



July 28 – August 2
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministry

Mandate

The Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministry was mandated by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly and appointed by the Church Council in response to memorials sent from eight synods. The assembly took the following action:

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.04.26]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Southwest California Synod, South Dakota Synod, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, La Crosse Area Synod, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, Northwestern Ohio Synod, and Lower Susquehanna Synod concerning specialized ministries and on-leave-from-call status;

To direct the Church Council to direct the appropriate churchwide unit to initiate a review process of the “Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” and the constitutional provisions and policies and procedures as they relate to interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish-based, and innovative calls, as well as on-leave-from-call status, protocols for removal from the rosters, and communication protocols;

To direct the Church Council to ensure that this review process include in its scope of inquiry, but not be limited to: the time limits given for on-leave-from-call, steps for requesting a roster status, and a process by which an action or lack of recommendation from a bishop may be appealed, including the possibility of an appeal in a judicatory other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster;

To require that those involved in the review process include a diverse group representing both the roster of Word and Sacrament and the roster of Word and Service who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g., interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, mission developers, etc.), and those currently or recently on leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g., between calls, family, disability, study, healing from abuse, etc.);

To urge bishops and synod councils to use sparingly any action by which a minister is removed from the roster for non-disciplinary reasons, unless the minister requests removal, until this review is complete, especially for those serving contract calls, as supply preachers, and in other ELCA ministries that don't qualify as a call; and

To require that the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization prepare a report and recommendations for consideration by the fall 2024 meeting of the ELCA Church Council.

In addition, the Church Council asked the task force to consider the work of other task forces and to respond to other resolutions that had come from synods:

- “Guidance on Retired or Retiring Ministers for the Roster of the ELCA” [CC22.11.34.ee.]
- “Extending Pastoral Counseling through Private Practice” [CC22.11.34.gg.]
- “Providing for Ordination of Candidates serving as Interim Pastors” [CC23.11.20cc]
- “Revisions to Roster Manual” regarding roster appeals [EC23.11.53c1]
- “Extending OLFC to Six Years” [EC22.03.10c]; and
- Recommendations regarding the current discipline process shared by the Task Force on the ELCA Discipline Process for Rostered Ministers of Color [CC23.04.05]

Process

The task force met a number of times to identify issues and develop strategies for gathering information from rostered ministers and from the Conference of Bishops. Members held a series of listening sessions across this church for rostered ministers who are on leave from call (OLFC) or who have recently been OLFC. Surveys of the Conference of Bishops (COB) were conducted to solicit bishops’ opinions on questions related to OLFC, interim ministry, and the process for exceptions to the three-year congregational service bylaw relating to ministers of Word and Sacrament seeking calls to specialized ministry either for ordination to a first call or within their first three years

of service. In addition, members reviewed the policies of full communion partners, including The Episcopal Church (USA), the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Methodist Church. The task force also engaged in discussion of this church's understanding of call and of ordination.

The following sections detail the task force's analysis of the issues and its recommendations for revisions to governing documents and roster policies related to the areas of concern raised by the Churchwide Assembly and the various synod resolutions referred to the task force.

On-Leave-From-Call Status

The Churchwide Assembly action identified three primary areas of concern related to on-leave-from-call status:

- Time limits for OLFC
- Steps for requesting a roster status
- Possibility of an appeal of the synod bishop's status recommendation

Under existing policy, regular OLFC is limited to three years, while family leave and study leave are both for six years. OLFC must be requested in writing within 45 days of ending a call, and the synod bishop must make a recommendation to the Synod Council as to whether leave should be granted. A positive recommendation from the bishop allows the Synod Council to vote on granting the status. A failure to endorse the request, however, immediately terminates the process and results in the removal of the rostered minister from the roster. Rostered ministers have complained that this process is open to potential abuse by a bishop, who could use an unappealable negative recommendation to remove a minister with whom the bishop has a poor relationship, avoiding the formal disciplinary process.

