

Synodically Authorized Ministries

Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod

approved by Synod Council, April 2002

According to the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (7.61.01.), "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 ordained pastoral leadership, the synodical bishop – may authorize a person rostered in other rostered ministry, or a non-rostered person who is a member of a congregation of the ELCA to offer this ministry."

In the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, the types of authorized ministries are specific, yet varied enough to meet the needs of our congregations, especially those who are without the leadership of rostered persons. The following outlines the qualifications, program of preparation, authorization for service, and supervision and accountability for ministry as a Synodically Authorized Lay Worship Leader.

Lay Worship Leader

An Authorized Lay Worship Leader leads a gathered community of Lutherans in worship, according to the practices of that congregation and the Lutheran Church. This may include entire leadership for the worship service, or with the help of an assisting minister, it may mean providing a reading of the Gospel lesson for that day and bringing the proclaimed Word in the form of a sermon. Other leadership responsibilities may include the preparation of and leading the Prayers of the Church. A listing of Authorized Lay Worship Leaders would be made available to each congregation of the synod, therefore a person may be contacted by congregations beyond their community or conference, but within the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod.

Qualifications and Procedures

Those preparing for a synodically authorized ministry must:

- < be a baptized, confirmed, active member of an ELCA congregation for at least one year.
- < possess the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service as a Lay Worship Leader
- < submit the Lay Worship Leader application form prior to entering the program.
- < consult with their pastor and submit the Pastoral Form prior to entering the program.
- < submit the Covenant of Support prior to entering the program.
- < consult with the Coordinator for Theological Education, the Leadership Support Committee, or the Vocations Committee responsible for this synod's program of preparation.

Program of Preparation

The Synod's program of preparation will include 5 units of study in the following areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Lutheran Confessions, Worship and Liturgy, and Homiletics (Preaching).

The five units of preparation should be completed at the synod sponsored classes. Some consideration will be given for people who have completed course work in other locations. The program will include required reading and other assignments. (The program of preparation will also include the relationship with a mentor/pastor assigned by the Coordinator for Theological Education in consultation with the bishop and the individual.

Authorization for Service

Upon satisfactory completion of the program an individual may be authorized for service within the synod. A letter of authorization from the bishop should be received before service begins as a Lay Worship Leader. Authorization will be for one year and may be renewed upon evaluation.

Where a specific need exists, the synod bishop at the request and with the consent of the congregation, may authorize an individual to serve in a congregation within the synod. Such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities and shall be for a specific period of time not to exceed one year.

To be considered for a synodically authorized ministry, the following criteria must be met:

- < Evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ.
- < Satisfactory completion of the synodical program of preparation, including demonstration of appropriate ministry skills.
- < Knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church.
- < Willingness to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of persons serving in public ministry. Individuals will be given copies of the ELCA document *Visions and Expectations* and be expected to be familiar with it.
- < Meet with an evaluation committee following instruction and participate in a yearly evaluation review.

Supervision and Accountability

Accountability for Lay Worship Leaders is the direct responsibility of the bishop of this synod who may appoint an ordained minister to provide such direct supervision with the concurrence of the appropriate governing body.

Currently in the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, there are three persons serving congregations the capacity of Pastoral Associates. These persons will continue their responsibilities with the assigned congregations under the previously agreed upon guidelines. Whenever their service is completed, that program and title will no longer be used.

Further Matters for Lay Worship Leaders

1. Lay Worship Leaders may wear an alb and cincture while leading worship, though it is not required. Pastoral stoles and clerical collars are not to be worn.
2. Lay Worship Leader is the term used to describe the ministry in which one is engaged. It does not carry with it a title. Therefore, persons serving in this role shall be called "Mr. or Mrs. or Ms."
3. Lay Worship Leaders will be compensated for their services according to current synod guidelines for worship supply.
4. Lay Worship Leaders are not to offer counseling as part of their ministries.
5. It must be remembered that this arrangement is for the sake of mission and ministry. Lay Worship Leaders are expected to maintain involvement in their home congregations. This is not to be seen as a permanent arrangement or full/part-time employment for the person serving as a Lay Worship Leader.