



NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD  
THE REV. CRAIG ALAN SATTERLEE, PH.D., BISHOP

## **Synodically Authorized Ministry Implementation Plan**

- 1) “Synodically Authorized Ministry: Policy, Background, and Commentary” and “Implementation Plan” are reviewed and approved by the synod Executive Committee and received/endorsed by Synod Council.
- 2) “Synodically Authorized Ministry: Policy, Background, and Commentary” will be shared with Bishop William Gafkjen, chair of the Conference of Bishops, and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton for their information.
- 3) “Synodically Authorized Ministry: Policy, Background, and Commentary” and “Implementation Plan” will be shared with the Deans for their information and their possible assistance in communication.
- 4) Within 30 days of executive committee approval, synodically authorized ministers will be sent a letter inviting them to be re-authorized by (a) reviewing and agreeing to adhere to “Synodically Authorized Ministry: Policy, Background, and Commentary” (Included with the letter), (b) preparing and submitting a sermon manuscript on Luke 7:11-17, including a one sentence summary of the good news of the sermon, (c) completing the provided re-authorization form, and (d) attending a meeting with the bishop and reauthorization team.
- 5) Synodically authorized ministers will have 90 days to complete this work and schedule an appointment with the reauthorization team or they will be suspended until they do.
- 6) Two weeks after the letter is sent to synodically authorized ministers, synod congregation presidents and pastors will be sent a letter inviting them to be authorized to receive synodically authorized ministry by (a) reviewing and agreeing to adhere to “Synodically Authorized Ministry: Policy, Background, and Commentary” provided with a letter and (b) completing the covenant provided.
- 7) Congregations will have 90 days to complete and submit the covenant or they will be suspended from receiving synodically authorized ministry until they do.
- 8) The documents will be mailed in hard copy and then sent with a follow-up email.
- 9) The goal is to have the initial set of reauthorizations for synodically authorized ministers and authorizations of synod congregations under this policy documented and complete by May 1, 2018.



**North/West Lower Michigan Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

21 September 2017

The peace of Christ be with you!

Our synod and I are genuinely grateful for synodically authorized ministers, for their gifts, commitment to the gospel, and service to the church. The Synod Council joins me in honoring them for their service, even as we seek to bring clarity about synodically authorized ministry in our synod and in the ELCA, which, like so much else, has evolved and changed over the years.

Since questions persist and congregations, pastors, and synodically authorized ministers continue to operate according to previous synod policies and varying understandings of synodically authorize ministry, Synod Council adopted the following motion:

“Per ELCA guidelines, the Synod Council directs the Bishop to develop and conduct a process of reauthorization of all Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs). The process developed by the Bishop will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council prior to implementation” (SC15.12.07).

As part of the process of reauthorization and in partnership with the Executive Committee, Synod Council, the Deans, and others both in our synod and across our church, we formalized and clarified the process for requesting synodically authorized ministry in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. A copy of the policy statement is included with this letter. Part of reauthorization includes ensuring the congregations are aware of and abide by our current policy.

So that your congregation might avail itself of synodically authorized ministry, your leadership is expected to review this policy and agree to adhere to this statement; you are not expected to agree with it. This will ensure that we are all on the same page. After you review of the policy, please complete and submit the enclosed covenant to the synod office. Congregations have until February 1, 2018 to complete and submit the covenant or they will be suspended from receiving synodically authorized ministry until they do.

If you have questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your partnership.

In Christ,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop





NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD  
THE REV. CRAIG ALAN SATTERLEE, PH.D., BISHOP

## **Synodically Authorized Ministry Congregational Covenant**

**Name of Congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **We have read “Synodically Authorized Ministry Policy, Background,  
and Commentary” and commit to adhering to this policy statement.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Our congregation commits to compensating supply pastors and  
synodically authorized ministers according to synod guidelines.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Congregation President (or a delegate who is an officer of the  
Congregation Council)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Pastor**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**



NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD  
THE REV. CRAIG ALAN SATTERLEE, PH.D., BISHOP

## **Synodically Authorized Ministry Request for Synodically Authorized Ministry**

**Name of Congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **We request synodically authorized ministry.**

**Specific date(s) for authorization** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of worship service(s) (Sunday, midweek, funeral, retreat, etc)  
with time(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Our congregation has filed a synodically authorized ministry  
covenant.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Our congregation requests that the bishop assign a synodically  
authorized minister.**

**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Our congregation requests that the bishop authorize  
\_\_\_\_\_, who is a synodically authorized minister.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Our congregation contacted the following ELCA pastors and none of them is available to serve:

---

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_ Our congregation contacted the following pastors from full communion partner churches and none of them is available to serve:

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_ Our congregation prayerfully considered the following before making this request

\_\_\_\_\_ Adjusting the worship time or communion schedule to make it possible for a neighboring pastor to preside.