Rostered ministers are required to seek annual renewal of their OLFC status from the Synod Council. Those whose leave is coming to an end can seek up to two years of extension, which must be requested by the synod bishop and Synod Council, recommended by the COB's Roster Committee, and approved by the Conference of Bishops. These extensions are quite regularly granted. Second, and even third, extensions can be granted by the COB, effectively expanding the time limit to as much as 12 years for those with family or study leave and 9 years for those with regular OLFC.

Task force members were struck by the consistency of the discussions across the listening sessions. It was clear that there is much anxiety around the process of OLFC. While the process is outlined in the roster manual, it often is unfamiliar to rostered ministers. In addition, synods have their own paperwork and process steps for requesting OLFC status. Rostered ministers report that they frequently are confused by or are ignorant of the process and that they have not received clear instruction from the synod regarding expectations for requesting OLFC status, the time limits, and what is expected for annual renewal of the leave or for requesting an extension. Many rostered ministers report a sense of isolation or of "being forgotten." Many feel frustrated that they are actively engaged in ministry such as supply preaching or serving as an interim, yet that ministry is not officially recognized as a call. Even the term "on leave from call" is a source of pain for some, because they continue to understand themselves as called to ministry—they simply don't have a recognized outlet for exercising their continuing call to ministry.

There was almost unanimous consensus among those interviewed that the three-year limit for regular OLFC is too short, and that, as the end of the leave approaches, anxiety rises and stress mounts because of the threat of being removed from the roster.

Interviewees discussed the fact that this church and its needs for rostered ministry are changing. Increasingly, congregations cannot afford a pastor at the minimum 15 average hours per week threshold that is the current criterion for ministry to qualify as a call. (This threshold was established because of Portico requirements for sponsorship.) Ministers wondered why their ten hours a week of supply preaching or other ministry with one congregation or multiple congregations as a transition or bridge pastor could not count as a call.

Rostered couples are especially challenged by the time limits, with one spouse often unable to find a call near their spouse's call. Those in the listening sessions wondered how the ELCA could be more adaptive with the language of "call," especially in interim situations. Some synods issue calls for most interims, while others do not issue interim calls at all, and still others issue calls only for interims that have significant time commitments. The result is that for some ministers who are OLFC but serving as interim pastors the OLFC "clock" doesn't stop ticking, while for others an interim call "resets the clock" and they can start over with a full term of leave again. This can happen even within the same synod, depending on the bishop's or Synod Council's decisions about which interims qualify for a letter of call.

Finally, there is definitely a perceived stigma among rostered leaders about being OLFC. The feeling most often expressed is that the minister is seen as having “failed” in a call and had to leave, which adds to the grief of leaving the call.

In surveying synod bishops, the task force learned that the refusal to make a positive recommendation to grant leave is exercised less frequently than popular perception would suggest. Only three bishops reported using that authority even once a year. A majority of bishops favored increasing time limits. A majority also supported the idea of maintaining some time limits for OLFC but establishing an alternative roster status for those ministers who continue to provide ministry such as supply and contract ministry that does not currently qualify for a letter of call, and a similar majority supported some sort of inactive roster status for those who, for various reasons, need to step away from all active ministry for a time.

Bishops having sole authority to deny on-leave or retired status without review was seen as problematic. A majority of bishops supported establishment of a policy that all requests for a change in roster status would automatically go before the Synod Council with the bishop’s recommendation as a point of information, rather than being determinative. There was support for establishment of a policy that, if the bishop’s recommendation is to deny the roster status request, the rostered minister would have to be informed of that recommendation and be given a guaranteed opportunity to present the minister’s position. There was support for establishing a process that would allow for the minister to appeal the bishop’s recommendation at the synod level.

