

Committee on Appeals
Status Report Concerning Proposed Amendments
to
Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline
of Rostered Ministers, Congregations and Members of Congregations

October 28, 2020

Committee Members:

Mr. Emanuel Alves, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F)
The Rev. Paul J. Blom, Southwestern Texas Synod (4E)
Dr. Phyllis Chang, South Eastern Iowa Synod (5D)
The Rev. Fritz E. Fowler, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod(7F) (*Vice Chair*)
The Rev. Cheryl Meinschein Hausman, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E) (*Secretary*)
Ms. Lana Obie, Northwest Washington Synod (1B)
The Rev. Linda M. Pedersen, Southwestern Minnesota Synod (3F)
Deacon Erin A. Power, Rocky Mountain Synod (2E)
Mr. George Rahdert, Florida-Bahamas Synod (9E)
Mr. Murray G. Sagsveen Western ND (3A) (*Chair*)
The Rev. Chrysanne Timm, North/West Lower Michigan Synod (6B)
The Rev. Paul A. Wollner, North Carolina Synod (9B)

Committee's Activities During 2020:

The committee first met in January 2020 and elected its officers in February.

In March, the [Church Council adopted a motion](#) that included these provisions:

To repeal the document, Vision and Expectations, effective immediately and which should no longer be used in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for any purpose;

To affirm that Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline remains the document which describes the grounds for which officers, rostered ministers, congregations, and members of congregations may be subject to discipline according to the practice of this church; [...]

To request that the Domestic Mission unit and the Committee on Appeals engage in conversation with the Conference of Bishops to seek further information and guidance regarding the needs of bishops to apply discipline as described in Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline, reporting that information to the Executive Committee of the Church Council at its October 2020 meeting.

The Committee has responded by doing the following:

- Facilitated listening sessions
 - Townhall sessions open to this whole church – 4 sessions in June
 - Regional listening sessions with bishops – 9 regions/9 sessions during May and June
 - Listening sessions with representatives of constituency groups (*ongoing*), including conversations concluded with Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM)/Proclaim, the African Descent Lutheran Association, the Latino Association/Asociación Ministerios Latinos, and the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice
- Conducted an online survey – [final report](#) dated August 2020
- Reviewed relevant ELCA social statements and messages
- Began the drafting process (*ongoing*)

- Reported progress to:
 - Conference of Bishops – October 2
 - Executive Committee, Church Council – October 15
- Established a webpage for [Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline](#)

Work in Progress and Future Plans:

Primary topics to be addressed in the revision that were identified by the committee in the course of information-gathering as well as in feedback from the Conference of Bishops meeting include: social media, intellectual property and plagiarism, family relationships, sexual matters, addictions and substance misuse, fiscal responsibilities, membership in certain organizations, previous felony convictions, privileged communications, confidentiality requirements for ministers of Word and Service, willful disregard of the constitutions of this church, criminal conduct by rostered ministers, bullying, racism, hate speech and membership in groups that promote hatred, sexual harassment, abusive behaviors toward rostered ministers by congregation members, and boundaries for former pastors of a congregation.

The Committee on Appeals:

- has established writing teams;
- is meeting twice each month to draft separate sections of the document;
- plans to create a final draft to be submitted to:
 - Conference of Bishops for review in March 2021
 - Church Council for approval and possible adoption in April 2021.

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