



# ELCIC Policy Regarding Authorized Lay Ministries

## Motion passed at the 2015 ELCIC National Convention

That the National Convention adopt the following policy regarding the provision of Word and Sacrament ministry in under-served areas:

### Policy Regarding Authorized Lay Ministers

The proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments are inseparable and are central to Lutheran worship and church life.

We affirm that the normal means by which Word and Sacrament ministry is provided in congregations is through a called and ordained pastor.

We recognize that, under particular local circumstances, the usual norm of pastor presiding over Word and Sacrament ministry is not possible. In most of these circumstances congregations can be served by one or more of the following:

- Interim/vice-pastors;
- Multi-point parishes or companion/yoked congregations;
- Wide-area parishes;
- Arrangements with our Anglican Full Communion partner;
- Assistance from ecumenical partners with whom we have an Ecumenical Shared Ministry protocol (eg. United and Presbyterian);
- "Circuit riders" or itinerant ministers;
- Calling an individual who has been ordained through the Alternate Route for Admission to the Roster of Ordained Ministers; or
- Partnering with other congregations to share their pastor.

In certain, rare circumstances none of these options is workable. In such cases:

1. The bishop of the synod may initiate a conversation with the congregational council about authorized lay ministry and whether it may be appropriate to their context.
2. The bishop of the synod would then seek approval of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops for authorized lay ministry in this context.

3. The congregational council would normally identify more than one candidate to serve in the ministry context. Candidates should have an aptitude for preaching and presiding.
4. The bishop of the synod and the Synod Council would approve authorized lay ministers subject to the following:
  - Authorized lay ministers will be appointed for one-year renewable terms;
  - The synod will provide appropriate preparation in Scripture, Lutheran Confessions, preaching, worship and in appropriate boundaries;
  - Authorized lay ministers will work under the supervision of a mentoring pastor appointed by the bishop of the synod;
  - The mentoring pastor will provide on-going support and review;
  - Authorized lay ministers will normally be installed by the dean; and
  - Authorized lay ministers will participate in a regular, on-going process of formation and education.

Authorized lay ministry is non-stipendiary.

Authorized lay ministers are appointed to a specific ministry context and do not serve outside that context.

Authorized lay ministers are permitted to proclaim the Word and preside at Holy Communion. This authorization does not extend to baptisms, weddings, funerals, or other activities which are normally in the purview of ordained or consecrated ministers.

Authorized lay ministers shall not wear clerical garb or vestments. When preaching or presiding, authorized lay ministers may choose to wear an alb.

The title "Pastor" is reserved for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. There is no title associated with authorized lay ministry.

In cases where pastoral counselling is needed, authorized lay ministers shall refer the individual(s) to their mentoring pastor.

There shall be an annual review of both the authorized lay ministers and of the appropriateness of the site for authorized lay ministry.

The synod will ensure that resources are available for preaching and worship leadership which might include a sermon bank, seminary resources and synod workshops.

This policy, once adopted by the ELCIC in convention, will be reviewed and amended as required by National Church Council.