rostered ministers, lay leaders, members, and survivors of maltreatment in the ELCA yearn for clear policies and guidance for preventing and addressing child maltreatment. This section outlines such policies, though it is not exhaustive.[82]

For more information on these policies, see the appendix to this social message.

Congregations, ministries, and other worshiping communities within the ELCA are strongly encouraged to implement and clearly communicate the following policies *at a minimum*:

- Screenings and background checks for all staff and volunteers working with children or youth.
- A waiting period of involvement with the church before new members or volunteers are permitted to accompany children or youth on trips or overnight events.
- Annual training for leaders on recognizing and reporting signs of maltreatment.

- Public posting of written information (for children *and* adults) about how to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- A "two-deep" policy requiring at least two adults to be present whenever children and youth are transported and at activities involving children or youth, including having at least two adults involved in any online communications with children or youth, such as text threads, chats, or emails.
- Sign-in and sign-out lists for events with children and youth, and clear limits on who can sign a child out from an event.
- Sensitivity to food insecurity, including avoiding behaviors that shame children for eating too much or taking food home from events.
- Policies on photography or video recording of children and youth, including limiting photography or video recording to authorized adults and requiring signed permission forms for the sharing of photographs or video.
- Limited access to private or nonvisible areas of a building during events or overnights.

In addition to these policies, congregations, synods, ministries, and institutions of the ELCA are called upon to collaborate in raising awareness of existing ELCA resources on sexual misconduct and child abuse, to provide ongoing training and resources for children, youth, and family ministers, and to involve children, youth, and family ministers in substantive decision-making about child protection policies at the congregational, synodical, and churchwide level.

Some congregations are concerned that a lack of volunteers, staff, or funding can hinder implementation of policies. Synods and the churchwide organization of the ELCA should consider providing financial support, information about free or low-cost training available from organizations and agencies, and avenues for leaders to share creative ideas for implementation in different settings.

A congregation's capacity to implement policies should inspire creativity, thoughtful discernment, and dialogue. However, it should not end in inaction toward this church's commitment to protect all people from harm.

What policies should guide pastoral care and worship?

This church and its rostered ministers have a responsibility to provide pastoral care for children and youth and see to the safety of children and youth in all settings. Pastoral counseling of children and youth should be done in a publicly visible place. Leaders should also maintain written records or reports on one-on-one counseling sessions with children and youth. Care must be taken to balance privacy and safety in such situations.

Counseling perpetrators of child abuse, especially child sexual abuse, requires specific skills and training that few rostered leaders have. In humility, leaders providing pastoral care must urge perpetrators to instead seek professional counseling. This church gives thanks for seminaries and organizations that provide training in this specialized area and encourages all rostered leaders to avail themselves of this training.

As a community rooted in the gospel, the ELCA affirms that those who commit crimes and harm others "are still human beings" and "are in need of accompaniment and of receiving the gift of the

gospel in word and sacrament."[83] This church teaches that adults who harm children are not separated from the grace of God.

However, the church is also called to protect those who are vulnerable. This requires "extraordinary care" and prayerful discernment.[84] Worshiping communities are encouraged to utilize resources from the ELCA churchwide organization's misconduct prevention staff or their synod in their discernment and planning.

What does this church teach about confidentiality in pastoral care and reporting?

The ELCA expects all leaders in the church—rostered and lay, volunteer and paid—to report suspected child neglect or abuse to the appropriate secular authorities, who are equipped to investigate allegations.[85] This includes reporting child maltreatment that occurs in the church, the home, or other settings.

Love and justice call the church to consider long-term consequences of maltreatment and obligate the church to take steps to reduce the long-term harm victims can experience. The ELCA has stated its support for the reporting and prosecution of adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse, including noncontact sexual abuse.[86] This social message extends this support to all forms of child maltreatment. Reporting is one way in which survivors of abuse can access the care and treatment they need.

This, of course, presents special concerns for confidentiality within private confession to a rostered minister. Some fear that perpetrators of abuse will not confess if a requirement to report exists. Others fear that without such a requirement, perpetrators may use confession as spiritual absolution, allowing them to continue the abuse without guilt.

The ELCA constitution, in general, supports the confidentiality of confession and pastoral counseling as an important element of spiritual care. Confidentiality fosters the trust necessary for people to seek spiritual care when overwhelmed by guilt, shame, or fear. However, when a person seeking pastoral care or confession "intends great harm to self or others," this church recognizes an exception to the protection of confidentiality.[87]

Overwhelming research points to the long-term negative effects of child maltreatment on the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of children. The connection between these experiences and future ill effects is so strong that it should be considered when evaluating what constitutes "great harm" and an exception to confidentiality.

Though state laws vary on rostered ministers' status as mandated reporters, in this church, the right to confidentiality in pastoral counseling or individual confession does not override the body of Christ's clear biblical mandate to protect the vulnerable. Rostered ministers thus ~~have an obligation~~are expected to report child maltreatment. In situations of counseling or confession when someone may disclose that they have harmed a child, the rostered minister should inform them of the limits of confidentiality.

What is the ELCA's response to abuse that occurs within the church?

Child abuse that is perpetrated by trusted people within the church can be especially traumatizing to victims and faith communities. These tragedies threaten trust in the church and in God. Accordingly, the ELCA's "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" explicitly provides that abuse of another, including child abuse, sexual abuse, and abuse of family members, is conduct incompatible with the ministerial office.[88]

Because of the gravity of the violation, when a rostered minister is reported for suspected child abuse, the minister should be administratively ~~removed~~ suspended from their call during the investigation out of an abundance of caution for the whole community.[89] If the allegations involve a volunteer or lay leader, they should also be removed from their role during an investigation.

In addition to reporting suspected child maltreatment by a rostered minister to law enforcement or child protective services, the ~~ELCA~~ synod bishop should ~~promptly~~ commence appropriate disciplinary proceedings as soon as doing so will not interfere with government investigations.[90] In these proceedings, this church urges disciplinary committees to consider permanent removal from the roster when appropriate.

This church also acknowledges that victims can be retraumatized during investigations. Care and advocacy for a victim's rights should be provided for the protection of victims during investigations and disciplinary proceedings.

What training and resources are needed to protect and nurture children?

Many people throughout the ELCA are inspired by the Holy Spirit to do more to protect children and yearn for the training and resources to do so.

Synods and the churchwide organization are urged to collaborate in providing training and resources for rostered ministers and lay leaders in recognizing and reporting abuse as well as guidance for preaching and teaching on the topic of child maltreatment.

The ELCA benefits from the resources on sexual misconduct that many synods and the churchwide organization already provide. At the same time, we acknowledge a need for greater awareness and ease of access to these resources.[91] Synods and the churchwide organization are encouraged to continue developing new resources as needed and to find means to ensure that such resources are easily accessible.

Synods and the churchwide organization are also encouraged to provide resources for parents and caregivers on effective forms of nonphysical discipline and theological resources that can equip the church to address child maltreatment, including speaking out against religiously motivated medical neglect.

In addition to providing resources and training, synods can be key partners in providing pastoral care to the community when child abuse occurs.

Seminaries are encouraged to provide coursework related to ministry with victims and perpetrators. Where possible, seminaries should equip rostered leaders for this type of specialized counseling.

Because Scripture is often manipulated to justify or excuse child abuse, and because of the great spiritual harm done to victims, seminaries and lay training schools are encouraged to equip students to interpret the Bible and theology in ways that correct these distortions.

Congregations, outdoor ministries, schools, and campus ministries are encouraged to continue to provide training for new staff in recognizing and reporting child abuse and child neglect. This church supports their efforts to remove from leadership any adult accused of harming a child and gives thanks for ministries providing trauma-informed spiritual care and development for young people. Congregations with related schools or campus ministries are urged to support the efforts of schools or campus ministries in implementing effective policies.

Rostered ministers and congregational leaders are urged to familiarize themselves with existing ELCA resources on sexual misconduct, including resources on reporting child abuse and preventing sexual misconduct.

What public policies are needed to protect and care for children?

Recognizing society's role in protecting and caring for children, the ELCA encourages individual members and the ELCA's Witness in Society to advocate for just, effective public policies, including:

- Funding and support for households facing poverty or food insecurity.[92]
- Living wage, paid family leave,[93] and paid sick leave laws,[94] which allow caregivers resources and time to care for their children and which reduce the risk of abuse or neglect.
- Support for families of children with disabilities as well as oversight of schools and care facilities attending to children living with disabilities.
- Support for and protection of children in the foster care system, including as youth "age out" of the system and begin life on their own.
- Oversight of agencies empowered to remove children from homes, including robust anti-discrimination measures.
- Robust child labor laws that prevent children from being placed in hazardous working conditions.
- Effective child trafficking laws and support for migrant and immigrant children.
- Ratification by the U.S. of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Legislation that addresses bullying and harassment, including when it occurs online.

During investigations of suspected child maltreatment, children can be retraumatized by encounters with law enforcement, attorneys, and investigators. For this reason, the ELCA recognizes the role of child advocates to accompany and shelter children during the process.

This church also recognizes the important role of trained chaplains[95] in addressing the spiritual trauma children can face both from their victimization and during investigations and court proceedings. The ELCA thus encourages public policy advocacy to support the work of both child advocates and trained chaplains and urges increased funding for both these important roles.

V. Conclusion: Guided by the good news of Jesus Christ

This church draws hope from the promise of God's love and from the many people, organizations, and ministries both within and outside the ELCA that serve, care for, nurture, and protect children, including:

- Leaders of children, youth, and family ministry, including outdoor ministries and ELCA schools and learning centers.
- Therapists, counselors, teachers, health care professionals, and advocates who meet the needs of children in the U.S. facing trauma or instability.
- Ministries and social service organizations that accompany new parents and caregivers.
- Organizations, communities, and movements that support victims in advocacy for justice, healing, and legal protection.
- Workers who protect and enhance the dignity of children, including social workers, teachers, child abuse investigators, prosecutors, child advocates, and those providing licensing and training for professionals who work with children.
- Lutheran social ministry organizations that support families and children.

In concluding this message, we reflect on the words of Paul: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Drawing on those words, this church declares to victims of all forms of child maltreatment:
We are convinced that neither your trauma, nor your pain, nor your grief, nor the injustice done to you, nor the sin of adults around you, nor your anger, nor your doubt, nor your fear can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. You were created in God's own image, and you remain God's beloved child.

This church's public witness will be guided by this promise. We will speak with vulnerable children when they can speak, and we will speak on their behalf when they cannot find the words. We will establish policies and practices to prevent harm, and we will accompany victims as they seek healing. We will support justice for all children, and we will exercise the sacred responsibility to which God calls the Christian Church, to nurture and protect these precious gifts.

In so doing, this church will bear witness to the coming reign of God—and to the fullness of peace, healing, and wholeness that awaits children, youth, adults, and all of creation.

APPENDIX — Child Protection Policies

The most important way worshiping communities can protect children from harm is by establishing and following clear policies. Below, we offer more information about the policies recommended in this social message.

1. **Screenings and background checks for all staff and volunteers working with children or youth.**

Though screening and background checks are not a perfect way to prevent harm, they are an essential step toward protecting children in the church. They "should be considered as one part of a comprehensive *process* that has multiple components" and will not look exactly the same in every worshiping community.[96]

Practices to consider include: adding to job postings a statement about the church's commitment to child protection, asking interview questions about a candidate's approach to managing children's behavior, requiring staff or volunteers to read and sign a child protection policy, and reviewing criminal background checks on staff and volunteers.

2. **A waiting period of involvement with the church before new members or volunteers are permitted to accompany children or youth on trips or overnight events.**

Most child abuse occurs in the home and is perpetrated by someone the child knows well and trusts. However, abuse can occur in any setting, including worshiping communities, where abusers have access to children. A waiting period before working directly with children is an imperfect but important preventative measure that allows the community to get to know a new person before allowing them increased access to spaces or events involving children. This waiting period can also provide time for the community to recognize and address concerns before a new person has increased access to children.

3. **Annual training for all leaders on recognizing and reporting signs of maltreatment.**

As this social message notes, many staff and volunteers in the church want to protect children but often are unsure how to do so. Many are burdened by uncertainty about whether or how to report what they have witnessed or heard. Differences in state laws make this more complex.

The ELCA is clear in its teaching that all instances of suspected child maltreatment are to be reported by church leaders to appropriate authorities. The ELCA churchwide organization and most ELCA synods provide information about reporting, and congregational leaders are encouraged to avail themselves of this information. The churchwide organization and synods are encouraged to provide access to ongoing training, including for worshiping communities that may not have the capacity or funding to access training on their own.

4. **Public posting of written information (for children *and* adults) about how to report abuse or neglect.**[97]

Given the high rates of child maltreatment in the United States, it is likely that every ELCA worshiping community includes someone who is experiencing or has experienced abuse or

neglect. Many victims of abuse or neglect do not know how to seek help or may be afraid of seeking help.

Posting this information accomplishes two related goals. First, it provides people with the information they need to protect themselves or others. Second, public posting of information communicates the community's commitment to child protection.

5. **A "two-deep" policy requiring at least two leaders to be present whenever children and youth are transported and at activities involving children or youth, including having at least two adults involved in any online communications with children or youth, such as text threads, chats, or emails.**

Having more than one leader present during children's activities reduces the risk of abuse and can provide other benefits. In emergencies, two-deep leadership can ensure sufficient leadership to protect children and respond to the emergency. In cases of suspected child abuse, two-deep leadership also can ensure mutual accountability and support when a leader makes a report. For text threads and online communications, leaders can utilize technologies that automatically create a record of communications that other leaders can review. Similarly, leaders can communicate with an email address that other adults have access to.

6. **Sign-in and sign-out lists for events with children and youth, and clear limits on who can sign a child out from an event.**

The church can play an important role in preventing child maltreatment outside of church activities. Sign-in and sign-out lists can help ensure that children are in the care of safe, trusted adults. This is especially important if a child may be at risk from a specific adult due to past abuse or neglect.

7. **Sensitivity to food insecurity, including avoiding behaviors that shame children for eating too much or taking food home from events.**

Schools and churches are vital sources of nutritious, sufficient food for children experiencing food insecurity. Taking extra food, either to consume immediately or to take home, can be a sign of food insecurity. Yet many children who experience food insecurity also feel stigmatized or isolated and may not ask for the food they need. At events involving food, actively welcoming all children to take what they need (including "seconds") can reduce stigma or shame and ensure that children who are hungry are fed.

8. **Policies on photography or video recording of children and youth, including limiting photography or video recording to authorized adults and requiring signed permission forms for the sharing of photographs or video.**

Recording and sharing images of children raises several issues of moral concern for the church, including privacy, ownership of an image, and safety.

The internet and social media grant the ability to share images and video with friends and strangers. Once shared, though, no one—including the subject in the image or video and the person who took it—can fully control how an image or video is used. Companies may use images for commercial purposes. Abusers of children may use or share images and recordings for predatory purposes.

Revealing a child's name and location can expose them to significant risk, especially when the child has been a victim of past abuse or may be targeted by an adult who means them harm.

Clear policies about the recording and sharing of images or videos of children can reduce these risks. Most policies include stipulations such as not using a child's full name when sharing images; limiting identifiable information (such as age, name of school, or city of residence); allowing parents, caregivers, or youth to opt out of recording; and limiting who can take photos, especially during children's events.[98]

9. Limited access to private or nonvisible areas of a building during events or overnights.

Abusers of children often seek ways to isolate a child from their peers or from trusted leaders. At church events, a child should never be alone and out-of-view of others with an unrelated adult. However, it is important to remember that abuse can be perpetrated by anyone, including an older youth or a peer. Limiting access to private or nonvisible areas of a building can reduce the risk that a child is alone with someone who may harm them. In addition to protecting children from abuse, this policy can ensure that other emergencies receive immediate attention from leaders.

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[1] *Our Calling in Education* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2007), 14.

[2] "Child maltreatment" is a broad term that includes "all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." "Child Maltreatment," World Health Organization, last modified November 5, 2024, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment. Though the specific legal definition of child maltreatment is left to individual states in the U.S., federal law defines maltreatment as "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation … or an act of failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" to a child. See U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, "Child Maltreatment 2022," 2024, www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment.

[3] David Finkelhor, Heather A. Turner, and Anne Shattuck, "Prevalence of Childhood Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: Results From the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence," *JAMA Pediatrics* 169, no. 8 (2015): 746–754, doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.0676.

[4] Casey L. Brown, Musa Yilanli, and Angela L. Rabbitt, et al., *Child Physical Abuse and Neglect* (StatPearls Publishing, 2024).

[5] HHS, "Child Maltreatment 2022," 55.

[6] Nearly 80% of maltreated children experience either neglect alone or in combination with other forms of maltreatment. Brown et al.

[7] Ileana Arias, Rebecca T. Leeb, Cindi Melanson. Leonard J. Paulozzi, et al., "Child Maltreatment Surveillance: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements," U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 2008, stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/11493.

[8] John Stirling, "Understanding Medical Neglect: When Needed Care Is Delayed or Refused," *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 13 (2020): 271, doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00260-6.

[9] Lori D. Frasier, Nicole Smith, and Kathryn Crowell, "When Medical Care and Parents Collide—Parents Who Refuse Testing and/or Treatment for Children," *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 13 (2020): 277, doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00271-3. See also Stirling, "Understanding Medical Neglect," 273.

[10] Medical decisions are complex and involve a variety of factors and people. In the ELCA's social statement on *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2003), this church acknowledges, "Human healing activities in all their variety … can be avenues of healing blessed and empowered by God. Because human beings are finite, none of these activities will produce perfect health;

because of sin, each of them can be abused" (p. 5). Due to the complex and personal nature of medical decision-making, this church teaches, "Simply because a treatment or procedure exists does not mean that it should be used in every instance. The patient, family, and health-care providers need to make thoughtful decisions that serve the patient's goals and well-being and that take seriously the limits of health care resources. … We encourage people to talk together with their families and health care providers about treatment goals and types of care, and to make decisions that reflect their responsibility to be good stewards of their health and the resources that are available" (p. 8). Though this church supports individual freedom to make health care decisions—whether for oneself or on behalf of or in consideration of another person—this freedom should be understood within the context of the relationship between self and others, and self and God (see *Caring for Health*, p. 22.)

[11] Over 8% of child maltreatment fatalities involve medical neglect. See HHS, "Child Maltreatment 2022," 55.

[12] Prince v. Massachusetts, 321 U.S. 158 (1944), cited in Stirling, "Understanding Medical Neglect," 274.

[13] American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) Taskforce, "Practice Guidelines: The Investigation and Determination of Suspected Psychological Maltreatment of Children and Adolescents," APSAC, 2025, apsac.org/practice-guidelines/. A list of possible forms of psychological maltreatment can be found at apsac.org/apsac-announces-revisions-to-its-definitions-of-psychological-maltreatment/.

[14] See for example "Physical Abuse" in "Recognize the Signs of Child Abuse," Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, www.dfps.texas.gov/child_protection/child_safety/recognize_abuse.asp.

[15] Elizabeth A. Swedo, Maria V. Aslam, Linda L. Dahlberg, Phyllis Holditch Niolon, et al., "Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences Among U.S. Adults—Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011-2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 72, no. 26 (June 30, 2023): 707-715, doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7226a2.

[16] Victor I. Vieth, *On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 40.

[17] Swedo et al., "Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences," 713.

[18] David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, and Deirdre Colburn, "The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse With Online Sexual Abuse Added," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 149 (2024), doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106634. This church recognizes online child abuse as "one of the most important child-protection issues of our time" and calls for care and vigilance on behalf of parents, caregivers, society, and lawmakers. See *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009), 26.

[19] Parents of children who abuse their siblings often experience the interconnected challenges of protecting the child who has been abused, loving the child who committed the abuse, and confronting their own trauma at learning about the abuse. See Tova Lewin, Brandy Black, Maria Socolof, and Anat Talmon, "The Parental Experience and Emotional Response to Sibling Sexual Abuse: When a Parent's Most Valuable Gift Becomes a Source of Trauma," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 162, no. 3 (April 2025), doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.107079.

[20] Laura Lander, Janie Howsare, and Marilyn Byrne, "The Impact of Substance Use Disorders on Families and Children: From Theory to Practice," *Social Work in Public Health* 28, no. 3-4 (2013): 194-205, doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2013.759005.

[21] "Unemployment Linked With Child Maltreatment," American Academy of Pediatrics, ScienceDaily, last modified October 5, 2010, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/10/101003081452.htm.

[22] Frasier et al., "Medical Care and Parents," 279.

[23] Mark A. Bellis, Karen Hughes, Nicola Leckenby, Clare Perkins, et al., "National Household Survey of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Their Relationship With Resilience to Health-harming Behaviors in England," *BMC Medicine* 12, no. 1 (2014): 1-10, doi.org/10.1186/1741-7015-12-72; Andrea J. Sedlak, Jane Mettenburg, Monica Basena, Ian Peta, et al., "Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4)," Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services 9 (2010): 2010, cap.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/sedlaknis.pdf; and Kathryn Maguire-Jack and Kierra Sattler, "Neighborhood Poverty, Family Economic Well-being, and Child Maltreatment," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, no. 5-6 (Sept 4, 2022): 4814-4831, doi.org/10.1177/08862605221119522.

[24] Claudia Bernard and Tom Greenwood, "Recognizing and Addressing Child Neglect in Affluent Families," Child & Family Social Work 24, no. 2 (May 2019): 340-347, doi.org/10.1111%2Fcfs.12619.

[25] R.L. Stollar, *The Kingdom of Children: A Liberation Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Inc., 2023), 215.

[26] Children's Bureau, "Child Welfare Practice to Address Racial Disproportionality and Disparity," Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (April 2021), available at govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-HE-PURL-gpo159394/pdf/GOVPUB-HE-PURL-gpo159394.pdf.
[27] Lincoln Rice, *The Ethics of Protection: Reimagining Child Welfare in an Anti-Black Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), xix.
[28] See Lori A. Legano, Larry W. Desch, Stephen A. Messner, et al., "Maltreatment of Children With Disabilities," *Pediatrics* 147, no. 5 (May 2021), doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-050920.
[29] "People Living With Disabilities" (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011), 9, 15.
[30] HHS, "Child Maltreatment 2022."
[31] David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, and Deirdre Colburn, "Prevalence of Online Sexual Offenses Against Children in the U.S.," *JAMA Network Open* 5, no. 10 (October 14, 2022), doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.34471.
[32] Ibid.
[33] John C. Thomas and Jonathan Kopel, "Male Victims of Sexual Assault: A Review of the Literature," *Behavioral Sciences* 13, no. 4 (April 2023). doi.org/10.3390/bs13040304.
[34] Victor I. Vieth, Rita Farrell, Rachel Johnson, Tomiko Mackey, et al. "Where the Boys Are: Investigating and Prosecuting Cases of Child Sexual Abuse When the Victim Is Male," Zero Abuse Project, accessed January 15, 2025, tinyurl.com/dhk8x2ed.
[35] See Victor I. Vieth, "Child Abuse and the Lutheran Confessional: A Call to Elevate Christ's Teachings on Children Above Church Traditions," in Craig L. Nessan and Victor I. Vieth, eds., *Here We Stand: A Lutheran Response to Child Abuse* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2025), 221.
[36] "My parents kept me under very strict discipline, even to the point of making me timid. For the sake of a mere nut my mother beat me until the blood flowed. By such strict discipline they finally forced me into the monastery; though they meant it heartily well, I was only made timid by it. They weren't able to keep a right balance between temperament and punishment. … It's a bad thing if children and pupils lose their spirit on account of their parents and teachers." Martin Luther, Table Talk, No. 3566A, "Children Must Be Disciplined With Understanding," in Theodore G. Tappert and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds. *Luther's Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967), 54:234-235.
[37] See Vincent J. Felitti, Robert F. Anda, Dale Nordenberg, et al., "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14, no. 4 (1998): 245-258; Christopher M. Jones, Melissa T. Merrick, and Debra E. Houry, "Identifying and Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 323, no. 1 (2019): 25-26; and Swedo et al., "Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences." For more information on ACEs, see cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html.
[38] "Gun-related Violence and Trauma" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2024), 6.
[39] Victor I. Vieth and Pete Singer, "Wounded Souls: The Need for Child Protection Professionals and Faith Leaders to Recognize and Respond to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse," *Mitchell Hamline Law Review* 45, no. 4, Article 6 (2019).
[40] Donald F. Walker, Henri Webb Reed, Tiffany O'Neill, et al., "Changes in Personal Religion/Spirituality During and After Childhood Abuse: A Review and Synthesis," *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1, no. 2 (2009): 130–145, doi.org/10.1037/a0016211.
[41] Adam Saradjian and Dany Nobus, "Cognitive Distortions of Religious Professionals Who Sexually Abuse Children," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 18, no. 8 (2003): 905-923, doi.org/10.1177/0886260503253881.
The following sources offer examples of such misuses of the Bible and theology. Some of these sources contain graphic descriptions of sexual abuse that may be disturbing to some readers. Sexual Ause Advisory Group, *Caring Well: A Report From the SBC [Southern Baptist Convention] Sexual Abuse Advisory Group* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2018); and Victor I. Vieth, "Lessons From the SBC Sexual Abuse Crisis," *Faith & Intimate Partner Violence Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Winter 2023), p. 61-73, www.civicresearchinstitute.com/online/PDF/FIPV-1503-06-Vieth-SBC.pdf. See also Basyle Tchividjian and Victor Vieth, "When the Child Abuser Has a Bible: Investigating Child Maltreatment Sanctioned or Condoned by a Religious Leader" *Faculty Publications and Presentations* 53 (2011), digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lusol_fac_pubs/53; and Victor I. Vieth, "The Need for a Trauma-informed

Lutheran Theology: A Case Study on Lutheran Study Bibles," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 51, no. 3 (July 2024), 52-66, currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/472.

[42] See Marcia J. Bunge, "Lutheran Foundations for Promoting Child Well-being and Addressing Child Maltreatment," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 24, no. 2 (April/May 2024), learn.elca.org/jle/lutheran-foundations-for-promoting-child-well-being-and-addressing-child-maltreatment/; Timothy J. Wengert, "'No Saxon Children Were Harmed in the Making of This Catechism': Luther's Catechisms of 1529 and Child Abuse," in Nessan and Vieth, eds., *Here We Stand*, 28-44, and Martin J. Lohrmann, "Support for Children in the Lutheran Confessions," in Nessan and Vieth, eds., *Here We Stand*, 45-57; and Vieth, "Lutheran Study Bibles."

[43] See Stephen L. Smallbone, William L. Marshall, and Richard Wortley, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy, and Practice* (Willan Publishing, 2008), 9-10; and Cory Jewell Jensen, "Understanding and Working With Adult Sex Offenders in the Church," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45, no. 3 (July 2018): 38, currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/133; and Stephanie Kewley, Anthony R. Beech, and Leigh Harkins, "Examining the Role of Faith Community Groups With Sexual Offenders: A Systematic Review," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 25 (2015): 147, dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.07.016.

[44] For example, a 2023 study found that only 35 of 65 ELCA synod websites provided policies specifically addressing child sexual abuse, and only 17 synods had information on reporting suspected abuse that included up-to-date contact information for law enforcement. ELCA Quality of Call Initiative for Women in Ministry, "Sexual Boundary Violations in the ELCA: Prevalence, Policy and Prevention" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), July 10, 2023, resources.elca.org/quality-of-call-initiative/elca-sexual-boundary-violations-full-report.

[45] For more on this history and current work being done to identify victims and provide opportunities for healing, visit the ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative at elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/ministries-of-diverse-cultures-and-communities/indigenous-ministries-and-tribal-relations/indian-boarding-schools.

[46] As Lutheran theologian Marcia J. Bunge notes, "The neighbor includes all people, regardless of age or other distinctions, and all have equal worth." Bunge, "Lutheran Foundations," para. 9.

[47] Indeed, the punishments described in some verses of the Bible are unthinkable today. Deuteronomy 21:18-21, for example, teaches that a "stubborn and rebellious son" should be stoned to death by the men of the city. Proverbs calls for punishments that "wound" those in error (Proverbs 20:30). This punitive and violent model of authority was challenged by early Jewish commentators, whose translations of "lashes" or "flogging" referred to the use of words rather than weapons. See Michael Avioz, "The Law of the Disrespectful Son and Daughter," *The Torah* (2015), thetorah.com/article/the-law-of-the-disrespectful-son-and-daughter; and Vieth, *On This Rock*, 12. See also Cindy Miller-Perrin and Robin Perrin, "Changing Attitudes About Spanking Among Conservative Christians Using Interventions That Focus on Empirical Research Evidence and Progressive Biblical Interpretations," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 71 (2017): 516, doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.03.015. Infanticide and exposure (leaving a vulnerable child, often an infant, exposed without shelter so that they would die) were common enough in the ancient world that Jewish and Christian writers specifically condemned the practice.

[48] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 401.108.

[49] "If God's Word and will are placed first and are observed, nothing ought to be considered more important than the will and word of our parents, provided that these, too, are subordinated to God and are not set into opposition to the preceding commandments," Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 402.116.

[50] Ibid, 409.168.

[51] Ibid, 407.150.

[52] *Our Calling in Education*, 16.

[53] This section of this social message draws substantially and at times directly on the extensive work of Lutheran theologian Marcia J. Bunge. From among her many writings, see especially "Lutheran Foundations," 2024; "The Child, Religion, and the Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood," *Journal of Religion* 86, no. 4 (October 2006), 549-578; Marcia J. Bunge, ed., *The Child in Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); and Marica J. Bunge, ed., *Child Theology: Diverse Methods and Global Perspectives* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2021). See also Bunge's chapter and other chapters in Nessan and Vieth, *Here We Stand*. Some of these principles are also found in the ELCA's social

statement *Our Calling in Education* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2007), which also drew heavily on Bunge's work.

[54] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.

[55] Tappert and Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, 44:13, "A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage."

[56] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.

[57] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.

[58] "Human Rights," 4.

[59] The ELCA further affirms, "Human life in all phases of its development is God-given and, therefore, has intrinsic value, worth, and dignity." ELCA, *Abortion* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991), 2. Theologian Karl Rahner echoed this view of children's dignity as inherent, writing, "The grace of childhood is not merely the pledge of the grace of adulthood." Karl Rahner, "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 8, trans. David Bourke (Seabury Press, 1977), 37.

[60] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.

[61] Through the shepherd boy David, God teaches an important lesson about strength and leadership (1 Samuel 17). Young Elihu, whose youth made him "timid," speaks a bold word of faith and truth to Job and his friends (Job 32:6-9). The unnamed girl held captive in Namaan's household (2 Kings 5:1-14) risks her own safety to declare to the Aramean Namaan that the God of Israel can cure his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). See also Amy Lindemann Allen, "Baptism and Children in Mark's Vision of the Realm of God," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 47, no. 4 (Fall 2020), 31-35.

[62] "Human Rights" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2017), 11.

[63] *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2012), 12.

[64] "Protecting the Civil Rights of Palestinian Children," ELCA social policy resolution CA19.02.06h, 2019.

[65] "Affirming AMMPARO Strategy," ELCA social policy resolution CA16.02.03m, 2016.

[66] *Our Calling in Education*, 15.

[67] "Human Rights," 11-12. See also *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993), 6-7; *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, 7 and 48-50; and *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999), 10-17.

[68] For a discussion of the moral demands of respecting and promoting well-being in the community of life, see *Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011), 16-20.

[69] "Human Rights," 6.

[70] *Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility*, 25.

[71] "This church will work with all people to craft fair and comprehensive laws particularly aimed at protecting the weakest and most vulnerable among us, especially children, from sexual harm." *Human Sexuality*, 35.

[72] "Patients have a right to refuse unduly burdensome treatments which are disproportionate to the expected benefits." "End-of-life Decisions" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1992), 3.

[73] This church calls for government enforcement of regulations and names child labor as an "exploitative … labor practice." *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood*, 10.

[74] ELCA teaching supports the prosecution of "any individual who commits a sexual crime against a minor, including people in leadership positions in the church … [and] expects that all church leaders will report all instances of suspected child abuse." *Human Sexuality*, 25.

[75] See *For Peace in God's World* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1995).

[76] Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[77] *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*, HHS Publication No. 14-4884, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), Rockville, Md., 10. Available at samhsa.gov/mental-health/trauma-violence/trauma-informed-approaches-programs. A trauma-informed approach empowers people experiencing trauma to define when these principles are present. For example, "safety is not defined by leadership or those with more power; it is defined by the person who experienced the trauma"; see Pete Singer, "Toward a More Trauma-informed Church: Equipping Lutheran Congregations to Prevent and Respond to Abuse," in Nessan and Vieth, eds. *Here We Stand*, 373.

[78] For these and many more examples of trauma-informed practices, see Singer, "Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church," 363-391.

[79] The ELEA, a ministry of ELCA schools and learning centers, provides a wide array of resources related to child protection and trauma-informed ministry with children. See elcaschools.org/educational-resources/.
[80] *The Church and Criminal Justice*, 21.
[81] "This church calls for the adoption of preventive measures, including educational programs, appropriate policies, and screening of individuals who care for, supervise, or work with children within this church" (*Human Sexuality*, 25).
[82] The Office of the Secretary of the ELCA provides resources, including sample policies for child abuse prevention and information on making a report, online at elca.org/about/churchwide/office-of-the-secretary/legal-issues/sexual-misconduct-prevention. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have policy recommendations for organizations serving children and youth. See Janet Saul and Natalie C. Audage, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures" (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007), cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/programs/index.html.
[83] *The Church and Criminal Justice*, 25, 29.
[84] "Congregations that contemplate allowing anyone who has been convicted of a sexual offense or who the congregation believes may present a danger to children or others should prayerfully realize that we also are called to protect the innocent and vulnerable. When relating to those who present such a concern, congregations should act with extraordinary care"; see *The Church and Criminal Justice*, 27.
[85] *Human Sexuality*, 25.
[86] *Human Sexuality*, 25.
[87] ELCA, "Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions," 7.45, 37. See also *Human Sexuality*, 25.
[88] "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2021), definition 16 and sections B.4, B.5, B.9, and B.11.
[89] See ELCA, "Constitution, Bylaws," 20.22.23 and 20.23.06. The trauma of child abuse allegations within a worshiping community should be considered as "adversely affecting" the local community.
[90] See Chapter 20 of ELCA, "Constitution, Bylaws" and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline."
[91] Most experts suggest that online resources be "one click away" from a homepage for ease of access.
[92] Such programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, and school breakfast and lunch programs.
[93] Recent research found that publicly funded paid family leave led to significantly lower reports of child maltreatment and a reduction in removal of children from their homes. Lindsey Rose Bullinger, Kerri M. Raissian, Bart Klika, Melissa Merrick, at al., "More Than Snuggles: The Effect of Paid Family Leave on Infant Maltreatment," *Child Maltreatment* (2026), published online ahead of print, doi.org/10.1177/10775595251318939.
[94] Researchers from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that, during the years 2011-2022, child maltreatment reports declined 11% following the adoption of a state paid sick leave mandate. Monica Deza, Johanna Catherine Maclean, and Alberto Ortega, "Paid Sick Leave and Maltreatment," National Bureau of Economic Research (May 2025), doi.org/10.3386/w33758.
[95] As part of a multidisciplinary team, chaplains can play a vital role in providing spiritual support to survivors of abuse. This role requires specialized training. See Vieth and Singer, "Wounded Souls" (2019), 1228-1230.
[96] Massachusetts Legislative Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, "Guidelines and Tools for the Development of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Intervention Plans by Youth-serving Organizations in Massachusetts," June 2017, 34, safekidsthrive.org/the-report/key-sections/section-2-screening-and-background-checks-for-selecting-employees-and-volunteers/.
[97] Phone numbers for reporting in each state can be found at www.childwelfare.gov/state-child-abuse-and-neglect-reporting-numbers/.
[98] For more information, see the ELCA's "Photo Guidelines for Congregations," available at resources.elca.org.

Proposed Social Message on Child Protection
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the action Church Council will consider at the November 2025 meeting?
To adopt "Child Protection" as a social message of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America addressing the church's role in preventing and responding to child maltreatment.

What is a social message?
Social messages are topical documents adopted by the ELCA Church Council to focus attention and action on timely, pressing matters of social concern to the church and society. They are used to address pressing contemporary concerns in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of the scriptures. They may elaborate and focus ELCA teaching and policy but must be consistent with previously adopted teaching and policy positions, especially from social statements. Social messages draw attention to specific topics, and they encourage moral discernment and action.

How did this social message originate?
The 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly received memorials from the Saint Paul Area, Central States, and Northeastern Iowa Synods requesting development of a social statement on child abuse and protection. The 2022 Churchwide Assembly, acting on the recommendation of the memorials committee, requested that Church Council authorize development of a social message on "child abuse and protection." The Church Council voted in April 2024 to authorize this social message.

How was the proposed text developed?
The Director for Theological Ethics worked with a group of consultants who provided initial insights and critical review of drafts. Theological Ethics also hosted a Lutheran Ethicists Gathering in January 2024 on the topic of child protection to gather insights from presenters, panelists, and attendees.

As the initial draft was developed, the Director spoke with more than 20 experts and stakeholders to identify key priorities for the church, policy recommendations, and other insights. This group included victims of child abuse (including those whose abuse occurred within the church), child abuse pediatricians, counselors and therapists, child advocates, social science researchers, Church Council members, youth ministry leaders, specialists in training churches for child protection, child maltreatment investigators, and teachers. The Director also spoke with staff in specific ELCA or ELCA-related ministries, including representatives from Lutheran Social Services, ELCA Schools and Learning Centers, misconduct prevention, youth and young adult ministry, children's ministry, and the ELCA's Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative.

Feedback from these individuals and from the public comment period was used to revise the draft. This was reviewed by the group of consultant experts and ELCA bishops. The Director made further revisions to develop the proposed text that is now under Church Council's consideration.

What was the participation level in the public comment period?
An online survey from March 20 to July 1, 2025, received 147 responses. In addition, Theological Ethics received emails from approximately 40 individuals with comments on the draft, some of whom emailed on behalf of a group. A final report of the survey results will be available at www.elca.org/childprotection.

En Bloc Items

I. Budget and Finance Committee

A. Audit Committee Membership

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To appoint the following individuals to serve on the Audit Committee for a two-year, renewable term: Kevin Anderson, Pat Harper, Rindra Josoa, Tami Jo McHugh, and Terri Robertson.

B. Audit Committee Report

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To receive the draft minutes of the ELCA Audit Committee describing their approval from June 2025 of the audited financial statements for the churchwide organization's fiscal year ended January 31, 2025.

C. Engagement of Audit Firm

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To assign responsibility for the engagement of an audit firm to perform the audit service plan for the churchwide organization's year ending January 31, 2026 to the Executive Committee.

II. Executive Committee

III. Legal and Constitutional Review Committee

A. Proposed continuing resolution amendments to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

The Office of the Secretary recommends a proposed amendment to two continuing resolutions. One is relating to the Association of Synod Vice Presidents. The association asks for this amendment because the language first better for availability when a synod vice president term is a four-year term.

The other amendment is relating to the non-Church Council membership on the Resource Development Committee to allow for confirmed members of synod-authorized worshiping communities to be appointed.

The process for continuing resolutions is specified in Chapter 22 of the ELCA Constitution. A two-thirds vote of the Church Council is required for adoption.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC] [Two-thirds approval required]*
Recommended:

To adopt the following amendments to the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as follows:

Chapter 10.
SYNODS

10.30. OFFICERS

10.31.B25. ***Association of Synod Vice Presidents:*** *The Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall be composed of the synod vice presidents of this church. The churchwide vice president shall be a member with voice but not vote. The Church Council may appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. The Conference of Bishops may appoint a synod bishop as a liaison to the association with voice but not vote. ~~Triennially~~ Annually, the Association of Synod Vice Presidents shall elect a chair and vice chair to preside at meetings for one-year terms with the possibility of re-election for a second year. Terms begin September 1 of the year of election. The persons who would make themselves available for election as chair or vice-chair would have at least two years remaining in their term.*

Chapter 14.
CHURCH COUNCIL

14.40. **CHURCH COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

14.41.~~H22~~H25 *…. Non-Church Council members, each of whom shall be a voting members of an ELCA congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community,...*

B. Proposed Amendments to Portico Benefit Services Restated Bylaws

The Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the ELCA (dba Portico Benefit Services) provides that its bylaws can be amended only with prior approval of the Church Council or the Churchwide Assembly.

At its November 2025 meeting, Portico Benefit Services Board of Trustees approved a resolution to amend Section 4.3 of the Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the ELCA. The amendments are to provide clarity on when a trustee's position is deemed vacant. The proposed amendments can be found here.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To approve the proposed amendments to the Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the ELCA as identified in the "Portico Bylaw Changes Nov 2025" document.

IV. Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee

V. Service and Justice Committee

VI. Christian Community and Leadership Committee

VII. Other Items

A. Church Council Nominations and Elections

Pursuant to 14.22. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the Church Council is to elect nominees to a vacancy on a board or committee of the churchwide organization. Biographical information is provided in Biographies.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To elect to the board of directors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University to a term beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2028: The Rev. Anthony Scott and Jill M. Meuser.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To elect to the board of trustees of United Lutheran Seminary to a term beginning September 2025 and ending May 2027: Donald Barb

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To appoint Deidre Hayes to serve as Church Council liaison to the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team for a term ending August 2031.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To elect the following individuals to serve on the Committee of Hearing Officers for a six-year term ending 2031: Aja M. Carr Favors, Adam B. Kuenning, Eric E. Nord, Tammy L. Pust, and Rev. Kim L. Lengert.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To elect the following individual to serve on the Committee on Appeals for a six-year term ending 2031: The Rev. Justin C. Boeding.

Audit Committee

Mr. Kevin D. Anderson

Synod of Congregation: Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod, ELCA (8G)
Congregation: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (ID: 02662) - Gaithersburg, Maryland
Birthdate: 09/21/1953 **Gender:** Man
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
18660 Queen Elizabeth Drive
Brookeville, MD 20833 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 3015701257 (Home)
Alternate: 2406017349 (Cell)
Email:
kevin.d.anderson@comcast.net (Home)
Educational Institutions:
University of Michigan Law School (1978-1981): Doctor Of Jurisprudence
University of Wisconsin--Whitewater (1973-1976): Bachelor Of Business Admin
Employment:
Managing Director (formerly Partner) (02/01/2007 - 12/20/2023)
BDO USA, P.C.
Washington, DC
Previous Employment:
Deloitte LLP (1999-2006)
United States Department of Treasury (1995-1998)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
ELCA Church Council (2019-2025)
Committee on Appeals (two short terms) (2015-2019)
Portico Benefit Services (Board of Pensions) (2009-2015)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
Over nearly 25 years I have sought and served in ever-increasing levels of responsibility in all three expressions of the church, ranging from congregational president to Synod Council, Synod Secretary, and the churchwide positions set forth above. My Church Council service includes the Executive Committee, Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, member of the Audit Committee, and chair of a temporary committee to revise and update the Church Council's committee structure. I am both a lawyer and a certified public accountant, with more than four decades of professional experience, and I bring these skills and experience to all of my service within the church.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
N/A

Alternate Committee Nominations:
1. Committee on Appeals
2. Committee of Hearing Officers
3.

Reference: Imran Siddiqui **Phone:**4045568134 **E-mail:**Imran.Siddiqui@elca.org
Relationship: ELCA Vice President--served on Council for three years together

1/27/2025 4:45:54 PM

Church Council

The Rev. Ralph Dunkin

Synod of Congregation:	West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, ELCA (8H)		
Congregation:	Trinity Lutheran Church - Wheeling, West Virginia		
Birthdate:	01/15/1951	**Gender:**	Man
Primary Language:	English	**Ethnicity:**	European Descent/White
Synod of Roster:	8H	**Leader Key:**	L006088
Willing to serve:	Yes		

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
27 Finch Ave
Wheeling, WV 26003 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 3042800710 (Home)
Email:
rwd300@yahoo.com (Home)
Educational Institutions:
Thiel College (Date not specified.):
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (Date not specified.): Master Of Divinity
Employment:
Retired (09/01/2015 - Present)
Retired
Wheeling, WV
Previous Employment:
Bishop, West Virginia Western Maryland Synod (1997-2015)
Pastor, Christ Lutheran Church (Mozart), Wheeling, WV (1978-1997)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Past President, West Virginia Council of Churches

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
[Information submitted through Bishop Riegel as approved by the West Virginia-Western Maryland synod executive committee.]

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
Reference: Bishop Matthew Riegel
Relationship: Bishop

11/4/2025 1:02:44 PM

Committee on Appeals

The Rev. Justin Charles Boeding

Synod of Congregation:	Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA (3I)		
Congregation:	United Lutheran Church (ID: 11902) - Red Wing, Minnesota		
Birthdate:	02/16/1976	**Gender:**	Man
Primary Language:	English	**Ethnicity:**	European Descent/White
Synod of Roster:	3I	**Leader Key:**	L027463
Willing to serve:	Yes		

Preferred Mailing Address: (Work)
3526 Kosec
Red Wing, MN 55066 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 5072264689 (Work)
Email:
pastorjustinboeding@gmail.com (Work)
Educational Institutions:
(Date not specified.):
Employment:
Senior Pastor (05/01/2012 - 05/28/2025)
United Lutheran
Red Wing, MN
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Faith Lutheran, Dodge Center (2003-2013)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as the Senior Pastor at United Lutheran and would be willing to serve the larger church in any capacity that is helpful.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.

Reference: Regina Hosanally **Phone:**6128120881 **E-mail:**hassanally@semnsynod.org
Relationship: Bishop

5/29/2025 11:22:32 AM

Committee of Hearing Officers

Ms. Aja M Carr Favors

Synod of Congregation: Nondenominational
Congregation: Ecumenical
Birthdate: 07/21/1978 **Gender:** Woman
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** Black/African American/African Descent
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
10040 S Oakley Ave
Chicago , IL 60643 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 3122212402 (Cell)
Email:
ajafavors@outlook.com (Home)
Educational Institutions:
Northwestern University (2015-2019): Master Of Public Administration
Valparaiso University Law School (2011-2013):
Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary (2002-2006): Master Of Theological Studies
Employment:
First Deputy Corporation Counsel (05/16/2024 - Present)
City of Chicago Department of Law
Chicago, IL
Previous Employment:
Nissan North America Inc (2023-2024)
ELCA (2016-2023)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Former ELCA Associate General Counsel (2016-2023)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
My sense of call to serve within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America arises from a deep conviction that faith and vocation are not separate, but intertwined expressions of stewardship and justice. In my work as former Associate General Counsel, I've witnessed how law can serve as a ministry; protecting institutions, promoting equity, and creating structures that allow mission to flourish with integrity. I feel called to contribute those same principles to the shared work of the Committee of Hearing Officers: advancing transparency, accountability, and inclusion in service to the Gospel. I bring over a decade of legal and governance experience, particularly in the areas of ethics, policy, and organizational leadership. I have guided institutions through complex matters involving equity, misconduct, data stewardship, and public trust. I believe these skills align with the Church's call to care for creation, community, and one another.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
As an African American woman and attorney who has served both within the Church and in public leadership, I bring a perspective shaped by navigating spaces where faith, justice, and representation intersect. My lived experience offers an understanding of what it means to serve in institutions that have not always reflected the fullness of God's people and the hope that comes when they begin to do so.

Alternate Committee Nominations:
1. Committee on Appeals
2. Committee on Discipline

Reference: Thomas Cunniff **E-mail:** Thomas.Cunniff@elca.org
Relationship: He is my former supervisor.

10/8/2025 4:40:38 PM

Committee of Hearing Officers

Mr. Adam Blake Kuenning

Synod of Congregation: Western Iowa Synod, Elca (5E)
Congregation: St John Lutheran Church (ID: 02462) - Council Bluffs, Iowa
Birthdate: 05/04/1985 **Gender:** Man
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
15939 Lake Street
Omaha, NE 68116 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 4026185078 (Cell)
Email:
adamkuenning@gmail.com (Home)
Educational Institutions:
Loyola University Chicago School of Law (2017-2018): Unknown
Creighton University School of Law (2010-2013): Unknown
University of North Dakota (2003-2006): Bachelor Of Science
Employment:
System Director Senior Counsel (07/01/2023 - Present)
CommonSpirit Health
Omaha, NE
Previous Employment:
Immanuel (2019-2023)
Erickson & Sederstrom PC (2014-2018)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Western Iowa Synod General Counsel (2025-)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
A sense of Mission drives much of life. Accordingly, I've dedicated much time to service. I've been fortunate to prove helpful to State and federal organizations, local congregations, and even my children's schools through volunteering and leadership. I've been blessed with the ability to quickly learn & process complex issues (from prior service as an Air Traffic Controller to my two most recent roles as lead Legal Counsels for large religious health systems) and be able to communicate those issues effectively to learners and lay persons. As relevant to the Committee of Hearing Officers, I serve as Chair of a State Agency Board that oversees public administrative hearings. I've been a part of a number of hearings in the last five years. These hearings often involve complex state and federal issues. I also volunteer as the legal counsel for the Western Iowa Synod, where I feel fortunate to use my gifts to help support the Church and our new Bishops (both nationally and in the WIS).

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
I am not a member of these groups. However, I am proud that our Church helps uplift those who so many others seek to marginalize.

Alternate Committee Nominations:
1. Committee on Appeals
2. Committee on Discipline
3. Audit Committee

Reference: Pr. Jon Benson (Ret.)
Relationship: I don't have Pr. Jon's contact info - he retired and stopped attending St. John earlier this year

10/6/2025 3:39:50 PM

Committee of Hearing Officers

The Rev. Kim L Lengert

Synod of Congregation: ELCA
Congregation: Ecumenical
Birthdate: 06/21/1963 **Gender:** Woman
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Synod of Roster: 7B **Leader Key:** L013091
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
100 Reach Road
Deer Isle, ME 04627 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 2073220887 (Cell)
Alternate: 6108231960 (Work)
Email:
kim@lengertlawfirm.com (Work)
Educational Institutions:
Widener University School of Law (2004-2007): Doctor Of Jurisprudence
Trinity Lutheran Seminary (1985-1990): Master Of Divinity
University of Miami (1983-1985): Bachelor Of Arts
Employment:
Director, Ending Hunger Corps (09/06/2022 - Present)
Dept of Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry, State of Maine
Augusta, ME
Previous Employment:
Owner/Attorney, Lengert Law Firm (short partnership in this period) (2008-)
Christ's United Lutheran Church (2011-2017)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Appointed Pastor, Conflict resolution, Vinemont Community Lutheran Church (2005-2009)
Pastor-Redeveloper, Inner city re-development, Incarnation Lutheran Church, (1999-2005)
Pastor Developer, Cross cultural organizational development, Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church (1989-1994)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
My life has been enriched by working with diverse communities in ministry, law, and personal life. I have been privileged to serve the church in both urban and rural areas, new church starts and congregations that had lost contact with their communities. My goal has been to help them discern and act upon God’s call to them in their situation. In both law and ministry, this has allowed me to see beyond the surface into the deeper areas that prompted current issue, and address it in an appropriate matter that promotes healing for the parties within the resolution. Because every interaction, whether a conversation or controversy, is a relationship and an opportunity in faith.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
As one who has been experienced "unwelcome' by my church, first as a woman and then as a woman in a same gender relationship, I recognize that both the pain imposed and the fear realized blocks people from a fuller understanding of both God and the church. I believe that through my experience I can be a bridge for others to unite.

