



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

By finding your way to this site we hope you are ready to dream gospel-sized dreams of ministry in Jesus' name where the gifts of God's people are unleashed for the sake of the world.

In 2016, the Churchwide Assembly established a new Roster of Ministers of Word and Service formed by combining three previously existing lay rosters: Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses, and Diaconal Ministers. The title given to the members of this new roster is deacon.

Speaking before the churchwide assembly Bishop Bill Gajkfen, a member of the Word and Service Task Force, spoke of the importance of this change:

...this is not just a technical "fix." This is an "adaptive" change. It's rooted in what we believe and think about who we are and how we live and work together for the sake of God's mission in the world. It's about how we are equipped and called to live and serve together as God's cross-marked Spirit-sealed believers, bearers and "embodiers" of good news, the best news, in a torn, tumultuous and terrified world. This is about Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the life of the world.

A discernment group has been asked to make a recommendation to the ELCA Church Council about the appropriate "entrance rite" – ordination or consecration – to welcome new deacons onto the roster of public ministry of the church so that a recommendation can be forwarded to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

We enter this process believing that ministers of word and service are a positive force within the life of this church. This new unified roster has the potential to be a catalyst both for congregational vitality, a major emphasis adopted by the ELCA, and for thinking about leadership in new and creative ways. You are being invited into the conversation about this roster, its entrance rite, and how those called to this ministry might more fully serve within this church.

Issues requiring thoughtful consideration include at least some of the following:

- The mission of the church – how will this new roster affect our life and ministry in our worshiping communities, our institutions, our global and ecumenical partners, and our witness in the world?
- Mutuality, acceptance and equity – how can we honor the distinctiveness of the gifts and calling of those on this new roster?
- Tradition and past churchwide discussions – how can we be attentive to our historical understandings of a single order of ministry as we look toward the future needs of the church.

The following papers have been presented to the Entrance Rite Discernment Group to inform its work, and we are sharing these papers to invite you into the conversation:

- ["A liturgical perspective on the question of the ordination of deacons in the ELCA: Some theses and questions"](#) by Thomas H. Schattauer.
- ["Baptism and vocation"](#) by Norma Cook Everist.



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- [“Diaconal ministry: The entrance rite question Reflections from a consideration of symbolic meaning and ritual practice”](#) by Gordon W. Lathrop.
- [“Ecumenical and global perspectives on the diaconate”](#) by E. Louise Williams.
- [“Initiatory rituals for public ministry”](#) by Mark Oldenburg.

As you read, know that the discernment group would appreciate your feedback to the following questions:

- What are some of your responses and reflections to the issues raised in these papers?
- Based on your understanding, what entrance rite do you think would be appropriate for ministers of word and service, and why? What effect do you think this will have on the ELCA?
- Although, these papers do not address this directly, what symbol(s) would be most appropriate to represent the work of ministers of word and service?

Here is a [link](#) to the feedback document. We invite you to complete it and email to the following address: Krista.M.Anderson@elca.org

At its heart, all of this is about the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. Thanks for entering into this conversation.

The Word and Service Entrance Rite Discernment Group

The Rev. Robert Driesen and Bishop Mark Narum, co-chairs

Sister Elizabeth Colver

Bishop James Dunlop

Cynthia Gustavson (Church Council representative)

The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans

Deacon Dr. Lake Lambert

Dr. John Litke

Dr. Susan McArver

Deacon Louise Williams

ELCA churchwide organization staff

Deacon Krista Anderson, program director, support of rostered leaders,
candidacy leadership manager – Region 3

The Rev. Wm. Chris Boerger, secretary

The Rev. Kevin L. Strickland, assistant to the presiding bishop/executive for Worship

The Rev. Dr. Gregory Villalon, director, ELCA Leadership for Mission/Candidacy