

## I. Synodically Authorized Ministries

**7.31.09. Licensure and Synodically Authorized Ministry.** When need exists to render Word and Sacrament ministry for a congregation or ministry of this church where it is not possible to provide appropriate pastoral leadership, the synod bishop—acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council—may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer this ministry. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop; such service shall be rendered during its duration under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod’s pastor. Such an individual will be trained and licensed to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, remuneration, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synodical leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.

This synodically authorized ministry policy is intended to honor the God-given office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession). Synodically authorized ministry is intended to assist this church to respond pastorally and effectively to emerging opportunities in Christ’s mission where it is not possible to provide a minister of Word and Sacrament. Principle 40 and related sections in “The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament,” which was adopted “for guidance and practice” by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, also address this subject.

Synodically authorized ministry of Word and Sacrament is normally limited to a specific congregation or other identified ministry where a pastor is not available for an extended period of time. Individuals authorized for such ministry within a synod are not rostered by the ELCA (unless already serving on a roster of this church) but are authorized to provide a ministry only within a particular setting for a designated period of time.

### A. Identification of need

The synod identifies a congregation or other ministry where pastoral leadership is not available for an extended period of time and where synodically authorized ministry may be appropriate. Because of the relationship of such authorized lay ministry to those serving in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, pastors serving congregations within the area where this ministry need is located normally will be consulted concerning this determination.

When determining the need for a pastor in a congregation or other identified ministry where a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church is not available, synods will first consider the utilization of an ordained minister from a full communion partner church, under the guidelines related to the orderly exchange of ordained ministers.

### B. Invitation to service

Congregations and other ministries within each synod are expected to assist in making this ministry available and beneficial by commending to the bishop individuals who should be considered for possible service in synodically authorized ministry. Individuals who demonstrate potential for service as synodically authorized ministers are invited by the synod to enter a program of preparation.

Any individual who has resigned or been removed from rostered ministry in the ELCA in connection with alleged misconduct, or who has been denied continuance in candidacy by reason of misconduct allegations, is precluded from serving as a synodically authorized minister.

### C. Qualifications

A person invited to prepare for a synodically authorized ministry must be an active member of an ELCA congregation, preferably for at least one year. In addition, prior to preparing to serve in synodically authorized ministry, an individual must have:

1. been recommended by the individual’s pastor and Congregation Council;
2. met with and been interviewed by synod staff and/or the synod committee responsible for the synod’s program of preparation;
3. demonstrated the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synodically authorized ministry or provided satisfactory evidence of prior preparation toward the goals and standards of the program outlined in this policy;

4. submitted written responses to the questions on the candidacy Entrance Form; and
5. identified references within and outside the church for contact by the synod and authorized the synod to obtain an in-depth background check, as outlined in the Candidacy Manual.

#### **D. Synod committee for authorized ministry**

A committee may be appointed by the Synod Council to provide the synod bishop with recommendations concerning the authorization of and accountability for authorized ministries within the synod. This committee should either be a subcommittee of the synod's Candidacy Committee or be structured to work closely with the Candidacy Committee, even though the work of the two is distinct.

The Synod Council or, if appointed, the synod committee determines the educational program within the synod for individuals preparing for service in an authorized ministry; determines eligibility of individuals to enter this program of preparation; and advises the bishop on the suitability of an individual for authorization and service in a synodically authorized ministry.

#### **E. Program of preparation**

The synod defines the program of preparation for synodically authorized ministry consistent with this policy and with any guidelines developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, in consultation with an ELCA seminary. The program of preparation can be accomplished in a variety of ways including educational programs that utilize current rostered ministers within the synod, ELCA seminaries and continuing education centers, and other appropriate resources. Such programs shall prepare individuals to have knowledge and abilities in the following areas:

1. Bible;
2. Lutheran theology, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Confession of Faith and polity of the ELCA;
3. worship;
4. spiritual discernment and faith development;
5. leadership expectations and identity;
6. contextual understanding; and
7. pastoral skills including preaching, catechetics, worship leadership, visitation, pastoral care, and outreach.

