

**Faithful
and
Trustworthy
Servants**

Pastors and Deacons of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

**Office of the Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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In 2017 the ELCA, together with Lutherans around the world, observed the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. This significant milestone provided an opportunity for this church to look back with joy to our deep theological roots and faith traditions, on our history of being a reformed and reforming church, and to a future filled with abundant hope and possibilities.

Propelled by a commitment to Lutheran traditions and to being a community of faith that is always forming and being renewed, the people, congregation, synods, churchwide staff, Church Council, Conference of Bishops, and ministry partners of the ELCA developed Future Directions 2025, goals and priorities to help this church journey faithfully and effectively together in the years ahead. ELCA Future Directions 2025 tells the story of the church we are becoming – a church that is confident about who we are in Christ and what God is calling us to do.

As pastors and deacons, candidates, Candidacy Committees, seminaries, and congregations, you are invited into this vision of what the ELCA is and can be in the future: a church where “Together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly and serve joyfully” and that envisions “A world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation.” What follows are the expectations that the ELCA has for rostered ministry candidates and, pastors and deacons who, led by God, will guide us into the future.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton

Faithful and Trustworthy Servants

In this document, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expresses its and expectations for pastors and deacons of this church. This document should not be understood as a set of laws and rules. Those are included in the constitutions of this church and the document Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline. Neither is it intended to suggest unrealistic or impossible expectations for those who serve as pastors and deacons. Instead, it seeks to express the high value and importance that pastors and deacons have in the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is offered for those who are already on the roster as a statement of expectations for them, as well as an invitation for reflection and consideration to those who seek to serve as pastors and deacons in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

In its function and its structure, this church commits itself to the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world and in this church. It is within this context of ministry that this church calls some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church.

Ministry of Word and Sacrament (Pastor)

Within the people of God and for the sake of the Gospel ministry entrusted to all believers, God has instituted the ministry of Word and Sacrament. To carry out this ministry, this church calls and ordains qualified persons.

A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to preach, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

- a. every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;
 - 3) conduct public worship;
 - 4) provide pastoral care;
 - 5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
 - 6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications;
 - 7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
 - 8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.
- b. each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
 - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
 - 2) relate to all schools and organizations of the congregation;
 - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
 - 4) with the council, administer discipline; and
 - 5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the ELCA churchwide organization and its synod.

Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, provisions 7.21. and 7.22., bylaw 7.31.02.

Ministry of Word and Service (Deacon)

This church calls qualified persons to provide a ministry of Word and Service, exemplifying the life of Christ-like service to all persons and creation: nurturing, healing, leading, advocating dignity and justice, and equipping the whole people of God for their life of witness and service within and beyond the congregation for the sake of God's mission in the world.

A minister of Word and Service of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, aptness to serve, teach, and witness, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Service shall comply with this church's constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

- a. be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
- b. advocates a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving attention to the suffering places in God's world;
- c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in the community, the nation, and abroad;
- d. Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
- e. Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
- f. Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
- g. Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
- h. Share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
- i. Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, provisions 7.21. and 7.22., bylaw 7.31.02.

I. We are church

We are what God has made us – people whom God has created by grace to live in union with Jesus Christ and has prepared to live faithful, fruitful lives by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8-10). In Jesus Christ, God has reconciled us to God and to each other. As we gather around word and sacraments, this life in Christ is what defines, shapes and guides us as a community of faith, the church.

By God's grace we can and do live confidently and generously in this community of faith and in service of others, amid the mysteries and paradoxes of this life in Christ – including our human limitations and failings, and the ambiguities, uncertainties and suffering that we experience (Called Forward Together in Christ p.4).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believes that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true

faith” (Small Catechism, Article 3). The Spirit provides the church with those persons who are enabled by God to lead the church in carrying out the ministry and mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This church confesses that the ministry of Word and Sacrament and the ministry of Word and Service have been instituted by God. Individuals are admitted to these ministries because they have been called by God. This church believes that the call comes to individuals from God both personally and through the church.