\_\_\_\_\_ A service without Holy Communion.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Congregational Council Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title (President, Secretary, etc)

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Authorization for a Synodically Authorized Minister To Preside at Holy Communion

NORTH WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD ELCA  
The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

To all God's beloved at name of congregation/location, who are called to be saints: Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our church teaches:

In witness that this sacrament [of Holy Communion] is a celebration of the Church, celebrating its unity, an ordained minister presides in the service of Holy Communion and proclaims the Great Thanksgiving. Where it is not possible for an extended period of time to provide ordained pastoral leadership, a synodical bishop may authorize a properly trained lay person to preside for a specific period of time and in a given location only"

*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* [Fifth Churchwide Assembly, 1997], 40; *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, 7.61.01

In "A Statement of Understanding Concerning Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament" (adopted by the Conference of Bishops as an agreed statement, March 2005), the Conference of Bishops understands "that synodically authorized ministries are intended to honor the God-given office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession) and this church's commitment to ordained ministry as the primary means for fulfilling this office."

Moreover, the Conference of Bishops "agree[s] that, in keeping with the policies of this church, synodically authorized ministry of Word and Sacrament is not intended for and should not be used to authorize an individual to provide for short-term, intermittent absences of a specific congregation's called pastor." At the same time, "we acknowledge that in some areas and at some times neither an ELCA nor a full communion partner church ordained minister is available to meet such a need." In these instances, "flexibility" may be required. As part of my commitment to the unity of our church, and in keeping with the promise I made when I was installed as bishop, "to carry out this ministry in harmony with the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," I honor these agreements by striving to exercise this "flexibility" judiciously.

**Having received assurance from your pastor or congregational leaders that neither an ELCA pastor nor an ordained minister from a full communion partner is available, I hereby authorize name, a certified synodically authorized minister of this synod, to preside at name of congregation/location on date, as an extension of my own ministry of Word and Sacrament as bishop.**

I am genuinely grateful to synodically authorized ministers for their gifts, commitment to the gospel, and service to the church. I expect that you will join me in honoring them for their ministry by providing compensation in accordance with synod guidelines.

In Christ,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

Date



**North/West Lower Michigan Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

21 September 2017

Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear

The peace of Christ be with you!

Our synod and I are genuinely grateful for your service as a synodically authorized minister, for your gifts, commitment to the gospel, and service to the church. The Synod Council joins me in honoring you for your service, even as we seek to bring clarity about synodically authorized ministry in our synod and in the ELCA, which, like so much else, has evolved and changed over the years.

Since questions persist and congregations, pastors, and synodically authorized ministers continue to operate according to previous synod policies and varying understandings of synodically authorized ministry, Synod Council adopted the following motion:

“Per ELCA guidelines, the Synod Council directs the Bishop to develop and conduct a process of reauthorization of all Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs). The process developed by the Bishop will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council prior to implementation”  
(SC15.12.07).

I write to invite you to participate in this process of reauthorization, which I hope will be simple and straightforward.

As part of the process of reauthorization and in partnership with Synod Council, the Deans, and others both in our synod and across our church, we formalized and clarify the process by which congregations request synodically authorized ministry in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, as well as the expectations of these congregations their pastors, and synodically authorized ministers. A copy of the policy statement is included with this letter. You are expected to review and agree to adhere to this statement.

You are to prepare and submit a sermon manuscript on Luke 7:11-17, including a one sentence summary of the good news of the sermon, to the synod office. I invite you to visit <http://craigasatterlee.com/preaching.html> and learn more about my views on preaching, which I taught at the seminary level for 18 years.

