

Synodically Authorized Ministry Northwest Synod of Wisconsin ELCA

*How to become a
Synodically Authorized
Minister SAM*

Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.

(1 Corinthians 4:1)

The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin's program follows the guidelines approved by the ELCA for the Synodically Authorized Ministry.

Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs) may serve as leaders in a variety of ways in this synod. Some may serve alongside rostered leaders in their own congregations. Upon request from a congregation and with the approval of the bishop they may enter into a covenant relationship to serve a congregation or parish as the primary pastoral leader. They may serve on teams and task forces of the synod.

How to Become a Synodically Authorized Minister

- The applicant is an active member of a congregation of the Northwest Synod of Wi.
- The applicant is recommended by either a congregational council or parish board.
- The applicant meets with a representative from the synod office who provides information about education courses required. This normally includes attending the Lay School of Ministry's basic 2-year course of study.
- Applicants will be required to take Select Learning's online preaching course.
- Depending on prior educational experiences, additional courses may be required.
- The applicant will have completed a background check.
- Congregations are encouraged to share the financial responsibilities with participants.

Accountability

SAMs are certified to do ministry and exercise leadership on behalf of the Northwest Synod Wisconsin of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. They therefore agree to:

- communicate regularly with a supervising rostered leader who will be assigned;
- participate in the Continuing Education Course of the Lay School of Ministry annually;
- attend the annual Fall Ministry Retreat & Winter Theological Event if possible;
- attend a Boundaries Workshop at least once every three years;
- submit a yearly report (*written after consultation with the supervising rostered minister*) to the synod office;
- if serving as the primary pastoral leader, complete a covenant agreement signed by the SAM, the congregation to be served, and the synod office which lists expectations, duties, and compensation;
- communicate with the synod office regarding concerns or troubling issues within the ministry site.

Role of Rostered Supervisor

- Meet (*either electronically or in person*) on a regular basis with their SAM in order to build a relationship of trust and accountability. The suggested frequency is once a month. The supervisor and SAM are mutually responsible to make sure this regular contact takes place.
- Be aware of the SAMs' activities and ministries.
- Be a resource and counsel for challenges, struggles, and joys; and offer additional help

and support as needed by the SAM.

The expectation is that in this established relationship, the SAM may contact the supervising pastor with any issues or questions that arise in the course of his or her ministry. If a supervisor has any concerns about the ministry of the SAM, he or she should contact the synod office.

Guidelines for Congregations/Parishes

Pastors and congregations/parishes may identify and encourage individuals to consider entering the SAM program. Those who apply must be endorsed by their home congregation. In considering whether to endorse an individual, the congregation/parish council should take great care in evaluating the individual's spiritual maturity, leadership potential, and willingness to learn and serve. Endorsement is accomplished by a vote of the congregational/parish council.

Congregations/Parishes are also encouraged to provide financial assistance for individuals in the program to fulfill their educational requirements. Annual reports from the SAM are also shared with the congregation/parish.

Guidelines for Synodically Authorized Ministers

While SAMs have fulfilled additional educational courses and been certified by the synod to serve within their congregations and the synod, they have not been through the candidacy process to be rostered leaders of the ELCA. Therefore, they are not to wear clerical collars or stoles in worship, which are symbols of ordination, or use the title "reverend." For the sake of forming a partnership for the ministry of the whole church, lay and rostered leaders must recognize and respect their different callings even as they work together.

Other Matters:

- An individual who has been removed from the ELCA roster because of misconduct or has been denied continuance in candidacy because of misconduct is precluded from serving as a SAM.
- SAMs are expected to abide by the document *Definition & Guidelines* which is found on the ELCA website.
- When permitted by law (as is the case in Wisconsin) SAMs may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation/parish in which they are authorized to serve.
- Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the bishop, who need not specify a reason.
- SAMs are not to offer therapy or counseling as part of their ministries, unless they have the degree/license to do this from a prior career. They may provide appropriate pastoral care.
- SAMs may serve only within the Northwest Synod of WI. Since they are not ordained clergy, they are not recognized by the IRS for the housing allowance benefit on their federal tax returns. **Synod Contact: info@nswwi.org**

BACKGROUND

This policy is based on several governing documents, including:

Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament,

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 and in consultation with the Synod 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 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.

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.

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 authorization is only to be used when the need for such leadership is "for an extended period of time"
- 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.