Alternate Committee Nominations:
1. Committee on Appeals
2. Committee on Discipline
3. Church Council

Reference: Tracey Berner **Phone:**5702050353 **E-mail:**tberner@pa.gov
Relationship: friend, former parishioner

10/30/2025 8:42:48 AM

Audit Committee

Dr. Tami Jo McHugh

Synod of Congregation: Northwest Intermountain Synod, ELCA (1D)
Congregation: Trinity Lutheran Church (ID: 04816) - Nampa, Idaho
Birthdate: 04/16/1962 **Gender:** Woman
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
136 S Ryde Ave
Kuna, ID 83634 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 2089895777 (Cell)
Email:
tamimchugh@msn.com (Home)
Educational Institutions:
California Southern University (2016-2019): Doctor Of Philosophy
Realtor University (2013-2014): Master Of Business Administration
Seattle University (1980-1984): Bachelor Of Business Admin
Employment:
President (01/01/2010 - Present)
McHugh Inc
Kuna, ID
Previous Employment:
See CV for current teaching positions (-)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Treasurer, Northwest Intermountain Synod (1999-)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
I have served as Treasurer of the Northwest Intermountain Synod since 1999. Prior to that, I was active in congregational leadership, including serving as congregational president. Since 2014 I have been President of Trinity New Hope, Inc., a nonprofit affordable housing ministry associated with my congregation. We have owned and operated 16 single family homes for low-income families. We are in the process of selling this property to a larger nonprofit that can help transition the homes into low-income home ownership. The homes surround our church parking lot. This has been a time-consuming but rewarding ministry. Despite my intense work schedule, I have always felt called to give back and I have served continuously for most of my adult life. Our eldest daughter is in her first call as an ELCA pastor in Ohio. Currently I am a full-time real estate broker plus I own a tax practice. In addition, I teach at four universities, with one of them being a full-time position.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
I am female. My identical twin sister is gay, Three of my granddaughters are also gay. I am a strong ally for the LGBTQ community.

Alternate Committee Nominations:
1. Church Council
2. Mission Investment Fund Board of Trustees
3. Board of Pensions (Portico Benefit Services)

Reference: Bishop Meggan Manlove **Phone:**2083184845 **E-mail:**bishopmeggan.manlove@nwimsyond.org
Relationship: Former pastor, friend, Bishop of NWIMS (where I am Treasurer)

10/19/2025 7:24:54 PM

Other committee or board
Trinity Lutheran Seminary

Ms. Jill M. Meuser

Synod of Congregation: Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA (7F)
Congregation: Calvary Lutheran Church (ID: 00461) - West Chester, Pennsylvania
Birthdate: 01/13/1955 **Gender:** Woman
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
1099 Carroll Hill Dr
West Chester, PA 19382 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 610-715-55 (Cell)
Alternate: 610-429-3756 (Home)
Email:
QACHEMIST77@GMAIL.COM (Home)
Educational Institutions:
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (1983-1988): Master Of Business Administration
Capital University (1975-1977): Bachelor Of Arts
Wittenberg University (1973-1975): No Degree Earned
Employment:
Quality Assurance Manager (09/01/2016 - 12/31/2019)
JRAD
Edgewood, MD
Previous Employment:
SMRC (2011-2016)
SciTech Services, Inc (2001-2011)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Southeastern PA Synod of the ELCA - Synod Council, Chair of Reference and Counsel, TOthers (2007-2015)
ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member (2011-2013)
Capital University Alumni Advisory Board, including serving as secretary (2006-2014)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
Having life-long connections to Capital University and Trinity/ELTS, I look forward to serving the institutions as they move into a challenging future. My faith informs my actions and relationships. Grateful for the many blessings in my life, I look for how God is leading me to be a blessing to others. I am intelligent, articulate and compassionate. I synthesize issues across disciplines to discern new ways of thinking about and communicating issues, opportunities, and solutions. I also bring the perspective of an informed lay person to a group whose other members are all Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Ministers of Word and Service. In addition to the service examples listed above, I have held numerous positions in my congregation, including Treasurer,; served on the Board of Directors and Finance Committee of the Deaconess Community, including during their move from Philadelphia to Chicago; and served on the SEPA Transition Ministry Team.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.

Reference: Pr Daniel Krewson **E-mail:**dkrewson@clcwc.org
Relationship: He is my pastor.

10/22/2025 3:39:23 PM

Committee of Hearing Officers

Mr. Eric Edward Nord

Synod of Congregation: Montana Synod, ELCA (1F)
Congregation: Hope Lutheran Church (ID: 13342) - Anaconda, Montana
Birthdate: 01/30/1963 **Gender:** Man
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
171 Trapper Ridge
PHILIPSBURG, MT 59858 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 4062940398 (Work)
Alternate: 4066702633 (Cell)
Email:
enord@cristlaw.com (Work)
Educational Institutions:
Carleton College (1981-1985): Bachelor Of Arts
Boston University Law School (1985-1988): Doctor Of Jurisprudence
Employment:
Attorney (09/10/2003 - Present)
Crist, Krogh, Alke & Nord
Billings, MT
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Montana Synod Legal Counsel (2015-2025)
Montana Synod Council (2010-2015)
King of Glory Lutheran Church, Billings, MT President (2005-2006)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
I feel called to do what I can for the Church and try to bring my skills as a lawyer to help in any way I can.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.

Reference: Laurie Jungling **Phone:**4065652227 **E-mail:**ljungling@montanasynod.org
Relationship: She is Bishop of the Montana Synod

4/29/2025 9:37:12 PM

Committee of Hearing Officers

Ms. Tammy Lynn Pust

Synod of Congregation: Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA (3H)
Congregation: Roseville Lutheran Church (ID: 11930) - Roseville, Minnesota
Birthdate: 04/18/1958 **Gender:** Woman
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
813 Millwood Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 6515032725 (Cell)
Email:
tammy.pust@gmail.com (Home)
Educational Institutions:
Concordia College (1976-1980): Bachelor Of Arts
U of Minnesota Law School (1980-1983): Doctor Of Jurisprudence
Employment:
Founder - after 40 years of public and private law practice (01/11/2024 - 09/21/2025)
Law Office of Tammy L. Pust
St. Paul, MN
Previous Employment:
Vice Chair and Administrative Appeals Judge, Administrative Review Board, US Department of Labor (2022-2024)
City of Boston, Boston Public Schools+Boston Human Resources+Direcotr, Office of Labor Relations (2020-2022)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Minneapolis Area Synod - neutral fact-finder/investigator + parlimentarian + legal advisor (2010-2025)
St. Paul Area Synod - neutral fact-finder/investigator + legal advisor in disciplinary proceedings (2010-2022)
Roseville Lutheran Church - Council member and President (2003-2010)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
I am a lifelong Lutheran. I've been a member of Roseville Lutheran Church (RLC), part of the St. Paul Area Synod of the ELCA, since 1988. At RLC, I served as a Council member and President, chaired a pastoral call committee, and taught Sunday School and Confirmation. For years, I have also used my skills and talents to serve the needs of the broader church community by serving as a parliamentarian, legal advisor and sometimes retained legal counsel. I've conducted several impartial workplace investigations, provided trainings on employment law and other legal issues, and advised congregational Councils on formal disciplinary proceedings. My work has served congregations in the St. Paul Area Synod, the Minneapolis Area Synod and, more recently, the Southeastern Minnesota Synod (parliamentarian). Professionally, I have worked as a lawyer, judge and teacher. For 40 years, I've used my legal skills, time and talents to try to improve people's lives and strengthen the communities we share.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
I do not identify as a member of one of the identified groups, but I do identify with those living with disabilities. The decades I spent representing the legal interests of and seeking appropriate accommodations for the diverse, non-included and inequitably treated students within our education systems taught me to recognize, and confront, these issues in all organizations so as to increase the strength of the many by improving accessibility for the marginalized few.

Alternate Committee Nominations:
1. Committee on Appeals
2. Committee on Discipline

Reference: (Former Bishop) Rev. Ann Svennungsen, **Phone:** 6129651628 **E-mail:** asvennungsen@gmail.com
Relationship: Personal friend, mentor and professional colleague

Responses to Churchwide Assembly Actions

1. Decarbonization of the Energy Grid

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06g]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Decarbonization of the Energy Grid" from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod;

To reaffirm the work of Lutherans Restoring Creation and encourage congregations and ministries to connect with its network and explore its resources for sustainable living;

To recognize the current efforts of the churchwide organization to reduce its carbon footprint and to request the churchwide organization consider transitioning to carbon-free electricity in its buildings by prioritizing community-based energy sources that do not perpetuate environmental injustice; and

To urge all expressions of the ELCA to make and continue commitments to decarbonization through adopting sustainable practices, carbon reduction goals, and environmental policy advocacy.

Response from Office of the Treasurer (November 2025)

The Lutheran Center and Archives Building recently completed a major lighting upgrade, replacing over 2,100 fluorescent fixtures with energy-efficient LED lighting. This project was funded through a combination of ELCA capital dollars and external grants. All old fixture components were recycled, and the fluorescent tubes—containing low-pressure mercury gas and phosphor—were safely disposed of to prevent environmental harm.

This upgrade is projected to reduce energy consumption by over 360,000 kWh annually, equivalent to more than 223,000 kgCO_2e in emissions savings.

ENERGY STAR Program

ENERGY STAR, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, promotes energy efficiency to protect the climate, improve air quality, and safeguard public health.

Commercial buildings are scored annually from 1 to 100 based on energy performance, adjusted for weather and operational factors. A score of 71 or higher qualifies a facility for ENERGY STAR recognition. The Lutheran Center currently holds a score of 91—well above the average of 75 for similar buildings and up from 87 just a few years ago.

Additional Opportunities

During the LED upgrade, other renewable energy options were explored, including solar, wind, and geothermal. However, limitations such as insufficient roof space, restrictive building codes, and high installation costs made these options unfeasible. Given the age of existing equipment and low return on investment, the decision was made to pause further efforts for now. The churchwide organization remains open to future innovations and technologies that may offer viable solutions.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*

Recommended:

To receive the response on "Decarbonization of the Energy Grid" from the Office of the Treasurer;

To commend the churchwide organization for its efforts to reduce its carbon footprint;

To recognize the current limitations to fully transition to carbon-free electricity in its buildings and encourage ongoing sustainability practices that support environmental justice; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

2. Increasing Continuing Education Commitments

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA25.01.06i]

To receive with gratitude the memorial on "Increasing Continuing Education Commitments" from the Greater Milwaukee Synod;

To encourage congregations and agencies to increase the guidelines for financial commitments for continuing education; and

To refer the memorial to the Church Council, in consultation with the Christian Community and Leadership unit, to create a process for these guidelines by establishing a “Continuing Education Advisory Committee” tasked with regular reviews of the guidelines and recommending appropriate increases for continuing education support.

Response from Christian Community and Leadership unit (November 2025)

Christian Community and Leadership unit plans to form a working group to help the staff respond to the memorial directed to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly "Increasing Continuing Education Commitments." To support this endeavor, please refer to the proposed timeline that outlines the dates, milestones, and participants involved in the continuing education commitments. This group will be inclusive and representative, bringing together ministers of Word and Sacrament, ministers of Word and Service, Church Council, seminaries, bishops, and churchwide organization staff to support this initiative.

PHASE	TIMELINE	ACTION STEPS	OVERSIGHT BY
(1). Committee formation: To form a working group to bring recommendations to Church Council.	December–January, 2026	To recruit 6 members to the working group representing: ministers of Word and Sacrament, ministers of Word and Service, Church Council, Seminary Professors, bishops, and CCL	David Anglada and CCL-Leadership team staff member.
(2). First meeting of the working group (virtual meeting).	January, 2026	Define working group purpose and scope of our work, goals and objectives plus, review timeline	David Anglada
(3). Data gathering and Assessment	January-March, 2026	Collect information from each of the 65 ELCA synods regarding their recommended funding for continuing education for both ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service. Additionally, gather data on the recommended time off for continuing education and any requirements for reporting annual continuing education activities. Once the information is compiled, analyze these findings.	David Anglada and CCL-Leadership team staff member.
(4). Disseminate data to the working group via a virtual meeting.	Summer, 2026	Share the results with the working group to discuss what was learned and begin writing recommendations to present to the Church Council.	David Anglada and members of the working group.
(5). Final Report	Fall, 2026	Recommendations to Church Council	David Anglada and members of the working group.

CC ACTION *[EN BLOC]*
Recommended:

To receive the timeline on "Increasing Continuing Education Commitments" from the Christian Community and Leadership unit and to anticipate a response at the Fall 2026 Church Council meeting; and

To request that the secretary inform the synod of this action.

GATHERING WORD AND PRAYER

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world,
the light no darkness can overcome.

Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening
and the day is almost over.

Let your light scatter the darkness
and illumine your church.

READING

A reading from First John.

19 And by this we will know that we are from
the truth and will reassure our hearts before
him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us, for
God is greater than our hearts, and he knows
everything.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

PRAYER

Gracious Lord, whenever we err,
Fill our hearts with your love.

When we wound or are wounded,
Fill our hearts with your love.

When tempted to judge,
Fill our hearts with your love.

Wherever there is hurt, loss, or despair,
Fill our world with your love.

PRAYER

Make us faithful instruments of your peace.
May we fill our world with your love.

Loving God, in holy baptism you have gathered us together across all human divisions and reconciled us to yourself in one body through the cross. Strengthen us now by your presence, that our thoughts and actions may be rooted and grounded in your love for us; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Hear my prayer, O Lord;
listen to my cry.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings.

In righteousness I shall see you;
when I awake, your presence will give me joy.

LORD'S PRAYER

You are invited to pray in the language or translation of your heart.

BLESSING

The God of peace be with us.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

ELCA Church Council

Report of the Treasurer

November 2025

Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

FY25 Unrestricted YTD Results/Forecast

	2025			2026
	Sept Actual	Full Year Budget	Full Year Forecast	Approved Budget
Mission Support	$ 21,472,936	$33,550,000	$ 33,750,000	$ 32,100,000
Direct Gifts, incl Temp Restricted	3,656,998	8,000,000	8,000,000	8,250,000
Investment Income	5,755,680	4,000,000	6,500,000	4,000,000
Bequests & Trusts	1,322,678	3,000,000	2,200,000	3,600,000
Endowment	2,965,913	3,600,000	3,675,000	3,650,000
Rent	715,648	1,050,000	1,050,000	1,000,000
Service Level Agreements/Other	1,266,128	1,900,000	1,800,000	1,600,000
Mission Investment Fund	1,000,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Total Operating Revenues	$ 38,155,981	$56,600,000	$ 58,475,000	$ 55,700,000

ELCA

FY25 Unrestricted YTD Results/Forecast

	2025			2026
	Sept Actual	Full Year Budget	Full Year Forecast	Approved Budget
Total Operating Revenues	$ 38,155,981	$56,600,000	$ 58,475,000	$ 55,700,000
Other Sources of Funds				
Designated Funds Released	-	4,925,000	4,925,000	3,082,936
Endowment Withdrawals	-	3,200,000	456,750	2,000,000
Restricted Funds Released	306,883	650,000	650,000	650,000
Total Other	$ 306,883	$ 8,775,000	$ 6,031,750	$ 5,732,936
Total Income	$ 38,462,864	$65,375,000	$ 64,506,750	$ 61,432,936
Total Spending	(41,057,165)	(65,375,000)	(64,506,750)	(61,500,000)
Net Revenues over Expenses	$ (2,594,301)	$ -	$ -	$ (67,064)

ELCA

From FY25 Budget to FY26 CWA Approved Budget

FY25 Budget	$65,375,000
Preliminary Adjustments:	
Grants	(750,000)
Purchased/Professional Services	(600,000)
Position Vacancies/Staff Efficiency Adj	(1,300,000)
Travel & Events	(475,000)
Other	(300,000)
Gap (part of proposed revision)	(450,000)
FY26 CWA Approved Spending Authorization	$61,500,000

Tentative and Preliminary

A WELCOMING CHURCH
A THRIVING CHURCH
A CONNECTED AND SUSTAINABLE CHURCH

Budget & Finance Committee
November 2025

Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

A WELCOMING CHURCH
A THRIVING CHURCH
A CONNECTED AND SUSTAINABLE CHURCH

BFC Members:

Pr. Lisa Ahlness, Chair

Pr. Heather Brown
Ms. Jessi Gieser
Ms. Patricia "Pat" Harper
Mr. Tim Hiller
Mr. Rindra Josoa
Mr. Moses Kavishe

Liaison Bishops:

Bishop Brenda Bos
Bishop Bill Gohl

ELCA

Proposed Expenses to be added

Office of Secretary – proportionate reduction	$334,832
Facilities – proportionate reduction	115,167
Increase to CW Assembly 2028 Budget	100,000
Compensation Increase (2%)	492,500
Facilities capacity cost	500,000
General Liability insurance and other	107,501
	$1,650,000



Proposed FY26 Budget Revisions

	2025 Forecast	2026 Approved Budget	2026 Nov Proposed Changes	2026 Revised Budget
Mission Support	$ 33,750,000	$ 32,100,000	$ 400,000	$ 32,500,000
Direct Gifts, incl Missionaries, YAGM, and Temp Restricted	8,000,000	8,250,000	-	8,250,000
Investment Income	6,500,000	4,000,000	-	4,000,000
Bequests & Trusts	2,200,000	3,600,000	(109,000)	3,491,000
Endowment	3,675,000	3,650,000	50,000	3,700,000
Rent	1,050,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Service Level Agreements/Other	1,800,000	1,600,000	-	1,600,000
Mission Investment Fund	1,500,000	1,500,000	-	1,500,000
Total Unrestricted and Temp Restr Funds	**$ 58,475,000**	**$ 55,700,000**	**$ 341,000**	**$ 56,041,000**

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Proposed FY26 Budget Revisions (cont)

	2025 Forecast	2026 Approved Budget	2026 Nov Proposed Changes	2026 Revised Budget
Total Unrestricted and Temp Restr Funds	**$ 58,475,000**	**$ 55,700,000**	**$ 341,000**	**$ 56,041,000**
Other Sources of Funds				
Designated Funds Released	4,925,000	3,082,936	876,064	3,959,000
Endowment Withdrawals	456,750	2,000,000	500,000	2,500,000
Restricted Funds Released	650,000	650,000	-	650,000
Total Other	**$ 6,031,750**	**$ 5,732,936**	**$ 1,376,064**	**$ 7,109,000**
Total Income	**$ 64,506,750**	**$ 61,432,936**	**$ 1,717,064**	**$ 63,150,000**
Total Spending	**(64,506,750)**	**(61,500,000)**	**(1,650,000)**	**(63,150,000)**
Net Revenues over Expenses	**$ -**	**$ (67,064)**	**$ 67,064**	**$ -**

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FY2026 Current Fund Proposed Action

- Total Unrestricted Revenues = $63,150,000
- Total Unrestricted Expenses = $63,150,000

To increase the Unrestricted (Current Fund) Spending Authorization from $61,500,000 to $63,150,000.



En Bloc Items

- **Receive the audited financial statements for the year ended January 31, 2025**
- **Audit Committee appointments**
- **Assign responsibility for engagement of an audit firm for the year ended January 31, 2026 to Executive Committee**

Child Protection

Proposed Recommended Social Message



ELCA

Background to the Draft



Revisions to Proposed

Restructured sections

- Moved “giving thanks” section on work being done currently to the end
- Reduced number of sections

Clarified text

- Added brief TOC and overview
- Additional text on poverty
- Clearer expectation to report alleged maltreatment
- Expansion of trauma-informed care

Added citations

Added appendix on recommended policies

- Allows social message to go into more depth without adding length to the body of the message

Overview of Sections

Understanding Child Maltreatment

The Church and Child Protection

Elements of a Lutheran Theology of Childhood

- Grounding principles
- Children, dignity, and justice

Guidance for Protecting Children

- Basic commitments
- Policies for worshipping communities
- Pastoral care and worship
- Confidentiality
- Training and resources
- Public policies

Board Development Committee

Hans Giller

Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Spring 2026 Church Council Retreat

- Q Center is just west of Chicago in St. Charles, Illinois, "The Midwest's Largest Meeting and Events Center" features 150,000 square feet of IACC-certified meeting space on 95 acres of wooded grounds.
- Retreat attendance includes Church Council members, Liaison Bishops, Advisory Members, and Administrative Team

ELCA

Spring 2026 Church Council Retreat

- Thursday, March 19 (travel day)
  - *For those flying:*
    - Shuttle buses leaving at 4 pm from Lutheran Center/O'Hare Marriott to Q Center
    - If unable to arrive by 4 pm, then take taxi/Uber directly to Q Center
  - Dinner served in dining room from 6-8 pm
  - Executive Committee to meet that evening
- March 20-22 (retreat)
  - Retreat ends Sunday, March 22 by ~11:30 am
    - For those flying: Transportation scheduled from Q Center to O'Hare Airport, leaving at ~12 pm

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Church Council Retreat Keys

- Presiding Bishop Curry has stated that his focus is on the ELCA priority of "a *connected, sustainable church.*"
- Worship and Prayer as a community
- Team Building- being connected starts with us
- Immunity to Change- Sustainability requires clear understanding of goals and adaptability to make change when needed

ELCA

And Now...

ELCA

An Exciting Offer Just for You!

- Contribute to the health of the Church Council
- Assist in preparing new council members and celebrate outgoing council members
- Evaluate the effectiveness of council meetings
- Support council in its governance role
- Facilitate socialization and fellowship among council members
- Help plan the Spring Retreat
- And much more...

ELCA



Board Development Committee

Thank You!

ELCA



ELCA

Final Report

2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY EVALUATION

Office of the Secretary
Research & Evaluation

Adam DeHoek, Ph.D.

PURPOSE

The 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly convened in Phoenix, Arizona, July 28-August 2. Gathering under the theme, *For the Life of the World*, voting members participated in plenary sessions and worship while acting on key legislative business and hearing reports on the work of the church.

The ELCA churchwide organization, specifically the Churchwide Assembly Planning Team, sought to know more about voting members' feelings of preparation, their connection and engagement in the work of the Assembly, and their experience of God's mission and ministry for the wider church.

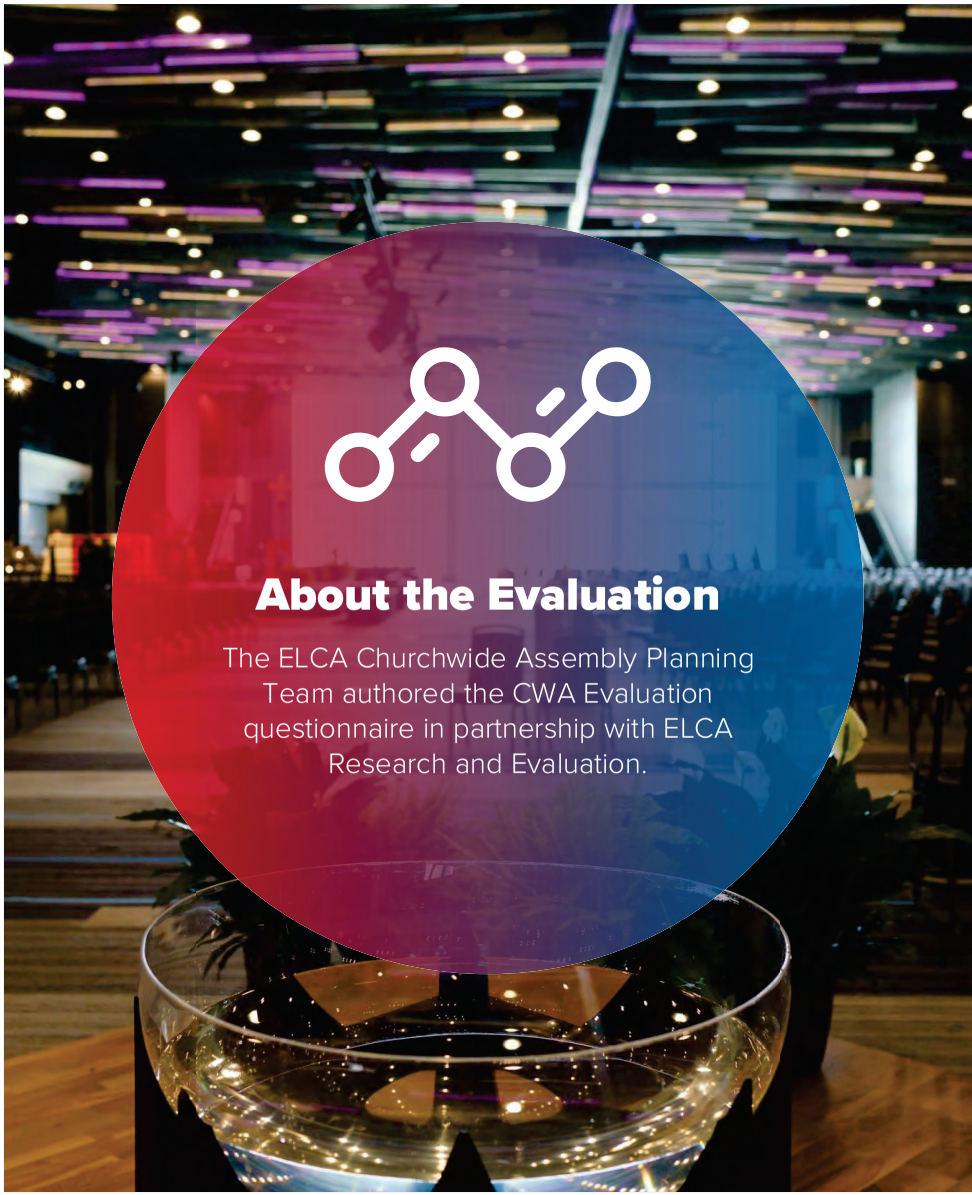


RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Desired Outcomes

The questionnaire sought to find answers to the research questions included below. The answers to these questions provide information about the experience of voting members before, during and after the Churchwide Assembly.

- How well-prepared did voting members feel in advance of the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly? What contributed to their feelings of preparedness?
- How well did voting members connect with and engage in the work of the Churchwide Assembly? What enhanced their experience? What detracted from it?
- How did voting members experience God's mission and ministry for the wider church? How were they inspired to share the ways the ELCA is making God's love real?



About the Evaluation

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly Planning Team authored the CWA Evaluation questionnaire in partnership with ELCA Research and Evaluation.

METHODS

ELCA Research and Evaluation constructed an online version of the CWA Evaluation questionnaire. It was distributed via email to all voting members of the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly at the end of the Assembly, with an email reminder distributed two weeks following the Assembly.