You are too complete and submit the enclosed re-authorization form. The form asks basic contact information and allows you to indicate conference(s) where you are willing to serve. Alternatively, the form allows you to officially indicate





**North/West Lower Michigan Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

that you are no longer available to serve in synodically authorized ministry. This is helpful in assessing the need for identifying and training synodically authorized ministers.

You are to attend a meeting with the bishop and reauthorization team, Pastors Rosanne Anderson and Dennis Smith. The purpose of the meeting is to answer questions and discuss your sermon. When we receive your materials, we will contact you to schedule the appointment.

You have until February 1, 2018 to complete this work and schedule an appointment with the reauthorization team or you will be suspended until you do.

If you have questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting with you. Once again, thank you for your service.

In Christ,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop







NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD  
THE REV. CRAIG ALAN SATTERLEE, PH.D., BISHOP

## **Synodically Authorized Ministry Re-Authorization of Synodically Authorized Minister**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregation Membership:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I request to be reauthorized to serve in synodically authorized ministry.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not desire to be reauthorized to serve in synodically authorized ministry.

**Complete the following to be considered for a re-authorization:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read ““Synodically Authorized Ministry: Policy, Background, and Commentary” and commit to adhering to this policy statement, including the expectations of synodically authorized ministers.

\_\_\_\_\_ I commit to accepting compensation according to synod guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have prepared and included a sermon manuscript on Luke 7:11-17.

In one sentence, the good news of the sermon is:

I am available to serve in these conferences (check all that apply):

\_\_\_\_ Bay      \_\_\_\_ Grand Rapids      \_\_\_\_ Stony Lake      \_\_\_\_ Traverse  
\_\_\_\_ Capital      \_\_\_\_ Kalamazoo      \_\_\_\_ Sunrise

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD  
THE REV. CRAIG ALAN SATTERLEE, PH.D., BISHOP

## **Synodically Authorized Ministry Policy, Background, and Commentary September 2017**

### POLICY

This policy clarifies and formalizes the process for requesting the bishop to authorize a synodically authorized minister or someone else who is not an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament to preside at Holy Communion because an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA or a full communion partner church is not available. This policy clarifies the congregation's called pastor may authorize someone who is not an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament to preach and lead a Service of the Word. It also provides expectations of pastors, synodically authorized ministers, and of the congregations requesting and receiving synodically authorized ministry. The policy statement is followed by background and commentary.<sup>1</sup>

#### Authorization to Preach and Lead Service of the Word

**Authorizing someone other than the called pastor of a congregation to preach is the prerogative of the called pastor, who bears responsibility for the preaching. In the absence of a called pastor, this responsibility is taken up by the bishop.** *The Use of the Means of Grace* directs,

While other persons may sometimes preach, the called pastor of a congregation has responsibility for this preaching, ordinarily preparing and delivering the sermon and overseeing all public ministry of the Word in the congregation. In congregations without a called pastor, the synodical bishop assumes this responsibility, often by providing an interim pastor.<sup>2</sup>

The called pastor of a congregation may entrust the pulpit to whomever she or he deems appropriate—a member of the congregation, a graduate of the Synod's Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM) or a predecessor program, a synodically authorized minister, or

---

<sup>1</sup>This document was prepared by Bishop Craig Alan Satterlee and reviewed by Bishop William Gafkjen of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod, who serves as chair of the Conference of Bishops. Bishop Gafkjen attests that it is a faithful exposition of our church's teaching and practice. This document was then reviewed and refined by the Deans, the Executive Committee of Synod Council, and Synod Council. Synod Council endorsed this policy on September 16, 2017 with the understanding that it supersedes all previous synod policy statements on synodically authorized ministry. The Executive Committee approved this policy as part of the process of reauthorization of synodically authorized ministers on September 26, 2017.

<sup>2</sup>*The Use of the Means of Grace*, Principle 9B. Cf. Introduction to Pulpit Supply List.

someone else. That person preaches on the pastor's authority and the pastor bears responsibility for the preaching. When a congregation is without a called pastor, the bishop (or the bishop's designee) assumes this responsibility and is free to make decisions about who may preach that are different from those made by the previously called pastor.