People experience the call to rostered ministry in a variety of ways. Fundamental to each is the personal experience of God’s justifying act in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the awareness of the gospel in one’s life and the response to that gospel that leads some to seek to serve in the public ministry of the church. This call may include the example and encouragement of others, the personal assessment of an individual’s own interests and abilities and response to the needs of the world. In whatever way the call may come to an individual, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believes that such a sense of call must be tested over a period of time, shaped by theological study, and finally confirmed in the church’s call to serve. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the church to discern a person’s gifts and abilities for rostered ministry.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America prepares and approves candidates for rostered ministry by setting standards, by providing for theological education through the seminaries of this church, and by evaluating a person’s qualifications for service by a Candidacy Committee. Upon approval, a person is eligible to receive a letter of call to serve in the rostered ministry of this church.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America therefore understands the call to rostered ministry to mean that:

- pastors and deacons are called by God through the church and are accountable to the word of God for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ;
- pastors and deacons are called by God through the church and are not self-chosen or self-appointed;
- pastors and deacons are called by God through the church for a ministry of servanthood and not for the exercise of domination or coercive power; and
- the ministry of pastors and deacons is a privilege granted by God through the call of the church and is not a right of the individual.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expects each of its pastors and deacons to understand and accept the call to serve this church’s ministry, and to trust that the Spirit sustains and upholds those who are called so they may fulfill their calling. That calling will include leadership for what have been identified as this church’s most important ministries in the years ahead:

Worship, word (pastors and deacons), and sacraments (pastors)

Rooted in evangelical proclamation and sacramental celebration, we are a church gathered around worship experiences that are meaningful, authentic and responsive to community contexts.

Faith formation and discipleship

Honoring our rich traditions, we are a church grounded in the Lutheran confessions inspiring biblical and theological literacy, gospel fluency, and daily vocation and ministry through shared experience and life-long learning.

Leadership development

We are a church strongly committed to formation, education, and continuing development and care of lay leaders and pastors and deacons.

Children, youth and young adults

We are a church dedicated to ministries that engage and affirm children, youth, and young adults as an integral part of this church, now and for the future.

Ministries addressing human suffering and injustice

In communities and around the world we are an informed church, actively utilizing our many gifts in witness and service in response to human need in our communities, countries, and the world.

II. We are Lutheran

We are a church that walks by faith, trusting God's promise in the gospel and knowing that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. We proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead for the life of the world. As the apostle Paul wrote (Romans 1:16-17), and we echo in our Constitution (2.02.), we are not ashamed of this gospel ministry because it is God's power for saving all people who trust the God who makes these promises. "We are to fear and love God, so, that we do not despise preaching or God's word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear it and learn it" (Small Catechism).

God's word, specifically God's promise in Jesus Christ, creates this liberated, confident, and generous faith. God gives the Holy Spirit who uses gospel proclamation – in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations – to create and sustain this faith. As a Lutheran church, we give central place to this gospel message in our ministry.

We understand to be Lutheran is to be ecumenical – committed to the oneness to which God calls the world in the saving gift of Jesus Christ, recognizing the brokenness of the church in history, and the call of God to heal this disunity. (Called Forward Together in Christ p. 4).

It is essential for a pastor or deacon to be able to understand and faithfully interpret the Scriptures and the Christian tradition. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America asks that its pastors and deacons assume responsibility for upholding this church's doctrinal tradition through faithful preaching, teaching, and service. All who serve as pastors and deacons in this church are expected to accept and adhere to the following:

Scripture, Creed, and Confessions

The Scriptures reveal God's redemptive actions, including the message of law and gospel, judgment and mercy, "beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ" (ELCA Constitution, 2.02.). Pastors and deacons of this church are to confess and teach the authoritative and normative character of the Scriptures "as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life" (ELCA Constitution, 2.03.). The ecumenical creeds are to be taught as true declarations of the faith of this church. The Lutheran confessions are to be acknowledged as true witnesses and faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

In identifying specific documents as normative for preaching and teaching, this church expects its pastors and deacons to understand that the faith of the church is corporate, not individualistic; catholic, not sectarian; orthodox, not heretical. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expects that its pastors and deacons teach nothing "that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church" (Conclusion to the Augsburg Confession).

