



# **A Handbook for LPA students, Active LPAs, and Mentors.**

Revised November 2020

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Page</b>	<b>Topic</b>
2	Contact Information
2	Welcome
2	Why Should I Consider Becoming an LPA?
2	What do LPAs do?
3	Application to the LPA Program
3	LPA Curriculum and Retreats
4	Retreats
4	Foundational Courses
5	→ Old Testament
5	→ New Testament
5	→ Church History
6	→ Lutheran Theology
7	Mentor Guided Activities
7	Expectations for Mentor Pastors
8	General Guidelines for Mentor Pastors
8	Detailed Guidelines for Mentor Pastors
10	Requirements for a Certificate of Completion
10	Requirements for Continued Leadership as an LPA
10	Code of Practice for Authorized Lay Leaders:
10	→ Permission for Worship Leadership
11	→ Congregational Settings
11	→ Expectations for LPAs
12	→ Continuing Education for LPAs
12	→ Discipline

## Appendices

13	Appendix A: Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized or Licensed Ministries (ELCA Church Council)
15	Appendix B: LPA Candidate Information
16	Appendix C: Instructions for Background Checks
17	Appendix D: Sample Lay License
18	Appendix E: Trustworthy Servants of the People of God
27	Appendix F: Further Options for Foundational Courses (Not included in tuition)
34	Appendix G: Guidelines for Licensing Worship Leadership

## **Contact Information**

Montana Synod Office: (406) 453-1461 1221 24<sup>th</sup> Street South Great Falls, MT 59405  
Program Administrator: Rev. Jason Asselstine [jasselstine@montanasynod.org](mailto:jasselstine@montanasynod.org)  
Admin Support: Candi Standall [cstandall@montanasynod.org](mailto:cstandall@montanasynod.org)  
LPA East Admin: Rev. Audrey Rydbom (406) 433-3350 [audrey.rydbom@yahoo.com](mailto:audrey.rydbom@yahoo.com)

## **Welcome**

The Montana Synod Lay Pastoral Associate (LPA) program is one way that lay men and women use their gifts in service to the Gospel through partnership with the Synod and local congregations. It is an intentional way of supporting and training leaders for the purpose of faith development and nurturing aptitude in the areas of spirituality, biblical knowledge, Church history, worship leadership, pastoral care, and the proclamation of the gospel (preaching). The LPA program also serves to connect individuals from around the synod as colleagues to support and encourage one another through the LPA journey and beyond.

## **Why should I consider becoming an LPA?**

Two reasons: The Church needs you. You need the Church.

Have you ever asked yourself, “What is God calling me to do right now? How can I best serve God and my neighbor? What gifts do I have that I am not using?” If so, then consider the answer to these questions now. Then consider this...

Congregations all over the world are changing. We are no longer the Church we once were. God is doing a new thing. The Church needs trained lay leaders to use their gifts in a variety of ways, such as leading worship and bible studies or giving pastoral care and teaching.

The Church has always been a place of community and a safe place to wonder about the many ways God can and does use us. We are by nature communal individuals...we need each other. Together we are the Body of Christ, created for relationship. This community is the best place to explore and hone your spiritual gifts.

## **What do LPAs do?**

LPAs serve as a resource for congregations. They make themselves available for pulpit supply when a pastor is gone, visit members at home and in the hospital, become assisting ministers for worship, and serve on a variety of synod and congregational committees. Some even serve long-term in a congregation during a pastoral vacancy as a Synodically Authorized Minister (SAM). Some take the course because their pastor saw gifts in them, or they simply wanted to broaden their knowledge of the Bible and the Church.

## Application to The LPA Program

Students in the LPA program are active, confirmed, communing, and contributing members of Montana Synod congregations. They are recognized as leaders by their congregations, uphold the highest standards of the Christian life, are faithful in their personal lives, and agree to live by the standards expressed in *Trustworthy Servants* (**Appendix E**). They work closely with a mentoring ordained minister (normally the pastor of their home congregation) throughout the training process. Or by a mentor assigned by the Synod leadership.

Applications to participate in the LPA program must include the following items:

- Completed application form, including basic personal information.
- A written or oral reference from the applicant's pastor/mentor.
- A letter of reference from the applicant's Congregation Council.
- Original reports from the required background check (**Appendix C**) completed within the last 5 years.