#### Authorization to Preside at Holy Communion

**Authorizing someone who is not an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA or a full communion partner to preside at Holy Communion is the responsibility of the synod bishop "under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod's pastor."**<sup>3</sup> Synodically authorized ministers serve as an extension of the bishop's own ministry. The bishop may authorize an individual to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion to fulfill the bishop's "authority to provide for 'appropriate pastoral leadership'" (7.31.09.). The bishop may only do this "in circumstances when neither an ELCA nor a full communion ordained minister is available."<sup>4</sup>

#### PROCESS FOR REQUESTING AUTHORIZATION TO PRESIDE AT HOLY COMMUNION

- Congregations desiring to avail themselves of synodically authorized ministry will file a covenant with the synod office.
  - The covenant attests that the congregation has reviewed this policy statement and is committed to adhere to it.
  - The covenant attests that the congregation will compensate in accordance with synod guidelines.<sup>5</sup>
  - This covenant is signed by both the congregation president (or a delegate who is an officer of the Congregation Council) and called pastor, since the bishop authorizes with the consent of the congregation.
  - A model of this covenant is provided in the appendix.
  - The covenant will be renewed annually to assist the bishop in assessing the need for synodically authorized ministry.
  - Congregations that do not file a covenant with the bishop's office are not eligible to receive synodically authorized ministry, i.e., to have a synodically authorized minister preside at Holy Communion.
- Requests for exceptions to our church's policies and understandings that an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament presides at Holy Communion should be directed in writing to Bishop Craig Alan Satterlee through the office manager.
- The request should come from an officer of the Congregation Council rather than the pastor to indicate the involvement of lay leadership in making this request. Under no circumstance should the request come from a synodically authorized minister. Requests from a synodically authorized minister that he or she be authorized to preside at Holy Communion will not be granted.

---

<sup>3</sup>ELCA Constitution, 7.31.09. Licensure and Synodically Authorized Ministry.

<sup>4</sup>*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, cited below as 4 under Summary. Cf. A Statement of Understanding Concerning Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament," Conference of Bishops, March 2005.

<sup>5</sup> [www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org) (see congregations/resources-for-congregations)

- Requests must be made as far ahead of time as possible—preferably one month in advance—with the understanding that authorization for someone other than an ordained pastor to preside will not necessarily be granted. In an emergency, call the synod office and leave a message for the bishop; the called staff will do its best to rearrange its schedule and provide coverage.
- The request should include the following information:
  - Name and location of the congregation, specific date(s) for the authorization, and the type of worship service(s) (with times) involved.
  - Request that the bishop authorize a synodically authorized minister and, if appropriate, the name of the synodically authorized minister for whom authorization is requested.
  - Acknowledgement of the following before making this request:
    - The congregation made a good faith effort to secure the services of ELCA pastors<sup>6</sup> and none are available.
    - The congregation made a good faith effort to secure the services of a pastor, active or retired, from one of our full communion partner denominations—Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, Reformed Church of America, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, Moravian Church—and none is available.
    - The congregation honestly considered adjusting the worship time or communion schedule to make it possible for a neighboring pastor to preside.
    - The congregation honestly considered a service without Holy Communion. There are many such liturgies available in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, LBW, and other resources. While it is important to celebrate and participate in Holy Communion as often as possible, a service without Holy Communion, especially in cases of one-time or sporadic need, including when a pastor is on vacation or otherwise away for a particular Sunday, provides opportunities for lay leadership in worship and cultivates a hunger for the Eucharist.

#### Expectations of Congregations, Pastors, and Synodically Authorized Ministers

- 1) Synodically authorized ministers must be active members of ELCA congregations in this synod.
- 2) Synodically authorized ministers will adhere to this statement of policy.
- 3) Synodically authorized ministers will be supervised by ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament appointed by the bishop.
- 4) Synodically authorized ministers will be reviewed annually by the bishop or his or her designee.
- 5) Synodically authorized ministers are available to serve a minimum of one synod conference and do not restrict themselves to a single congregation.

