

February 16, 2023

Pastoral letter regarding a ruling of the Court of Appeal

Dear Church,

A recent ruling of the ELCIC Court of Appeal has upheld an appeal of a rostered pastor disciplined by a Synod Council and suspended from the roster of pastors ([see attached for a summary for the decision](#)). The reason for the suspension was that the rostered minister was in a self-defined polyamorous relationship. The Synod Council cited paragraph 3 from the Manual on Discipline as the precipitating cause:

3. Willful disregard or violation of the functions and standards established by ELCIC for rostered ministry shall be grounds for discipline of rostered ministers. Functions and standards for ordained ministry are found in the ELCIC Constitution, Article VIII and the ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, Part III; Functions for lay diaconal ministry are found in the ELCIC Constitution, Article VIII and the ELCIC Administrative Bylaws, Part IV.1.

The Court of Appeal ruled that the complaint cannot be upheld on the standards outlined in the constitutional and bylaw provisions cited above.

When conflict between a Synod Council and a rostered Pastor emerges in our church it is always painful for all– the accused, the complainant, the investigating committee, the disciplinary committee and indeed the Court of Appeal itself. The issues raised in this particular conflict may now become a matter of consideration for the whole church. So, we pray that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide us. As we prepare for any discussions on the issues involved, let us be patient and gentle with each other, speaking the truth in love. Please join me in praying for our church as we move forward and prepare for both Assembly and Convention this summer.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada