



SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Guidelines for the Office Of Licensed Lay Minister

THE PURPOSE OF LICENSED LAY MINISTERS

The most important considerations in the training of workers in the church are that they comprehend the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and are able to articulate this good news. This is essential because the gospel is the center of the church's life and shapes its people into a community. Accordingly, the Constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeast Michigan Synod state that the purposes of the church are to proclaim God's love to meet human needs, worship God in Word and Sacraments and through lives of praise and service, nurture one another in the Word of God, and preserve the unity which God has given (see S6.02, SEMS Constitution). To fulfill these purposes, the Church through its constituted organizations provides leadership of various kinds, such as those ordained as pastors and deacons, and includes training, oversight and support for them.

The Synod may also authorize persons to assume other types of leadership roles in congregations, so that the purpose of the Church is served. The training, authorization for service, supervision and accountability of these individuals remain with the Synod.

The Office of Licensed Lay Ministry in the Southeast Michigan Synod has been created to enrich, amplify, and support the work of congregations. Primarily, the Licensed Lay Minister is to be involved in the mission and outreach of the church as it seeks to draw others into its fellowship, minister to the needs of the community, and strengthen the faithful lives of the baptized. As such, Licensed Lay Ministers may have a variety of functions, such as teacher, catechist, evangelist, social service coordinator, youth worker, or parish administrator. In addition, when it is not possible for a congregation or the Synod to provide ordained pastoral leadership, the Licensed Lay Minister may be authorized by the Bishop to preach and preside at Holy Communion.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A LICENSED LAY MINISTER

It is expected that for a person to become a Licensed Lay Minister in the Southeast Michigan Synod, he or she would:

- Be baptized, confirmed and active member of an ELCA congregation of the Southeast Michigan Synod for a period of not less than two years.
- Be of sound moral character and mature faith, and also show an interest in further spiritual formation.
- Possess the ability and willingness to participate in and complete a program of preparation leading to recognition as a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM Academy).
- Submit a Licensed Lay Minister application along with the appropriate recommendations and support forms from the pastor and congregation council.
- Complete an interview with the Licensed Lay Ministry Advisory Board, a psychological evaluation, and a background check.
- Serve in a supervised internship in their congregation or another congregation for a period of not less than six months, minimally 5-7 hours a week.
- Secure a Letter of Appointment to serve from their own congregation or another congregation, describing the Licensed Lay Minister's role and area of service.
- Participate in ongoing education events, such as workshops and retreats.

Licensing of ministers is for one year and is renewable subject to the approval of the congregation or organization where the person is serving, the Licensed Lay Ministry Advisory Board, and the Synod's Bishop, who will sign the annual approval.

PROGRAM OF PREPARATION

The Synod's program of preparation includes twelve units of study over the course of two years. Included in those units are the following, not necessarily in the order in which they will be offered:

- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Introduction to the New Testament
- Basic Systematic Theology
- The Lutheran Confessions
- Church History (to the Reformation)
- Church History (from the Reformation to the present)
- Christian Worship
- Communicating the Gospel
- Teaching the Word
- Practical Ministry (visitations)

- Issues in Christian Ethics
- Christian Discipleship

Units / classes are taught by pastors of the Synod or others as agreed to by the Advisory Board and approved by the Bishop. Normally, units consist of five sessions of three hours each. Time and place of instruction can be decided by the instructor and students enrolled in conjunction with the Advisory Board. Written and reading assignments are ordinarily a part of each unit. In addition, there will be retreats for those enrolled, both at the beginning and during the course of the two years. Even after training is complete, retreats are considered a vital part of the Licensed Lay Ministry Program, and all program participants are expected to attend.

This program is also open to church members who have no specific desire to be Licensed Lay Ministers, but who are looking for ways to deepen their understanding and be better equipped for effective service in their congregations and beyond. While readings and assignments will be given to all class participants in order to gain the most from the experience, those who intend to become Licensed Lay Ministers are required to complete all assignments.

At the beginning of the second year, the Advisory Board will interview those who want to move on toward becoming a Licensed Lay Minister, to review the first year, and to consider the other requirements for the office, including an internship.

After the second year of the program, a form of public recognition will occur for those who have satisfactorily completed the preparation – both those who are seeking to become Licensed Lay Ministers and those who are not. This recognition may be included in the Synod Assembly or a special ceremony at one of the synod congregations.

Auditing Course/Unit – individuals who are not sure about the pursuit of becoming a Licensed Lay Minister are invited to audit a course or two at a reduced rate. After two courses, individuals are requested to submit in writing if the Office of Licensed Lay Ministry is desired or not. If not, auditing classes can continue as desired. If the desire is to pursue the License, an additional fee and request to the Advisory Board is required.

INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENTS

All those who prepare to become Licensed Lay Ministers are expected to complete an internship of at least six months (preferably nine months). Ordinarily this internship will begin at the conclusion of the program classwork. Those who desire to serve in a pastoral vacancy will be expected to complete at least a nine-month approved internship (preferably one year and reviewed by the Advisory Board) under the supervision of a pastor and take

additional course work on Sacramental practices. The purpose of the internship is to enable the applicant to experience the kind of service that would be expected as a Licensed Lay Minister, to test that person's skills, interests, commitment, and acceptance of this role as a Licensed Lay Minister, and to continue preparation for the office of Licensed Lay Minister under the supervision of an experienced pastor who has been approved by the bishop.