---

<sup>6</sup>Refer to the pulpit supply list [www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org) (see congregations/resources-for-congregations).  
 NWLMS SYNODICALLY AUTHORIZED MINISTRY: POLICY, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

- 6) Synodically authorized ministers are available to serve at Services of the Word where communion is not celebrated.
- 7) Synodically authorized ministers will accept remuneration and mileage according to synod compensation guidelines.
- 8) Synodically authorized ministers conduct themselves in ways that honor the God-given office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession).
  - a. The alb is the appropriate vestment worn by synodically authorized ministers. In keeping with the ELCA policy, synodically authorized ministers are not to wear clerical stoles or clerical collars.
  - b. The appropriate title for synodically authorized ministers is “synodically authorized minister.” The title “SAM,” though less cumbersome, is not clear. The title “Pastor” is reserved for ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synodically authorized ministers or by the congregation(s) they serve.
  - c. Synodically authorized ministers do not participate in liturgical actions that give the impression they are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament such as the laying on of hands at ordinations and installation.
- 9) Synodically authorized ministers do not preside at the Eucharist when an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament is or becomes available, even if authorized to do so.
- 10) Synodically authorized ministers do not preside at the Eucharist without a letter of authorization from the bishop that includes specific date(s) and location.
- 11) Synodically authorized ministers do not claim special status or authority in their home congregations based on this ministry. They acknowledge that, as is the case with pastoral ministry, presiding at the Eucharist in their home congregations is exceptional to maintain healthy boundaries.
- 12) Synodically authorized ministers are not to offer therapy or counseling as a part of their ministries but may provide appropriate pastoral care.
- 13) Synodically authorized ministers will participate in boundary training every three years. Anti-racism training is also encouraged.
- 14) In keeping with Luther’s explanation of the Eighth Commandment in the *Small Catechism*, synodically authorized ministers “speak well of and put the best construction on” the ELCA, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, the bishop, synod staff, and the congregation(s) they serve while carrying out this ministry.
- 15) In keeping with Matthew 18:15-20, synodically authorized ministers communicate concerns about decisions made regarding synodically authorized ministry directly to the bishop. A resignation from congregational or synodical commitments in protest of decisions made about synodically authorized ministry will be regarded as resignation from synodically authorized ministry.
- 16) As is the case with rostered ministers, the bishop is responsible for responding to violations of expectations of synodically authorized ministers. The bishop’s possible responses include conversation with the bishop or the bishop’s designee, a letter of admonition and correction from the bishop, suspension for a specified or an indefinite period, the determination that one’s service as a synodically authorized minister or a congregation’s privilege of benefiting from this ministry will not be renewed, or the

determination that one's service as a synodically authorized minister or a congregation's privilege of benefiting from this service will be revoked.

## BACKGROUND

In April 2015, Bishop Satterlee revised the Introduction to the Pulpit Supply List and included a section explaining his understanding of and approach to synodically authorized ministry.<sup>7</sup> Since questions persist and congregations, pastors, and synodically authorized ministers continue to operate according to previous synod policies and varying understandings of synodically authorized ministry, Synod Council adopted the following motion:

“Per ELCA guidelines, the Synod Council directs the Bishop to develop and conduct a process of reauthorization of all Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs). The process developed by the Bishop will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council prior to implementation.”<sup>8</sup>

As part of the process of reauthorization, Bishop Satterlee, in partnership with Synod Council, the Deans, and others both in our synod and across our church, developed this more detailed policy for synodically authorized ministry in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. This policy is based on several governing documents, including: *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*,<sup>9</sup> *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*,<sup>10</sup> *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*,<sup>11</sup> *Who Presides at the Eucharist? ELCA and Indiana-Kentucky Synod Policy and Practice*, *Authorization for a Synodically Authorized Minister to Preside at Holy Communion: North West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA*,<sup>12</sup> and the Introduction to the Pulpit Supply List previously cited.

### What is Synodically Authorized Ministry—in the ELCA and in Our Synod?

The ELCA Constitution provides the foundation of 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

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://mittensynod.server303.com/docs/PulpitSupplyList.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Motion SC15.12.07.

<sup>9</sup> [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Constitutions\\_Bylaws\\_and\\_Continuing\\_Resolutions\\_of\\_the\\_ELCA.pdf?\\_ga=2.158481018.1351862623.1503972364-179360665.1379300764](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Constitutions_Bylaws_and_Continuing_Resolutions_of_the_ELCA.pdf?_ga=2.158481018.1351862623.1503972364-179360665.1379300764)

<sup>10</sup> *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, as adopted March 31, 2017, by the ELCA Church Council.

