



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

North/West Lower Michigan Synod  
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## Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM)

Vision and Expectations for Commissioned Leaders in the  
North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members. 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. [Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) (7.11)*

This document articulates the vision and expectations for Commissioned Leaders in this church. This document should not be understood as a juridical standard. Neither is it intended to suggest unrealistic or impossible expectations for those who serve in leadership in this church. Instead, it seeks to express the high value and importance that this church places in those who are called to serve in one of its ministries, both lay and ordained. This vision and these expectations are for those Leaders who are commissioned by the ministry through which they serve, as well as a tool for participants in *Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM)* to discern their calling.

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod equips leaders for mission and ministry by providing foundational theological education through its partnership with Trinity Lutheran Seminary, leadership development through sessions on various ministry applications, and spiritual formation through relationships with other students and mentors. Upon successful completion of the ELMM process, individuals are recognized by the Bishop and Synod Assembly. We celebrate their commitment to spiritual growth and faith formation and their desire to share their gifts and live Godly lives.

Thus prepared and recognized, a person is eligible to serve as a Commissioned Leader in their congregation as deemed appropriate by their pastor and congregation council. No congregation is obligated to commission one who has completed the ELMM process.

Commissioned Leaders are co-workers in ministry with Ministers of Word and Sacrament (ordained pastors) and Ministers of Word and Service (associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, deaconesses.) They understand constitutional requirements for ordained ministers to preach the word and administer the sacraments, and synodical Bishops' responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Commissioned Leaders support their pastors and help their congregations understand that as the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we are church together.



Those who complete the ELMM process may serve on Synod committees at the invitation of the Bishop or the Bishop's staff and/or they may sense a call to serve in their community in some way. The Bishop is under no obligation to invite them to serve on Synod committees nor to recommend them for, or place them in, community service roles. This holds true regardless of whether they are commissioned by their congregation for specific areas of ministry.

Individuals who complete the ELMM process are not appointed by the Bishop to serve in place of a congregation's pastor, nor are they authorized to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. This holds true regardless of whether they are commissioned by their congregation for specific areas of ministry.

Commissioned Leaders shall be:

- Committed to Christ
- Willing to accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith accepted by the ELCA
- Able to demonstrate an aptness, ability, and willingness to serve in ministries which equip and support the people of God
- Diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministries to which they are called
- Striving to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Gospel

These basic standards and the public statements of commitment contained in the service of commissioning provide a framework for the vision and expectations for Commissioned Leaders in the congregations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

During the service of installation and commissioning, the following questions may be asked:

- "Will you assume this ministry in the confidence that it comes from God?"
- "Will you carry out this ministry in accordance with the teachings and practice of the Lutheran Church?"
- "Will you be diligent in your study of the Holy Scriptures and faithful in your use of the means of grace and in prayer?"
- "Will you trust in God's care, seek to grow in love for those you serve, strive for excellence in your skills, and adorn the Gospel of God with a godly life?"

## **I. SERVING IN FAITHFULNESS**

### **Will you assume this ministry in the confidence that it comes from God?**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believes that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith" (Small Catechism, Article III). It is the Spirit that 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.



The North/West Lower Michigan Synod, therefore, understands that Commissioned Leaders:

- are called by the Holy Spirit through the church and are not self-chosen or self-appointed
- are called to a ministry of servanthood in full co-operation with the whole people of God, both lay and ordained
- consider ministry a privilege rather than a right

Believing that this ministry comes from God, Commissioned Leaders serve believing that the Holy Spirit will uphold, strengthen and sustain them as they provide service and leadership in the church's ministry.

## **II. FAITHFULNESS TO THE CHURCH'S CONFESSION**

**"Will you carry out this ministry in accordance with the teachings and practice of the Lutheran Church?"**

Commissioned Leaders accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as stated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution.

This promise includes confession and teaching the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life.

This promise includes acceptance and confession of the ecumenical creeds which 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.

## **III. FAITHFUL RENEWAL**

**"Will you be diligent in your study of the Holy Scriptures and faithful in your use of the means of grace and in prayer?"**

Commissioned Leaders-- in partnership with ordained clergy and rostered leaders--enable and equip others in their Christian lives and for their ministry in the world as the baptized people of God. In order to do this, Commissioned Leaders develop and nurture a sound knowledge of the Scriptures, both intellectually and devotionally. Commissioned Leaders seek regular opportunities for personal participation in communal and personal devotion and worship.



#### **IV. FAITHFUL LIVING**

**"Will you trust in God's care, seek to grow in love for those you serve, strive for excellence in your skills, and adorn the Gospel of God with a godly life?"**

Commissioned Leaders must be members of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As a member of such a community of faith, the Commissioned Leader practices the qualities of Christian community: mutual love and support are given, repentance and forgiveness are practiced, and healing is experienced.

Commissioned Leaders support both the work of the congregations, institutions or agencies in which they serve, and also the synodical and churchwide ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Commissioned Leaders work in a supportive relationship with pastors and other leaders in ministry, and to demonstrate accountability to those in positions of leadership and oversight in this church.

Commissioned Leaders recognize the importance of life-long growth in learning. Such growth is intended to renew, extend, and deepen their insight into the Scriptures and faith. It is intended to strengthen their interpersonal skills, and enable them to respond to the insights and challenges of the world with greater awareness and a more faithful witness. In an increasingly complex and educated society, the development of informed intellectual and professional skills is crucial to competent ministry. This Synod expects Commissioned Leaders to participate in regular and disciplined time of personal study, study in the company of others, and in programs of continuing education.

Commissioned Leaders need to be examples of self-care, as well as caring for others. Caring for self includes seeking counseling and/or medical care when needed, as well as adequate time taken for vacation and rest.

Commissioned Leaders promise to be examples of responsible and faithful living in the exercise of God's gifts of sexuality and family, the qualities of which include the following:

**Responsibility to family** - Whether married or single, Commissioned Leaders are expected to uphold an understanding of marriage in their public ministry as well as in private life that is biblically informed and consistent with the teachings of this church. Spouse and children, if any, are to be regarded with love, respect, and commitment. Within the family, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and mutual care are to be expressed.



**Sexual Conduct** - The expectations of this Synod regarding the sexual conduct of its Commissioned Leaders are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God and that all Christians are to live in such a way as to honor this gift. All who serve in public ministry are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for the purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction of others. Single persons are expected to live a chaste life. Married persons are expected to live in fidelity to their spouses, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a marriage relationship that is mutual and faithful.

**Christ-like Service** - Commissioned Leaders are called to ministries which equip and support the ministries of the whole people of God. The charges to witness and minister to the world are given to the church today as they were given to the apostles of the early church and to all Christians throughout history. 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 of God's people; and the promise of everlasting life. The testimony of these acts of God's grace and forgiveness are expressed in both word and deed carried out in a lifestyle exemplified by Christ the servant.

Commissioned Leaders look to I Cor 13 as a model for loving conduct. They live out faithfulness through keeping commitments in a timely manner, and through clear communication. Called to render a particular service in the church, Commissioned Leaders witness to the world through expressions of compassion, hospitality, patience, forgiveness; through seeking peace and justice for all people; through care for all of God's creation; and through sharing faith in various expressions and functions of ministry.

*Our Lord, who came among us as a servant, calls us to faith and a life of loving service to our neighbor. You stand among us as one called to render a particular service, a gift from God to inspire us to love and good works. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, guide, bless, and keep you, that you may be faithful in the ministry to which you have been called.*

I have read, understand, and accept the "Visions and Expectations: Commissioned Leaders in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America".

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Signature

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Date