Recommendations for On-Leave-From-Call Status:

- Establish in the roster manual a protocol for roster status requests that includes the following:
 - All requests for on-leave status will be voted on by the Synod Council.
 - The synod bishop will make a recommendation to the Synod Council regarding approval or denial of the status request.
 - The bishop will communicate the recommendation to the rostered minister prior to the Synod Council vote.
 - If the recommendation is for denial of status, the rostered minister will be granted an opportunity to address the Synod Council or a designated committee.
 - After hearing from the 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 leave, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.
- The regular on-leave category would be intended primarily for those rostered ministers who for various reasons are choosing to step away from active ministry for a season. Others may be granted a Synod Council letter of call to supply ministry.
- Increase the time limit for regular leave to six years to match the limits for family and study leave, still with the possibility of being granted extensions to that leave. Rostered ministers already on leave would have their current leave extended to the new limit.
- Establish in the ELCA Constitution the possibility of a Synod Council letter of call to supply ministry that would be a one-year term call, renewable annually, for those ministers of Word and Sacrament who do not have a settled call but who remain active in ministry. This type of call would not be eligible as a first call for those candidates seeking ordination.
- Establish policies and standards in the roster manual for those who have a letter of call to supply ministry that includes minimum thresholds for service and a requirement of annual reporting to the synod bishop of the minister’s exercise of the call, with that report to be incorporated into the regular annual report form required of all rostered ministers.
- Encourage synods to consider whether ministers of Word and Service without a regular call may nonetheless actually be currently engaged in an employment that could, in fact, qualify as a call.
- Include in the ELCA bylaws that a rostered minister who 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, may be granted permission to hold membership in a congregation of one of our full communion partners. (This possibility has already been granted to those rostered ministers with retired or disability status.)

- Change the title from “on leave from call” to simply “on leave” to stress that the rostered minister is temporarily on voluntary leave, but to avoid suggesting that the Spirit’s call to ministry has been withdrawn.

(See Appendix for proposed changes to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA and certain of the proposed changes to the roster manual. Additional changes to roster manual policy will be drafted following action by the Churchwide Assembly.)

Interim Ministry

As detailed above, the task force learned that calls to interim ministry are handled very differently from synod to synod, which can lead to inequity. The task force believes that issuance of a synod letter of call to interim ministry should be the norm in most situations, while still leaving discretion to the synod bishop and Synod Council to vary from that norm if there are circumstances that call for it, such as a very short-term interim that is better addressed by a supply pastor.

Synods also have asked that ministers of Word and Service be given the possibility of a Synod Council letter of call to serve as an interim deacon in a congregation. It should be stressed that this is not to be understood as granting sacramental authority to a deacon to serve as an interim pastor. However, a deacon could receive a synod call to serve as an interim congregation deacon and the synod bishop could separately, under the established policies, authorize that deacon to also serve as a synod-authorized minister (SAM).

Recommendations for Interim Ministry:

- Establish in the bylaws that rostered ministers serving in an interim ministry shall normally serve under a letter of call. (The existing exception will be maintained that allows ministers with retired status to be appointed to serve an interim without a letter of call.)
- Add “interim congregation deacon” to the Table of Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service in the ELCA Constitution.

Because of the often complicated dynamics of congregations in transition and the possibility that an interim may last only for a short time, the task force does not recommend allowing for ordination of candidates to serve in interim ministry calls. However, it does recommend that exceptions continue to be considered for rostered ministers who have served a portion of their initial three years in a congregation and who have demonstrated the gifts and maturity to navigate interim ministry.

- Revise language in the roster manual to clarify that exceptions for interim ministry are allowable with approval of the Conference of Bishops by adding language on p. 24: “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 unless an exception is granted by the Conference of Bishops.”

Retired Roster Status

This task force was asked by the Church Council to incorporate into its work the previous work of a task force that was created to look at roster manual policies regarding the granting of retired roster status, triennial review of those with retired roster status, and revocation of retired status.

Many of the issues laid out above concerning the granting of OLFC status are similar to those that exist for the retired status. The task force believes that these requests should follow the same protocol as requests for OLFC, with the rostered minister being granted opportunity to present a position in the case of a recommendation for denial or revocation of status.