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Roster\\_Mgmt.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Policies_Procedures_Roster_Mgmt.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Adopted for guidance and practice by the Fifth Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, August 19, 1997.

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/The\\_Use\\_Of\\_The\\_Means\\_Of\\_Grace.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/The_Use_Of_The_Means_Of_Grace.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Appendix.

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.<sup>13</sup>

The *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* provides the policy governing synodically authorized ministry.<sup>14</sup> This churchwide policy covers topics including identification of need, invitation to service, qualifications, program of preparation, authorization, supervision, accountability, renewal, and revocation. This statement includes a summary of the policy as it relates to the service of synodically authorized ministry (as opposed to identification of candidates and training) followed by a commentary.

### Summary

The following 12 statements are taken directly from The *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

- 1) Synodically authorized ministry policy is intended to honor the God-given office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession).
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) 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.

---

<sup>13</sup> ELCA Constitution, 7.31.09.Licensure and Synodically Authorized Ministry.

<sup>14</sup> *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, pp. 77ff.



- 5) 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.
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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.
- 9) 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.
- 10) 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.
- 11) 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.
- 12) Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop, who need not specify the reason.

## COMMENTARY

**(1) The ELCA has strong theological, ecumenical, and missional commitments that do not typically allow for people who are not ordained to preside at Holy Communion.** The ELCA defines an ordained ministry as the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament, instituted by God, to serve within the people of God and for the sake of the gospel ministry entrusted to all believers.

Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to preach, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and

ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.<sup>15</sup>

*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* sustainably expresses the church's commitment that an ordained minister presides at holy communion:

In witness that this sacrament is a celebration of the Church, serving its unity, an ordained minister presides in the service of Holy Communion and proclaims the Great Thanksgiving. Where it is not possible for an extended period of time to provide ordained pastoral leadership, a synodical bishop may authorize a properly trained lay person to preside for a specified period of time and in a given location only.<sup>16</sup>

"In the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. He is the shepherd who leads the people of God, the prophet who announces the Word of God, the priest who celebrates the mystery of God. In most churches, this presidency is signified by an ordained minister. The one who presides at the Eucharistic celebration in the name of Christ makes clear that the rite is not the assembly's own creation or possession; the Eucharist is received as a gift from Christ living in his church. The minister of the Eucharist is the ambassador who represents the divine initiative and expresses the connection of the local community with other local communities in the universal Church."<sup>17</sup>

**(2) An individual who is not ordained presiding at the Eucharist is an exceptional rather than a routine matter. The ELCA Constitution grounds this exception in the need of the church rather than the gifts, character, desires, or calling of any individual:** "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..."<sup>18</sup> The issue is not the gifts, abilities, or dedication of a synodically authorized minister since our church requires

...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

---

<sup>15</sup> ELCA Constitution, 20.7.21-22.

<sup>16</sup> *The Use of the Means of Grace*, Principle 40, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> *The Use of the Means of Grace*, Background 40a, p. 45, quoting *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, World Council of Churches, 1982.

<sup>18</sup> *ELCA Constitution*, 7.31.09.Licensure and Synodically Authorized Ministry.

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.<sup>19</sup>

**(3) In meeting a need for word and sacrament ministry when an ELCA ordained minister of Word and Sacrament is not available, the synod will first consider full communion partners so that an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament might preside at Holy Communion.** The *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* directs that an ordained minister of a Word and Sacrament will be considered before an individual who is not ordained is authorized to preside at Holy Communion:

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.<sup>20</sup>

**(4) Synodically authorized ministry is intended to extend the church's mission.** The *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* states, "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."<sup>21</sup> Synodically authorized ministry is intended to equip the church to respond nimbly and effectively "to emerging opportunities in Christ's mission." It is not intended to enable congregations to avoid or postpone engaging in mission or making necessary change. Synodically authorized ministry is not a cost saving measure.