#### **F. Authorization for service**

When the synod has determined that a specific need exists, and with the consent of the congregation to be served, an individual may be authorized for service within the synod by the synod bishop, in consultation with the Synod Council. The bishop will authorize for this ministry only those individuals who have been well prepared and who will serve under supervision. Completion of a program of preparation does not mean that authorization for service will follow. There is no guarantee of service within the synod. When authorized, such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities, and authorization shall be for a specific period of time not to exceed one year, unless terminated earlier.

Individuals who serve in synodically authorized ministry are to meet the following criteria:

1. evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
2. satisfactory participation in the synod program of preparation, including demonstration of appropriate ministry skills;
3. knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church; and
4. willingness to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of individuals serving in public ministry as described in "Vision and Expectations — Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

#### **G. Letter of authorization**

The bishop's authorization shall be evidenced by an appropriate letter describing the terms and conditions of the authorization. The description may limit the activities the person is authorized to perform.

#### **H. Supervision and accountability**

Accountability for synodically authorized ministry in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the Congregation Council. Accountability for a synodically authorized ministry in a non-congregational setting within a synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body of the entity that conducts that ministry, or if there is no such entity, the Synod Council. In all cases, a synodically authorized minister is to be under the direct supervision of a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop.

The supervising minister of Word and Sacrament shall report to the governing body and seek the advice and counsel of the bishop or designated synod staff in relation to the synodically authorized minister.

### **I. Candidacy for rostered ministry**

When, in the judgment of the authorizing bishop, a person whose service as a synodically authorized minister likely will be long-term in one ministry or in a succession of assigned ministries, that person normally shall enter the ELCA candidacy process for ordination and shall remain active in candidacy and theological preparation while serving in synodically authorized ministry.

It is preferable that a mission development is led by a pastor rather than a synodically authorized minister. When a synodically authorized minister is serving in that capacity, he or she normally shall have received a positive entrance decision for candidacy for ministry of Word and Sacrament before beginning that ministry and shall remain active in candidacy and theological preparation while serving in that mission development.

### **J. Renewal and revocation**

Renewal of authorization after one year may be given when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synod bishop at the request and with the consent of the congregation or other ministry being served, consultation with the supervising minister of Word and Sacrament, and a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the authorized minister.

Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop, who need not specify the reason.

### **K. Marriage services**

Where permitted by law, synodically authorized ministers may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation in which they are authorized to serve, with the concurrence of the congregation and the approval of the synod bishop.

### **L. Other matters**

Individuals may serve in a synodically authorized ministry only within the synod that has authorized that ministry. A synod may consider for authorization an individual trained and authorized by another synod, based on the individual's qualifications and ability to meet the new synod's criteria for authorized ministry.

Individuals authorized for such ministries are not to wear clerical stoles and should not wear clerical collars unless authorized by the synod bishop. The title "Pastor" is reserved for ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synodically authorized ministers.

Synodically authorized ministers are not to offer therapy or counseling as a part of their ministries but may provide appropriate pastoral care.

### **M. Licensure**

Synodically authorized ministry is not to be used to authorize an individual to provide for short-term, intermittent absences of a congregation's called pastor. However, there is sometimes a need to provide for the celebration of the sacrament in circumstances when neither an ELCA nor a full communion ordained minister is available. Such situations highlight a tension between a bishop's authority to provide for "appropriate pastoral leadership" (7.31.09.) and the limitation that such authorization is only to be used when the need for such leadership is "for an extended period of time" (*Use of the Means of Grace*, Principle 40). On rare occasions, this tension may require flexibility in interpreting "for an extended period of time" so that an individual is licensed by the synod bishop to provide Word and Sacrament ministry in congregations in a location or area where ordained leadership is chronically unavailable. Licensure under such circumstance could be for a term not to exceed one year and must be limited to a specific area. Such a licensed minister must be appropriately prepared and supervised to serve only at identified locations with the specific approval of the bishop during a transitional period while the synod seeks to make ordained ministers available to serve in that area. In such situations, and subject to such conditions, the bishop may license an individual to administer the sacraments.