Based on the above items, the Montana Synod determines whether an applicant may be admitted to the LPA program. Accepted applicants are expected to remit tuition (\$650 payable in two yearly installments of \$325) in a timely manner and making arrangements with the Synod office if an installment plan is necessary.

**Age:** There are no age limitations. However, individuals must be able to complete the assigned work and be able to work with a mentor. We have had high school students and those in their 80's attend. If you have questions talk to your mentor or call the Synod office.

## LPA Curriculum & Retreats

The LPA course consists of 3 parts:

1. **4 retreats** (Spirituality, Worship, Preaching, Pastoral Care) They are held in April and October each year, beginning Friday evening through Saturday afternoon.
2. **Foundational Courses** (Old Testament, New Testament, Church History and Lutheran Theology).
3. **Mentor Guided Activities** (Planning and Leading Bible Study, Preparation for Preaching, Visitation/Prayer and Care of the Souls, Teaching the Catechism).

Each quarter (after the retreat weekends), students will have a Foundation Course to complete on their own. These are worked on one at a time, with each course expected to be completed before the next group gathering. The only exception is the first course, which students will receive in October of the first training year.

## Retreats

There are no good substitutes for attending the retreats, the value of which goes far beyond the practical and advertised learning that takes place while attending the session. The relationships fostered and collegially formed by coming together is as important as the education received. It is for this reason that we rarely offer a substitute for a retreat missed. Retreats are required.

### **LPA West** (At the Ursuline Center, Great Falls)

Fall, year 1: Prayer (Oct. 2021)

Spring, year 1: Worship (April 9-10, 2022)

Fall, year 2: Preaching (Oct. 1-2, 2022)

Spring, year 2: Pastoral Care (April 1-2, 2023)

### **LPA East** (At Pella Lutheran Church, Sidney)

Fall, year 1: Prayer (Oct. 18-19, 2019)

Spring, year 1: Worship (~~April 17-18, 2020~~) (rescheduled to April 2021)

Fall, year 2: Preaching (~~Oct. 16-17, 2020~~) (rescheduled to Oct. 2021)

Spring, year 2: Pastoral Care (~~April 16-17, 2021~~) (rescheduled to April 2022)

### **Retreat Housing and Meals**

In Great Falls, the retreats will be held at the Ursuline Center (2300 Central Ave). Each room is dorm style with a shared bathroom. All meals are family style. Coffee, tea and light snacks are also provided during the retreat. *All room and board is covered by your tuition.*

In Sidney, the retreats will be held at Pella Lutheran Church (418 West Main St.). *Meals and snacks will be provided. Hotel accommodations will be made in Sidney for your stay and are covered by your tuition.*

## Foundational Courses

Students are expected to complete courses in four areas:

1. Old Testament
2. New Testament
3. Church History
4. Lutheran Theology

The cost of these resources is included in the tuition fees. At the first retreat students will be given a flash drive that includes all the resources needed for the program.

In the back of this handbook are alternate resources should students wish to study more in depth in one of the sections. However, the cost of these options is not included in the tuition fee.

Here are the courses included in your registration cost:

## **Old Testament**

Digital presentation by Dr. Michael Chan

### Description:

The Old Testament is challenging literature for Christian leaders. This course will persuade students that the Old Testament is not only a helpful companion in ministry, but that it is also invaluable. All lectures are given with preaching, teaching, and pastoral care in view. These lectures will provide crucial information on Israel's history and narratives, prophetic literature, wisdom literature, and why Scripture matters in the first place.

Your instructor is Dr. Michael Chan, Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary. Dr. Chan did his Ph.D. work at Emory University and the University of Helsinki. The author of several books. Dr. Chan's research focuses on developing resources for Christian leaders, apocalyptic literature, and the prophets.

### Details:

- Course Introduction (18 minutes)
- Part 1: Creation, Exile, and Return (74 minutes)
- Part 2: Prophetic Imagination (62 minutes)
- Part 3: Wisdom Literature (89 minutes)
- Part 4: Why Scripture Matters (44 minutes)

## **New Testament**

An Introduction to the New Testament with Dr. James Aageson

The New Testament documents are central to the Christian faith and to historic Christianity. By ecumenical consensus among all Christian traditions, the New Testament is central to the faith, life, and worship of the Church. It is the word of God and it conveys the word of God. Even as the New Testament is central to all Christian traditions, interpretations of these texts often vary widely. This makes for a rich and fascinating tapestry of readings in the history of New Testament interpretation. This course is an introduction to the New Testament designed for a general audience and for lay people who may be preparing themselves for congregational leadership.

