



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

**ATTENTION:**

- Bishop-elect
- Installation Planning Committee
- Worship Planners

## LAYING ON HANDS

When installing a bishop, the laying on of hands with prayers for the Holy Spirit is a visible reminder of the newly elected bishop's calling, which publicly marks the continuity between this bishop's particular call and the ministry of oversight in the whole church throughout the ages.

### Who participates

At least three bishops in historic succession are to be included in the laying on of hands. These bishops may be from this church or from churches in a relationship of full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One of these bishops in historic succession is normally a bishop of The Episcopal Church.

In addition to bishops in historic succession, other ELCA bishops, as well as judicatory leaders from churches with which the ELCA is in full communion, may participate. Bishops of the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation, especially where a companion synod relationship exists, are an especially important sign of partnership. Be clear with all who are invited to participate regarding when and how this will happen.

### How it happens

Because this action is integral to the service of installation, the highest priority should be placed on visibility. It is tempting to "expand the circle" and include more than the participants listed above. This is likely to lead to confusion about how or why some were invited to participate and others were not, while creating a visual barrier between the bishop-elect and the assembly.

Participants in the laying on of hands should be standing near the bishop-elect during the rite of installation (in a semi-circle that is open to the rest of the assembly). As the presiding bishop lays hands on the bishop-elect and prays for the Holy Spirit, the other participants will join in laying hands on the bishop-elect. Alternately, all may lay on hands in silence, either one at a time or simultaneously, followed by the prayer spoken by the presiding bishop as she/he alone lays on hands. In this instance, other bishops could easily move to a position that indicates their participation but does not obscure visibility. A note in the worship folder may encourage members of the assembly to extend their hands in the direction of the bishop who is being installed as the presiding bishop prays on behalf of the gathered assembly and the whole church.

The bishop-elect should consult with the presiding bishop when considering involving people other than those listed above in the laying on of hands prior to the day of the service.