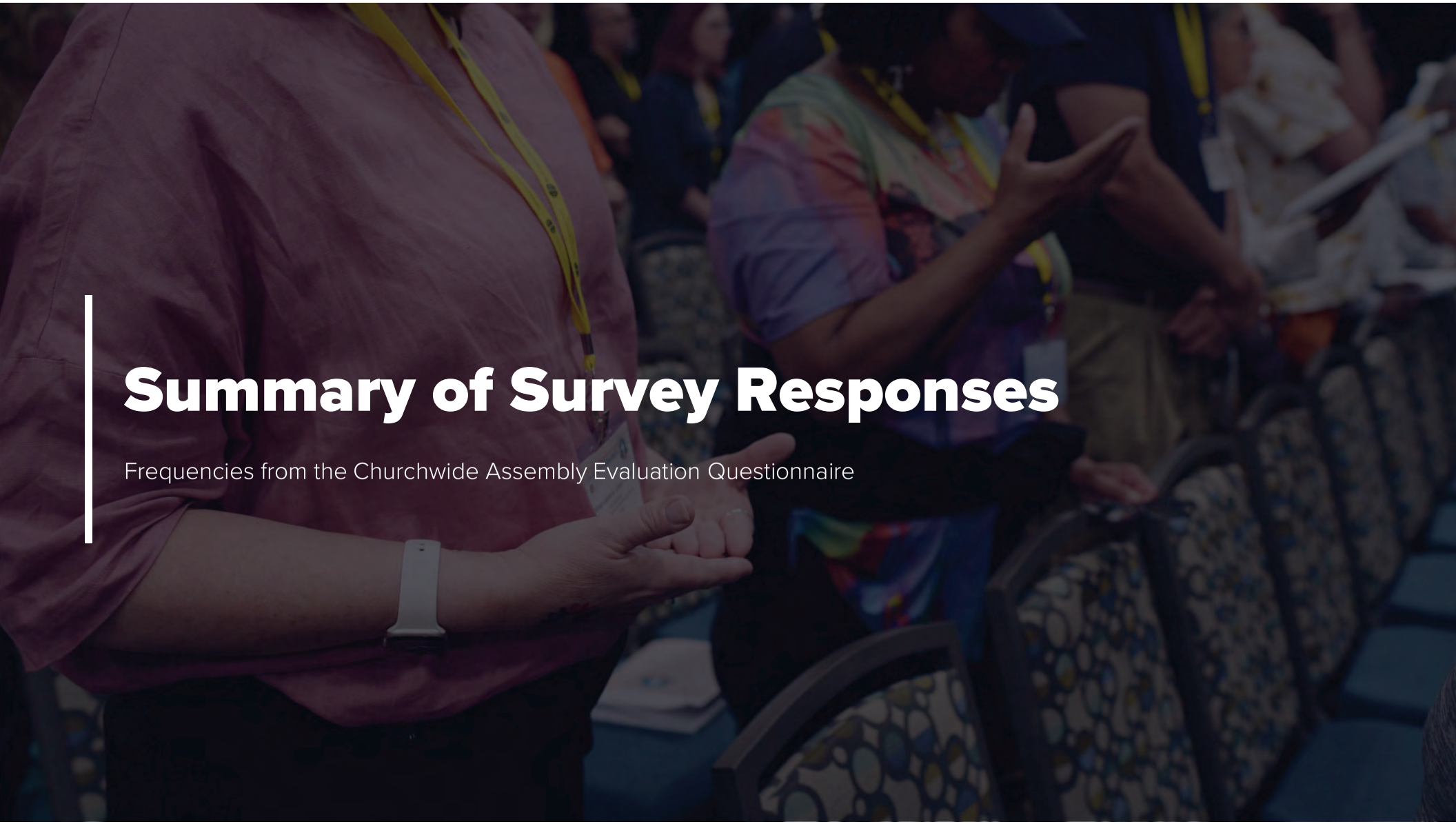
Of the respondents to the survey:

- 64% were lay members; 36% were Ministers of Word and Sacrament; and 1% were Ministers of Word and Service.
- 55% identified as women; 41% identified as men.
- 82% identified as white; 16% identified as persons of color.
- 58% were 55 years old or older; 4% were 24 years old or younger



Response Rate

Voting members of the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly were invited to complete the CWA Evaluation questionnaire. 265 of 803 voting members (33%) completed the entire questionnaire.



Summary of Survey Responses

Frequencies from the Churchwide Assembly Evaluation Questionnaire

OVERALL RATINGS

86%

Of voting members rated their CWA experience as very good or excellent.

Voting members provided favorable ratings about their preparation for the Churchwide Assembly, their connection and engagement with the work of the Assembly, and their experience of God's mission and ministry for the church.

		% Agree*
Preparation	Before attending the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, I felt well-prepared to be a voting member.	78%
Connection and Engagement	There is important work being carried out across the ELCA.	98%
	I felt like we accomplished a lot at the CWA.	89%
	I felt like I was an integral part of the work of the CWA.	88%
Mission and Ministry	Through my participation in the Churchwide Assembly, my knowledge of the breadth of the work of the ELCA was deepened.	93%
	I have a better knowledge of the interconnectedness of the three expressions of the ELCA (congregation, synod, churchwide).	86%

*Percent responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on a 5-point scale.

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

77%

Of voting members said they received the right amount of communications.

Though 20 percent said they would have preferred additional communications or materials.

Emails about registration and logistics	% Agree*
Helped make the registration process smooth.	92%
Informed me of the steps I needed to take in advance of the Churchwide Assembly.	92%
Provided useful information about logistics (e.g., flights, hotels, parking, etc.).	91%
Arrived in time for me to put the information to good use.	87%
Registration orientation webinar	**% Agree****
Informed me of the steps I needed to take in advance of the Churchwide Assembly.	91%
Provided useful information about logistics (e.g., flights, hotels, parking, etc.).	89%
Helped make travel arrangements and the registration process smooth.	86%
Prepared me for participation as a voting member of the Churchwide Assembly.	86%

*Percent responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on a 5-point scale.

**Of those who participated in the webinar (83%), percent responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on a 5-point scale.

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Communications and materials

Twenty percent of respondents (n = 53) provided additional feedback about communications or materials they would have preferred.

Of these, they most sought information about expectations or highlights of the Assembly, separate emails about specific topics, logistics like transportation and Ramp cards, as well as legislative items and memorials.

Additionally, there were a handful of comments from voting members that they did not receive much if any email communication.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
What to expect (13% of comments)	"As a first-time attendee, I think it would have been nice to have a detailed email regarding what to expect during the Assembly."
Separate emails about specific topics (11%)	"Perhaps not more emails, but emails that provided more concise information. Or perhaps more emails with each email containing a fewer number of items/topics contained within. I felt the emails had so much information in them, I tended to feel overwhelmed and then confused as to what was needing to be addressed."
Shuttles/Transportation (11%)	"As far as transportation goes, I think arrival information was rather misleading. Shuttle times Monday were extremely limited. Most people I spoke with ended up arranging their own transport, myself included."
Ramp cards (9%)	"More information on how to use and report use of the Ramp card."
Legislative items (9%)	"I would have preferred a document that listed all the things we would be voting on with a link that took me to the page that had the information about those things."
Memorials (8%)	"Earlier and more information about memorials would have been helpful."

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Pre-Assembly Videos	% who watched		% Agree*
Presiding Bishop Eaton "Welcome"	72%	Provided me with a good overview of the ELCA.	91%
		Gave me a realistic preview of what it would be like to be a voting member.	88%
Secretary Rothmeyer "Parliamentary Procedure"	55%	Helped me understand the rules of parliamentary procedure that we would use.	88%
		Reduced my anxiety about participating in the deliberative process.	72%
Vice President Siddiqui "Ecclesiastical Ballot"	58%	Helped me understand how the elections of Presiding Bishop and Secretary would be carried out.	92%

*Of those who watched, percent responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on a 5-point scale.

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Pre-Assembly Webinars and Hearings	% who attended		% Agree*
CWA Guide training	76%	I felt comfortable that I would be able to use CWA Guide after participating in the virtual training.	91%
Palestine and Israel	50%	The hearing was informative and helpful.	86%
Faith and Civic Life Recommended Social Statement	53%	Helped me feel well-prepared for when it was discussed at the CWA.	84%
Human Sexuality Recommended Edited Social Statement	52%	Helped me feel well-prepared for when it was discussed at the CWA.	82%
Hearing on the budget	36%	Helped me feel well-prepared when the budget was discussed at the CWA.	80%
Hearing on memorials	55%	Helped understand the process of how the legislative items would be acted on.	79%
Virtual Bible studies	46%	Helped center me spiritually in preparation for the Assembly.	60%

*Of those who participated, percent responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on a 5-point scale.

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Pre-Assembly videos and events

Thirty percent of respondents (n = 79) provided feedback about the pre-assembly videos and events.

Their comments centered on the need for clearer communication about the availability of these resources, as many said their schedules made live participation difficult.

Several appreciated having recordings, guides, and summaries available afterward, but also expressed a desire for the Q&A portions of the webinars to be posted as well.

Other respondents mentioned that the process of preparation felt overwhelming.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Need for clearer communication (20% of comments)	"I don't recall seeing the pre-assembly hearings and did not attend them. Had I known, I would have attended. I am not sure if I missed the email notices, but I don't recall seeing them."
Scheduling challenges prevented attendance (18%)	"There were a whole bunch [of events] that got clumped together the three weeks leading up to the CWA. Clearing time several evenings per week or finding time to watch a recording was a lot."
Appreciation for follow-up resources (13%)	"I really appreciated the guides and summaries of the webinars. As a new mom, it really helped me be able to stay informed without having to sit on the webinar and chase an infant around."
Process to prepare was overwhelming (10%)	"For a first-time participant, it was somewhat overwhelming."
Need for Q&A portions of webinars (9%)	"I think it would be extremely helpful in the future to include the Q&A portion of the webinars. Many of the questions I had were answered in this section, but I was unable to attend two of the webinars live as they conflicted with my work schedule. I greatly appreciated being able to see the recording of the presentations, but I felt I would have been even more prepared had I been able to see and listen to the Q&A portion too."

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

MORE THAN

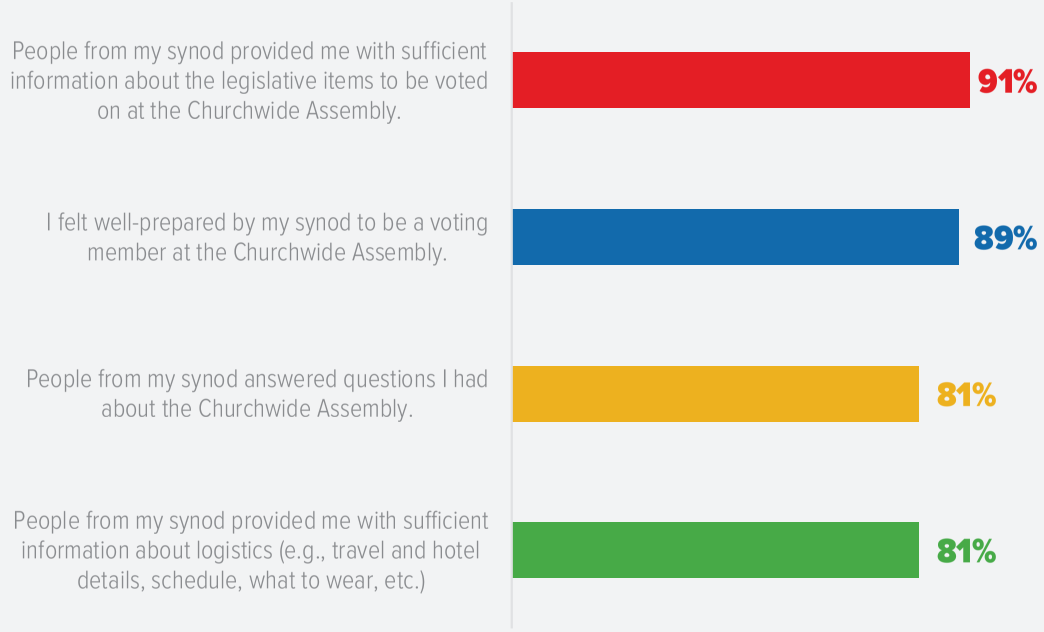
80%

Of voting members reported feeling prepared by their synod for Churchwide Assembly.

Voting members most often met twice with others from their synod in advance of the Churchwide Assembly.

59 percent of voting members said they met the right number of times. 32 percent wanted to meet more than they did.

AREAS OF PREPARATION BY SYNODS



PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Synod support

Twenty-nine percent of respondents (n = 76) provided feedback about additional information they would have liked to receive from people in their synod to prepare for Churchwide Assembly.

Their comments fell largely into three buckets: a greater desire for relationship building and in-person meetings among voting members, more details about legislative items, and additional orientation and practical expectations for first-time voting members.

More than a handful of respondents also provided positive comments about the preparation their synod offered.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Relationship building and in-person meetings (17% of comments)	"It was wonderful getting to know fellow delegates at the Assembly. Might have been nice to have a bit more relationship-building time before we got there." "The two times we met were online. It would have been nice to meet people in person before we got to Phoenix."
Details about legislative items (16%)	"Time to discuss at a high level the items we would be discussing at CWA to bounce ideas or share perspectives to help my internal deliberation process."
Appreciation for preparation offered (16%)	"My synod people sufficiently prepared and provided me with materials and information regarding the Churchwide Assembly."
Orientation for first-time voting members (12%)	"It would have been nice to have a meeting where those who had attended prior Churchwide Assemblies could share what to expect at the Assembly. Topics such as the importance of preparation prior to the Assembly, what a basic plenary session would be like, and such. Although we were often asked if we had any questions, I felt as though I didn't know what questions to ask."

PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY

Other feedback

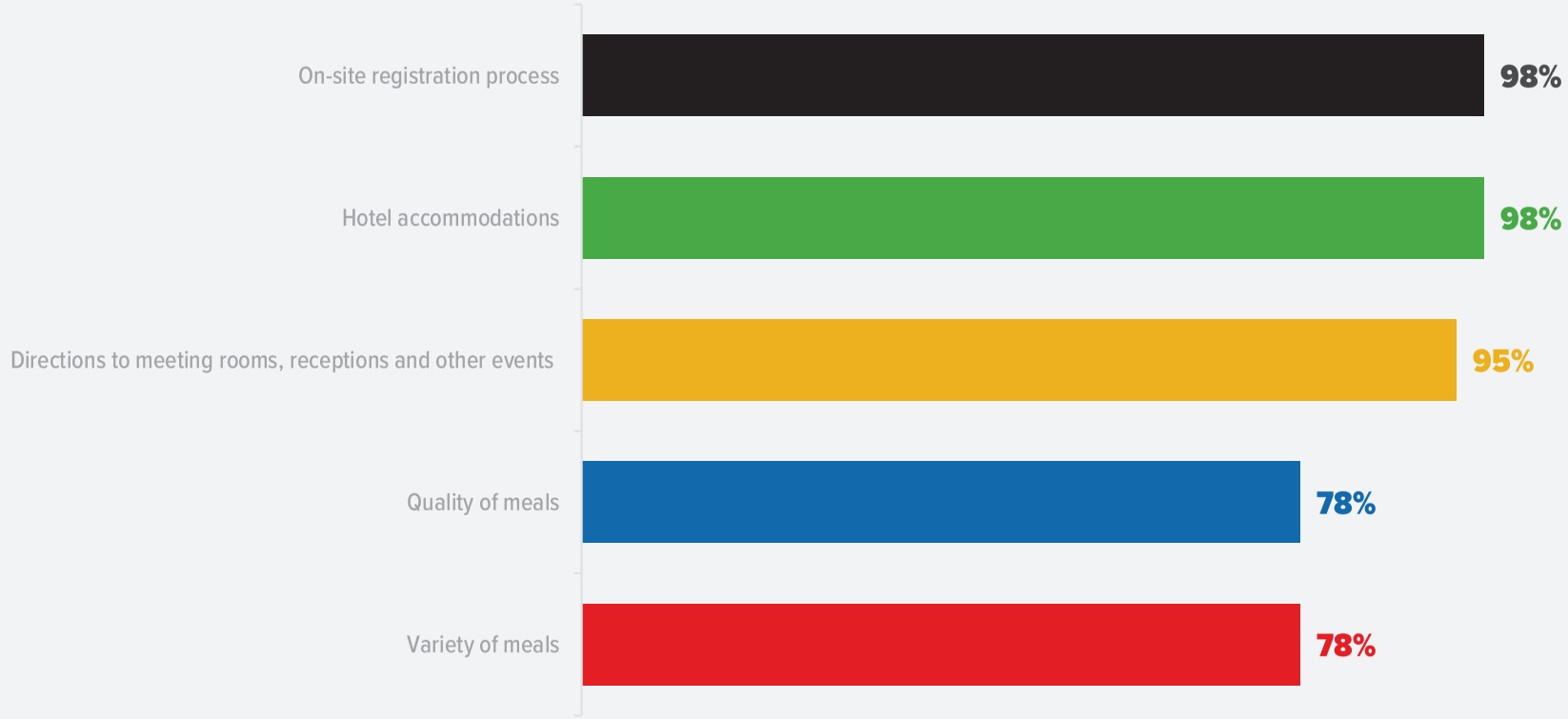
Twenty-eight percent of respondents (n = 73) provided additional feedback about what impacted their preparation for Churchwide Assembly.

Due to the breadth of the question, unsurprisingly, these comments were likewise broad. Respondents were most likely to mention the overwhelming amount of information to review in preparation for the Assembly and that there was not enough time to take it all in.

Several mentioned that being a previous voting member and experiencing the Assembly before was the best preparation.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Not enough time to take in the vast amount of information (18% of comments)	"I didn't realize how little time there would be to read/think about reports/memorials/items we'd be voting on at the assembly itself. I also didn't realize that the deadlines for submitting edits would sometimes be immediately after a general session ended. I feel like I was always a step behind, and with it being my first assembly, I didn't know what I didn't know until I got there. I really could have used more hand-holding as a first-timer to make sure I knew what I needed to fully prepare." "I was grateful to have so much on the ELCA churchwide website. It would have been nice to have more of that information months in advance, but I also realize that some things may not have been ready by then. It's just a lot of information to read through in a short period of time."
Previous voting member (8%)	"I was a voting member in 2022, so I already knew a lot about what and how everything was going to happen. So, it was easier for me to come up to speed this time."

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT



*Percent responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on a 5-point scale.

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Nominations and Elections	% Agree*
Information was effectively conveyed about the process for identifying the names of people who might be considered for election as Presiding Bishop.	88%
Information was effectively conveyed about the process for identifying the names of people who might be considered for election as Secretary.	87%
I was satisfied with the process of electing the Presiding Bishop at the Churchwide Assembly.	85%
I was satisfied with the process of electing the Secretary at the Churchwide Assembly.	81%
I was satisfied with the process for electing members of churchwide boards, Church Council and committees.	72%
The electronic election process went smoothly.	69%

*Percent responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on a 5-point scale.

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Election of the Presiding Bishop

Thirty-five percent of respondents (n = 93) provided comments about the election of the Presiding Bishop.

Most comments centered on wanting more information about the candidates. While many found the speeches helpful, they hoped for additional speeches, more chances to ask questions, and more time to process what they heard.

Respondents also indicated that technical glitches with the voting machines and the virtual presentation made the process less smooth.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Need for more information about the candidates (33% of comments)	"Elections should allow more time for candidates to speak, and more questions asked of the candidates. Four-minute speeches and 3 questions is not sufficient for understanding our leaders." "I was delighted with the process and the election. I would have liked to have more detailed resume information about the finalists."
Technology glitches (e.g., voting machines; virtual speeches) (16%)	"The delay in voting due to issues with the iPad technology went on longer than necessary. The eventual solution of using the alternate devices worked just as well and could have been implemented sooner." "Although it was good for equity to use Zoom for the first speeches, the technological glitches did end up creating a somewhat uneven field anyway."
Positive comments about the outcome (13%)	"I am excited and looking forward to the next 6 years."
More time for discernment (11%)	"I wish there was a short break for discernment between the 4th and 5th votes. My candidate didn't make the top 2 so I would have liked more time to consider. It felt rushed."

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Election of the Secretary

Twenty-six percent of respondents (n = 70) provided comments about the election of the Secretary.

Similar comments about the process were heard in response to the election of the Secretary as with the election of the Presiding Bishop. There was a desire for more information about the candidates and more time to process it.

Respondents also shared that they would have liked to have more information about the job description of the Secretary.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Need for more information about the candidates (27% of comments)	"It would have been nice to hear from the final 2 candidates for Secretary in the same way it was done for Presiding Bishop. The process moved directly from 3 candidates to 2 candidates with very little time to reconsider my vote." "It might have been good to hear more questions to the candidates about their actual qualifications for the position."
Positive comments about the process (19%)	"Starting with an open nomination, the narrowing the field, the hearing from the candidates was fair and efficient."
More time for discernment (14%)	"I believe additional time should have been allotted after the names on the second ballot were presented before being asked to vote. A number of folks dropped off the ballot, and those who voted for one of them may have needed some time to consider who they wanted to vote for."
More information about the requirements of the position (9%)	"More information should have been shared about the attributes desirable for the position of Secretary. Too much emphasis was placed on constitution and bylaws and little to none was placed on the management oversight functions of the Secretary."

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

79%

Of voting members said they did not have any issues with CWA Guide.

17 percent said they had issues which were resolved within an hour. Two percent said they had issues which were never resolved.

Technology		% Agree*
iPads	The pickup and registration process for the iPad was quick and efficient.	90%
	The return process for the iPad was quick and efficient.	89%
CWA Guide - Software	It was easy for me to read documents in CWA Guide.	84%
	It was easy for me to navigate through the pages of a document in CWA Guide.	81%
	It was easy for me to find documents in CWA Guide.	69%
	It was easy for me to move from document to document in CWA Guide.	65%
CWA Guide - Procedures	Updates were efficiently pushed to CWA Guide.	71%
	I was given adequate instructions on how to find documents in CWA Guide.	69%
	I was given sufficient time to find documents in CWA Guide.	59%
Plenary Sessions	The volunteers assisting with technology were knowledgeable.	91%
	Internet connectivity in the convention hall was adequate.	91%
	It was easy to find an available charging station for my device(s).	61%

*Percent responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on a 5-point scale.

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

CWA Guide

Forty percent of respondents (n = 107) provided suggestions to improve CWA Guide.

Most comments focused less on the CWA Guide itself and more on in-room adjustments to make it easier to use, such as clearly communicating and projecting the location of documents under discussion.

Respondents also suggested improving navigation within the Guide (summaries, icons, drop-downs, bookmarks, hyperlinks) and asked for on-screen updates to sync immediately in the app.

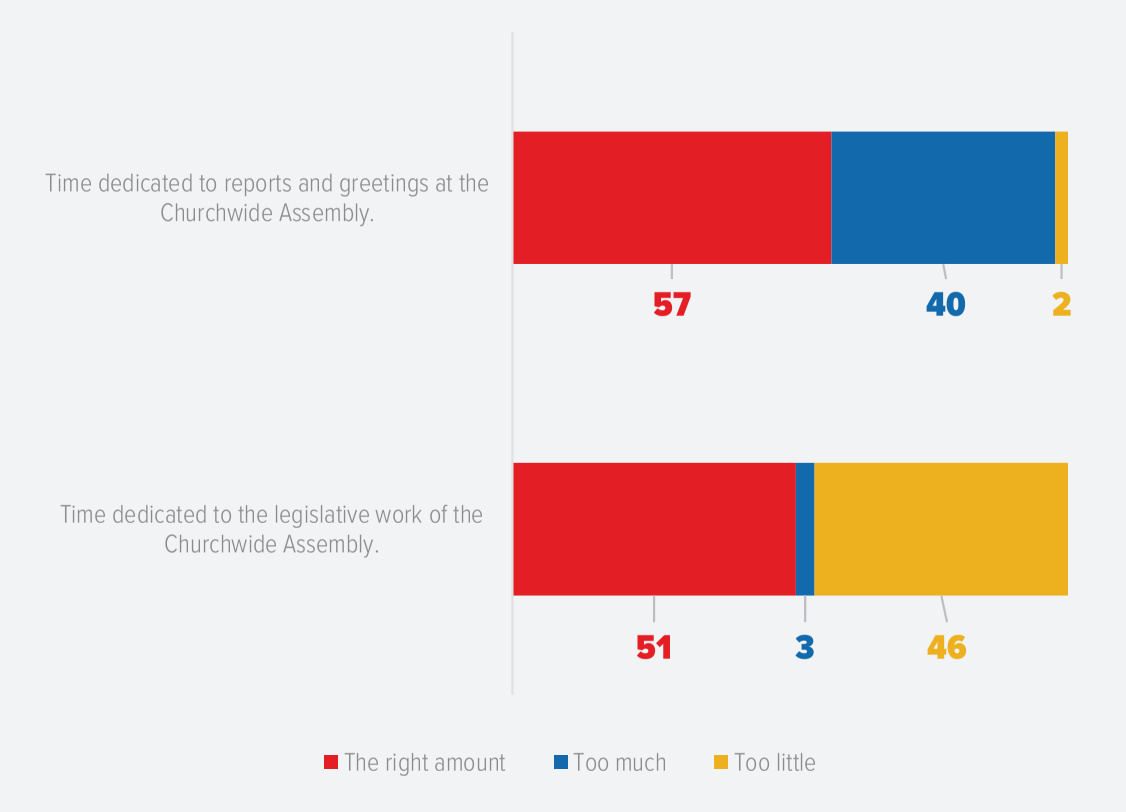
Comment category	Verbatim comments
Communicate the location of documents (22%)	"Always tell people what section and items each time. That was so confusing to keep up in the guide. Once located, it was fine." "It seems like we only got help finding what documents we were discussing when someone asked. There should always be 'We are discussing the content in THIS FOLDER, titled "THIS" to make sure everyone is on the same page."
Suggestions for better navigation (18%)	"For the specific documents that were being discussed in the schedule, have hyperlinks to the documents. That way, we wouldn't have to go and hunt for them but access them through the calendars." "I wish all of the documents had a table of contents (in the sidebar or in the document itself) to be able to jump directly to the relevant section."
Project the location of documents (13%)	"During assembly, it would have been helpful to have the navigation instruction posted on the screen. It was difficult to keep up with navigating to the correct document."
Documents should sync immediately and automatically (9%)	"I kept wishing for the impossible, that the iPad would mirror the changes on the screens in real time. Not having that as an option really threw me."

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

73%

Of voting members found that the daily schedule moved at the right speed.

Twenty-one percent said it moved too quickly, while 6 percent said it moved too slowly.



CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Worship	% Agree*
I valued the variety of worship experiences at the CWA.	92%
The frequency and length of the worship services at this assembly were balanced among the plenary business sessions.	90%

*Percent responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on a 5-point scale.

CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Other feedback

Thirty-three percent of respondents (n = 88) provided additional feedback about what impacted their connection and engagement at the Churchwide Assembly.

Similar to the broad question about preparation, responses to this question covered a wide range. Most centered on the daily schedule, using words like "uncertain," "rushed," "abrupt," and "unfinished." Others focused on the time debating legislative action, noting that discussions often bogged down and that all voices represented in the room were not heard by the assembly.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Schedule concerns (14% of comments)	"There were times we stayed within the stated schedule, and we could have gone a little bit longer to finish the business we were in the middle of completing." "I felt that we moved too abruptly between agenda items without smooth transitions, or mention of having to move away from a hotly debated topic in order to address the next agenda item."
Concerns about legislative debate (13%)	"I am frustrated with person after person saying the same thing in support or not in support of anything. After three have supported and no one is against something, it is time to vote and move on." "I really wanted to hear more voices at the microphones, but that was really hard when the same people would get up and speak about multiple issues. I'm not sure CWA is a true representation of the whole ELCA because there were a lot of repeat voices dominating the conversation."
Generic positive comments (9%)	"It was a privilege to serve the church at the assembly." "The friendliness and care of just about everyone was so helpful in creating a caring environment."

EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S MISSION & MINISTRY

Sharing your experience	% Agree*
I valued being in fellowship with other Lutherans from around the country.	97%
Through my participation in the Churchwide Assembly, my knowledge of the breadth of the work of the ELCA was deepened.	93%
I feel inspired to share about how God is working through the ELCA.	92%
I have a better knowledge of the interconnectedness of the three expressions of the ELCA (congregation, synod, churchwide).	86%

*Percent responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on a 5-point scale.

EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S MISSION & MINISTRY

Plans to share

Fifty-eight percent of respondents (n = 155) provided information about what they intended to share with their congregations.

Respondents described what they planned to share, how they would share it, and with whom.

Most said they would offer overall summaries of their experience, including the elections, social statements, legislative actions, worship, and the collective work of the ELCA.

They expected to give verbal or written reports to interested individuals, congregational councils, or congregations as a whole.

Comment category	Verbatim comments
Content • Elections (24%) • Impact of the work of the ELCA (19%) • Social statements (13%) • Legislative actions (13%) • Worship (10%) • Summary/Overview (8%)	"I plan on sharing how the Assembly worked, the experience of being part of the election process of the Bishop, Secretary and the wonderful work our church does." "The ELCA is doing amazing work in the world, and we are blessed to be a part of it." "I plan to highlight the ELCA's social statements when I present about my experience to my congregation." "I plan to share a look into the process, the worship, and some of the legislative decisions we made." "How powerful worship was and how present the Holy Spirit was in our midst." "A general overview of what took place, and encouragement of future participation."
Mode of Communication • Newsletter or other written reflection (13%) • Verbal report (e.g., sermon; Temple Talk; adult forum) (11%)	"I would like to share a written communication with congregation members including pictures and resources available to our church and our members." "Talk to individual members about my experience. I hope that a 'Temple Talk' or adult Sunday School class will be scheduled to share too."



Contact

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PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES DIGEST OF BOARD ACTIONS

Submitted by: Lori Brown, Vice President and CLO
Date of Board Meetings: July 23-25, 2025 and November 5-7, 2025

Category 1: (*Policies with an impact beyond the ministry, which require Church Council approval*.)

At its meeting on February 20, 2025, the Board of Trustees of Portico Benefit Services endorsed the recommendation resulting from Benefits reExamined research and consultation. This board also directed Portico to take actions that are necessary to present the recommendations for approval by the ELCA Church Council and move forward with implementation and communication plans after approval from the ELCA Church Council. The ELCA Church Council endorsed the changes at its meeting in April 2025.

Presented below for Church Council approval are the resulting amendments to the ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plan that are consistent with the recommendations presented in April 2025:

- **Plan Design & Naming**
  - 4 plan options; 2 sets made up of a copay and high deductible health plan (HDHP) with same deductibles
- **Full refresh of option names to signal change**
- **Actuarial Value of Plans 75 – 80%** (from 78 – 82%)
- **Coverage of GLP-1 for Weight Loss**
  - Remove coverage for GLP-1 drugs for weight loss
- **Age Banding**
  - Over 3 years, transition the age banding from 2.1 to 3.1 to more closely align with the Affordable Care Act (ACA.

- Adding Benefits reExamined health benefit options, approved by Board of Trustees of Portico Benefit Services at its meeting in July 2025.
  Sections 9.01, 9.04, 10.03, 10.04, 10.05, 10.06, 10.07, 10.11, 15.05, 20.02

- Benefits reExamined updates to reflect new deductibles and new benefit option names, approved by Board of Trustees of Portico Benefit Services at its meeting in November 2025.
  Sections 10.03, 10.04, 10.06, 10.09, 10.11

- Exclusion added of the GLP-1 drug for weight loss, approved by Board of Trustees of Portico Benefit Services at its meeting in November 2025.
  Section 12.08

November Resolutions/Actions
Approved resolution to clarify when a trustee's position shall be deemed vacant under Section 4.3 of the *Restated Bylaws of the Board of Pensions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, as referenced below*:*

SECTION 4.3 **Removal of Trustee.** A trustee's position shall be deemed vacant following:

i. three (3) absences during any rolling three (3) years, commencing with the first absence; or
ii. two (2) consecutive absences.

Category 2: (*Policies related to the day-to-day functioning or to the specific mandate of the ministry*.)
NONE

Category 3: (*Other procedures and board actions*.)
NONE

The following is the report that was submitted to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly regarding the Season of Jubilee initiative. Racial Justice works in collaboration with African Descent Ministries on this initiative. Finalizing the report needs to be done within this relationship of collaboration. Staff are waiting for this position to be filled before determining how to move this important work forward. This update serves as a reminder to the ELCA Church Council about the assembly report and as a means for council to anticipate some of the highlights that will be in the final report. No action is required at the fall 2025 meeting.

"**Season of Jubilee**—In response to the social policy resolution, *Renewed Action Regarding Racism Toward Lutherans of African Descent* (CA 16.05.17), and the Explanation of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent, on June 27, 2019, the ELCA Church Council adopted the following action: "To engage in anti-racism and racial justice work; work toward economic justice—including the study of reparations."

These actions, in combination with a long-standing call by African Descent leaders, other ELCA synod memorials and resolutions, and the example provided by ecumenical partners already engaging in reparations, led to the launch of The Season of Jubilee initiative to assess perspectives on African Descent community reinvestment within the ELCA and to identify concrete steps for moving the ELCA beyond apology and into tangible actions of repair and reinvestment.

A preliminary report was prepared and presented to the Church Council Executive Committee in June. It combines preliminary research findings, community feedback, and strategic recommendations emerging from the study and a series of community dialogues facilitated by African Descent Ministries (ADM) and the Racial Justice Ministries (RJM) team.

The Season of Jubilee affirms this as a pivotal moment. African Descent communities have spoken—clearly and courageously. The findings call for reinvestment in the following areas:

- Partner with Black churches and nonprofits of color
- Align funding with community-identified priorities
- Simplify access to financial resources and support
- Communicate transparently and consistently with impacted communities
- Set measurable goals and report progress publicly
- Maintain a sustained presence in community spaces

In June, the Executive Committee took action to forward the preliminary report and to request a more comprehensive report be presented to the Church Council in November. This final report will urge the Church Council to allocate funds to be invested strategically in cities across seventeen locations for continued engagement with African Descent communities. Yet, this call is about much more than money—it is about presence, accountability, long-term transformation, and metanoia. To this end, the preliminary report has already recommended establishing a Reparations Task Force—modeled after the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force—with representatives from African Descent Ministries, Racial Justice Ministries, the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity, the Mission Investment Fund, Research and Evaluation, and other key stakeholders to advance the work." – 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Report of the Presiding Bishop, pp. 1-2

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

October 15, 2025

Dear friends,

It feels like we just wrapped up our October 2–3 meeting, yet here we are preparing to meet again. Next month, we will gather remotely for a three-hour meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 12. Though the time between meetings is short, our commitment to staying connected and focused on God's shared mission remains strong. Based on previous remote meeting experiences, we will offer some guidelines to help provide structure for our meeting process.

While centered in God's word and prayer, our business for the meeting will focus on essential matters. You will hear brief verbal updates from the officers and the Conference of Bishops chair. We also look forward to electing a new Church Council member to fill one of our vacancies.

From our Church Council Committees, we will receive the following:

- Executive Committee: Final report from the educational debt task force, action on Season of Jubilee initiative
- Budget and Finance Committee: Revision to the 2026 fiscal year spending authorization, other *en bloc* actions
- Legal and Constitutional Review Committee: Revisions to the Roster Manual, other *en bloc* actions
- Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee: Consideration of new social message on child protection, authorization for the work on the next social message
- Board Development Committee: Information about our retreat next spring

All reports should be read ahead of time to maximize our conversation together. The provisional schedule will give you an idea of how the meeting will flow. The agenda, and hopefully most of the materials, will be posted about two weeks prior to the meeting.

If you have difficulties accessing the Church Council Teams site, I encourage you to reach out to Joseph Schmidt, Joseph.Schmidt@elca.org. I'm certain he will be happy to help you.

Your leadership is a blessing to this church. As members of the Church Council, your commitment and collaboration help ensure that we remain a connected and sustainable church, grounded in our faith in God and united in purpose to God's mission.

God's blessings,



Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop

Standing Rules for November 2025 Church Council Meeting

The following standing rules will serve to facilitate the work of the ELCA Church Council at its November 2025 meeting. Relevant portions of the ELCA Constitution and the *ELCA Church Council Governance Policy Manual (GPM)* are provided as background.

Background Information:

Attendees of the Church Council Meeting

Church Council Voting Members

14.31. The voting members of the Church Council shall consist of the four churchwide officers, the chair of the Conference of Bishops, and at least 32 and not more than 45 other persons elected by the Churchwide Assembly.

Liaison Bishops and Advisory Members

14.32.01. The Church Council shall have as liaison members nine synod bishops, each elected by the Conference of Bishops to one three-year term. One bishop shall be elected from each region.

14.32.02. Liaison members of the Church Council shall have voice but not vote.

14.33.02. Advisory Members. Categories of advisory members may be designated by the Church Council. These categories shall be set forth in continuing resolutions. Advisory members shall have voice but not vote.

14.33.A22. *The Church Council shall have as advisory members each president, or the designated representative of the president, of the ELCA ethnic associations, as well as a representative of ReconcilingWorks. Advisory membership of the Church Council shall be reviewed each triennium.*

Visitors/Guests

GPM, pp. 18–19: *In accordance with the Open Meetings policy, visitors are welcome to attend open sessions of meetings of the Church Council or its committees, but they do not have voice or vote. At the discretion of the chairperson and within the constraints of the agenda, the chairperson may invite comments or call upon visitors to speak. When a matter on the agenda is pending, debate and discussion ordinarily will take place among Church Council members before comments from visitors are invited.*

Members of the Church Council, staff and guests share the responsibility to maintain good order and to not disrupt meetings. To assist in maintaining good order, persons in the meeting space are requested to mute electronic

devices and to refrain from behavior that disrupts the meeting. Electronic recording or live-streaming of Church Council or committee meetings is not authorized without prior permission of the chairperson.

Meeting Procedures

14.12.02. The Church Council shall use parliamentary procedure in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, unless otherwise ordered by the council.

GPM, pg. 16: *In accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, the Church Council may meet in executive session, either when indicated on the agenda or upon adoption of a motion to enter executive session. Prior to beginning an executive session, the chairperson shall identify which staff members and others are invited to participate in the executive session. If actions are taken in executive session that may be publicly disclosed, the chair will report those actions when the Church Council returns to open session. If confidential minutes are taken in executive session, they will remain confidential unless authorized for public distribution by the Executive Committee.*

En Bloc *Resolution*
The responses to certain churchwide assembly actions, synod council actions, and previous Church Council actions may be approved by an *en bloc* resolution. In addition, Church Council committees may place recommendations *en bloc*. *En bloc* resolutions requiring two-thirds vote of the voting members present will follow the proper voting procedures.

Standing Rules:

Voting Procedures
Voting normally will take place using a separate link through a voting form or poll app. For council members who do not have access to the link, they may submit their vote electronically to a designated person. As directed by the chair, voting may also take place through a voice vote.

Obtaining the Floor
In plenary sessions of the Church Council, the voting members have prior right to obtain the floor, unless the chair determines that it is in the best interests of the council to call upon a liaison bishop, an advisory member, a churchwide staff member, or another individual with voice. Voting members may indicate their intention to speak by using the "Raise" hand feature in Microsoft Teams. Once a voting member has been called upon, the member should click on "Lower hand."

Questions of Personal Privilege
Questions of personal privilege that are not urgent and do not relate to the council as a whole are out of order. (Questions of privilege that relate to the council as a whole include such concerns as problems with voting links, microphones, and emergencies.) Questions of privilege that relate to the council as a whole may be raised in the course of the meeting by using the "Raise" hand feature. Other requests for time in

plenary for questions of personal privilege (e.g., personal announcements, comments on matters not on the agenda, reflections on the meaning of votes after they are taken) must be submitted electronically to Jodi Slattery at Jodi.Slattery@elca.org. The chair may, at the chair's sole discretion, allow such matters to be addressed at a later time.

En Bloc *Agenda and Deadlines*
To call for separate consideration of an item in *en bloc* or to submit new business, a voting member must submit notification electronically to the secretary of this church (CeCee.Mills@elca.org) prior to the established deadline, Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025, 6:30 p.m. (CST).

Technical Details
Plenary sessions will be recorded for minutes purposes only. The recordings will not be made public. Electronic recording or live-streaming of Church Council or committee meetings is not authorized without prior permission of the chairperson. Questions about technical issues should be directed to Joseph Schmidt at Joseph.Schmidt@elca.org.

Microphones should be muted unless a person is speaking or presenting.

Church Council members, liaison bishops, and advisory members are encouraged to use video and may wish to use a virtual background or blur their background for privacy purposes. All other meeting participants are asked to turn their video off to conserve bandwidth, unless they are invited to speak or present, at which time the individual is encouraged to turn on the video.

The conversation or chat window will be disabled for the meeting. If enabled for a specific purpose, the conversation or chat window should be used solely for that purpose.

Report of the ELCA Treasurer
November 2025

Financial Results through September 30, 2025

Unrestricted

Unrestricted results of operations for the first eight months of the year were a loss of $2.6 million compared to a budgeted loss of $8.7 million. This compares to income of $341 for the same period last year. While the budget does reflect a loss of $8.7 million, $5.1 million of this "loss" will be restored as necessary in the month of January. To clarify, the approved FY25 unrestricted budget reflects a $5.1 million loss from normal operations; however, this budgeted loss is supported by the release of board designated funds and liquidation of an endowment in order to achieve a breakeven budget where spending equals revenues. If September were the end of the fiscal year, spending would exceed revenues by $2.6 million, and the board designated fund "budgeted operations support" would be spent. This current balance in this fund is just over $8 million.

Key areas which impacted the net favorability to budget of $6.1 million through September were underspending of $3.0 million, favorable investment income of $2.9 million and favorable mission support of nearly $600K.

Mission support, which represents 58% of unrestricted revenue, is 2.7% favorable to plan and 2.1% behind prior year. The trend improvement relative to prior years is encouraging… through September 2023 and September 2024, mission support was 5.9% and 4.8% below prior year, respectively. As a result, the Church Council will be considering a favorable mission support revision for the 2026 budget at the November meeting.

Direct giving, which represents current unrestricted gifts from donors (including individuals, congregations, and synods) is at 97.2% of plan and 6.1% behind 2024 but is expected to achieve budget for the full year.

Realized bequest and trust income is $677K behind plan and $775K behind 2024. Because 2024 finished the year over 20% behind the 10-year average, the continued decline compared to prior year is concerning. We continue to work with the ELCA Foundation in an effort to gain any insights on whether this is likely a continuing trend or if there are unique issues that have impacted 2024 and 2025. The most likely conclusion at this time is that many gifts take 15 – 20 years to be realized, and the economic environment 16 years ago was weak. The ELCA also experienced a loss of members at that time related to the human sexuality decision.

Overall unrestricted spending for the first eight months of the year is at 93% of plan. Based on projections from current discussions with senior leadership and historic trending, we expect to finish the year around 97% of plan. Holding spending to 97%, without negatively impacting those that we serve, will provide additional resources needed to cover overspending at the 2025 churchwide assembly and preserve some of the budgeted operations support fund balance to help offset some additional spending needs in FY2026.

ELCA World Hunger

Through September 30, World Hunger direct gifts from synods, congregations, and individuals are slightly ahead of plan. The Development team continues to project the favorable achievement of this $19 million annual goal which supports this important ministry. The fund balance which began the year at $3.8 million is currently at $2.3 million since expenses occur more consistently over the course of the year and the income streams are more heavily weighted toward the fourth quarter.

Lutheran Disaster Response

Over $14 million has been spent in the first eight months of 2025 in support of disasters around the world. The largest amounts have been spent in support of AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities), the Eastern Europe and the Middle East crises, wildfires in the U.S., general hurricane response, and unnamed disasters. Receipts to date are at $8.7 million over $3 million higher than 2024 through September, largely due to the domestic flooding and wildfire receipts.

Peace,

Lori Fedyk
ELCA Treasurer

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
SUMMARY OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES
For the Period Ending September 30, 2025

	2025 Actual	2025 Budget	2024 ACTUAL	Year-to-Date Variance ACTUAL Vs. BUDGET Favorable/(Unfavorable)	Year-to-Date Variance CURRENT YEAR vs. PRIOR YEAR Favorable/(Unfavorable)
UNRESTRICTED					
Mission Support	$ 21,472,936	$ 20,896,934	$ 21,927,001	$ 576,001	$ (454,065)
Other	16,683,044	14,145,335	18,445,769	2,537,709	(1,762,725)
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED	**38,155,980**	**35,042,270**	**40,372,770**	**3,113,711**	**(2,216,790)**
TOTAL Designated and Restricted Funds Released	306,883	325,000	260,526	(18,117)	46,357
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE AND SUPPORT	**38,462,863**	**35,367,270**	**40,633,296**	**3,095,593**	**(2,170,433)**
LESS TOTAL EXPENSES	**41,057,165**	**44,091,827**	**40,292,353**	**3,034,662**	**764,812**
NET REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES	**$ (2,594,302)**	**$ (8,724,558)**	**$ 340,943**	**$ 6,130,256**	**$ (2,935,245)**

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PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, INTERNAL STATEMENTS ONLY

REVENUE SUMMARY
For the Period Ending September 30, 2025

	2025 Actual	2025 Budget	2024 ACTUAL	Year-to-Date Variance ACTUAL vs. BUDGET Favorable/(Unfavorable)	Year-to-Date Variance CURRENT YEAR vs. PRIOR YEAR Favorable/(Unfavorable)
UNRESTRICTED					
Mission Support	$ 21,472,936	$ 20,896,934	$ 21,927,001	$ 576,001	$ (454,065)
Direct Gifts	3,656,998	3,762,306	3,894,633	(105,309)	(237,635)
Investment Revenue	5,755,680	2,812,302	6,658,818	2,943,378	(903,139)
Bequests and Trusts	1,322,678	2,000,000	2,097,568	(677,322)	(774,890)
Endowment	2,965,913	2,700,000	2,992,229	265,913	(26,316)
Rent	715,648	700,000	691,355	15,648	24,293
Services and Other Revenue.	1,266,128	1,170,727	1,111,167	95,401	154,961
Mission Investment Fund	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	
Total Revenue	**$ 38,155,980**	**$ 35,042,270**	**$ 40,372,770**	**$ 3,113,711**	**$ (2,216,790)**
TOTAL Designated and Restricted Funds Released	306,883	325,000	260,526	(18,117)	46,357
Net Operating Revenue and Support	**$ 38,462,863**	**$ 35,367,270**	**$ 40,633,296**	**$ 3,095,593**	**$ (2,170,433)**

PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, INTERNAL STATEMENTS ONLY

ACTUAL EXPENSES VS. SPENDING AUTHORIZATION
For the Period Ending September 30, 2025

	Actual Expense	Spending Authorization	Variance Favorable (Unfavorable)	Percent of Budget
Home Areas				
Christian Community and Leadership	$ 14,034,816	$ 14,416,218	$ 381,402	97%
Service and Justice	6,622,600	7,974,156	1,351,556	83%
Innovation	956,580	1,182,860	226,281	81%
Presiding Bishop	5,048,518	5,440,585	392,067	93%
Secretary	3,907,470	3,946,320	38,851	99%
Treasurer	7,744,728	8,075,547	330,819	96%
Other				
General Treasury	1,391,053	1,599,561	208,508	87%
Depreciation	1,351,401	1,456,580	105,179	93%
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	**$ 41,057,165**	**$ 44,091,827**	**$ 3,034,662**	**93%**

PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED, INTERNAL STATEMENTS ONLY

Report from the Conference of Bishops

The Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America met Oct. 5-7 at the Hilton Minneapolis.

Bishop Yehiel Curry laid out his focus as he begins his term as presiding bishop. Reflecting on one of the ELCA priority areas – A connected, sustainable church – Curry said he will place emphasis for the next year on a connected church.

During the meeting, the conference:

- Affirmed our guiding document that the vice chair (the position that I held) steps into the chair role when vacated.
- Updated the term for the CoB Executive Committee from a 4-year to 3-year term with elections in the spring rather than the fall CoB meeting. The Rev. Felix Malpica, bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod, was elected vice-chair and the Rev. Jen Nagel, bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod, to the Executive Committee as an at-large member. The chair and vice chair positions will be re-elected during the spring CoB meeting at Eaglewood Resort.
- Discussed ways to communicate, engage in ministry and support one another in the midst of the current realities of Christian Nationalism, polarization and dehumanizing political actions and rhetoric.
- Engaged in conversation about the conference's role as consultants to the Task Force on Interdependence and Purpose. The task force was appointed by the Executive Committee of the Church Council during its fall meeting in Minneapolis.
- Honored and celebrated Secretary Sue Rothmeyer at a farewell reception.

The Allegheny Synod will elect a new bishop at their Fall Synod Assembly (Oct. 31/Nov. 1). The new bishop will begin February 1, 2026.

Bishop Deborah Hutterer
Chair, Conference of Bishops



African Descent Lutheran Association
Reverend Jesse W. Brown Jr, National President
www.adlaelca.org

Report to the ELCA Church Council

Fall 2025

1. The African Descent Lutheran Association has served as an information conduit to our chapters and congregations for resources that are provided through the ELCA, synods and other non-church resources.

2. We have celebrated the witness of African Descent pastors that God has called home to become our Ancestors and Saints.

   YouTube: ADLA National Memorial Service, https://youtu.be/j_LL8sPz7dg

3. We have placed African Descent people in the context of our Lutheran tradition through historical storytelling.
   1. Rev. Dr. Mona Fitch Elliott ,"Jobeth", https://youtu.be/IBrR1iBMDQQ

4. We have celebrated African Descent authors of new books that tell the story of the history of African Descent people in the Lutheran Church as well as telling the story of the Love of Jesus that flows through the life blood of our community.
   1. We have celebrated Rev. Dr. James Thomas, https://youtu.be/j_LL8sPz7dg

5. We have celebrated and blessed our new ELCA Presiding Bishop, Bishop Yehiel Curry and Secretary of the ELCA, Reverend CeCee Mills. Both of them preached at the ADLA Assembly.
   1. Bishop Yehiel Curry, https://youtu.be/qS6qH-Bh_3w
   2. Rev. CeCee Mills, https://youtu.be/eqKk-PmzYfA

6. We have hosted an Assembly, July 24-27, 2025 for those who support the work and witness of the Lutherans of the African Descent Community and have worked to build stronger bonds with the African National Community.

7. We have supported our sibling Associations in advancing their agendas and advancing the witness of Christ through their organizations.

8. We have called for All communities to be more vigilant in demanding justice.
   1. YOUTUBE: https://youtube.com/shorts/CVlkHWsqWTk

- These and other activities are included in the work of the African Descent Lutheran Association.

By God's Grace We Serve,

Rev. Jesse W. Brown, Jr

American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association Report

A comprehensive plan for rebuilding the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association (AIANLA) to enhance its impact within Native and Lutheran communities.

Mission and Goals

- The AIANLA aims to foster spiritual, cultural, and community well-being by honoring Native elders, empowering youth, and bridging Native and Lutheran communities.
- Key goals include cultural preservation, intergenerational leadership development, spiritual growth, community empowerment, partnership development, and sustainable governance.

Leadership Structure

- The leadership model includes a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, two Incorporators, an Elder Council Chair, and a Youth Representative, each with defined term lengths to ensure continuity and fresh perspectives.
- Incorporators will serve as *ex-officio* board members, while the Elder Council will provide guidance and mentorship.

Engagement and Initiatives

- The AIANLA will engage Native elders through councils and mentorship programs, focusing on cultural preservation.
- Current initiatives include website redesign, Lenten resource creation, a banner project, and virtual book studies to enhance engagement and understanding.

Timeline and Partnerships

- A detailed timeline outlines key activities from January 2025 to February 2026, culminating in an in-person gathering for leadership elections.
- The AIANLA will collaborate with the ELCA's Indigenous Tribal Relations Office while maintaining governance autonomy.

Governance Provisions

- Staggered elections and committee establishment will promote inclusivity and accountability, with annual reviews to ensure organizational progress.

Signed: Reverend Joann Conroy, President/Incorporator

Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (ALAMEH)

Twenty years ago, at its 2005 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA adopted an Arab and Middle Eastern Ministry Strategy by a vote of 858 to 6. The strategy's recommendations, besides urging support of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern ancestry and development of new ministries, encouraged the ELCA to include the insights and perspectives of its members of Arab and Middle Eastern heritage.

We, the members of ALAMEH, celebrate the Church Council's recent decision to include reports by the advisory members in meeting materials and to include the advisory reps as members of the Church Council committees. We believe that this decision will bring us closer to the Church's original goal to "include the insights and perspectives of its members of Arab and Middle Eastern heritage."