Notes: Jim is a Lutheran Professor.

Details: This is also included on the flash drive given to you during registration.

## **Church History**

**Reformation Roots** (Select Learning resource)

Each session is 20-30 minutes long and is accompanied by a study guide designed for 50-60 minutes of class time. Featured presenters include: Martin Marty, Hans Wiersma, Phil Adamo, Mark Tranvik, Mickey Mattox, Victoria Christman, Darrell Jodock, Mickey McCormick, Ron Rittgers, Robert Christman, Laruel Carrington, Kirsi Stjerna, Euan Kerr Cameron, Mark Valeri, Eric Carlson, William Cahoy and Shawn Colberg.

Session 1: From Night to Dawn: the Stage is set for the Reformation  
Session 2: From bondage to Freedom: Luther Rediscovered Grace  
Session 3: From Scholar to Provocateur: Luther Takes on the Church  
Session 4: From Priest to Outlaw  
Session 5: From Heretic to Hero  
Session 6: From Scholar to Father: The Domestic Luther  
Session 7: From Simple to Complex: The New Church Finds Common Ground  
Bonus Session 8: Luther's Legacy  
Session 9: Swiss Reformation: A Rationalist's Revolt  
Session 10: Radical Reformation: Revolution and Withdrawal  
Session 11: English Reformation: The Political Reformation  
Session 12: The Catholic Reformation: Reaction and Renewal

Details: Please do not make copies of this resource. The Synod pays Select Learning for each copy we make.

## **Lutheran Theology**

### **Lutheran Theology 1.0**

Even though "theology" sounds like a scary word, it is something we all do every day as we explore questions about how God engages our lives. Lutheran Theology 1.0 will dig down to the roots of the basic Lutheran beliefs and understandings of God's working in our lives as well as in and through the Church. We will explore central concepts of Lutheran theology like "justification by grace through faith," "gospel and law," the Word of God, and preaching and reading scripture through Lutheran lenses. This will be an introduction to Lutheran theology that is designed for a general audience. There will be some reading required, most of which will be provided to you by the program.

Text: *Lutheran Trump Cards* by Dave Daubert (used throughout)

Session 1 – Intro to Lutheran Theology: Definitions and Concepts  
Session 2 – Basics of Lutheran Theology: Faith of a Child (Small and Lg Catechisms)  
Session 3 – "Justification by Grace through Faith": What does this mean? (Romans)  
Session 4 – "Freedom of a Christian": The Freedom of Christ Given (Luther's essay)  
Session 5 – "Freedom of a Christian": The Freedom of Christ Lived (Galatians)  
Session 6 – Discipleship: Following Christ into God's World  
Session 7 – Preaching and Reading Scripture Lutheran Style  
Session 8 – The ELCA and You: What does it mean (and not mean) to be part of the ELCA?  
Presented by Bishop Laurie Jungling.

Details: This is also included on the flash drive given to you during registration.

**Exceptions:** If a candidate has already taken a class equivalent to those offered here it may count toward the course requirements of this program. Please submit a transcript to the synod office or talk to the Bishop if you have questions.

The LPA Program is designed to be finished in two years. It begins in October and ends the second year, just prior to Synod Assembly the first week in June. The candidates will be recognized at the Synod Assembly only after all the requirements have been met. (pg.5)

This is the typical order of required home courses:

Year 1, Oct-April: Intro to Old Testament

Year 1, April-Oct: Intro to New Testament

Year 2, Oct-April: History of Christianity (Reformation Roots)

Year 2, April-June: Intro to Lutheran Theology

However, candidates are welcome to take classes in any order they choose. In some cases, it may take more than two years.

## **Mentor Guided Activities**

Mentoring Pastors are a key partner in the training of lay leaders through the LPA Program, assisting Montana Synod and class instructors in a student's education and supervision. Mentor Pastors make a commitment of their time and expertise to support the equipping of lay leaders for ministry. Mentor Pastors provide individual attention and support to students as they engage in theological education and ministry practice. They provide valuable feedback both to students and the Montana Synod about a student's development. Mentor Pastors invite and encourage students to apply what they've learned in their own congregational setting through experiences of leadership and of study.