Doctrinal Tradition

Christians enter the catholic faith through baptism in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pastors and deacons of this church are called to continue in this catholic faith, serving, preaching, and teaching it within the doctrinal tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Pastors and deacons express this tradition when they live out the shared values of this church, which are grounded in faith, in our biblical and Lutheran confessional sources, and our love of God and neighbor.

Pastors and deacons speak to the way this church lives and practices our faith, and they will guide how we journey forward in Christ as church together:

Forgiveness and reconciliation

We are reconciled to God by God’s forgiving mercy. Forgiveness and reconciliation flow from what God has made us to be in Jesus Christ and what God is doing with us in the world. As a people of God, we embody forgiveness in speech, action and relationships, and our ministry in reconciliation is foundational.

Dignity, compassion, and justice

Each person is created in God’s image. We respect this God-given right to dignity and, inspired by the life of Jesus, show love and compassion for all people. Through proclamation of the gospel, through worship and as servants of God working for healing and justice in the world, we uphold and seek to protect the dignity and human rights of all people.

Inclusion and diversity

As Christ’s church, we value the richness of God’s creation and offer a radical welcome to all people, appreciating our common humanity and our differences. We are a church that does not view diversity as a barrier to unity. We recognize and will challenge dynamics of power and privilege that create barriers to participation and equity in this church and society – for women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people who are marginalized or living in poverty, and the LGBTQIA community.

Courage and openness to change

Because we trust in God’s promise and understand faith to be a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, we are emboldened to embrace learning and change in our spiritual and institutional journey as church. This means we are open to new ways and willing to take risks to discover God’s plan for this church.

Faithful stewardship of God’s creation and gifts

As church together, faithful stewardship is about holding to God’s purpose and ensuring the responsibilities and resources that God has entrusted to us are used with great care and with accountability to God, to each other, and to those served by this church.

III. We are church together

Just as God has joined us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in baptism, we are also joined to others, not only in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), but in all communities of Christian faith around the world. In Christ none of us lives in isolation from others. Jesus is our peace and has broken down the walls that divide us – walls of judgment, hatred, condemnation and violence – and has made us into one, new human community (Ephesians 2:14-15). This spiritual communion depends only on God’s mercy that comes to us in the word and sacraments. That alone is enough for unity, and so we yearn for this communion with all Christians at the Lord’s table.

Because God gives us our unity in Christ, we are able to see and respect the diversity within Christ’s body. We receive it as a gift and embrace it, rather than treating it as a threat or a problem to be solved (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). We respect and honor the diversity of histories, traditions, cultures, languages, and experiences among us in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and in the larger Christian community of faith. We seek full participation of all in the life and work of this church and will strenuously avoid the culture of any one group becoming the norm for all in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. And we strive to address the ways that racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of injustice limit participation and harm people, communities and the whole body of Christ.

In all these relationships, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serves reconciliation and healing with other Christians, while repentantly acknowledging its failings and wrongs, trusting in God's forgiving mercy (Called Forward Together in Christ p. 5)

Trust is the Foundation of Relationships

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* explains, from Scripture we learn that love and trust are at the heart of God's relationship with human beings. We also hear that human beings are created for trusting relationships with each other (p. 4-6). The statement continues: "Trust is a critical element that holds together couples and relationships, households and families, social structures and institutions. ... Trust is essential for the good of society. ... When human beings serve their neighbor rather than themselves, they are acting in ways that enhance social trust. ... Social trust is grounded in the practice of mutual respect for the dignity of all people and their consciences. Strong communities ensure social trust when they provide social support for disagreement and dissent, and nurture the values of mutual respect and regard for the opinions of others. ... The development of social trust must be a central concern for Christians who seek the good of the neighbor in the pursuit of justice and the common good. This church must be a leader in refocusing attention on practices and attitudes that build social trust (p.12-13).