Step 1: The first step in an internship is the agreement of a congregation and pastor to host and sponsor an internship.

Step 2: A design for this internship should be worked out between the intern, the supervising pastor, and the congregation involved – duties assigned, hours to be spent, schedule of supervisory consultations and evaluations, etc. (see Internship Application). It is expected that the internship supervisor will be a rostered pastor of the Synod and directly involved in the ministry being undertaken by the intern.

Step 3: The pastor is expected to submit a written evaluation of the intern and their internship to the Advisory Board at the midpoint and conclusion of the internship. The intern is also expected to submit a written report to the Advisory Board, describing the nature of the experience and their personal reflections on it.

AUTHORIZATION FOR SERVICE

Upon satisfactory completion of the program, a Letter of Appointment from a specific congregation or ministry, and a favorable recommendation from the Advisory Board, an individual may be authorized, by the Bishop, for service within the Synod as a Licensed Lay Minister.

A roster of Licensed Lay Ministers will be kept by the Synod and be made available to congregations within the Synod that may be looking for leadership assistance, as well as to the Bishop who may need to fill the needs of a congregation or ministry in the absence of an ordained pastor. The roster of Licensed Lay Ministers is for service in the Southeast Michigan Synod alone and does not give or imply the same or similar status elsewhere in the ELCA, nor should one expect, upon completion, to be assigned to a congregation in need.

It is recommended that the rite of installation (see Occasional Services, page 136ff) be used in the public worship of the congregation or ministry to be served to recognize and inaugurate the work of the Licensed Lay Minister.

OTHER MATTERS

Licensed Lay Minister is a term used to describe the office of the church in which one serves. It does not carry with it a title. Therefore, persons serving as Licensed Lay Ministers will

continue to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Upon licensure, the letters “LLM” may be written after their name.

The office of Licensed Lay Minister is a voluntary position for the sake of the mission and ministry of the Church. It should not be viewed by congregations or those who hold the office as a permanent arrangement for full or part-time employment or in place of an ordained minister. However, when Licensed Lay Ministers are asked to preach, they should be compensated for their services according to the current synodical guidelines for pulpit supply. Licensed Lay Ministers also should be compensated when asked to serve in a capacity for which a congregation usually offers compensation. Under any circumstances, the LLM should be reimbursed for any expenses incurred for the position.

Licensed Lay Ministers are not to engage in counseling, unless professionally trained for that ministry. This prohibition is to be specified in their Letter of Appointment. Licensed Lay Ministers are encouraged to assist pastors in any of the rites of the church when requested to do so. However, Licensed Lay Ministers may not preside at weddings. Ordinarily they also should not preside at baptisms, confirmations, or funerals. There may be exceptions, approved in advance by the Bishop, to preside at these rites (except the marriage prohibition).

Licensed Lay Ministers may wear an alb and cincture when leading or assisting in worship. Stoles and clerical collars are not to be worn at any time.

If a Licensed Lay Minister should serve in an interim or pastoral vacancy situation, in a “stated supply” capacity, or in a long-term arrangement with a congregation, particularly when a contract of any length is used, this service exception must be approved by the Bishop. Those serving in this capacity will be in a supervisory relationship with a neighboring rostered leader and in other synodically organized groups.

THE ADVISORY BOARD

Licensed Lay Ministers, including their training and supervision, are the responsibility of the Bishop of the Synod who may appoint others to assist him/her with the planning and oversight needed. This appointment may involve pastors to supply direct supervision for Licensed Lay Ministers in their place of service, and an Advisory Board to supervise the overall function of the program.

The Advisory Board has a membership of not more than nine persons, which membership may consist of rostered leaders of the Synod, instructors in the program, persons on the roster of Licensed Lay Ministers, and others the Bishop may deem appropriate to appoint. A member of the Bishop’s staff also will be a part of the committee and attend its meetings.

The Bishop will appoint a Director who shall have overall responsibility for the program and the Advisory Board. Appointment to the committee would be for two years and may be renewed as the bishop chooses. Leadership within the committee, chairperson and secretary, will be decided by the Board.

The duties of the Advisory Board include the following:

- Select instructors and places for classes to be held.
- Select units of study and regularly review curricula, syllabi, and instructor and student evaluations.
- Interview applicants for the office of Licensed Lay Minister and oversee their plans for successful completion of internships.
- Make recommendations to the Bishop about those who have completed the program and their readiness to be authorized as a Licensed Lay Minister.
- Make recommendations to the Bishop regarding those who wish to be renewed as a Licensed Lay Minister.
- Arrange for recognition for those who have completed the program as well as opportunities for continuing education for Licensed Lay Ministers.

FUTURE ISSUES

There are certain to be issues these guidelines have not been able to address. As these issues arise, they will be discussed by the Advisory Board and recommendations will be made to the Bishop. If needed, and the Bishop directs, changes will be brought to the Synod Council for approval. For more information or to make an appointment to discuss the LLM Academy, contact Robin McCants, Assistant to the Bishop at r.mccants@semisynod.com.

Registration Address:

**Licensed Lay Ministry, Southeast Michigan Synod
4800 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48201**