



Installation



of a BISHOP

CONSIDERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Updated March, 2021

During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many considerations for how the installation of a synod bishop may be carried out. This document serves as an addendum to the “Planning the Installation of a Synod Bishop” packet, offering general guidance for installations during these unusual times. The full packet is available on at [ELCA.org/resources/synods](https://www.elca.org/resources/synods) (select the "Bishop Installation" tab). Appropriate pages from the packet are linked directly below.

This guidance, developed during the first months of the pandemic, outlines certain minimum requirements that must occur as part of the planning process and in the installation itself. Many local decisions will be contextual and may change as the planning process unfolds. As vaccine rates increase and we begin to move out of severely limited gatherings, **some of the restrictive measures below may not be necessary. They are included here for reference should there be a need to limit physical gatherings once again.** Churchwide staff are available to consult throughout the process.

Timing of the Installation

The timing of the installation is mutually agreed between the synod and the Office of the Presiding Bishop. Note that there is no requirement that the installation must occur within a specified period of time following the election of a bishop or following the stated date on which the new bishop begins their term. Decisions about timing of installations shall be made in consultation with the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

Role of the Presiding Bishop

In particular situations, the presiding bishop may designate another bishop to preside at the installation. In these cases, it is still the responsibility of the Presiding Bishop and churchwide staff to oversee all aspects of the installation that have churchwide implications, especially the completion of the liturgical review process (See “[Liturgical Review](#)” document for more information).

Scope of the gathering

During times of physical distancing, we anticipate that most installations will occur as an online service. Ideally this would originate from a church building within the territory of the synod where the essential worship leaders will gather.

Holy Communion

In situations where the primary gathering will be online and the doors cannot be opened to the whole church, Holy Communion should not be celebrated. Instead, the Installation of a

Bishop may be set within a Service of the Word (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 210), following the sermon and hymn of the day, if sung. The Nicene Creed may be said preceding the order of installation. The authorized text for the Installation of a Bishop is included in the “Planning the Installation of a Synod Bishop” packet and available on the above website.

Minimum required participants in-person

The absolute minimum required participants at the installation of a bishop is four:

- The bishop being installed
- The presiding bishop (or designated bishop to preside at the installation)
- Two additional bishops to participate in laying on hands. One of these additional bishops shall be a bishop of The Episcopal Church.

It is likely that there will be additional people present, which might include other worship leaders, musicians, and those supporting the technology for the online service. Having a few additional people physically present offers voices to speak on behalf of the Church during the “Address and Questions.”

Contextual decisions, as well as guidance from state and local health officials, will influence how many participants in leadership roles physically may be present at the installation. Some roles could be led remotely using video technology, including:

- Preacher
- Presenter (typically the secretary of the synod)
- Readers
- Intercessors
- Musicians

Physical distancing and other safety precautions

- All worship leaders must wear cloth face coverings except when in an active role during the service. Leaders should remain visibly physically distanced as much as possible throughout the service.
- Masks may be removed for spoken roles provided that adequate (if not greater) distance is maintained between the speaker and other participants.
- The presiding minister should use a music stand or other portable stand to hold the leader book rather than having an assisting minister hold the book.
- Additional helpful information on safety precautions and protocols may be found in the document “[Resuming Care-filled Worship and Sacramental Life During a Pandemic](#)” available from ELCA.org/PublicHealth. *Note:* This guidance is regularly reviewed by an ecumenical consultation and an update is anticipated in May 2021.

Laying on hands

This is one time when physical distancing becomes impossible. Special precautions must be taken so that only one person and the bishop being installed are in contact at any given time.

- Each bishop laying on hands disinfects their hands in full view of the camera immediately prior to the gesture and again after completing the laying on of hands. Cloth face coverings must be worn throughout.
- After the presiding minister speaks the initial words of the Thanksgiving, the two additional bishops approach the bishop being installed, one at a time, and lay on hands in silent prayer.

- Finally, the presiding minister approaches the bishop being installed and lays both hands in silence, then continues with the prayer. It is recommended that the presiding minister wear a mask during this spoken prayer.

(See “[Laying on hands](#)” document for more information).

Giving of a Cross and other symbols

The pectoral cross, as well as any additional symbols to be presented during the installation, could be placed on a table near where the installation takes place. This would allow the presiding minister to retrieve these items directly from the table at the time of presentation.

Music

During a time when communal singing adds to the risks associated with in-person gatherings, careful considerations about music need to be made. A solo voice of one standing at some distance from the others in the room may sing on behalf of the assembly. Additional music may be provided remotely.

The hymn of invocation might also be sung by a solo voice. Alternatively, the Prayer of the Day for Pentecost, Year B (ELW p. 36), may be spoken as an invocation of the Spirit before the Thanksgiving.

Future times of celebration

Synods may consider celebrating this new ministry at a time in the future when it is safe to gather in large groups and allow communal singing. This may be at a future synod assembly or other scheduled time. At that time, some of the festive elements that could not happen at the installation may occur, such as greetings from ecumenical partners, festive music, and wider engagement at a service of Holy Communion presided by the synod bishop. This may be followed by a festive reception to celebrate the ministry and mission of the synod.

For questions or to consult about the installation service and the liturgical review process, please contact:

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