Because trust is at the heart of all relationships, pastors and deacons must lead lives of integrity so that they are perceived by their ministry and community as trustworthy.

A Trustworthy Life in Rostered Ministry

With all Christians, pastors and deacons are called to lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27). Christ's own self-giving on the cross is the example for Christian life for all believers. Because pastors and deacons are also recipients of God's gracious gift in Christ Jesus, they are called to use their gifts and abilities to enable others to understand themselves as recipients of that same grace and to live as God's people in the world. In their life and conduct, pastors and deacons are to witness to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Therefore, pastors and deacons will seek to use their gifts in lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Pastors and deacons fulfill their calling not only by what they do in carrying out certain tasks, but also in who they are. They officially proclaim and witness in their person to the gospel of Christ. The life of a rostered minister is not one of moral or spiritual perfection. It is, instead, the living out of the good news that one is justified by God's grace and thus called to live out that grace in daily life. Pastors and deacons are not simply professionals trained in skills to perform a task, but are sent by the church to lead the community of faith through the ministry of Word and Sacrament or Word and Service and by their own example.

Public ministry in this church carries with it expectations and accountabilities that are determined by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gathered in assembly, or by the ELCA Church Council, and not simply by a given congregation, synod, institution, or agency served by the minister. Those who publicly profess to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ are challenged to maintain personal character that brings credit to their trustworthiness and service in their community and in the world.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has high expectations for those who serve as pastors and deacons of this church. It holds these expectations because it recognizes that when offense is given by a pastor or deacon, his or her ability to carry out public ministry is threatened.

Yet sin and brokenness are realities in the lives of all persons, including those who serve as pastors and deacons. It is crucial for us all to remember that repentance and forgiveness are to be daily realities in the

life of every baptized Christian. Neither perfection nor self-righteousness is asked of the pastors and deacons of this church. When there is failure in the lives of those who serve in public ministry, this church seeks to provide counsel and understanding, while emphasizing that repentance and forgiveness are necessary precursors yet not guarantors of restoration to the ministerial duties.

When there are repentance and forgiveness, this church rejoices. Indeed, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believes that God not only calls but sustains those who are set apart for the ministry of Word and Service and Word and Sacrament. It is with this recognition that this church can affirm that those who are set apart for rostered ministry are to seek to embody those characteristics that are consistent with their callings (Candidacy Manual chapter 2).

Becoming Trustworthy Leaders

Pastors and deacons seek regular opportunities for personal participation in the means of grace, including the renewal of baptismal grace in individual confession and absolution and sharing in the sacrament of Holy Communion, thus receiving God's renewing, sustaining, empowering Spirit both in his or her person and for the practice of ministry. Pastors and deacons also engage in daily prayer and encourage others in the practice of regular prayer.

A pastor or deacon must be a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. There the minister is an integral part of a community of faith in which mutual support is given and in which care, forgiveness and healing occur. In rare circumstances, membership in a full-communion partner congregation may be acceptable.

Pastors and deacons support and participate not only in the work of the congregation but also in the synodical and churchwide ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This church expects its pastors and deacons to work in a collegial relationship with one another and to share in mutual accountability with those in positions of leadership and oversight in this church. All pastors and deacons of this church are to seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the public ministries of this church and strive to extend the reign of God in the community.

The pastor or deacon is concerned for the whole person. He or she welcomes and ministers to all people. The minister serves those troubled with spiritual or emotional problems. This church expects that its pastors and deacons will respect information confidentially shared.

