

**Southeast Michigan Synod Constitution for Licensed Lay Ministers
and Synod Authorized Ministers
Governing Documents as of May 2025**

- S8.12.A25 The Role of Licensed Lay Ministers and Synod Authorized Ministers:** The bishop of this synod may establish a program to train and certify people to serve as Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) and Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs), whose purpose is to enrich, amplify, and support the work of congregations. This program will fall under the synod bishop's oversight; the bishop will appoint a director who will have overall responsibility for the program, and an advisory board to assist the bishop and the director in administering the program.
- a. The Licensed Lay Minister is to be involved in the mission and outreach of the congregation as it seeks to draw others into its fellowship, minister to the needs of the community, and strengthen the faithful lives of the baptized. Licensed Lay Ministers may function as: preacher, teacher, catechist, evangelist, social service coordinator, youth worker, or parish administrator, or other roles developed in consultation with the bishop.
 - b. In addition, when it is not possible for a congregation or the Synod to provide ordained pastoral leadership for an extended period of time, a Licensed Lay Minister may be assigned the role of a Synod Authorized Minister. This assignment shall be reviewed annually and approved by the Bishop, Director, and Advisory Board. Both LLMs and SAMs must be authorized by the Bishop to preach; the Bishop must give special permission for LLMs or SAMs to preside at Holy Communion and Holy Baptism.
- S8.12.B25 Requirements for Licensed Lay Ministers:** A Licensed Lay Minister in the Southeast Michigan Synod shall:
- a. Be baptized, confirmed and an active member of an ELCA congregation of the Southeast Michigan Synod for a period of not less than two years.
 - b. Be of sound moral character and mature faith and also show an interest in further spiritual formation.
 - c. Possess the ability and willingness to participate in and complete a program of preparation leading to recognition as a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM Academy).
 - d. Submit a Licensed Lay Ministry application along with the appropriate recommendations and support forms from the pastor and congregation council.
 - e. Complete an interview with the Licensed Lay Ministry Advisory Board, a psychological evaluation, and a background check (for more information, contact the Synod Office).

**Southeast Michigan Synod Constitution for Licensed Lay Ministers
and Synod Authorized Ministers
Governing Documents as of May 2025**

- f. 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.
- g. Secure a Letter of Appointment for the Office of the Bishop to serve in their own congregation or another congregation, describing the Licensed Lay Minister's role and area of service.
- h. Licensed Lay Ministers may serve within the Synod as pulpit supply. Approval for this service requires at least two years of preaching plus a letter a recommendation submitted to the Advisory Board from a mentor and/or Conference Dean and/or pastor who can attest to the candidate's faith growth and biblical understanding.
- i. Maintain a regular relationship with an approved mentor who is rostered by the ELCA (clergy or deacon) who provides annual reports of the mentor/mentee relationship in advance of annual interviews for licensing. Non-ELCA mentors must be approved by the Advisory Board and/or the Synod's Bishop.
- j. Participate in ongoing education events, such as workshops and retreats. Licensing of LLMs or SAMs 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 for licensing.

S8.12.C25 Requirements for Synod Authorized Ministers: Upon successful completion of the training for LLMs and after at least two years of service, LLMs may be nominated to service as a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM). Those serving in this capacity will be in a supervisory relationship with the Bishop, their Conference Dean and the Advisory Board. SAMs are required to follow the guidelines and requirements set forth for all Licensed Lay Ministers of the Southeast Michigan Synod.

- a. SAMs must be nominated by the Advisory Board and approved by the Bishop to serve as a pastoral presence in a congregation.
- b. SAMs may be required to complete further preparation as determined in consultation by the Bishop, Director and Advisory Board. This preparation may include a second approved internship and additional coursework on Sacramental Practices, Liturgy Planning and Preaching.

S8.12.D25 Requirements for the Preparation of LLMs and SAMs: The Synod's program of preparation includes twelve units of study over the course of two years.

Those who are in preparation to become Licensed Lay Ministers are expected to complete an internship of at least six months (SAMs preferably nine

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months). Ordinarily this internship will begin at the conclusion of the program classwork.

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.

The bishop may authorize Licensed Lay Ministers to serve within the Synod upon satisfactory completion of the program, a Letter of Appointment from a specific congregation or ministry, and a favorable recommendation from the Advisory Board. A roster of Licensed Lay Ministers will be kept by the Synod and made available to congregations within the Synod that may be looking for leadership assistance.

Licensed Lay Ministers shall be expected to abide by the ELCA's Definition and Guidelines for Discipline, renew Boundaries Training every three years, and undergo background checks as required by the synod bishop or the director of the LLM/SAM Program.

- S8.12.E25 Compensation for LLMs and SAMs: Ordinarily, LLMs and SAMs will be compensated by the congregation where they are serving. LLMs shall receive the Synod's posted pulpit supply rate for preaching. It is expected that SAMs will receive a contract from the congregation where they serve. This contract shall be developed in consultation with the Bishop's Office and will define additional duties, responsibilities and additional compensation.