A Mentor Pastor shall:

- Be an ordained minister on the roster of the Montana Synod, ELCA (or full communion partner.)
- Be approved as a Mentor Pastor by the Bishop.
- Clearly understand and be committed without reservation to the programs of the LPA.
- Be an effective model for and guide to the LPA student.
- Maintain the Mentor Pastor relationship with the student unless the relationship is terminated in consultation with the Bishop.

The responsibilities of the Mentor Pastor are as follows:

*Please note that these are **guidelines** which may have to be adapted to meet the contextual needs of each LPA candidate and congregation.*

*The following has been gleaned from various sources, especially from the experiences of mentors and candidates who have completed this process and shared their experiences and expertise.*

### **Expectations for Mentor Pastors**

Mentoring Pastors are a key partner in the continued training of LPAs. Mentor Pastors are local, ordained ministers who, in conjunction with the Bishop's office, provide for the ongoing supervision and accountability of Montana Synod LPAs.

A Mentor Pastor is expected (*as are all rostered leaders*) to always uphold the standards outlined in their letter of call and in the ELCA documented definitions and guidelines for discipline. A Mentor Pastor who violates these standards and practices may be terminated by the Bishop in his/her role as a mentor and be subjected to further discipline according to the practices of the ELCA.

If a Pastor Mentor is unable to fulfill his/her role as mentor, he/she is to alert the Synod office as soon as possible to allow time to find a new Mentor Pastor.

### **General Guidelines for Mentor Pastors**

Regular (at least monthly) meetings with the LPA student. This is the opportunity to address questions that come up in the everyday context of serving a congregation, i.e.:

- worship planning for regular Sunday services and special services (including funerals)
- sermon preparation and resources
- theological questions
- ministry of sacrament questions
- working with the Church council
- visitation and care of souls
- challenges in congregational life
- personal spiritual practices
- personal boundaries with others

Sharing resources. The Mentor Pastor can be tremendously helpful by sharing resources from his or her own library or their Church's library and other resources.

Worship planning meetings, classes, etc. Invite the LPA student to attend various meetings and classes at the Mentor's Church in order to learn and get exposure to various ideas and ways of teaching, planning, carrying out the work of the Church.

Introducing the LPA to clergy in the area. Facilitating the establishment of relationships with area-wide clergy helps give LPAs a network of support and an opening to work together with other congregations in ministering to the community.

Inviting and encouraging the LPA to participate in clergy activities. This would include cluster meetings, classes and workshops offered by NRIT, other workshops and trainings and retreats, installations and ordinations, pastor's retreats, etc. The introduction of ordained clergy to the LPA is helpful because many are not familiar with the LPA program yet.

### **Detailed Guidelines for Mentor Pastors**

Mentor Pastors will provide for learning in four specific areas during the LPA training course (*The Synod office will provide progress forms to document this training*):

1. Planning and Leading Bible Study
2. Preparation for Preaching
3. Visitation/Prayer and Care Of The Souls
4. Teaching the Catechism

Ways in which Mentor Pastors might integrate these four foci into their congregation's week-in week-out activity include:

1. Over the LPA student's two years be deliberate about asking them to lead in these areas.
  - Going away on vacation? Ask them to preach and get permission, from the Bishop, too.
  - Need some variety in your Sunday morning Adult Education program? Ask them to lead six week Bible Study either by developing their own study or by using one already made.
  - When doing hospital and nursing home visits invite the student to go along with you for a few times, and then turn them loose to do a few visits on their own.
  - What about teaching the confirmation?
  - Don't forget to offer feedback. The student will be eager to hear how they did and what you think.
  - This kind of support is crucial for their encouragement, confidence, and identity-development as a ministry leader.

## 2. Other Suggestions

It is important and helpful to have regular meetings to discuss how the program is going for the student.

- You will want to meet at least once every month. A one-hour meeting ought to suffice.
- This is a time for feedback, constructive criticism, and encouragement in regard to the areas of the learning mentioned above.
- Just as important, this can be a time to check-in on how the process is going. Taking on leadership roles in the congregational setting can be a dynamic process. The student may have doubts about their ability.
- They may not be sure about how to handle a particular situation that comes along with the tasks an LPA is certified to carry-out. So, this regular time of checking-in will be helpful to get a read on how the student is handling the process both inwardly and outwardly.