Pastors and deacons recognize the importance of life-long growth in learning. Such growth is intended to renew, extend, and deepen insight into the scriptures and the doctrinal teaching of the church and to enable one to respond to the insights and challenges of the world with greater awareness and a more faithful confession. In an increasingly complex and educated society, the development of an informed intellect and professional skills is crucial to competent ministry. This church expects of its rostered leaders regular and disciplined time for personal study, study in the company of others, participation in programs of continuing education, and periodic times for extended study. Congregations and other entities of this church are expected to provide pastors and deacons the time and assistance with the financial resources needed for such study.

Because all are stewards of the lives God has given, the pastor or deacon needs to be an example of self-care, as well as caring for others. The significant demands of time and effort in a calling to ministry can lead one to neglect proper nutrition, exercise, and time for recreation. The ministry setting of a pastor and deacon should respect the need for the minister to have adequate time for self-care. Caring for self also includes seeking counseling and/or medical care when there is evidence of physical or mental illness, substance abuse or addiction, eating disorders, or relational problems.

Trust, Trustworthiness, and Holy Living

This church's social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* describes the context for living holy, trustworthy lives. From Scripture, beginning with creation, this church understands that love and trust are at the heart of God's relationship with human beings. Human beings are created for trusting relationships with each other. By the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives may reflect the love of Christ crucified and risen. "The life I now live in the flesh," declares Paul, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20)." Thus, Christ-like love for the neighbor informs all our activities, now and into God's future. In anticipation of that future, ethics, therefore, are not purely a personal matter; rather, they affect the witness of the Christian community and the well-being of the larger community (1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 6:10; Revelation 21:8) (p. 4-6).

"We do not live in private worlds without thought or consideration for historic events or the impact of our actions on individuals, the community, or the environment. Rather, the responsibility to serve the neighbor through our daily callings seeks to shape human relationships and a world community that honors God and anticipates God's future transformation of all of creation." (p. 8).

"In whatever the situation, all people are called to build trust in relationships and in the community. The way we live out these callings, of course, will be flawed and imperfect. As forgiven sinners, we recognize through faith that our imperfect lives are means by which God cares for and sustains creation. We can live both humbly and boldly, knowing that our efforts are still infused with God's love and blessing for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world. By the mercy of God, in the midst of evil, betrayal, brokenness, loneliness, and loss, we dare to believe that opportunities do open, forgiveness is sought and tendered, good may be rescued, and trust can be restored" (p. 9).

As the social statement makes clear, a pastor or deacon is to be an example of holy living so that her or his life does not become an impediment to the hearing of the gospel or a scandal to the community of faith. The qualities of such a life include the following:

Integrity and Trustworthiness

A pastor or deacon is expected to:

- a. be honest and forthright in dealings with others while protecting privileged and confidential communications;
- b. strive to develop a public reputation for integrity and to nurture trustworthy personal relationships;
- c. avoid conduct that is dishonest, deceptive, duplicitous or manipulative of others for personal benefit or gain.

Trustworthiness in Relationships

In all relationships, a pastor or deacon is expected to honor his or her public promises, bear the burdens of others, and seek to build up the body of Christ.

In public ministry as well as in private life, she or he is expected to develop and nurture appropriate relationships with others, acting in ways that build and sustain trust.

Further, pastors and deacons will respect and nurture friendships among others and will welcome and nurture friendships for themselves. They will avoid compromising their role as ministers in such relationships, maintaining appropriate boundaries and remaining alert to the dangers of acting out of multiple roles in a single relationship.

Trustworthiness in Family

Pastors and deacons will strive to serve others and nurture trust by enhancing their own family life. Within the family, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and mutual care are to be expressed. Children, if any, will be regarded with love, respect and commitment. It is also expected that pastors and deacons maintain responsible relationships with their parents and other immediate relatives.

Some of the ways that Trustworthiness in Family is broken are:

- a. abuse, desertion, or abandonment of spouse, or children;
- b. repeated failure to meet legally determined family support obligations.

