

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Chapter 14

ORDAINED MINISTERS AND LAY ROSTERED MINISTERS

***S14.01.** The time and place of the ordination of those persons properly called to congregations or extra-parish service of this Synod shall be authorized by the Bishop of this Synod.

***S14.02.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

a. Every ordained minister shall:

- 1) preach the Word;**
- 2) administer the Sacraments;**
- 3) conduct public worship;**
- 4) provide pastoral care; and**
- 5) 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 ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 1) offer instruction, confirm, solemnize marriages, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;**
- 2) supervise all schools and organizations of the congregation;**
- 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and**
- 4) with the Council administer discipline.**

c. Every pastor shall:

- 1) strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;**
- 2) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;**
- 3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and**
- 4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the ELCA churchwide organization and of this ELCA Synod.**

S14.03. The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, and members dismissed or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this Synod.

S14.04. Whenever members of a congregation move to such a distance that regular attendance at its services becomes impractical, it shall be the duty of the pastor to commend them,

upon their consent, to the pastoral care of a Lutheran congregation nearer to their place of residence.

S14.05. Each ordained minister on the roster of this Synod shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the Bishop of the Synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

S14.06. The pastor shall become a member of the congregation that has extended the letter of call. In a pastoral charge of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

***S14.11. When a congregation of this church desires to call a pastor or a candidate for the pastoral office in the ordained ministry of this church:**

- a. Each congregation of this Synod shall consult the Bishop of this Synod before taking any steps leading to the extending of a call to a prospective pastor.**
- b. For issuance of a letter of call to a pastor or pastoral candidate by a congregation of this Synod in accord with ELCA constitutional provision 7.41, a two-thirds majority ballot vote shall be required of members of the congregation present and voting at a meeting regularly called for the purpose of issuing such a call.**
- c. When the congregation has voted to issue a call to a prospective pastor, the letter of call shall be submitted to the Bishop of this Synod for the Bishop's signature.**

BLS14.11.a. At the time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the Bishop with the consent of the Congregation Council or Councils of the vacant pastoral charge.

- b. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, each Congregation Council affected shall immediately notify in writing the Bishop of this Synod and the Dean of the Mission District. The Bishop shall call a conference to be attended by the Bishop or an appointed deputy, the Dean of the Mission District, and the Congregation Council.**
- c. Nominations for the filling of pastoral vacancies must be made to the pastoral call committee of the pastoral charge through and with the approval of the Bishop, and without that approval no nominee shall at any time be considered. In the consideration of candidates for the vacancy, names may be suggested to the Bishop by the Congregation Council or by the Dean of the Mission District.**
- d. When the Congregation Council has decided to recommend to the pastoral charge for its call as pastor a particular nominee, duly suggested and approved, an election shall be conducted under the supervision of the Bishop or a deputy appointed for the purpose. Balloting shall be limited at any Congregation Meeting to a single nomination, presented by the Congregation Council with at least two-thirds of its members concurring. In multiple-congregation pastoral charges a majority vote in each congregation and a two-thirds majority of the total shall be sufficient to elect.**

S14.12. No ordained minister shall accept a call without first conferring with the Bishop of this Synod. An ordained minister shall respond with a letter of acceptance or declination to a letter of call within thirty days of receipt of such call. In exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Bishop of this Synod and the chair of the Congregation Council of the congregation issuing the call, additional time may be granted to respond to a letter of call.

- *S14.13. a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical Bishop and for the following reasons:**
- 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;**
 - 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;**
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;**
 - 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;**
 - 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;**
 - 6) the dissolution of the congregation; or**
 - 7) suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.**
- b. When allegations of physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office have come to the attention of the Bishop of this Synod, the Bishop in his or her sole discretion may, or when such allegations have been brought to this Synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the Bishop shall, investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.**
- c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the Bishop of the Synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the Bishop of this Synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.**
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the Bishop of this Synod together with the committee described in *S14.13.b. shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by this Synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor at a legally called meeting after consultation with the Bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.**
- e. If, in the course of proceedings described in *S14.13.d., the committee concludes that there are grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action to the synodical Bishop who may bring charges, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of this synod.**

f. If, following the appointment of the committee described in *S14.13.b. or d., it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation(s) being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the Bishop of this Synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation(s) without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint synodical and churchwide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

*S14.14. Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or, if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.

* S14.15. The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book which shall remain its property. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the Bishop of this Synod that such records have been placed in his/her hands in good order by the departing pastor before:

- a. Installation in another field of labor, or
- b. The issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.

*S14.16. The pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before:

- a. Installation in another field of labor, or
- b. The issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.

* S14.17. During service to a congregation, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the Bishop of this Synod. The interim pastor and any ordained ministers who may assist shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the Bishop of this Synod that the parochial records, for the period for which the interim pastor was responsible, are in order.

* S14.18. With the approval of the synodical Bishop expressed in writing, which sets forth a clear statement of the purpose to be served by such a departure from the normal rule of permanency of the call as expressed in *S14.13., a congregation may call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the Bishop of this Synod or a representative of the Bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *S14.13.

S14.21. All ordained ministers under a call shall attend meetings of the Synod Assembly, and pastors of congregations shall also attend meetings of the Mission District to which the congregation belongs.

S14.40. Official Rosters of Laypersons

***S14.31. The provisions in the churchwide documents and such provisions as may be developed by the Division for Ministry governing associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers of this church shall apply in this Synod.**

- a. When a congregation of this Synod desires to call an associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister or a candidate for these official rosters of laypersons of this church:
 - 1) Such a congregation of this Synod shall consult the synodical Bishop before taking any steps leading to extending such a call.**
 - 2) Issuance of such a letter of call shall be in accord with criteria, policies, and procedures developed by the Division for Ministry, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**
 - 3) When the congregation has voted to issue a call to an associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister, the letter of call shall be submitted to the Bishop of this Synod for the Bishop's signature.****
- b. An associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister shall confer with the Bishop of this Synod before accepting a call within this Synod.**
- c. The call of a congregation, when accepted by an associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the individual, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical Bishop in accordance with policy developed by the Division for Ministry, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**
- d. Associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers on the roster of this Synod who are serving under call shall attend meetings of the Synod Assembly.**