Discuss how the learning is going.

- Many students will be coming into contact with new forms of biblical criticism. And most of this learning is done through video tapes so there is no opportunity to ask the professor questions.
- You will be needed to answer questions, help make sense of the various forms of criticism, help the student understand the purpose of reading the Bible in these various ways, and to encourage them to keep an open mind about what they are being taught.
- Of course, this should be done in a "mentoring sort of way." That is, it is important for you to respect the integrity of the student's growth and learning process.
- You will want them to see the texts and other resources they are using to familiarize yourself with their coursework.

Most importantly, just try things.

- The mentor/student relationship can develop in a variety of ways.
- The only way it shouldn't develop is as no relationship at all.
- Other than that: do whatever works to nurture the growth and experience of the student.

## **Requirements for a Certificate of Completion**

Students of the LPA training program who have satisfied all requirements will receive a certificate of completion at program's end. Those students will have:

- Attended all class sessions. If it is necessary that a student miss a session an acceptable replacement may be negotiated with the Synod office or, participate in the missed class with the next LPA class.
- Completed all assignments as required, both written and tasked in the home study/mentor portions.
- Initiated regular meetings with their Mentor Pastor. Students are expected to meet with their mentor pastor prior to each retreat class to discuss resource materials and study preparations, and subsequent to each retreat class to reflect on the students' learning experience.
- Completed quarterly evaluations as requested for each home-study and mentor-guided training.

## **Requirements for Continued Leadership as an LPA**

Once all the requirements have been met and an individual has been recognized as an LPA in the Montana Synod, to remain active as an LPA certain annual requirements must be met:

1. 20 hours of Continuing education each year
2. Annual Report to the Bishop. (Sent by the Synod in December)
3. A typed manuscript of a preached sermon may be requested.
4. Remain in Good standing in an ELCA congregation.

"Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synodical Bishop, who need not specify the reason" ("Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized or Licensed Ministries" of the ELCA--CC95.04.47t) (**Appendix A**).

## **Code of Practice for LPAs**

### **Permission for Worship Leadership**

Leading worship in an ELCA congregation does not, by itself, require an authorization by the Bishop. However, if an LPA is to preach or preside over Communion, they would need to be authorized each instance.

An Authorized Lay Worship Leader may preside at the Eucharist provided they receive the permission of the Bishop for each specific occasion (**Appendix D**). A request for permission to preside may be made in one of the following ways:

- A pastor, or congregational president if no pastor is available, may contact an LPA to ask that person to lead worship, preach, and preside at their congregation on a particular date. The requesting individual then emails the office of the Bishop for a Lay License for the person to preside at the Eucharist at a specified place and time.

- The Bishop may give written permission for an LPA in special situations to lead worship, preach, and preside at a particular congregation for an extended period of time. Again, a request is emailed to the Synod office and once approved by the Bishop, a Lay License, indicating their assignment, is sent from the office of the Bishop to the LPA and is copied to the requesting individual or congregation to be served.

The congregational bulletin should list that the LPA is there with a license from the Bishop.

## **Congregational Settings**

LPAs are not authorized to serve in congregations outside of the Montana Synod of the ELCA. If asked to serve in a congregation of another denomination or synod, LPAs may only respond as individuals at their own discretion but are not authorized by the Bishop of the Montana Synod to do so. LPA's are discouraged from preaching at congregations that have splintered off the ELCA.

LPAs may lead worship in union congregations with the permission of the office of the Bishop under the supervision of the Lutheran pastor of the union congregation. When a union congregation is served by a non-Lutheran pastor, special arrangements are made through the office of the Bishop.

LPAs are not authorized to participate in worship leadership in local ecumenical services except under the permission and supervision of their home pastor.