**(5) Synodically authorized ministry is not intended to provide for the celebration of the Eucharist when the called pastor of the congregation is absent because of vacation or continuing education.** The *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* states, "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."<sup>22</sup> The ELCA Conference of Bishops affirmed this statement in 2005.<sup>23</sup>

**(6) At the same time both the Conference of Bishops and *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* acknowledge that there is often need to provide for the celebration of the sacrament when a congregation's called pastor is away and that in some areas and at some times neither an ELCA nor a full-communion partner church ordained minister is available to meet such a need.**

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

---

<sup>19</sup>*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*.

<sup>20</sup>*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, cited above as 5 under Summary.

<sup>21</sup>*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, cited above as 2 under Summary.

<sup>22</sup>*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, cited above as 4 under Summary.

<sup>23</sup>"A Statement of Understanding Concerning Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament," Conference of Bishops, March 2005.

“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.<sup>24</sup>

The bishop may authorize an individual to administer the sacraments to fulfill the bishop’s “authority to provide for ‘appropriate pastoral leadership’” (7.31.09.). The bishop may only do this “in circumstances when neither an ELCA nor a full communion ordained minister is available.” The paragraph above describes these circumstances as occurring “on rare occasions” and not as a routine matter. In the Introduction to the Pulpit Supply List, Bishop Satterlee writes:

As part of my commitment to the unity of our church, and in keeping with the promise I made when I was installed as bishop, “to carry out this ministry in harmony with the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” I honor these agreements by striving to exercise this “flexibility” judiciously. I authorize synodically authorized ministers of this synod to preside at Holy Communion, as an extension of my own ministry of Word and Sacrament as bishop, when neither an ELCA pastor nor an ordained minister from a full communion partner is available.<sup>25</sup>

Bishop Satterlee acknowledges that some in our synod regard the way he has determined to utilize synodically authorized ministry to negotiate the “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’” as “rigid” rather than “flexible” and disrespectful of those who serve in synodically authorized ministry. Bishop Satterlee acknowledges that others in our synod regard this way of utilizing synodically authorized ministry to negotiate this “tension” as lax and disrespectful of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. Bishop Satterlee acknowledges that this way of utilizing synodically authorized ministry to negotiate this “tension,” while pastorally sensitive and respectful of ELCA policies, challenges his own theological understanding, undermines his teaching and integrity, and stretches him beyond his comfort level. Such is the reality of a compromise position. While the church through the Conference of Bishops will unquestionably continue to grapple with this “tension,” Bishop Satterlee will not unilaterally depart any farther from the church’s policies.

Since the circumstances for authorization are contextual, bishops are not bound either by the practice of either their predecessors or colleague bishops. In the Introduction to the Pulpit Supply List, Bishop Satterlee writes:

I am regularly asked if I am aware that I am, in some instances, changing the way Bishops emeriti Hansen and Schleicher conducted the Office of Bishop, and

---

<sup>24</sup>*Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters*, cited above as 4 under Summary. Cf. A Statement of Understanding Concerning Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament, Conference of Bishops, March 2005.

<sup>25</sup>Introduction to the Pulpit Supply List, 2015.

if I am allowed to make changes. With sincere gratitude and genuine affection for Gary and John, I am aware that, on occasion, I do things differently, even as my brothers and I hold in common commitment to Christ, passion for proclaiming the gospel, zeal for mission, and love for this synod and its people. I expect the bishops who serve after me will faithfully and wisely discern what is best for this synod and its mission in their time and change the way I am doing things. In my own discernment and exercise of the Office of Bishop, I work diligently to keep my promise to conduct my ministry in harmony with the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, as part of their mutual accountability and commitment to the unity of the church, bishops carry out their ministries in conversation with colleague bishops and partners in the churchwide office, and in a manner consistent with Lutheran theology and ELCA policies.

**(7) Synodically authorized ministry is authorized “under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod’s pastor.”<sup>27</sup>** Synodically authorized ministers serve as an extension of the bishop’s own ministry. Apart from the bishop, they possess no authority. It is therefore incumbent on those who serve in synodically authorized ministry to cultivate and not squander the bishop’s confidence and trust. It is likewise incumbent upon the bishop to cultivate the confidence and trust of those who serve in synodically authorized ministry.

---

<sup>26</sup> Introduction to the Pulpit Supply List, 2015.

<sup>27</sup>ELCA Constitution, 7.31.09.Licensure and Synodically Authorized Ministry.