We also continue to celebrate with gratitude and reassurance the 2025 Churchwide Assembly's nearly unanimous approval of Memorial D4 to *Stand for Palestinian Rights and an End to the Occupation of Palestine*. The memorial calls for the ELCA, its members, congregations, synods and churchwide units to advocate for human rights and a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis by supporting policies that end the occupation and the war in Gaza and support for Palestinian statehood and U.N. membership, among other things. We express our appreciation for then Presiding Bishop Eaton's immediate response of writing to government leaders as directed in the memorial.

While we celebrate this positive outcome of the assembly, we continue to lament that the leadership of the Church and those overseeing the assembly permitted to stand without comment or correction the extended speech by the ELCA's guest Rabbi Jacobs, representing the Reformed Jewish community. Rabbi Jacobs misinterpreted Memorial D4 as being anti-Israel and anti-Jewish, he rebuked members for passing the memorial, he accused us of endangering the lives of Jews, and he caused emotional pain to Palestinian and other Arab ELCA members and to our guest from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Bishop Imad Haddad.

While the Rabbi's words hurt, more painful to us was the lack of expressed support for our community by our Church's representatives. We do not view this as an intentional slight, but we do believe this lack of recognition of the pain that was caused indicates that our community, like perhaps all the ethnic groups, remains invisible to the larger Church.

This event leads us to request that the Church leadership and the Church Council make a concerted effort to include members of ALAMEH in the structures related to interfaith dialogue and relationships with our Muslim and Jewish siblings.

An important part of our being able to support our Arab and Middle Eastern community in the ELCA is knowing who and where they are. We therefore request that the appropriate Church Council committee investigate how to improve the congregational census process, urging pastors to be sure to include the ethnicity of members and urging bishops and pastors to respond to outreach from ALAMEH as we seek contact information to include in our rolls those identified as Arab/Middle Eastern.

We celebrate with thanksgiving the upcoming ordination of Seminarian Adham Al-Araj, a Palestinian from Bethlehem. His ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament will take place on Saturday, December 13 in San Diego, CA. He will serve the ELCA Pacifica Synod in the El Cajon, CA area, ministering to a new Arabic-speaking congregation. Three other seminarians are now in the process of formation, preparing to serve new congregations as we seek to create mission congregations in areas with

large Arabic-speaking populations. Finding new pastors with the language and cultural background to help in our goal of starting new Arabic-language congregations is a difficult task, and we are grateful for the support of the ELCA staff, Rev. Khader El-Yateem and Rev. Khader Khalilia, in helping us accomplish our goals.

We also celebrate with thanksgiving the awarding of an ELCA Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity Grant to ALAMEH which will permit us to purchase simultaneous translation devices that will enable us to more wholly include members of our community whose mastery of English is not yet advanced enough to permit their full participation in large group meetings.

We recognize with appreciation the work of Pastor Charbel Zgheib of Salam Arabic Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, NY. Pastor Zgheib initiated and developed Salam Radio Station, one of the three core expressions of the Salam Ministries, alongside Salam Arabic Church and Salam Social Ministry, aimed at proclaiming the Word of God and promoting Christian and humanitarian values among Arabic-speaking communities in the United States. It serves as the first Arabic Christian ecumenical online media organization in the country, combining radio, social media, and mobile applications to engage, educate, and inspire through faith, culture, and dialogue. In 2025, Salam Radio Station has moved from vision to tangible impact: a secured physical home; continuous 24/7 Arabic broadcast reaching thousands; a rapidly growing digital community; and a nearly completed studio ready to expand production.

Also under Pastor Charbel's leadership and with a grant from Lutheran Disaster Response & World Hunger, ALAMEH has been able to complete nearly two years of its project: *Strengthening Protection Capacities and Resilience for Vulnerable Arabic Immigrant Populations.* Its mission is to enhance the protection, dignity, and resilience of vulnerable individuals through holistic support—integrating food assistance, immigration education, emotional and spiritual care, and capacity building for faith leaders. In its first year, the program served 459 individuals directly through all program components: 215 immigrants received culturally appropriate food assistance; 198 participants benefited from educational sessions and legal referrals; and 36 participants engaged in trauma-healing and pastoral support groups.

We celebrate these accomplishments and express our gratitude for the work of our members in making them possible, and we continue to seek the Church's and the Church Council's assistance in helping us find ways to be even more instrumental as a resource for ministry, social service, curriculum, and workshops -- true partners in the mission and vision of this church.

Thank for your attention to our report!

Sincerely,

Ryan Lahurd, President of ALAMEH

Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice Report
Awaken Hearts. Confront Injustice. Transform Hearts.

White Lutherans for Racial Justice is one of the six ELCA Ethnic Associations, committed to dismantling white supremacy within the ELCA and partnering across the church toward collective liberation, repair, and belonging. We report to Jen DeLeon, ELCA Director of Racial Justice. Our mission is to engage in the lifelong work of anti-racism and authentic diversity through education, accountability, and community.

Drawing from the wisdom of the Rev. Yolanda Denson-Byers in *See Me, Believe Me*, it is the responsibility of white bodied people to help make our churches, and the ELCA, a safer place. We exist to learn, teach, support, offer resources, and amplify the voices and leadership of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and Culture. We seek to shift from charity toward communities who have been marginalized by whiteness, to being the church with, learning from, and accountable to BIPOC wisdom and experience.

We work to be loving, trusted, and effective allies to people of color and culture especially in our church, to grow in faith and witness, and to live out our baptismal promises. The work of this association is rooted in love of God and neighbor. We invite you to join this network, use its resources, and share it within your circles!

Board: Board bios

Membership: Membership opened in January 2025. We currently have 129 members and are growing.
Online Assembly: January 23 - 24, 2026. You are invited to join us! Our email newsletters have details.

Purpose: *Gather 130 leaders, at least two from each synod, to build community, worship, learn, and organize to dismantle racism and advance racial justice in the ELCA and in our communities.*

Hoped for Outcomes:

1. *Form regional networks to advocate and organize.*
2. *Approve new bylaws, adjust current Board member terms, and select new Board members.*

Process: *The gathering will include community building in small groups and in regional conversations, worship and Bible study, workshops, and a business session.*

Recent Programs:

- 52 registrations for the weekly Anti Racist Text Study
- 35 registrations for **The Five Cs** with David Scherer
- 112 registrations for **See Me, Believe Me** book study w/ the Rev. Carla Christopher and special guests.
- Supported the Gathering at the Gate event in Washington DC - 90 people from across the country
- Monthly Drop in time to process how white supremacy shows up in us and be in accountable community

Communications and Engagement:

- October email newsletter distribution: 905 recipients
- Open rate has been above 50 percent each month in 2025, which aligns with expected benchmarks for organizations like ours, with several editions approaching 60 percent in September, June, and a special request email.

Learnings:

- Transformation requires both clear truth telling about racism and pastoral accompaniment that is spiritually grounded and trauma informed.
- Sustainability improves when roles are clarified, rhythms for rest and renewal are honored, and funding and decision making align with stated values.
- A connected network with synod liaisons and shared practices increases resilience and reduces duplication.

Priorities for the Next Six Months

- Support the work and programs of the ELCA Racial Justice office and staff.
- Continue capacity building and leadership development.
- Deepen partnership with other Ethnic Associations and with the ELCA Racial Justice office.
- Support implementation of CRLC and DEIA Audit recommendations.
- Establish a synod liaison network and a simple shared communications cadence to connect congregations, synods, and partners.

Action Steps

We invite your action in these ways:

1. Connect with the other Ethnic Association websites and Facebook pages.
2. Tell five people about this community and invite them to our online Assembly in January 2026.
3. **Email:** Join our email list using the website pop up sign up at whitelutheransforracialjustice.org.
4. **Facebook:** Connect with us on Facebook.
5. **Website:** Visit whitelutheransforracialjustice.org to learn more and access resources.
6. **Join us:** Become a member at Take Action.
7. **Shared Practices:** Encourage the adoption of shared impact measures related to CRLC (Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church) and DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility) recommendations so that learning is connected across the church.

Desta Goehner, President, The ELCA Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice
Website: www.WhiteLutheransForRacialJustice.org
Email: Desta.Goehner@whitelutheransforracialjustice.org

Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Report

Grace and peace to you my siblings in Christ,

Our association's president, Rev. Dr. Moses Penumaka was elected to the Church Council during the Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix, Arizona this summer. He resigned as our association's president immediately after his election. As the vice president/president-elect, I stepped up into that role. With that in mind, I am still learning my role in our association, the role our association in the ELCA and my role as the president to the association in the Church Council. But I am grateful for the support of all the associations' presidents: Jesse Brown, Jr., Joan Conroy, Desta Goehner, Ryan LaHurd, Alejandro Mejia and Aubrey Thonvold.

I attended the first council meeting in Minneapolis back in October and attended the installation of our Presiding Bishop Curry. I found the meeting to be productive and the spirit-filled installation service. I am also grateful for council's positive response to our associations' presidents' requests to welcome our full participations and contributions in the committee's discussions.

At this point I don't have much to report. However, I would like to share some of the highlights since I assumed this role:

- In January this year, our Association in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation members in Asia hosted the Asian Lutheran International Conference (ALIC) in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. The main purposes of this conference are:
  - To address common concerns faced by Asian Lutherans by promoting dialogue and networking.
  - To be a forum for supporting theological reflection among Asian Lutherans with reference to specific cultural issues and the development of resources in the areas of worship, Christian education and theological education for the benefit of Asian Lutheran ministers.
  - To address the issues of leadership development for Asian Ministries and theological education by creating an opportunity for interaction with leaders and theologians of Asian background.

  That great conference happened because of our church's generous financial support. Thank you.
- Our AAPI assembly was scheduled on September 25-27 in Monterey California. But due to our leadership transition and all the logistics, we decided to postpone the meeting until early next year (April 9-11, 2026) to give us enough time to plan and promote the assembly.
- Our association has conducted several Community Listening Sessions on API Strategic Ministry Plan 2026-2030. We appreciated the works of our leaders and our program director of Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries, Pr. Teresita Valeriano for that plan.
- This is a challenging time for our API community especially as we are dealing with immigration issues. We have many family members afraid for their lives. We hosted a prayer vigil for one of our Indonesian church members who was detained by ICE and has since been held at Adelanto ICE Detention Center. Please continue to pray for our community and all who are directly affected by this administration's policy on immigrations.

I look forward to working closely with all the leaders of our community, Pr. Tita (Program Director of Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries of the ELCA, my fellow associations' presidents and council.

Blessings,

Pr. Bimen Limbong, President of AAPI-ELCA

Asociacion
de Ministerios
Latinos ELCA

Somos Iglesia Junt@s

ELCA Latino Ministries Association
Report to Churchwide Council
October 27, 2025

Beloved siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our Latine communities across this nation are confronted with deep uncertainty, fear, and a growing sense of hopelessness as we navigate an unprecedented and perilous time. The actions and policies of governing forces have resulted in blatant persecution of our people, and the wounds continue to deepen. Racial profiling has returned in practice and policy, marking our communities as subjects of suspicion rather than as siblings in Christ deserving of dignity and respect. Yet, even in the midst of such suffering, we remain steadfast in our call to advocate, accompany, and uphold the dignity of those entrusted to our care.

Advocacy, Partnerships, and Accompaniment.
Although every member of our board is a volunteer, we continue to put forth every effort to support and uplift our constituency. Therefore, throughout this season, the association has served as a prophetic and pastoral presence. We have spoken publicly, engaged in one-on-one accompaniment, and strengthened relationships with networks, including the Latino Christian National Network, as well as working in collaboration with our sibling ELCA ethnic associations, so that our collective witness may be more visible and effective.

Together with the Rev. Hector Carrasquillo from the MDCC desk, we are facilitating a sacred space of consultation and dialogue among ELCA Latine leaders, discerning how to faithfully respond to the realities affecting our communities in this current political landscape.

Belonging, local engagement, and leadership support
In an ongoing effort to cultivate spaces of belonging, especially for those who identify as Latine whose primary language is English, we continue to make all communications and materials available bilingually in English and Spanish. Interpretation remains a challenging endeavor; however, it has become essential for ensuring that all are welcomed, valued, and fully included in the life of this organization.

Over the past two years, we have made it a priority to reconnect deeply with local leaders and congregations. We remain convinced that unity is a source of strength granted to us by the Holy Spirit. Regional meetings have been taking place providing opportunities for listening, relationship-building, and collaborative discernment. Leaders have expressed a longing for initiatives that foster leadership development, advocacy efforts, networking, and fellowship rooted in shared identity and mutual support.

Our role as a bridge between local communities and churchwide expression remains central to our mission. We continue nurturing close collaboration with the Latino Ministries Program Ethnic Director as we seek to faithfully accompany our leaders and congregations. At the same time, we are expanding and strengthening our database of more than 300 contacts to better support communication, coordination, and future ministry efforts.

Collaboration to and within the wider church
The association has also served as a trusted partner within the churchwide organization, working closely with units such as ELCA World Hunger, AMMPARO, seminaries, synods, and others who rely on us to ensure the wider community remains informed about resources and opportunities. We sustain open channels of communication through our electronic bulletin, email correspondence, our website, and social media presence.

As an advisory member to the Churchwide Council and in collaboration with the other 5 ethnic associations, it has been possible to advocate for our communities and facilitate making decisions that assist our denomination's priority of being a welcoming church.

In support of the churchwide organization's commitment to deeper connection with local communities, we have shared our contact list of more than 100 Latine congregations from all 65 synods, as well as rostered leaders and individual members who participate in our communication systems. This information has been gathered through diligent relationship-building by our board.

Communication and Organizational Strengthening
During our upcoming board meeting, we will finalize our 2026 program and calendar, and continue preparations for our ministry during the Advent season. We remain attentive to the pastoral needs of our people and committed to directing them toward appropriate channels of care and support.

The association is currently engaged in updating its constitution so that our structure may more faithfully reflect our context and mission. This work will enhance our ability to serve effectively and responsibly.

We praise God for the opportunity of being of service to our church and for the partnership we share. Our deepest gratitude to Rev. Kadher El-Yateem, Ms. Tammy Jackson, and all the Service and Justice team. We are also grateful for the logistical support we have received from the Delaware-Maryland Synod for our operations.

It is our desire and commitment to continue contributing to the well-being of our Latine community and denomination to fulfill our common call of proclaiming the good news, together.

Yours in the love of Christ,

The Rev. Alejandro Mejia
President
ELCA Latino Ministries Association

**Latine (pronounced la-ˈti-ne) is a gender-neutral form of the word Latino, created by LGBTQIA+, non-binary, and feminist communities in Spanish-speaking countries. The goal of the term Latine is to remove the gender from the Spanish word Latino, replacing it with the letter E, which is gender neutral. This idea is native to the Spanish language and can be seen in many gender-neutral words such as "estudiante" (student).*

ReconcilingWorks Report

Who We Are

Since 1974, ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation has advocated for the full welcome, inclusion, and equity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community.

ReconcilingWorks accompanies congregations, synods, and leaders across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) to deepen **welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy** of LGBTQIA+ people and live into the church's commitments to **antiracism and social justice**. ReconcilingWorks is an independent non-profit organization funded by the generosity of individuals, faith communities, grants, and from curated resources and trainings. ReconcilingWorks does not receive funding from any Lutheran denomination.

Reconciling in Christ Program

Since 1983, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Program has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church.

In 2021, the ReconcilingWorks staff launched the newly expanded Reconciling in Christ (RIC) partner commitments: to ensure the welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; work for racial equity and commit to anti-racist work; and to support the national program.

The RIC Program is made up of congregations, synods, colleges, seminaries, outdoor ministries, and other Lutheran organizations.

Every ministry setting begins this journey from its own unique context, and ReconcilingWorks is here to help you create an authentic welcome journey that is customized to your community.

Four RIC Partner Public Commitments (updated 2021)

To be recognized as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Partner, faith communities will:

- Clearly state a welcome to people of ***"all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions"*** *or* ***"LGBTQIA+"*** and name its commitment to ***"racial equity"*** *or* ***"anti-racism"*** in a Welcome Statement. Anything in bold and quotations above must be included in your RIC Partner Welcome Statement to meet ReconcilingWorks commitments. If your faith community has its own statement of racial equity or commitment to anti-racism, be it in public community documents or social statements, polities such as by-laws or constitutions, or in its Mission, Vision, or Value statements, this can also satisfy this RIC Partner commitment. A copy of this additional statement will need to be shared with ReconcilingWorks.
- **Be open to calling** LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC (Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color) Rostered Leaders. This commitment extends to all areas of leadership within the life of your community.
- Allow sanctuary/community space to be used for **LGBTQIA+ weddings and blessings.** If a faith community is looking for resources for wedding or blessing services to be more inclusive, see the ELCA's Marriage Resource or ReconcilingWorks Worship, Liturgy, & Scripture material.
- **Make a meaningful contribution annually** to support the national RIC program. A meaningful annual contribution is determined by each faith community, its budget, and the understanding that your generosity funds the RIC Program. Meaningful contributions vary for each RIC partner.

By the Numbers (as of Oct 27, 2025)

- **RIC Partners: 1,146** active Reconciling in Christ (RIC) partners across the ELCA.
- **On the Journey of Discernment:** 295 congregations/ministries formally engaged in the RIC discernment process to become RIC.
- **New This Year: 63** communities approved as RIC YTD.

We're Learning

- Sustained change happens when **education + policy + practice** moves together.
- Congregations benefit from **cohort learning** and **clear public commitments**.
- Synod leadership engagement accelerates progress across regions.

How the Church Council Can Support

1. **Champion** RIC visibility in communications and events.
2. **Invite** synods/congregations into discernment and trainings.
3. **Resource** regional cohorts and translation/Accessibility updates for materials.
4. **Celebrate** RIC milestones and share stories ELCA wide.

Advisory Member Contact:

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ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL DEBT

ELCA

Church Council
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Executive Summary

The Educational Debt Task Force Report to the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) (November 2025) offers a comprehensive analysis of the financial challenges faced by rostered ministers and candidates within the ELCA due to educational debt. Drawing from both qualitative and quantitative research, the report identifies historical trends, key impacts on ministers' lives and ministry, and actionable recommendations for the entire church structure to alleviate the burden of educational debt and enable rostered ministers to more effectively carry out the Great Commission, making disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

Background & Context

Pursuing rostered ministry in the ELCA requires a seminary education, frequently leading to significant educational debt, particularly from the 1990s onward as the cost of seminary education rose, congregational expectations changed, and denominational funding decreased. The resulting rise in debt levels has prompted concerns about long-term financial wellness, career sustainability, and the overall well-being of rostered ministers. In response, the 2019 Churchwide Assembly took action which ultimately led to the creation, in 2022, of a cross-functional task force charged with taking a deeper dive into the realities of educational debt.

In-depth interviews with 34 rostered ministers and candidates for ordained ministry, and survey responses from 3,457 active and retired rostered ministers (a 21% response rate), provided data and stories as the basis for this report.

Key Findings

1. Educational debt among rostered ministers has increased sharply since the 1990s, with significant impacts on personal finance, retirement savings, and the ability to handle unexpected expenses. The current level of total educational debt (including theological and undergraduate education) held by rostered ministers in the ELCA is estimated to be between $140 and $150 million.

2. The "Donut Generation" — ministers ordained between the mid-1990s and the late-2010s who entered seminary after a period when congregations and the institutional church financed most if not all educational expenses, but before the churchwide organization, seminaries and synods undertook significant scholarship-raising efforts — experienced the highest debt levels due to reduced institutional support.

3. Rostered ministers of color reported both greater reliance on educational loans and higher debt loads currently compared to white colleagues, with a median balance more than 61% higher ($97,850 compared with $60,500).

4. Both interviews and survey responses revealed recurring negative effects of debt, including financial stress, compromised health and well-being, and limits on long-term savings. Fifty percent of women and 56% of rostered ministers of color reported increased levels of stress and diminished overall well-being due to the pressure of carrying educational debt. The findings presented indicate that intersectionality may contribute to greater financial and emotional burden, though additional analyses to explore the impact of other aspects of a person's identity (e.g., race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) are still needed.

5. Efforts to award more scholarships (e.g., an increasing availability of Fund for Leaders scholarships and full-tuition scholarships from seminaries) are having the desired effect on educational debt. Respondents ordained in the 2020s were considerably more likely to rely on scholarships to finance their seminary education, compared to any decade previous. Concurrently, the prevalence of borrowing and the educational debt levels decreased among these respondents.

Recommendations

The report offers a coordinated set of recommendations at all levels of the ELCA:

CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION:

Expand debt reduction programs for current rostered ministers, with special emphasis on the Donut Generation and rostered ministers of color; conduct collaborative meetings on financial well-being; commission further research on debt impacts.

SYNODS:

Encourage and support churchwide and synod-level debt reduction efforts; educate lay leaders on the importance of supporting clergy financially.

CONGREGATIONS:

Foster awareness of the financial burdens on pastoral leaders, with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

OTHER GROUPS IN THE ELCA ECOLOGY:

Prioritize grants and scholarships, especially for underrepresented groups; provide ongoing financial education and counseling to seminarians; strengthen alternative and bi-vocational ministry pathways.

Conclusion

Each rostered minister with educational debt has their story of its impact. Addressing educational debt is essential for the church to maintain healthy and effective ministry leadership. The report underscores the urgent need for intentional, well-coordinated debt reduction efforts, greater financial education, and attention to equity for rostered ministers of color and those with additional intersectionality. Without such action, the church risks undermining the well-being and sustainability of those answering the call to serve.

> *"The burden of student loan debt can weigh on rostered ministers in both financial and physical ways, impacting the well-being of rostered ministers themselves and their relationships with others."*
>
> – ELCA DEACON

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ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL DEBT

Final Report of the Educational Debt Task Force

Introduction

"I didn't intend to become a pastor. I wanted to do global mission work ... to be raising chickens and goats to feed Africa. It was the encouragement of college professors who felt I had the gifts to be a pastor that led me to seminary. I plugged away at classes and stuff like that for 7 and a half years until I finished my Master of Divinity degree. My wife and I were both in school, working part time, and raising our children. I had to borrow the maximum amount possible to cover living expenses. During the 2008 recession we lost our house to foreclosure. I hoped student loan forgiveness would eventually help us out. So far, it hasn't. We have managed to piece it all together but I have to admit, it has come with a lot of stress and some resentment".

– ELCA PASTOR

This is one rostered minister's story – but it echoes many of the realities ELCA pastors and deacons experience: a desire to serve; the challenge of navigating school, work, and family; the psychological and emotional effects of financial stress. And the cost of that stress? An estimated $140-150 million in educational debt currently carried by active and retired ELCA rostered ministers.

This report seeks to help the ELCA understand the implications of this debt and its impact on rostered ministers, and how the church might respond in a way that enables rostered ministers to more effectively carry out the Great Commission, making disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

Though it's often said that "you don't go into pastoral ministry for the paycheck," answering God's call to serve the church usually means a seminary education that for most people has come with a price tag. Throughout the years, the financial impact of receiving the degrees and certifications necessary to become a rostered minister in the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America has been a concern. Stories of pastors with six-figure student loan debt, or deacons opting to leave ordained ministry altogether due to financial stress, combined with rising rates of retirement and decreasing seminary enrollment, elevated the urgency of understanding the breadth and depth of the issue.

In 2019, the Churchwide Assembly took action to undergo a comprehensive analysis of seminary tuition funding sources. This led to the creation, in 2022, of a cross-functional task force charged with taking a deeper dive into the realities of educational debt: who has it, at what levels, how does it impact their quality of life and ability to serve, and what can our church do to better understand and alleviate the stressors in the system that might keep those who feel called to serve from answering that call.

At the time, there were hunches and anecdotes, but no solid data to support the figures, nor to inform possible actions to address the issue. Now, we have a clearer picture of what actions have already begun to change the reality, and what is still needed to address two particularly impacted groups. This report lays out:

- Historical context: What got us here?
- Process: How did the task force carry out its work?
- The reality of educational debt: Who is most affected? And to what degree?
- Recommendations to alleviate the issue: How can this church ensure leaders who feel called to ordained ministry are financially well enough to serve?

Historical Context

The United States federal government began funding higher education in 1935 with the National Youth Administration. This was followed by the 1944 GI Bill. Both of these measures were aimed at preventing poverty through expanded access to education. The Higher Education Act of 1965 created federal grants (later called Pell Grants) and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program. Initially, borrowing was modest, but policy changes and rising costs in the 1970s — especially cuts to Pell Grants — drove students, particularly students of color, to rely more heavily on loans (Shermer, 2021).

Although the issue of educational debt was coming to national prominence by the 1980s, prior to the 1990s, educational debt wasn't a major issue in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) or its predecessor bodies, its seminaries or its seminarians. The cost of receiving a seminary degree was fully or significantly covered by the larger church, which supported tuition and related expenses as part of its mission to raise up pastors and other leaders.

However, as congregational giving patterns changed, and the cost of higher education expanded, the amount of denominational support decreased, necessitating that students assume more of the responsibility of paying out of pocket to earn their degrees. In the 1990s, the percentage of seminary students borrowing to finance their education as well as the amount they were borrowing increased significantly. These increases were well-documented in *The Gathering Storm* (Ruger, Miller & Maphis Early, 2005) and *Taming the Tempest* (Miller, Maphis Early and Ruger, 2014), studies conducted by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, which compared data from seminary graduates in 1991, 2001, and 2011. Miller, et al., (2014) reported that, over this twenty-year period, the percentage of seminary graduates with educational debt had increased along with the average amount of debt they carried. Among seminary graduates in 2011, 64 percent carried educational debt, up from 47 percent in 1991. Additionally, the average debt per borrower had increased from $11,043 in 1991 (or $18,328 in 2011 dollars) to $37,952 in 2011, nearly doubling over the two decades.

These findings were widely publicized and produced considerable concern in many denominations, including the ELCA, about the issue of educational debt and its implications for both the long-term financial wellness of rostered ministers and the quality of congregational ministry. These increases in the prevalence and extent of educational debt continued into the 2010s, producing concerns for seminary graduates, theological schools, and denominations. High levels of debt impacted graduates' career choices, home purchases, savings for children's education, retirement savings, and health care needs. Financial anxiety related to educational debt often led to poor wellness outcomes and feelings of resentment and disconnection toward the church. These issues were more pronounced for persons of color, who were more likely to make financial sacrifices to attend seminary and feel the future impact of those decisions (e.g., Deasy & Love, 2021).