## **Expectations for LPAs**

All LPA's shall:

- Represent the Lord and his Church, the ELCA, and the Montana Synod with the grace, dignity, respect, and responsibility required of their position.
- Report any difficulties and/or irregularities to the office of the Bishop within 48 hours of their designated visit to a congregation.
- Use only this title (LPA) to identify themselves in person or in print. They shall never use the title Reverend, Pastor, Deacon, etc., in person or in print.
- Never wear a clerical collar or other attire which specifically identifies those individuals called to and ordained for the Office of Word and Sacrament.
- Follow the normal worship practices of the congregations in which they are serving.
- Be diligent in preparing to lead worship.
- Carry written authorization from the Bishop when presiding at the Eucharist.
- Be entitled to compensation for their services at the supply rate set by the Montana Synod, including reimbursement for mileage at the current IRS reimbursement rate.
- Wear a white alb when leading worship, and a cincture and/or cross, if desired. Stoles of any kind and chasubles are inappropriate and shall not be worn. Street clothes are also fine where appropriate.
- Normally NOT baptize someone during a regular service of worship or in private except under the provisions of the Church for emergency baptisms. (Any Christian may baptize in an emergency situation and report such a baptism to the pastor of the congregation.)
- NOT officiate at a wedding, since they are not authorized to do so by the Synod or ELCA.

- Conduct funerals in the absence of a pastor and with proper authorization from the congregational council and Bishop.
- Have a written statement of authorization by the Bishop included in the worship bulletin of congregations in which LPAs are preaching or presiding at the Eucharist.

## **Continuing Education for LPAs**

LPAs need opportunities for continued growth in competence and understanding as they utilize their gifts in ministry. Continuing education is how leaders enhance ministry abilities, acquire new skills, and experience personal growth for more effective ministry. It is the expectation of the Montana Synod that each LPA participate in at least 20 hours of continuing education experience annually. Such experiences may include formal classes or workshops, independent study, participation in pericope study groups, and the like. The continuing education experience shall be included in their annual report to the Bishop.

## **Discipline**

LPAs hold a unique and important public position and responsibility in the Montana Synod and the Church at large. This position should never be taken lightly. Failure to function appropriately as an LPA shall result in immediate discipline through the office of the Bishop and may include termination of authorization and removal from the role of LPA of this synod. Questionable or inappropriate behavior on the part of an LPA shall be reported to the office of the Bishop immediately.

**“Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized or Licensed Ministries” (CC95.04.47t)**

These guidelines relate to bylaw 7.61.01. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* that addresses the issue of providing Word and Sacrament ministry through the use of synodically authorized ministry, where it is not possible to provide appropriate ordained pastoral leadership. Those who are authorized for such ministry within a synod are not rostered by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (unless already serving on a roster of this Church) but are authorized to provide a specific ministry within a particular setting for a designated period of time.

Principle 40 and related sections in “The Use of the Means of Grace—A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament,” which was adopted “for guidance and practice” by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, also addresses this issue.

- A. **Identification of Need:** The synod identifies a congregation or other ministry where ordained pastoral leadership is not available for an extended period of time and where synodically authorized ministry may be appropriate. Because of the relationship of an authorized lay ministry to those serving in the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament, pastors serving congregations within the area where this ministry need is located normally will be consulted in this determination.
- B. **Invitation to Service:** An individual who demonstrates the potential for service is invited by the synod to enter a program of preparation. An individual who has been removed from rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by reason of misconduct, or has been denied continuance in candidacy by reason of misconduct is precluded from serving in a synodically authorized ministry of this Church.
- C. **Qualifications:** A person invited to prepare for a synodically authorized ministry should be an active member of an ELCA congregation for at least one year. Prior to preparing to serve in synodically authorized ministry an individual must have:
  - 1. Been recommended by the individual’s pastor and congregation council;
  - 2. Consulted with synodical staff and/or the synodical committee responsible for the synod’s program of preparation; and
  - 3. Demonstrated the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synodically authorized ministry.

In making its determination concerning an individual’s eligibility to serve in a synodically authorized ministry, the synod will interview the applicant and will obtain written responses to the “Entrance Information Questions” in the “Candidacy Manual.” The synod will also obtain a background check, as outlined in the “Candidacy Manual,” on each individual being considered for authorization in the synod.

