

**Southeastern Minnesota Synod Guidelines  
for Synodically Authorized Ministers  
September 1, 2016**

These guidelines are a complement and addition to the policy and guidelines related to synodically authorized ministries of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.

**Identification of Need and Invitation to Service**

The synod identifies congregations and ministries where ordained pastoral leadership is not available for an extended period of time and where a synodically authorized minister (SAM) may be appropriate.

An individual who demonstrates the potential for service is invited by the synod to enter into a program of preparation.

**Qualifications:**

A person invited to prepare for a synodically authorized ministry must be an active member of an ELCA congregation for at least one year. Prior to serving in synodically authorized ministry an individual must:

- Show evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ and be willing to preach and teach in accordance with the Lutheran Confessions, the Holy Scriptures, and the constitutions of the ELCA.
- Be recommended by the individual's pastor and congregation council;
- Consult with synodical staff and/or candidacy committee, and
- Demonstrate the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synodically authorized ministry or a willingness to provide evidence of prior preparation that has achieved the goals and standards of the program of preparation outlined in these guidelines.
- Go through the complete ENTRANCE process for candidacy, just as a candidate for rostered leadership would. (The costs for assessments and background checks shall be the responsibility of the synod, with contribution from the congregation the SAM will serve.)
- Be willing to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of persons serving in public ministry as described in "Visions and Expectations – Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America"

**Program of Preparation:**

SAMs approved under the above qualifications will attend the Region 3 Preacher Training Program, but do not need to complete this prior to starting to serve as a congregation's SAM.

**Authorization to Serve**

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 within the synod by the synodical bishop, in consultation

with the Synod Council. Such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities, and authorization shall be for a specific time period, not to exceed one year. The covenant may be renewed yearly, after review and recommendation to the Bishop by the Candidacy Committee.

### **Supervision, Accountability, and Synodical Expectations**

#### **Mentor/Supervisory Pastor:**

Accountability for SAMs in a congregation setting is the direct responsibility of the Congregation Council. A SAM is to be under the direct supervision of an ordained minister appointed by the Synodical Bishop. The supervising ordained minister shall report to the governing body and seek the advice and counsel of the bishop or appropriate synodical staff person in relationship to the SAM.

#### **Reporting to Bishop:**

SAMS shall submit a written quarterly report to the bishop for at least the first year. After the first review, the frequency of reporting will be at the Bishop's discretion.

The synod staff will maintain regular communication with SAMs and the congregation or parish through annual worship visitation and meeting with all parties. Candidacy Committee will meet annually with SAMs for a ministry review.

#### **Synodical Participation:**

SAMS are expected to participate in conference/synod events, complete parochial and other reports, and encourage greater congregational involvement and participation in the life of the Southeastern MN Synod and the ELCA. The SAM is expected to participate in a text study group, ideally within the same study group as their mentor/supervisor pastor.

#### **Covenant:**

A copy of the covenant between the SAM and the congregation shall be filed with the synod office. The agreement shall be reviewed annually. The agreement shall include the goals and expectations established by all parties (congregation, SAM, and synod). Synodical guidelines for compensation and benefits of SAMs shall be followed.

### **Renewal and Revocation**

Renewal of authorization after one year may be given when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synodical bishop at the request and consent of the congregation, consultation with the supervising ordained minister, and a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the SAM. Renewal will be contingent upon active participation in the Lay School of Theology. Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synodical bishop, who need not specify the reason.

### Letter of Authorization:

The authorization may be evidenced by an appropriate letter and accompanying covenant describing the terms and expectations of the authorization. The authorization may also limit the activities to be conducted.

### **Other Matters**

Weddings, Funerals, etc: SAMS, approved under these specific guidelines, will be authorized to preside at marriage services at the congregation (after registering with the county courthouse), with specific authorization from the synodical bishop. SAMS may preside over funerals.

Scope of service: SAMS may serve only within the synod within which they are authorized, and only within the church in which the synodical bishop authorizes.

Use of vestments: SAMS are not to wear clerical stoles, but may wear albs if appropriate for the context.

Title: The title "Pastor" is reserved for ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by SAMS.

Counseling: SAMS are not to offer therapy or counseling as part of their ministries, but may provide pastoral care.

### **Mentor/Supervisor Pastor Expectations**

It is expected that the mentor pastor shall:

- Be an ELCA pastor serving in the Southeastern Minnesota synod
- Meet regularly with the SAM, such as monthly, for prayer, sharing and planning together
- Establish goals for the relationship and mutual ministry involvement
- Seek to provide theological, practical, and spiritual direction for the SAM
- Seek to establish a relationship in which the two encourage one another and participate together in conference and synod activities and events
- Provide an annual report to the bishop that reviews the components of the relationship and the mentor's observation about the ministry conducted by the SAM
- Initiate and foster intentional conversations with the SAM about discernment of a sense of call to ministry
- Involve the bishop or synod staff in the event of difficulties for the SAM or the mentor relationship