Process

The Educational Debt Task Force organized its work into two primary phases: self-education and research.

SELF-EDUCATION

In its initial phase (which stretched from August 2022-July 2023), the task force focused on deepening its understanding of the issue of educational debt and on situating that work within a broader context. Because supporting leaders requires many interconnected strategies, the task force began by examining its role alongside existing and emerging programs, task forces, and study committees.

During this self-education stage, members engaged with colleagues across the ELCA ecology through a series of presentations and conversations. The presentations included the topic areas of Racial Justice; Economic Justice; Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment; Quality of Call; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity (STAD) Committee; Mission Development and Redevelopment; Ethnic-Specific Ministry; the ELCA Fund for Leaders; and the 66th Synod Reparations Fund.

The task force also heard from several synod leaders on programs in their synods which address educational debt, and from LSS Financial Counseling (Duluth, MN), who provided information about the intricacies of Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). These presentations provided the necessary context to ground the work of the task force and inform some of the specific lines of inquiry in the research.

RESEARCH

Beginning in August 2023, the task force shifted to the research phase of its work. The objectives of the research phase were:

- to understand the educational debt landscape among ELCA rostered ministers and candidates, including how educational debt is experienced by these leaders and how it impacts them;
- to explore unique financial challenges facing rostered ministers of color; and,
- to gather information about existing synod programs that assist in debt reduction.

To explore these lines of inquiry, the task force began by conducting qualitative interviews with rostered ministers and candidates about their process of discerning a call to ministry and their personal experience with educational debt.

Following these interviews, the task force organized itself into two sub-teams: 1) Survey of Rostered Ministers, who conducted a survey to learn more about the extent, experience, and impact of educational debt on ELCA rostered ministers, and 2) Synod Debt Reduction Programs, who conducted a survey and a set of interviews with bishops and synod staff to discuss their educational debt reduction programs[1].

Research Findings

Qualitative Interviews

METHODOLOGY

Interviews were conducted with 34 ELCA rostered ministers and candidates[2] about their call to ordained ministry, their process of financing their seminary education, and their experience of educational debt. These interviews were conducted by six task force members between August and December 2023.

The three primary purposes for conducting these interviews were:

- to gather the stories of individual leaders of their experiences of financing seminary and living with educational debt;
- to identify areas of inquiry not considered or explored in previous research on the topic; and
- to inform the development of a quantitative survey of rostered ministers.

As mentioned above, one of the goals of the task force was to understand more about the educational debt landscape among ELCA rostered ministers. Although educational debt was already present in higher education before the 1990s, the decade introduced new borrowing patterns that led to increasing levels of debt in theological education. As such, leaders ordained at this time and in the decades that followed are especially well-positioned to provide insight into the challenges of financing seminary and the lasting consequences of those decisions.

Rostered ministers ordained between the mid-1990s and the late 2010s have been informally referred to as "the Donut Generation." They have been described this way following the imagery of a donut. These leaders attended seminary during a period of time when financial support for seminary education was limited. This followed a period when a large proportion of the cost of seminary education was financed by congregations and church bodies and preceded a time of increased scholarship availability from seminaries, synods and the churchwide organization in the late 2010s[3]. Thus, the Donut Generation fell through the proverbial hole in terms of financial support from the institutional church. Given the desire to understand in depth the contours of the experience

of leaders that carried educational debt, the task force emphasized the inclusion of these leaders during the interview phase of the research.

FINDINGS

Through the interviews, the task force gained deeper insight into the context candidates and rostered ministers faced when preparing for seminary, the factors that shaped their need to take on educational debt, and the impact that debt has had on their lives and decisions since graduation. Because our interviews emphasized rostered ministers ordained during the 2000s and 2010s, the findings reflect most strongly the experiences of these participants.

Preparing for seminary

Two themes about the demographics and finances of seminary students emerged repeatedly. First, interviewees described widespread misconceptions about who was attending seminary. Congregational leaders — and at times rostered ministers who had studied decades earlier — often assumed seminarians were young, single students entering directly from college. In reality, most were in their late thirties or early forties, second-career learners, and often supporting families.

Second, interviewees noted persistent misunderstandings about how seminary was financed. They shared that many congregational leaders and rostered ministers who had been ordained in decades prior believed tuition and living expenses continued to be covered completely by congregations or the larger church, when in fact, contributions from these sources were in decline[4] and sufficient scholarships were not yet available. Interviewees also mentioned that certain congregational leaders and rostered ministers regarded federal loans as justifiable for undergraduate education but assumed that only irresponsible individuals would need them to finance seminary; these leaders did not understand that more than three in four students borrowed to finance their seminary education[5]. Taken together, seminarians' need to borrow was highest at a time when that need was not well-understood.

Factors shaping borrowing

Several interviewees noted that connection to the ELCA via a long-standing relationship with a congregation or through family ties increased their chances of receiving significant financial support during seminary. Stronger connections to the ELCA also meant greater awareness of scholarship opportunities, including those from the ELCA Fund for Leaders, and how to apply for them. By

contrast, those with weaker ties to the ELCA reported being less likely to receive congregational support and less informed about available scholarships. One of the pastors we interviewed said, "It was a bit of a shock — the sticker price of seminary — and just lack of financial support. I did work a part-time job pretty much all my time in seminary but the hourly rate was never enough to cover tuition, housing, or any of the big-ticket items." Situations like this frequently led to negative financial and emotional outcomes (e.g., feeling left behind; experiencing resentment).

Residential education and other required in-person training (e.g., internship and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)) had a significant impact on the amount of educational debt incurred. In many cases, this training meant leaving one's job, asking a spouse to give up employment, and/or relocating an entire family — each with serious financial consequences. Even for those ordained most recently or for those who completed most of their studies through distributed learning, internship and CPE still created financial pressures that often led to borrowing.

> *"In my context, there is one CPE site that is accredited. It is about an hour from where I live. And they only offer summer semester. I ended up doing an online CPE unit, which cost an additional $3,500 on top of my tuition. It runs across both spring and summer semesters. This has delayed my endorsement date and caused me to take a leave of absence from seminary. Then, after my endorsement, I need to wait to start internship until the beginning of the spring semester. I will have gone approximately a year without income because of when I needed to do CPE. I hate that I need to wait around for calendar dates that have been deemed acceptable for this process."*
>
> **– ELCA PASTOR**

One of the most frequently cited factors limiting educational debt was the income of a spouse or partner. Interviewees noted that a working spouse or partner could help support both the seminarian and their family during seminary, reducing the need to borrow. By contrast, those who were single did not have access to this financial support and often reported needing to take on debt as a result.

Impact of educational debt

When asked about the impact educational debt had on them in the long-term, interviewees reported a variety of impacts. Financially, interviewees detailed living paycheck to paycheck, taking on extra jobs to meet expenses, postponing health care needs, delaying home purchases, being unable to save for children's education, and contributing less to retirement accounts.

Interviewees also mentioned that their own emotional well-being and the emotional well-being of their families were impacted. Of their experience, one interviewee said, “The biggest impact on me has been the anxiety. If I don’t get through candidacy, I have all of this debt for this education that qualifies me to do nothing.”

Some of the candidates and rostered ministers we interviewed who were still in seminary or who were ordained after 2015 attended seminary without paying tuition. However, many still reported needing to incur educational debt to cover their living expenses. This suggests that even with the close of the Donut Generation’s seminary attendance, there may not have been a full return to a time when a seminary education could be pursued at little financial cost or without the need to borrow.

Survey of Rostered Ministers

METHODOLOGY

Guided by previous research by the ELCA and other denominations and informed by the findings from the qualitative interviews, the task force — in collaboration with ELCA Research and Evaluation — designed and conducted a survey of all rostered ministers. The survey aimed to establish a reliable picture of rostered ministers' experiences of financing seminary, the prevalence and amount of their educational debt, and the impact of carrying that debt. It also sought to identify and measure differences in these experiences across variables such as decade of ordination, age, gender, and race and ethnicity.

The survey was distributed via email to all ELCA rostered ministers, active and retired, and was open for responses Jan. 25-Feb. 9, 2024. Recipients of the email were encouraged to complete the survey whether they had educational debt or not.

In all, 16,080 ELCA rostered ministers received the survey. There were 3,457 completed responses for a 21% response rate. The sample was generally representative of the population of ELCA rostered ministers with respect to the following metrics: decade of ordination, roster, gender, and race and ethnicity. It was somewhat less representative of age in that the sample included a lower proportion of rostered ministers from the Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and a slightly higher proportion of rostered ministers from Generation X (1964-1980) and of Millennials (1981-1996) than are included in the population. The sample also included a higher proportion of active rostered ministers, compared to retired, than the overall roster proportions.

The survey was structured around three main areas of inquiry: experiences and educational debt before seminary, during seminary, and after seminary. While the survey addressed a wide range of topics informed by the qualitative interviews, analysis to date has concentrated on the most significant areas of inquiry:

- the process of financing seminary education and the degree of reliance on a variety of funding sources;
- the prevalence and amount of educational debt at the time of graduation from seminary;

- the prevalence and amount of educational debt carried at present;
- the impact of educational debt on borrowers; and
- how each of the above varies by a variety of demographic variables, particularly decade of ordination, gender, and race and ethnicity.

FINDINGS

This section presents the key overall findings from the most significant areas of inquiry. Where differences emerged across demographic variables, those analyses are also included.

Financing seminary

Overall, respondents to the survey most commonly reported that they relied on a spouse or partner's employment income (38%), on federal student loans (36%), and on off-campus jobs (34%) to finance their seminary education.

Reliance on spouse or partner's income was most common among respondents ordained in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Beginning in the 1990s, however, the most common source of support shifted: federal student loans became the primary means of funding for those ordained in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. In part, this change reflected the wider availability of educational loans during this period. Among those ordained in the 2020s, seminary-based scholarships emerged as the most common source of funding, while reliance on federal loans declined.

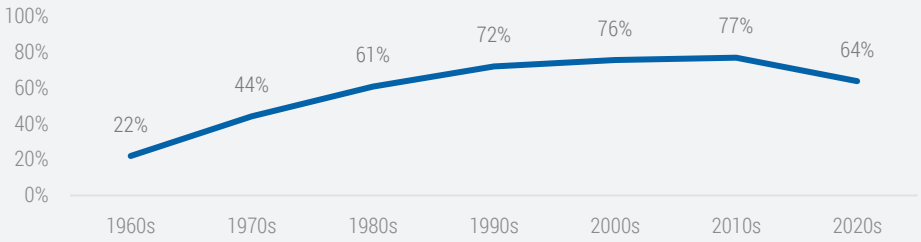
We found significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color in their reliance on federal student loans to finance seminary education. Focusing on the period when educational loans were most widely used (1990s–2010s), 50% of white respondents reported relying on federal loans, compared with 61% of respondents of color. This suggests that, even within a broader context of high loan usage, respondents of color were more likely than their white peers to depend on federal student loans.

Prevalence and amount of debt at graduation from seminary

Prevalence. Sixty-four percent of all respondents reported carrying educational debt at the time of graduation from seminary. As shown in Figure 1, the proportion was lowest among those ordained in the 1960s (22%) and rose steadily to 72% in the 1990s, before plateauing at 76–77% in the 2000s and

2010s. Encouragingly, the proportion declined among those ordained in the 2020s (64%), returning to levels last seen in the 1980s.

FIGURE 1. % WHO CARRIED EDUCATIONAL DEBT AT SEMINARY GRADUATION BY DECADE OF ORDINATION

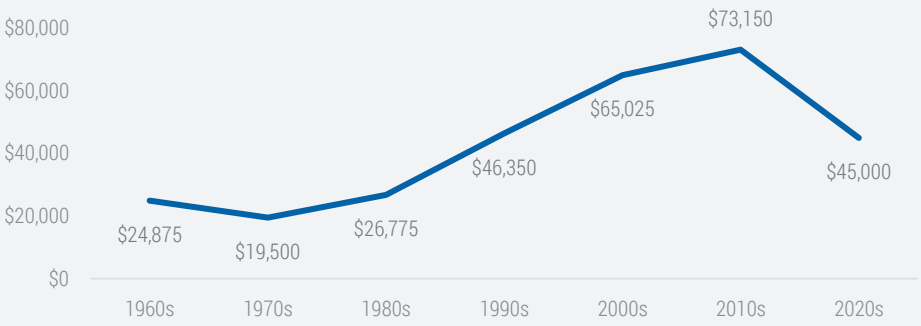


Modest demographic differences appeared in the prevalence of educational debt among those ordained in the 1990s–2020s. Men were slightly more likely than women to graduate with debt (76% vs. 71%), and rostered ministers of color were slightly more likely than their white colleagues to do so (78% vs. 74%).

Amount. When looking at the respondents who reported carrying educational debt at seminary graduation, the median amount in inflation-adjusted dollars was $50,700 per borrower and ranged from $2,500 to more than $150,000.

Educational debt at graduation varied significantly by decade of ordination, as shown in Figure 2. Respondents ordained in the 1960s-1980s carried the lowest median levels of inflation-adjusted debt, at around $25,000 per borrower. In the 1990s, average educational debt rose sharply to $46,350. Those ordained in the 2000s and 2010s reported the highest average amounts ($65,025 and $73,150). Encouragingly, average debt declined for those ordained in the 2020s, returning to levels similar to the 1990s ($45,000), though it is too soon to know if this trend will persist.

FIGURE 2. AVERAGE AMOUNT OF EDUCATIONAL DEBT CARRIED AT SEMINARY GRADUATION BY DECADE OF ORDINATION



Similar to the pattern in prevalence of educational debt at graduation, there were demographic differences in the amount of debt carried among respondents ordained since 1990. The gap between men and women was modest, with median debt of $60,500 and $62,475, respectively. By contrast, the difference by race and ethnicity was stark: rostered ministers of color reported a median educational debt of $97,850 at the time of graduation, compared to $60,500 among white rostered ministers.

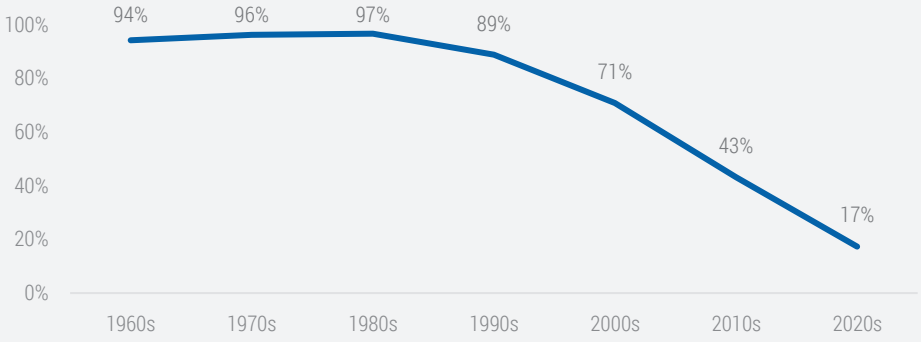
Prevalence and amount of debt at present

Respondents who reported that they either carried educational debt at graduation from seminary or due to borrowing for additional post-seminary education (65% of all respondents surveyed) were asked about the level of educational debt they continued to carry at the time of the survey.

Of this group, 69% reported that they no longer carried educational debt (i.e., it had been paid off in full or forgiven). The other 31% had not yet paid it off. The median amount of educational debt they still carried was $37,500, and the total amount of educational debt currently carried by respondents to this survey was $33,747,500. Based on the structure of the roster and the representativeness of the sample, we would estimate that ELCA rostered ministers (active and retired) currently carry between $140 and $150 million in educational debt.

As shown in Figure 3, nearly all respondents ordained in the 1960s–1980s and most ordained in the 1990s–2000s have fully repaid their educational debt or had it forgiven. By contrast, fewer than half of those ordained in the 2010s and less than one in five in the 2020s have done so, which is expected given how recently many completed seminary,

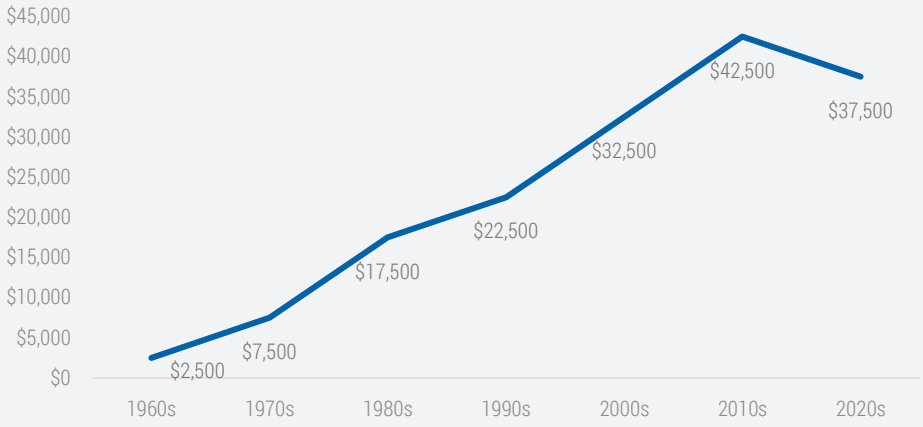
FIGURE 3. PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE PAID OFF THEIR EDUCATIONAL DEBT, BY DECADE OF ORDINATION



As shown in Figure 4, median amounts of remaining educational debt rose steadily through the 2010s, when they reached their highest point. This is consistent with this group of leaders having incurred the largest amounts at graduation and having had limited time to pay it down. For those ordained in the 2020s, the median is lower than in the 2010s despite having had less time to repay, reflecting their lower initial debt at graduation.

Of respondents that carried educational debt at the time of graduation from seminary or who borrowed to finance post-seminary education, men were more likely than women to have paid off this debt in full or had it forgiven (75%, compared to 63%). Given that men carried less educational debt on average at the time of graduation from seminary, it follows that they would be more likely to have paid it off. Among those who continue to carry educational debt, the median amounts remaining for men and women are the same ($37,500).

FIGURE 4. AVERAGE AMOUNT OF EDUCATIONAL DEBT REMAINING PER BORROWER, BY DECADE OF ORDINATION[6]



Racial disparities were considerably more pronounced: 70% of white respondents had paid off their debt compared to only 42% of respondents of color. As reported above, respondents of color carried substantially higher educational debt levels when they graduated seminary than did white respondents, so it is not surprising that a lower proportion of this group has been able to pay off this debt. Neither is it surprising that respondents of color also continued to carry higher median debt ($55,000) than white respondents ($32,500), consistent with their higher initial borrowing.

Impact of educational debt

It goes without saying that educational debt impacts the lives of borrowers in a variety of ways. The survey results painted a picture that made it clear the weight that the borrowers were carrying caused significant hardship. Overall, respondents were most likely to report that educational debt negatively impacted their general financial well-being (40% reported being negatively impacted), their ability to save for retirement (39%), their personal well-being (37%) and their ability to handle large, unexpected expenses (37%).

The impact of educational debt on respondents varied by decade of ordination. Those ordained in the 1960s and 1970s rarely reported negative effects, with fewer than 10% citing challenges in areas such as handling unexpected expenses, housing, or family support. Beginning in the 1980s, however, four areas consistently topped the list of negative impacts: ability to handle unexpected expenses, saving for retirement, general financial well-being, and personal well-being.

Over time, not only did these areas of impact remain stable, but the proportion of respondents reporting them increased sharply. By the 2010s and 2020s, more than half of respondents reported being negatively affected by educational debt in multiple areas. These patterns generally align with rising debt levels at graduation, though an exception appeared among those ordained in the 2020s, who reported lower debt than the 1990s–2010s cohorts but were still more likely to cite broad negative impacts.

Men and women identified the same four areas most negatively impacted by educational debt, but women were consistently more likely to report these effects. For instance, nearly half of women said their general financial well-being was affected, compared to one-third of men, with similar gaps across all four areas.

White respondents and respondents of color identified the same four areas most affected by educational debt, but rostered ministers of color were more likely to report negative impact in each. The largest gap was in personal well-being, cited by 56% of respondents of color compared to 37% of white respondents.



In addition to a greater quantitative understanding of the impact of educational debt on rostered ministers across the demographic spectrum, one of the goals of the survey was to explore the representativeness of narratives that have existed in the church, but for which there has not been reliable quantitative evidence gathered. In particular, the survey sought to understand more about the Donut Generation of leaders, as well as what differences exist between white rostered ministers and rostered ministers of color when it comes to educational debt experiences.

Donut Generation

The findings of the survey provide reliable evidence that the financial experience of seminary was fundamentally different for the Donut Generation of rostered ministers (primarily among those ordained in the 2000s and 2010s) through three main metrics: degree of reliance on federal student loans, prevalence of borrowing during seminary, and amount of educational debt carried at graduation from seminary.

- Respondents ordained in the 2000s and 2010s were the most likely to say that they relied moderately or highly on federal student loans to finance their seminary education; more than half of respondents in each decade said this.
- The highest degree of reliance in any other decade was among those ordained in the 1990s (39%). Furthermore, among respondents ordained in the 2020s, we saw a decline in the reliance on federal student loans; only 35% of respondents reported moderate or high reliance.

The pattern is the same when analyzing the proportion of respondents who carried educational debt at the time of graduation from seminary by decade of ordination.

- Three out of four respondents ordained in the 2000s and 2010s reported carrying educational debt (75%). This was the highest proportion compared to any other decade.
- The proportion was slightly lower among those ordained in the 1990s (72%), indicating that some of those in that decade might also be included in the gap.
- The proportion in the next highest decade (the 2020s) was 64%.

Finally, the inflation-controlled amounts of educational debt carried by respondents at graduation from seminary also provide evidence of the Donut Generation.

- Those ordained in the 2000s and 2010s carried considerably more educational debt following seminary than did those ordained in the decades before or, to this point, in the decade since.
- On average, respondents ordained in the 2000s and 2010s generally carried between $15,000 and $20,000 more in educational debt per borrower than respondents from any other decade.

The cost of this debt was not limited to the dollar amount, however. Members of the Donut Generation reported that in addition to limiting their ability to save for retirement and handle large, unexpected expenses, the psychological and emotional toll of carrying such debt contributed to feelings of stress and financial insecurity, impacting their overall well-being.

Rostered ministers of color

The survey data suggests that rostered ministers of color[7] have a distinct experience with educational debt compared to white rostered ministers at each step along the way. Rostered ministers of color were more likely to rely on educational debt to finance their seminary education, more likely to carry educational debt, more likely to carry higher amounts of debt, and more likely to report its negative effects.

- Half of the rostered ministers of color who responded to this survey reported relying moderately or highly on federal student loans to finance their seminary education. Among white respondents, that proportion was 35%.
- When limiting the analysis to those respondents ordained in the 1990s or more recently — when educational loans became more commonly utilized overall — the proportion of respondents of color who relied on federal student loans increased to 61% and the proportion of white respondents to 50%. Thus, even when removing a potential contributing factor from the analysis — the higher proportion of white respondents ordained before the common usage of educational loans — we continued to see a difference between respondents of color and white respondents.



Looking at actual borrowing, a similar pattern between these groups existed, although the differences were smaller.

- Seventy-five percent of respondents of color reported carrying educational debt at graduation from seminary, compared to 64% of white respondents.
- This gap shrunk when including only those ordained since 1990 in the analysis (78%, compared to 74%).

The largest difference between respondents of color and white respondents was in the amount of educational debt carried at graduation from seminary.

- The average amount of educational debt carried by respondents of color was $93,769, compared to $63,696 among white respondents, a difference of $30,000 per borrower.
- Including only those ordained since 1990 does nothing to shrink the gap. Rather, we see the average amounts for both respondents of color and white respondents increase approximately $6,000 per borrower to $99,245 among respondents of color and $69,228 among white respondents.

Finally, respondents of color were more likely to report being negatively impacted by educational debt in each area of inquiry. They were 19 percentage points more likely to say they themselves were negatively impacted by educational debt, 10 percentage points more likely to report negative impact on their ability to save for retirement and their ability to handle a large, unexpected expense, and 7 percentage points more likely to say their general financial well-being had been negatively impacted.

These findings suggest that the experience of financing seminary and managing its effects are fundamentally different for rostered ministers of color and white rostered ministers.

Task Force Recommendations

To lay the groundwork for a comprehensive strategy to address educational debt among rostered ministers, the task force proposes several recommendations aimed at different levels of the ELCA ecology, including congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. These recommendations are designed to provide relief to as many pastoral leaders as possible, enabling them to be more effective and satisfied in their participation in God's mission in the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

ELCA Educational Debt Reduction Program: Reimagine and enhance programming and fundraising efforts to additionally assist rostered ministers alongside seminarians with educational debt reduction. There should be a particular emphasis on rostered ministers from the Donut Generation, persons of color, and those with additional intersectionality.

Suggested Activities:

- Learn from Existing Frameworks: Examine approaches of fundraising that could be applied in churchwide or regional debt-reduction efforts. This could include applying learnings from churchwide or synod programs or through consultation with full-communion partners about how they address this issue.
- Communication and Education: Communicate effectively about the importance of supporting educational debt reduction. This includes providing congregations and synods with information about the state of educational debt among ELCA rostered ministers.
- Research and Evaluation: Direct and resource ELCA Research and Evaluation to evaluate and measure on-going progress of the proposed ELCA Educational Debt Reduction Program.
- Collaborative Meetings: Convene quarterly meetings of relevant units and programs within the ELCA churchwide organization and its financial separately incorporated ministries to share learnings and collaborate on the financial well-being of rostered ministers with respect to educational debt.

Address Current Educational Debt Inequities Among Underrepresented Populations: Respond thoughtfully to disparities identified through research and support efforts that promote equitable solutions.

Suggested Activities:

- Financial Support for Underrepresented Populations: Prioritize financial support for students from historically underrepresented populations, including immigrant, Indigenous, Latine, African American, and other persons of color, as well as LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Conduct Additional Study: Convene a specific task force to focus on the unique challenges faced by underrepresented populations. Direct ELCA Research and Evaluation to conduct further research and analysis on educational debt and its impacts on these communities to support this task force.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYNODS

Support Educational Debt Reduction Programs: Participate in efforts for rostered minister educational debt reduction.