- D. **Synodical Committee for Authorized Ministry:** An appropriate synodical board or committee may be appointed by the Synod Council to provide the synodical Bishop with recommendations concerning the authorization of and accountability for authorized ministries within the synod. This committee may be a sub-committee of the synodical Candidacy Committee. When it is a separate committee, it should be closely related to the synod Candidacy Committee. In either case, the work of the two is distinct. The synodical committee or synod staff determines the educational program within the synod for persons considered for service in an authorized ministry; determines the eligibility for individuals to enter this program of preparation; and advises the Bishop on the suitability of an individual for service in a synodically authorized ministry.
- E. **Program of Preparation:** The synod defines the program of preparation for an authorized ministry of Word and Sacrament, consistent with guidelines developed by the Division for Ministry, and in consultation with an ELCA seminary. Such programs shall prepare persons to have knowledge and abilities in the following areas:
  - 1. Bible;
  - 2. Lutheran theology, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Confession of Faith and polity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
  - 3. Worship;
  - 4. Spiritual discernment and faith development;
  - 5. Leadership expectations and identity;
  - 6. Contextual understanding; and
  - 7. Pastoral skills including preaching, catechetics, worship leadership, visitation, pastoral care, and outreach.

The program of preparation can be accomplished in a variety of ways including educational programs that utilize current rostered leaders within the synod, ELCA seminaries and continuing education centers, the ELCA *SELECT* curriculum, and other appropriate resources.

The synod determines when an individual is prepared for service within the synod. There is no guarantee of service within the synod and participation in a program of preparation does not mean that authorization for service will follow.

- F. **Authorization for Service:** When the synod has determined that a specific need exists, and with the consent of the congregation to be served, an individual may be authorized for service within the synod by the synodical Bishop, in consultation with the Synod Council. Such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities, and authorization shall be for a specific period of time not to exceed one year, unless terminated earlier. Persons who serve in synodically authorized ministry are to meet the following criteria:
1. evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
  2. satisfactory participation in the synodical program of preparation, including demonstration of appropriate ministry skills;
  3. knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this Church; and
  4. willingness to meet this Church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of persons serving in public ministry as described in "Vision and Expectations – Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."
- A person authorized by the synodical Bishop is then installed in such service.
- G. **Supervision and Accountability:** Accountability for synodically authorized ministry in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the Congregation Council. Accountability for a synodically authorized ministry in a non-congregational setting within a synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body of the entity that conducts that ministry, or if there is no such entity, the Synod Council. In all cases, a synodically authorized minister is to be under the direct supervision of an ordained minister appointed by the synodical Bishop. The supervising ordained minister shall report to the governing body and seek the advice and counsel of the synodical Bishop or appropriate synodical staff person in relationship to the synodically authorized minister.
- H. **Renewal and Revocation:** Renewal of authorization after one year may be given when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synodical Bishop at the request and with the consent of the congregation or other ministry within the synod being served, consultation with the supervising ordained minister, and a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the authorized minister. Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synodical Bishop, who need not specify the reason.
- I. **Letter of Authorization:** The authorization may be evidenced by an appropriate letter describing the terms and conditions of the authorization or license. The description also may limit activities authorized to be conducted.
- J. **Marriage Services.** Where permitted by law, synodically authorized ministers may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation in which they are authorized to serve, with the concurrence of the congregation and the approval of the synodical Bishop.
- K. **Other Matters:** Persons may serve in a synodically authorized ministry only within the synod that has authorized that ministry. A synod may consider for authorization an individual trained and authorized by another synod, based on the individual's qualifications and ability to meet the new synod's criteria for authorized ministry. Persons authorized for such ministries are not to wear clerical stoles, and should not wear clerical collars unless authorized by the synodical Bishop. The title "Pastor" is reserved for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synodically authorized ministers. Synodically authorized ministers are not to offer therapy or counseling as a part of their ministries but may provide appropriate pastoral care.

*Adopted by the Church Council as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 1995 [CC95.04.47t] and amended April 2005, and April 2006*

***LPA Candidate Information***  
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY OR TYPE

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last* *First* *M.I.*

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Street Address* *Apartment/Unit #*

\_\_\_\_\_ *City* \_\_\_\_\_ *State* \_\_\_\_\_ *ZIP Code*

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Work E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last* *First*

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Street Address* *Apartment/Unit #*

\_\_\_\_\_ *City* \_\_\_\_\_ *State* \_\_\_\_\_ *ZIP Code*

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Relevant  
Info (food  
allergies, special  
needs for training  
sessions, etc.)**

\_\_\_\_\_

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS MONTANA SYNOD

### Introduction

To be in rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to be in a position of public trust. The church expects those who serve as ordained pastors, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, associates in ministry and LPA's to be exemplary in terms of their personal and professional conduct. Out of care for the church and its members, then, the ELCA's Unit for Vocation and Education—as of 2005—now requires its synods to conduct a background check on all persons pursuing candidacy.