Trustworthiness in Finances

Each pastor and deacon are to be faithful stewards of time, talents, and possessions. They are examples to the community of generous giving. They are expected to conduct personal fiscal affairs in accordance with ethical and legal requirements. Among those fiscal activities that may be considered conduct incompatible with the character of role as a rostered minister are:

- a. Indifference to or avoidance of legitimate and neglected personal debts;
- b. Embezzlement of money or improper appropriation of the property of others;
- c. Using the ministerial office improperly for personal financial advantage.

Trustworthiness in Communications

Pastors and deacons must take special care in their engagement in public discourse, especially with the use of social media. Rostered ministers are what they say as well as what they do. Users of social media do not always distinguish between persons and their professional roles. What rostered ministers say can be interpreted as coming not from an individual but from the church. The result can be harm both to this church and to rostered ministers as proclaimers of the gospel in word and deed. Careful thought and reflection must be given to the use of social media. Boundaries and privacy need to be respected.

Trustworthiness in Sexual Conduct

The expectations of this church regarding the sexual conduct of its pastors and deacons are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift and trust from God. Pastors and deacons are to live in such a way as to honor this gift and trust.

Therefore, pastors and deacons are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts at sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others. As is made clear in the ELCA's social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*: "This church does not tolerate the abuse of the ministerial office for personal sexual gratification.

Pastors and deacons who abuse the trust placed in them by engaging in promiscuity, infidelity, adultery, or other forms of sexual abuse violate these high standards. Such violations severely damage the credibility of the public ministry to which the church and its pastors and deacons are called" (p. 35). They also "damage the self and an individual's future capacity to live out committed and trustworthy relationships" (p. 31-32).

Concerning appropriate sexual expression in a relationship, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* states: "As trust and entrusting are established in a relationship, physical expression naturally becomes more intimate. That is, sexual intimacy would be expected to follow the same pattern of growth marked by the other dimensions of mutual self-understanding. For this reason, this church teaches that degrees of physical intimacy should be carefully matched to degrees of growing affection and commitment. This also suggests a way to understand why this church teaches that the greatest sexual intimacies, such as *coitus*, should be matched with and sheltered both by the highest level of binding commitment and by social and legal

protection, such as is found in marriage. Here, promises of fidelity and public accountability provide the foundational basis and support for trust, intimacy, and safety, especially for the most vulnerable. This is why this church opposes non-monogamous, promiscuous, or casual sexual relationships of any kind” (p. 31).

To avoid scandal and maintain the integrity of their office, pastors and deacons who are single are expected to refrain from sexual relationships. Pastors, deacons, and candidates for rostered ministry who are in a faithful and committed relationship are expected to enter legal marriage before intimate sexual behavior. *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* states: “Because this church urges couples to seek the highest social and legal support for their relationships, it does not favor cohabitation arrangements outside of marriage” (p. 32). Therefore, it is expected that all candidates for rostered ministry, and pastors and deacons will not participate in cohabitation prior to marriage.

Trustworthiness in Civil Marriage

This church acknowledges that consensus does not exist, and that its members hold various convictions about same-gender relationships and marriage. Pastors and deacons are expected to respect the people who hold these various convictions.

On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled that members of the LGBTQIA community have the same legal marriage rights granted heterosexual couples. As a result, all pastors and deacons living in a sexually committed relationship are expected to uphold an understanding that civil marriage is the highest legal form of recognized commitment and accountability granted under law.

Trustworthiness in Beginning, Sustaining, and Ending Marriages

Should a Pastor or deacon seek to marry, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought, and the rostered minister shall make the decision known among those he or she serves.

A married pastor or deacon is expected to live in fidelity to his or her spouse, giving expression to sexual intimacy solely within a marriage relationship that is mutual and faithful. Each pastor or deacon who is married is expected to keep his or her marriage inviolate until death, to cultivate love and respect for her or his spouse, and to seek marital counseling when it is needed.