Recommendations for Retired Roster Status:

- Establish policies in the roster manual that require the following: *(See Appendix.)*
 - All requests for granting or revocation of retired status will be voted on by the Synod Council.
 - The synod bishop will make a recommendation to the Synod Council regarding approval or denial of the status request.
 - The bishop will communicate the recommendation to the rostered minister prior to the Synod Council vote.
 - If the recommendation is for denial of status, the rostered minister will be granted an opportunity to address a designated committee.

- After hearing from the 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 retired status, the rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.
- Provide in the roster manual clear guidelines for synod councils to use in the review of retired status currently mandated at least triennially.

Average Time Requirements for Calls

Current policy requires that all calls must require an average minimum of 15 hours per week. As described above, however, an increasing number of ministry situations do not require (or cannot afford) that many hours of service.

The task force believes that it would be wise to eliminate average time requirements for non-stipendiary and supply ministry calls and establish policies to set minimum accountability standards for those calls, and to reduce the requirement for a regular letter of call to 10 hours average minimum per week. Rostered ministers who are working fewer than 15 hours per week would be advised that their call does not qualify for Portico benefits. The churchwide organization would work with Portico to create a mechanism for a sponsoring entity to report whether a call meets Portico's threshold for sponsorship.

Recommendations for Average Time Requirements for Calls:

- Eliminate average time requirements for non-stipendiary and supply ministry calls and establish policies in the roster manual for minimum accountability standards.
- Reduce the average time requirement for regular calls to 10 hours per week.

Specialized Ministry

As this church increasingly seeks means of opening itself to new forms of ministry, new understandings of worshiping communities, and innovative means of serving the neighbor, the need for trained leadership for these ministries presents itself more and more frequently. One response has been the lifting up of the roster of Word and Service, which at its core is focused on specialized ministry to this church and to the neighbor and world in all its many forms.

For ministers of Word and Sacrament, however, the questions are more complex, primarily for those candidates and first-call pastors who are seeking synod calls for ministry outside of the congregation. Bylaw 7.41.02. describes a key component of this church's understanding of the ministry of Word and Sacrament:

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.

At the heart of this discussion are the issues of how we are to understand calling to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. It may be that some of these ministries are better served by ministers of Word and Service or by laypersons. Also to be considered is the conviction strongly held by many that three years of pastoral formation in a congregation is a great benefit to this church. Others hold an equally strong conviction that the three-year bylaw restrains the movement of the Spirit into new ministries.

The exception process is intended to allow for openness to different forms of ministry for Word and Sacrament ministers. The current process requires the following: 1) a letter of request from the synod bishop; 2) a letter of request from the candidate; 3) a vote from the Synod Council indicating willingness to issue a letter of call if the exception is granted; 4) a letter from the entity the candidate hopes to serve; and 5) a letter of support from the candidate's Candidacy Committee. That documentation is presented to the Roster Committee, which then makes a recommendation to the COB, which at its twice-yearly meetings votes to grant or deny the exception. (The Roster Committee also has authority to grant exceptions for urgent requests during the interim between COB meetings.)

There is a perception among many rostered ministers and candidates that the process for an exception is cumbersome and slow, and that requests are frequently denied. However, a review of the past 10 years of exception

requests reveals that, of 171 requests, all but five were approved by the COB. The reason most often cited for debate over a given request was the question of whether a particular ministry required sacramental responsibilities. What those numbers do not reflect, however, would be those situations where the synod bishop may have chosen not to request an exception to the bylaw, perhaps because the bishop believed that the proposed call did not entail any sacramental responsibilities.

In response to concerns about the need for congregational pastoral formation and participation in sacramental responsibilities, the Roster Committee now regularly requires that ministers seeking exceptions commit to ongoing formation by serving for a limited number of hours per month for a limited term in a local congregation, concurrent with their service in the non-congregational call.

There are also categories of call that do not require a vote by the full COB. The Roster Committee is empowered to grant exceptions for federal chaplaincy and global service, and mission development calls are considered to fulfill the congregational service requirement.

The task force believes that there is a middle path that both tends to concerns about pastoral formation and the nature of call to Word and Sacrament ministry and recognizes the need for openness to new forms of ministry and the work of the Spirit.

Recommendations for Specialized Ministry:

- Expand the number of designated categories of call that do not require an exception request to include the following:
 - Federal chaplaincy
 - Global service (other than YAGM-related)
 - Hospital/hospice chaplaincy
 - Campus ministry
 - Mission development
 - For the purposes of exceptions, “mission development” is to be understood as a call to Word and Sacrament ministry with a Synod-Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC). Calls to other developing ministries, such as Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministries (SAOMs), would still be 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.
- Establish policies in the roster manual that require the following:
 - All requests for exceptions to the three-year bylaw must come to the Conference of Bishops from the Synod Council, rather than the council simply affirming its willingness to extend a letter of call.
 - 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 rostered minister would be granted the same opportunity to be heard as described above before a final decision is made.
- Standardize roster manual policies concerning the expectation that all ministers of Word and Sacrament who receive exceptions to the three-year bylaw will provide concurrent, time-limited service in a local congregation in order to receive ongoing pastoral congregational formation.
- Encourage more frequent meetings of the Roster Committee to consider requests for exceptions in order to speed the exception process for those requests that require urgency.

The task force is not prepared at this time to make recommendations regarding letters of call for pastoral counseling in private practice, which is an area of ministry that raises unique questions of liability for the synods.

Conclusion

The Task Force on On-Leave-from-Call and Specialized Ministry is grateful for the opportunity to meet together and to engage rostered ministers from across this church in envisioning faithful, just, and equitable policies that will also serve the needs of the gospel in the many and varied contexts in which our rostered ministers serve. We

have heard the voices of ministers deeply pained by their experiences in those times of waiting for a new call, as well as the voices of those who believe that our current policies need to change in those places where they may hinder the work and call of the Spirit. Our prayer as a group is that the recommendations we make might tend to the needs of our rostered ministers and that they might offer good order in a time of change, while remaining open to the new thing to which the Spirit is calling this church.

Members of the Task Force:

Mr. Philip Allen
Ms. Yvonne Curtis
Bishop Paul Erickson
Ms. Julie Grindle
Bishop Constanze Hagmaier
Bishop Kurt Kusserow

Deacon Krista Lind
The Rev. Gabriel Marcano
The Rev. Keats Miles-Wallace
Deacon Karla Neumann Smiley
The Rev. Charles Pierson Shaw

APPENDIX

- 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, and who requests a temporary leave from active ministry, 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 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. ~~Normative Pattern Regular Leave: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, a~~ 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 ~~three~~ six 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~~ 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 ~~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 Extensions to 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.
- 7.41.01. 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.~~

7.41.03. **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.

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 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 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.

[RENUMBER OLD 7.41.03. through 7.41.09]

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
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
2.0	Synod ministry	
2.1	Bishop	Synod Assembly

INSERT: 1.7 Supply Pastor Synod Council

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

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	<u>Interim congregation deacon</u>	<u>Synod Council</u>

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, and who requests a temporary leave from active ministry, 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 Sacrament is a member 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.

- Normative Pattern Regular Leave: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synod bishop, a 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 ~~three~~ six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.
- 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~~ 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.
- 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~~ Extensions of 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.
- 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.

SELECTED PROPOSED ROSTER MANUAL CHANGES

Page 31, under “Definition and criteria for on leave from call status”

(See also page 66, items 4 and 5 for Ministers of Word and Service—parallel changes to be made there)

Proposed language:

- 4) ~~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). 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.

Page 36, under “Policy and procedures related to retired status”

(See also page 71 for ministers of Word and Service—parallel changes to be made there)

- c. The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Sacrament [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, 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 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.