

Vision and Expectations

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod equips leaders for mission and ministry by providing foundational theological education through its partnership with Trinity Lutheran Seminary, leadership development through sessions on various ministry applications, and spiritual formation through relationships with other students and mentors.

Upon successful completion of the ELMM process, individuals are recognized by the Bishop and Synod Assembly. We celebrate their commitment to spiritual growth and faith formation and their desire to share their gifts and live Godly lives.

Thus prepared and recognized, a person is eligible to serve as a Commissioned Leader in their congregation as deemed appropriate by their pastor and congregation council. No congregation is obligated to commission one who has completed the ELMM process.

Commissioned Leaders are co-workers in ministry with Ministers of Word and Sacrament (ordained pastors) and Ministers of Word and Service (associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, deaconesses.) They understand constitutional requirements for ordained ministers to preach the word and administer the sacraments, and synodical bishops' responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Commissioned Leaders support their pastors and help their congregations understand that as the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we are church together.

Those who complete the ELMM process may serve on Synod committees at the invitation of the Bishop or the Bishop's staff and/or they may sense a call to serve in their community in some way. The Bishop is under no obligation to invite them to serve on Synod committees nor to recommend them for, or place them in, community service roles. This holds true regardless of whether they are commissioned by their congregation for specific areas of ministry.

Individuals who complete the ELMM process are not appointed by the bishop to serve in place of a congregation's pastor, nor are they authorized by the bishop to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. This holds true regardless of whether they are commissioned by their congregation for specific areas of ministry.

Board of Governors

The ELMM Board of Governors is comprised of the ELMM Administrator, Assistant to the Bishop (as assigned by the bishop), three non-rostered leaders who have completed the program, and three rostered leaders.

The Board meets two to three times per year to review and approve applicants for acceptance and participants for completion. They provide support and accountability to the administrator and oversight of the program's financial wellbeing.



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**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Equipping **L**eaders for **M**ission and **M**inistry

Vision

A community of scripturally-grounded, mission-driven, spirit-led disciples

Mission

To equip leaders for mission and ministry

Guiding Principles

- The church needs equipped leaders
- Scripturally-grounded disciples lead with confidence
- Mission-driven disciples energize the church
- Spirit-led disciples encourage and empower others

Objectives

- Discern baptismal vocation
- Experience spiritual growth and faith formation
- Develop foundational knowledge of the Scriptures from the Lutheran perspective
- Cultivate critical thinking skills
- Acquire confidence in public speaking

Curriculum

Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM) is a three-year process consisting of 12 retreats and 6 skill days. Trinity Lutheran Seminary professors are the primary instructors for the program. Leaders in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and full communion partner churches provide instruction on enrichment topics. Mentor Groups support the participants' progress, both in learning and faith formation.



The textbook, *Witnesses to the Word*, written by Trinity Lutheran Seminary faculty, provides an overview of the Bible and covers a wide variety of topics. The retreats are supplemented with sessions on church practices and other topics relevant to ministry in our congregations and communities.

Some instructors may ask participants to do advance reading and/or written assignments in preparation for a skill day or retreat. Participants might be invited to do reading and/or written assignments as a follow-up after a skill day or retreat.

Entrance

Prospective participants may contact the Administrator for an application. The application process includes three references, one of which must be from a participant's current pastor. Participants may begin the program at any time during the three-year curriculum.

Although it is anticipated that participants will use what they learn in various leadership roles in their home congregation and their communities, it is also valid for an individual to enter the process for their personal spiritual growth and faith formation.

Acceptance

Upon receipt of three favorable references, attendance at two events, and approval by the ELMM Board of Governors, the Program Administrator informs the participants of their acceptance into the program.

Completion

Consistent attendance is strongly encouraged to promote the participants' progress and growth. In rare cases the participant may extend their time beyond the three years in order to make up missed retreats and skill days.

Participants will provide written evaluations following each session to share with their pastor. Regular conversation between participants and their pastors and congregational councils is expected, involving the Governing Board as necessary.

These conversations should include reflections on what they have learned, their sense of calling to a particular area of ministry, exploration of opportunities to serve in these areas, etc. It is recommended these conversations occur at least twice a year, and that participants also share some of this information with their congregation council. As the participant approaches completion of the program, it is recommended that an action plan be created in consultation with their pastor.

Should a pastor or congregation council feel any concerns as a result of these conversations, the pastor, participant and administrator should discuss them as early as possible. The participants are expected to support the work of the pastor and enhance the ministries of their congregation, and/or find opportunities for ministry in their communities.

Participants will receive a certificate upon completion and be recognized by the Bishop and Synod Assembly. Although the certificate grants no particular privileges, leaders who complete the program may be commissioned by their home congregations for particular areas of ministry. Note that no congregation is under obligation to commission one who completes the program.

Costs

- Tuition: \$100 per year. This helps pay for programming and administrative costs.
- Retreats: Participants pay a standard fee for each Retreat as well as Room and Board expenses. Effective September 2015, retreat fees are \$50 (commuter—no lodging), \$95 (double occupancy), and \$140 (single occupancy).
- Skill Days: Fees range from \$25 to \$75.

Congregations are encouraged to consider contributing toward the cost of the program.

Tuition and housing scholarships are offered. Forms are available from the Administrator. Financial need should not prevent anyone from entering or completing the program.