Suggested Activities:

- Communication and Education: Communicate effectively about the importance of supporting educational debt reduction. This includes sharing information about potential churchwide and synod-specific educational debt reduction programs with rostered ministers and congregations, as well as providing congregations with information about the state of educational debt among ELCA rostered ministers.
- Engagement and Support: Evaluate their debt reduction programs to determine their effectiveness in attracting and retaining rostered ministers. This might include providing resources and support to synod staff, candidates, and rostered ministers.
- Study the Landscape: If the synod does not have a dedicated program geared to reducing the educational debt of current rostered ministers in their synod, the synod could include questions about seminary debt in annual questionnaires to learn more about the educational debt among rostered ministers in their synods.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS

Gain Insight into Educational Debt Amongst Pastoral Leaders: Engage in and advocate for churchwide and synod initiatives aimed at reducing educational debt.

Suggested Activities:

- Communication and Education: Educate members about the educational debt challenges faced by pastoral leaders. This education should shed light on the challenges faced by leaders of color and those with additional intersectionality and the need for congregations to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion in their call processes.
- Engagement and Support: Actively engage in supporting their pastoral leaders, including participating in churchwide and synod-specific efforts for debt reduction for current rostered ministers.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS THROUGHOUT ELCA ECOLOGY (COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, SEMINARIES, AND RELATED INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND MINISTRIES)

Minimize Educational Debt for Future Rostered Ministers: Support proactive strategies that minimize financial burdens for those preparing for ministry.

Suggested Activities:

- Grants and Scholarships: Create and provide grants and scholarships for undergraduate students pursuing theological education. Given their substantial impact of reducing the educational debt incurred by students, ELCA seminaries could begin or continue offering full-tuition scholarships.
- Discernment and Financial Awareness: Encourage undergraduate students and seminarians to consider the type of theological education they need to be effective in ministry and include financial education and debt impact awareness throughout their discernment process.
- Strengthen Alternative Learning Programs: When appropriate, consider and/or promote alternative learning programs, such as

Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM), and certificate programs, as means of equipping congregational leaders in the midst of a changing church.

These recommendations aim to create a comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing educational debt among pastoral leaders, improving their financial well-being and enhancing their ability to serve effectively in their roles.

Conclusion

As one member of the task force remarked during our time together, "I will not always be a pastor, but I will always need a pastor." The church has always needed theologically-grounded, faithful leaders. Ensuring those leaders have the financial and emotional capacity to stay strong and focused on ministry is of utmost importance as congregations and institutions continue to adapt to today's current environment.

The task force's research makes it clear that increased educational debt affects overall financial confidence, the ability to manage monthly bills, and levels of stress. It also called out a negative impact on saving for retirement — a factor which may be compounded by years of serving at minimum compensation guidelines or below, longer periods of time between calls, and fewer opportunities to serve in head of staff or other more highly compensated positions. All of these things are detrimental to financial wellness and may well contribute to physical and emotional dis-ease. Without a commitment to address these realities, the church risks the health and longevity of those who answer God's call to serve as leaders.

Even as the ELCA is exploring new models for ministry and casting a wider net to raise up both lay and rostered leaders, the fact remains that generations of pastors and deacons continue to carry a heavy financial burden. At a high level, the church in all its expressions will benefit from a deeper understanding of the realities facing those who have answered the call to serve in rostered ministry. This could begin as simply as sharing this report with congregational and synod leaders. It could also include additional data gathering and analysis to determine with greater specificity the extent and implications of educational debt.

The task force would also strongly encourage the church to commit to an intentional debt reduction effort. This could take the form of a matching grant, a partnership with synods to incentivize rostered ministers to consider calls in those areas, or a broad-based debt reduction effort to raise funds for loan forgiveness.

Finally, the church would be well-served to leverage the generous financial support from all expressions of the church to provide grants for renewal opportunities that will give our financially-burdened rostered ministers the strength to keep serving today, and to save for tomorrow.

Appendix A

Synod Debt Reduction Programs

METHODOLOGY

The Educational Debt Task Force conducted a survey of synods regarding their educational debt reduction programs. The purpose of the survey was to collect information from synods about their educational debt reduction programs for rostered ministers, and share this information with candidates, rostered ministers, and synods. The survey was fielded in December 2023. The task force received responses from 48 of 65 synods (74% response rate), representing all nine ELCA regions.

After reviewing the survey responses, five members of the task force conducted follow-up interviews with bishops or staff in 10 synods to understand the responses in greater depth and to explore questions unearthed by the survey responses.

Findings

- More than half (54%) of responding synods reported having some sort of educational debt reduction program. This finding was surprising, as the prevailing narrative before this research was conducted was that between 10 and 12 synods had programs in place to address the educational debt of their rostered ministers.
- Synods with programs were most likely to say that their purposes fell into one of these three categories:
    - Reduce the educational debt of leaders
    - Attract new leaders and retain them, and/or
    - Enable leaders to more fully live into their call
- Respondents with programs were very likely to say that they were satisfied with how their program functioned. Synods whose programs were simple to administer found this advantageous for both synod staff and rostered ministers called to the synod.
- Synod leaders were somewhat less likely to say that it was having the desired effects of reducing significant amounts of educational debt and attracting and retaining leaders. Rather, they indicated that their

programs provided a modest bonus to leaders who were already going to come to the synod or who planned to stay an extended period.

- Comments from qualitative portions of the survey as well as from follow-up interviews suggested that renewed efforts to reduce tuition at seminaries were effective. Many bishops and synod staff observed that newly ordained rostered ministers in most synods tending to carry less educational debt than those ordained a decade or more ago. However, pastors who had graduated from seminary before that time still carried significant educational debt.
- There was curiosity among respondents about what opportunities might be available from the federal government through Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF).

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

Donut Generation – Following the imagery of a donut, these are leaders who fell through the proverbial hole in terms of financial support from the institutional church. These leaders attended seminary during a period of time when financial support for seminary education was limited, extending roughly from the mid-1990s through the late-2010s. This followed a period when a large proportion of the cost of seminary education was financed by congregations and the institutional church and preceded a time of increased scholarship availability from seminaries, synods, and the churchwide organization in the late 2010s.

Fund for Leaders – An ELCA program that has been offering scholarships for students at ELCA seminaries who are pursuing rostered ministry in the ELCA since 2000. In the 2025-2026 academic year, the fund will provide nearly $3.2 million in scholarships to 458 ELCA seminary students.

Intersectionality - A term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) which describes a framework for understanding how different aspects of a person's identity, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, overlap and interact to create unique systems of discrimination and privilege.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) - A program that forgives the remaining balance on certain federal student loans after a borrower makes 120 qualifying monthly payments while working full-time for a qualifying public service employer. Eligible employers include government organizations and certain non-profit organizations. To qualify, borrowers must have Direct Loans, make payments under a qualifying income-driven repayment plan, and have their employment certified by a qualifying employer. Most ELCA rostered ministers became eligible on July 1, 2021, though some were eligible before this date.

Theological Education for Emerging Ministry (TEEM) - An ELCA leadership formation process designed for individuals currently serving in emerging ministry sites who have been identified as candidates by their synod bishop. TEEM students receive a solid grounding in Lutheran theology and the Lutheran Confessions, completing both academic coursework and practical ministry requirements in collaboration with faculty, synod staff, and TEEM procedures.

Appendix C

Task Force Membership

Name	Role and Organization[8]	Participation
Eric Addington	Associate Vice President for Enrollment and Financial Aid; Concordia College	2022-2025
Nathan Block	Manager of Business Intelligence; Portico Benefit Services	2022-2024
Vima Couvertier-Cruz	Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice; Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC)	2022-2025
The Rev. Shelley Cunningham	Director of Customer Outreach and Church Relations; Portico Benefit Services	2025
Bishop Yehiel Curry	Bishop, Metropolitan Chicago Synod	2022-2024
Adam DeHoek	Congregation Statistics Analyst, ELCA: Churchwide organization convener	2022-2025
Deacon John Dellis	Gift Planner; Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest	2022-2025
The Rev. Miguel Gomez-Acosta	Director for Evangelical Mission; Grand Canyon Synod, ELCA	2022-2025
Cherrish Holland	Program Director, Partnerships and Financial Education; Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota ELCA Church Council member	2022-2025
Bishop Meggan Manlove	Bishop; Northwest Intermountain Synod	2025
Julie Nelson	Former Co-Director, 3E Program; Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA	2022-2025
The Rev. Dr. Moses Penumaka	Director, Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM); Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS); Member of Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity (STAD) task force	2022-2025
Grace Pomroy	Director, Stewardship Leaders Program; Luther Seminary	2022-2025
Laury Rinker	Vice President, Marketing; Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA	2022-2025
The Rev. Carlton Rodgers	Senior Pastor; Tabernacle Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA	2022-2024
The Rev. Angela Shannon	Pastor; All Saints Lutheran Church, Bowie, MD	2022-2025
Greg Truex	Chief Operating Officer; ELCA Federal Credit Union	2022-2025

Notes

[1] Due to its broader nature, and the differing application and utilization of synod debt reduction programs, this report focuses on the findings from the Survey of Rostered Ministers. Additional information about Synod Debt Reduction programs may be found in Appendix B (page 24) of this report.

[2] Of the 34 interviewees, 28 were pastors; 3 were deacons; and 3 were candidates for Word and Sacrament Ministry; 27 were white and 7 were Black, Indigenous, or Persons of Color (BIPOC); their median age was 42; they were serving in 14 synods.

[3] Several examples include United Lutheran Seminary, which began offering full-tuition scholarships in the fall of 2017 and Luther Seminary, which began offering full-tuition scholarships through its Jubilee Scholarship Program in the fall of 2018. During this time, the ELCA Fund for Leaders was provided a multi-million dollar grant for immediate use to provide full-tuition scholarships to ELCA students at ELCA seminaries.

[4] ELCA Annual Congregation Report summaries.

[5] ELCA Stewards of Abundance debt audits (2006-2015).

[6] The average remaining debt for those ordained in the 1960s has been removed from this figure, as the number of respondents that still carried debt was too low for reliable analysis.

[7] Originally, the task force intended to include the feedback and experiences of more rostered ministers of color. To achieve this goal, we employed additional survey reminders for rostered ministers of color and engaged the program directors for ethnic-specific ministries to promote the survey. Although the sample did not numerically underrepresent rostered ministers of color, their lower number in the sample meant that we could not conduct analyses on each ethnic-specific group. Rather, to conduct meaningful comparative analysis, we needed to group all rostered ministers of color together.

[8] Role and organization upon joining the task force.

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Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

The Educational Debt Task Force

www.elca.org

Highlights of 2026 Proposed Budget Revisions

Unrestricted Budget

Note: This document references changes to the 2026 Approved Budget for your consideration. As part of this discussion on Thursday evening, October 30, we will also provide rationale on the FY25 forecast amounts.

Last April the Budget and Finance Committee and the Church Council approved and forwarded to the Churchwide Assembly a recommended spending authorization for FY2026. The recommended budget for 2026 was approved at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. The ELCA constitution provides the Church Council with the authority, upon recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee, to approve modified spending authorizations subsequent to those that were approved at the last churchwide assembly.

Below are the recommended changes to the previously approved revenue budget along with a change in the spending authorization for the year ending January 31, 2027. These modifications are coming to the Budget and Finance Committee for your consideration. Any action on budgets taken by BFC will be forwarded to CC for consideration and action.

Mission Support

What is the basis for a proposed increase of $400,000 to the approved FY26 mission support budget? Through September, actual mission support is running at 2.8% ahead of budget (2.1% below prior year). Synods submit mission support intents annually based on action of their assemblies. Between 2023 and 2024, synod intents reflected decreases in mission support of 5.5%; between 2024 and 2025, synod intents reflected decreases in mission support of 5.4%. Based on the results to date in FY25, the experience has been better. Furthermore, based on a compilation of synod budgets approved at assemblies this summer, the decrease in mission support between FY25 and FY26 is only 1.2%. The revised budget proposal is a decrease in mission support over projected FY25 of 3.7%. Based on discussion with the Sr. Director for Synod and Congregational Support and the facts presented, we believe this is achievable.

Investment Income

This category includes investment income from all sources, including certificates of deposits, dividends, interest, and realized and unrealized gains/losses on managed investments, and mineral rights income. The 2026 budget remains conservative relative to actual performance in 2023, 2024, and projected 2025; however, 2022 was only $1.4 million. Holding the budget to $4 million is prudent given expected interest rate reductions and market volatility. In addition, through September, spending from restricted and designated funds such as Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger have reduced available free cash for investing by about $8.5 million.

Bequest and Trust Income

This category is very difficult to predict and can swing widely from year-to-year. The 2026 budget has been decreased slightly based on softer results in 2024 and YTD 2025 trends. While 2024 and 2025 year-

to-date have been soft, the proposed revised budget of nearly $3.5 million is lower than the five- and ten-year trends.

Endowment Income

Endowment income represents quarterly unrestricted distributions from the endowment assets. This has increased slightly based on the first three quarters of 2025. This growth in distribution is expected to continue so long as asset values remain relatively constant.

Designated Funds Released

The revised amount of $3,959,000 represents full utilization of a board designated fund – Budgeted Operations Support. The fund has grown over the past seven years based on favorable net assets over expenses and was intended to cover operating shortfalls in those years. Fortunately, the combination of underspending, growth in direct gifts, and growth in investment income have made that not necessary. Based on current year results and 2026 proposed budget, the fund should be fully spent at the end of 2026.

Endowment Withdrawals

Some restricted endowments may become unrestricted with the passage of time. The organization has identified approximately $2.2 million that may be utilized by liquidation of a Church Council Designated Fund functioning as an endowment. It is expected that withdrawals will be taken from this fund in both 2025 and 2026. Churchwide is in discussion with the ELCA Foundation to request an audit be conducted to identify whether additional endowments such as this exist.

The net impact of these changes is an increase in unrestricted revenues of $1.7 million.

Basis for Increase in Spending Authorization

Budgeted unrestricted spending that was approved at the Churchwide Assembly totaled $61.5 million for FY26. That level of spending required reductions from the FY25 budgeted spending of $3,875,000. The respective allocation of spending across each unit and office was proportionally reduced to reflect this change. Over the past several months, the administrative team (comprised of the Presiding Bishop, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive for Administration, Executive Director Christian Community & Leadership, Executive Director Innovation, Executive Director Service & Justice, along with two appointments by the Presiding Bishop (currently Executive for Development and Executive for Human Resources)) conducted detailed reviews of their programmatic and operating budgets to identify potential savings. The administrative team identified approximately 88% of the total required, including reductions in travel costs, grants, purchased/professional services, and staffing changes which are under consideration. In addition, certain increases were either not included in the original spending authorization or changes since April 2025 have resulted in increased spending requests. These include:

1) 2% compensation adjustment
2) Facilities - Idle capacity costs.
3) Increase in churchwide assembly funding for 2028
4) Increase in insurance costs
5) Net deficit in original budget

The combination of the 12% of savings which were not able to be identified, along with the additional items that were not included in the original budget total $1.65 million, resulting in a requested increase in the proposed spending authorization from $61,500,000 to $63,150,000. Increases to the budgeted revenue streams, as discussed above, will offset the requested increase in spending.

The proposed action for the Budget & Finance Committee to consider is as follows:

To approve and forward to the Church Council for their action:

To increase the Unrestricted (Current Fund) spending authorization from $61,500,000 to $63,150,000 for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2027.

ELCA Churchwide Organization

Proposed Budget Revisions for FY 2026

	2023	2024	2025	2025	2025	2026	2026	2026
			Sept			Approved	Nov Proposed	Revised
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Forecast	Budget	Changes	Budget
Mission Support	$ 37,080,134	$35,229,229	$ 21,472,936	$ 33,550,000	$ 33,750,000	$ 32,100,000	$ 400,000	$ 32,500,000
Direct Gifts, incl Missionaries, YAGM, and Temp Restricted	6,336,180	7,844,264	3,656,998	8,000,000	8,000,000	8,250,000	-	8,250,000
Investment Income	7,005,992	8,120,003	5,755,680	4,000,000	6,500,000	4,000,000	-	4,000,000
Bequests & Trusts	6,841,607	2,822,967	1,322,678	3,000,000	2,200,000	3,600,000	(109,000)	3,491,000
Endowment	3,606,353	3,939,802	2,965,913	3,600,000	3,675,000	3,650,000	50,000	3,700,000
Rent	1,041,369	1,044,904	715,648	1,050,000	1,050,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Service Level Agreements/Other	1,701,568	1,582,008	1,266,128	1,900,000	1,800,000	1,600,000	-	1,600,000
Mission Investment Fund	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,000,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	-	1,500,000
Total Unrestricted and Temp Restr Funds	**$ 65,113,203**	**$ 62,083,177**	**$ 38,155,981**	**$ 56,600,000**	**$ 58,475,000**	**$ 55,700,000**	**$ 341,000**	**$ 56,041,000**
Other Sources of Funds								
Designated Funds Released	-	-	-	4,925,000	4,925,000	3,082,936	876,064	3,959,000
Endowment Withdrawals	-		-	3,200,000	456,750	2,000,000	500,000	2,500,000
Restricted Funds Released	749,983	555,703	306,883	650,000	650,000	650,000	-	650,000
Total Other	**$ 749,983**	**$ 555,703**	**$ 306,883**	**$ 8,775,000**	**$ 6,031,750**	**$ 5,732,936**	**$ 1,376,064**	**$ 7,109,000**
Total Income	**$ 65,863,186**	**$ 62,638,880**	**$ 38,462,864**	**$ 65,375,000**	**$ 64,506,750**	**$ 61,432,936**	**$ 1,717,064**	**$ 63,150,000**
Total Spending	**(62,309,000)**	**(62,476,076)**	**(41,057,165)**	**(65,375,000)**	**(64,506,750)**	**(61,500,000)**	**(1,650,000)**	**(63,150,000)**
Net Revenues over Expenses	**$ 3,554,186**	**$ 162,804**	**$ (2,594,301)**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ (67,064)**	**$ 67,064**	**$ -**

AUDIT COMMITTEE OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
Microsoft Teams Meeting
Tuesday, June 17, 2025, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Minutes

I. Call to Order — Tracey Beasley

II. Opening prayer — Wyvetta Bullock

III. Welcome and Roll Call

Kevin Anderson
Tracey Beasley - *Chair*
Kerry Fehrman
Keoni Newman
Ingrid Stafford

Crowe LLP:
Pete Ugo
Chelby Nystrom – on vacation

Forvis Mazars:
Christie Clements
Jeff McCall
Seth Hopkins

Staff:
Jon Beyer - absent
Wyvetta Bullock – absent (sick)
Lori Fedyk
Annette Román
Stephanie Ulba

INGRID OFFERED PRAYER

IV. Adoption of agenda — Tracey Beasley

AC ACTION:
Recommended: **To adopt the agenda and permit the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order deemed most appropriate.**

V. Approval of minutes (Exhibit A) — Tracey Beasley
APPROVED

AC ACTION:
Recommended: **To approve the minutes of November 13, 2024, as presented in Exhibit A.**

DRAFT

SETH INTRODUCED HIMSELF GIIVNG SOME BACKGROUND

PETE UGO WENT NEXT

Kevin Anderson asked a question regarding the reclassification of some assets. (questions were asked and answered)

Pete went over the footnotes explaining their meaning.

Pete stopped to allow for Tom Cunniff to join in executive session. Internal auditors were asked to leave, as was Alma (and Pete Ugo?) ask Lori if she wants to include on the minutes a paragraph regarding the decision on the foot note for a reclassification. With that, Pete ended his presentation and left the mtg.

DRAFT was approved with the exception of the change they will make.

Tracey invited Jeff to start the internal audit report. He presented Forvis Mazars report.

VI. Treasurer remarks — Lori Fedyk

Lori presented her report using a PPT presentation on income and expenses.

You may remember that we reviewed our spending authorization. OT has a negative number. We have been experiencing situations where due to the loss of our tenants. We no longer have support from that organization. We charged them fees for early termination and that has come to an end and we are now feeling the blunt of that loss. She spoke of World Hunger – that we spend more than we receive in the first months of the year, as the biggest part of that income comes toward the end of the year. Our budget is a little bit behind but I am comfortable that we are on track to hit those numbers on the budget. The spending was accelerated due to some changes in the government. We were asked by LWF to advance them some of the monies they would typically receive later in the year. Kevin asked a question about personnel changes. (Phil Hirsch)

Lori responded about the transitions that are funded. For other things we are not funded, if we have to do additional recruiting expenses we will ….. we have some money left for CWA but if there are a lot of actions, we may be short, as well.

Kevin mentioned a 3-yr task force that may be approved at CWA. Lori: we may not have $$ to fund that.

Audit Comm members update. Lori expressed her thanks to the members present, very grateful for attendance, guidance, questions, etc. while serving in AC. We will have a whole new crew of members. Tracey shared some names with Lori, she also identified three additional candidates. She explained that she can have 3 at-large members. Tracey recommended has vast experience and may be able to hit the ground running. I'm encouraged that they are willing to put their name forth as we move forward with this selection. Ingrid mentioned Mark Stafford, who currently serves in FO. He just assumed the chair role this year in March. Maybe next week during the FO mtg. we can close the loop on that. He may be willing to do it. Kevin: I wonder if the sheet with names you gave us is accurate. Lori: We set a precedent with Ingrid. I am certainly open to anyone who may want to put their name to remain active in the AC going forward for other 6 years as at-large members. That would give for some continuity. If someone is willing to consider please let Lori know.

VII. Presentation of preliminary draft of the audited financial statements (Exhibit B) — Crowe Staff

VIII. Additional Financial Statement Discussion — Stephanie Ulba

IX. Crowe LLP report to the Audit Committee (Exhibit C, Part 1 – Part 2) — Pete Ugo

Pete introduced himself and started sharing his report. He indicated the audit has been completed. He shared the presentation on the screen. He indicated that Chelby is out on vacation time planned long ago, Samantha Morales is in charge of the Chicago team involved in the audit. He talked about the Letter SAS 114

AC ACTION

DRAFT

Recommended: **To approve the draft of the audited financial statements of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Administrative Offices, as presented, for the year ended January 31, 2025.**

Executive Session with Crowe.

APPROVED

VIII. Internal audit report (Exhibit D, Part 1 – Part 2) — Seth Hopkins, Christie Clements, Jeff McCall

AC ACTION
Recommended: **To receive the report of the internal auditors.**

Executive Session with Forvis Mazars.

APPROVED

IX. FY25 YTD Financial Update — Lori Fedyk

X. Update on New Audit Committee members — Lori Fedyk

XI. Next meeting date:

Wednesday, November 12, 2025, 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

XII. Executive session with the Treasurer

- Meet separately and as appropriate with management, independent auditors and internal audit team to discuss issues of importance to the Audit Committee and the individual parties. This will be done independently after each report.
- Conclude as to the performance of the independent auditors.
- Assess the Audit Committee's performance with respect to its duties and responsibilities**.**

Meeting adjourned.

DRAFT

Other committee or board

United Lutheran Seminary

Mr. Donald Edward Barb [Form received following meeting]

Synod of Congregation: Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA (7F)
Congregation: Christ Ascension Lutheran Church (ID: 00720) - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Birthdate: 06/06/1947 **Gender:** Man
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** European Descent/White
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
20 W Chestnut Hill Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19118 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 6098468408 (Home)
Email:
Donaldebarb@yahoo.com (Home)
Educational Institutions:
Ohio State University (1965-1969): Bachelor Of Arts
Ohio State University College of Law (1971-1974): Doctor Of Jurisprudence
Employment:
Senior Vice president (01/01/2011 - 01/01/2026)
Retired
Philadelphia, PA
Previous Employment:
Chubb & Son (1978-2011)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
Southeast PA Synod Committee on. Discipline (2024-2030)
Stewardship chair Christ Ascension (2024-2026)
Finance team Christ Ascension (2025-2026)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
Lifelong active participation in Lutheran congregations, including council and worship & community ministry. Legal training & work experience. Married to Lutheran clergy person graduate of ULS. And deep connection to seminary. Sense of social justice, fairness and due process. Manager of staff of 6 attorneys including career development, conflict resolution, litigation, claim settlement and working with team. Contract & legal document interpretation. Senior Vice President of Fortune 500 Corporation.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
As a gay person, II am a member of an underrepresented group.. I have been actively engaged as a speaker and advocate for the full inclusion of LGBTQ community in the life of the ELCA. Advocated for marriage equality with legislators in New Jersey.

Reference: The Rev Dr Janet Corpus **Phone:**2152423241 **E-mail:**jmcorpus@verizon.net
Relationship: Pastor and friend

11/12/2025 9:34:52 PM

Other committee or board

Trinity Lutheran Seminary

The Rev. Anthony Laurence Dunbar Scott [Form Received Following Meeting]

Synod of Congregation: Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA (7F)
Congregation: Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation (ID: 00726) - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Birthdate: 07/22/1988 **Gender:** Man
Primary Language: English **Ethnicity:** Black/African American/African Descent
Willing to serve: Yes

Preferred Mailing Address: (Home)
1752 Hood Lane
Maple Glen , PA 19002 United States
Telephone:
Preferred: 3143262275 (Cell)
Email:
Pastor@reformationphilly.org (Work)
Educational Institutions:
Wartburg College (2007-2010): Bachelor Of Arts
Eden Theological Seminary (2010-2013): Master Of Divinity
United Theological Seminary (2017-2020): Doctor Of Ministry
Employment:
Pastor (05/30/2023 - Present)
Reformation Lutheran Church
Philadelphia , PA
Previous Employment:
Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ (2021-2022)
First Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ (2020-2021)
Congregational, Synod, or Churchwide Service Activities:
SEPA Synod - Consultation Committee (2024-2025)

What are the gifts, skills, experiences and areas of expertise that you would bring to this work?
As a Pastor, Middle Judicatory Executive, and hospital chaplain, I routinely encountered complex situations , issues of trust, and other dynamics which required thoughtful consideration and grace. If elected to this role, I commit to bring my skills to the Board of Advisors of Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

If you identify as a member of one of the historically underrepresented groups, we invite you to share how you might offer a useful perspective to leadership in this church.
My perspective as an individual is valid and a gift.

Reference: Tracey Beasley **Phone:**6107646398 **E-mail:**traceyabeasley@gmail.com
Relationship: Congregant

12/12/2025 1:07:40 PM