It is recognized that due to human sin and brokenness, in some cases the marital relationship may have to be dissolved. Should a pastor or deacon and spouse separate or seek to divorce, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought. Similarly, should one decide to marry following a divorce, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop must be sought.

IV. We are church for the sake of the world

Christ has freed us from sin and death, even from ourselves, so that we can live as ministers of reconciliation in loving and generous service of our neighbors (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). In Jesus Christ, all of life – every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life – flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God’s grace.

Freed by the transformative life of Christ, we support Evangelical Lutheran Church in America members as they give themselves freely in transforming service with the neighbor. Through a wide range of daily vocations and ministries, we nurture faith, build alliances and gather resources for a healed, reconciled and just world. As church together, we faithfully strive to participate in God’s reconciling work, which prioritizes disenfranchised, vulnerable and displaced people in our communities and the world. We discover and explore our vocations in relation to God through education and moral deliberation. We bear witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ through dialogue

and collaboration with ecumenical partners and with other faiths. In all these ministries, God's generosity flows through us into the life of the world.

The charge to witness to and serve the world is given to the church today as it was to the apostles of the early church. The content of that witness is God's revelation in Jesus Christ: God's creative self-disclosure as the Word made flesh; Jesus Christ victorious over death for the salvation and the promise of everlasting life. The testimony of these acts of God's grace and forgiveness is expressed in both word and deed by pastors and deacons through compassion, hospitality, patience and forgiveness; through seeking peace and justice for all people; through care for God's creation; and through sharing one's faith through preaching, teaching, service, conversation, and personal witness. This witness is characterized by:

Evangelism

The apostolic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the church's mission. It is the proclamation in word and deed of the message of salvation in Jesus Christ and reconciliation with God. This gospel is proclaimed through Word and Sacraments as well as service to the church and world. Through its pastors and deacons this church affirms the critically important task of communicating this evangelical word to the world.

Compassion

Christians are called by God to participate in compassionate care for those in need. This church expects its pastors and deacons to follow the example of Jesus and to lead the church in compassionate care of the suffering.

Confession

Pastors and deacons are expected to enter into the church's act of confessing the Christian faith in our world. The church is called to such a confession because its present existence lies between the advent of God's Kingdom in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and the promised certain consummation of the eschatological kingdom. This confession places this church and its pastors and deacons in the struggle against sin, death, and the devil.

Hospitality

Pastors and deacons in Christ's church value the richness of God's creation and offer a radical welcome to all people, appreciating our common humanity and our differences. Pastors and deacons do not view diversity as a barrier to unity. As highlighted in "Called Forward Together in Christ" pastors and deacons will recognize and challenge dynamics of power and privilege that create barriers to participation and equity in this church and in society – for women, people of color, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people who are marginalized or living in poverty, and the LGBTQIA community (Called Forward Together in Christ p. 6).

Peacemaking

The culmination of God's eschatological salvation will be the overcoming of every enmity and the reconciliation of the whole creation. Yet even in the present time, God's peace is a reality. This church expects its pastors and deacons to be witnesses to and instruments of God's peace and reconciliation for the world.

Justice

The church is to witness to God's call for justice in every aspect of life, including testimony against injustice and oppression, whether personal or systemic. This church summons its leaders to be committed to justice in the life of the church, in society, and in the world. Pastors and deacons are expected to oppose all forms of harassment and assault.

Stewardship of the Earth

The people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its pastors and deacons will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation.

Conclusion

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America affirms that "the Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming and sanctifying activity in the world" (ELCA Constitution, 4.01.).

Ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service have been chosen by God and this church to lead the people of the ELCA and equip them as they bear witness to God and serve this world. Each pastor and deacon have both the privilege and the responsibility of guiding this church into God's future.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America prays for the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to those who serve this church in the ministry of Word and Sacrament and in the ministry of Word and Service.

Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the Third Sunday after Epiphany, Evangelical Lutheran Worship