The Montana Synod, along with a number of other synods, has a contract with the Oxford Document Management Company, a Minnesota corporation, to conduct background checks on our ministry candidates. The process, done electronically on your computer by accessing Oxford's website is simple and straightforward. Once you have supplied them with the needed information (name, date of birth, Social Security number, driver's license number, and places of residence for the past seven years), you then electronically sign an authorization and release which permits Oxford to proceed with the background check. The check includes searches of motor vehicle records, as well as of county court records and a federal offender database. When completed, Oxford reports its findings back to the candidacy committee for its confidential use.

### Six Easy Steps to Follow

1. On your computer, access Oxford Document's website: [www.oxforddoc.com](http://www.oxforddoc.com)
2. On their home page, click on “**Applicant**” in the right-hand column
3. After clicking on “applicant,” the next screen will ask you to provide a “Client Number” and a “Position Code.” These codes will be given to you by the Admin from the Synod office.
4. The next screen will verify that you have typed in the correct client number. It should say that the background check is being conducted for the Montana Synod of the ELCA
5. Proceed to the next screen and type in the information requested. Note: on the request for addresses for the past seven years, be sure to include the name of each county where you resided. (Candidates who have been away at college within the past seven years will need to provide their college addresses as well, even though their home addresses may have been somewhere else.)
6. When you have completed filling in the information requested, proceed to the **authorization** statement and—after reading the terms of the authorization and release—click on “**Continue**” and follow any remaining instructions.

Should you encounter any problems in using Oxford Document's website, please feel free to call Susan Smith in the synod office at 406-453-1461.

## Sample Lay License



**Montana Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*  
*Montana Synod*

### Lay License to Perform Ministerial Acts

I hereby certify that Rick Brown is licensed to provide ministerial service (except for the celebration of marriages) in the following congregation(s):

CONGREGATION

Faith Lutheran Church

CITY AND STATE

Hamilton, MT

For: August 16, 2020

Signed,

---

Laurie Jungling  
Bishop of the Montana Synod  
11/4/2020

**The following notice should appear in the Church bulletin any time someone other than a pastor presides:**

"Name, a LPA, has been authorized by the Bishop of the Montana Synod to provide pastoral services in this congregation this Sunday."

# Trustworthy Servants of the People of God

*Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.  
Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.  
I Corinthians 4:1-2 (NRSV)*

# Trustworthy Servants of the People of God

Every church has hopes and expectations for its leaders. The constitutions of the ELCA clearly state the expectations of rostered ministers.<sup>1</sup> Another policy document, *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*, describes consequences for unacceptable behaviors.<sup>2</sup> The ELCA's constitution outlines the importance of the office of ministry and the requirements for serving the church in that role.<sup>3</sup> Expectations are also outlined for the calling body, understanding the call of pastors and deacons to be one of mutual accountability.<sup>4</sup> The responsibilities for pastors and deacons are outlined below.

This document, *Trustworthy Servants*, is different. It is intended as a guide, both for pastors and deacons, and for candidates seeking entry onto those rosters. As such, it will be used as part of the candidacy process, both for the candidates and for the candidacy committee.

*Trustworthy Servants* affirms the high value that pastors and deacons have in the life of the ELCA. It presents aspirations for integrity in professional life and faithfulness to the calling that all rostered ministers share.

These aspirations are not simply for individuals. They are for the whole church, corporately. As a people united in Christ, we respect and honor the diversity of histories, traditions, cultures, languages, and experiences in the ELCA and the larger Christian community. We seek full participation of all in the life and work of this church and will strenuously avoid and repent when the culture of any one group becomes the norm for all in the ELCA. It is a blessing when pastors and deacons live their lives advocating against all of the ways that racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of prejudice and injustice limit participation, and harm individuals, communities and the whole body of Christ.

As outlined in the ELCA's constitution, the specific responsibilities of pastors and deacons include those named here.

## **Ministry of Word and Sacrament (Pastor)**

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

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.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ministry of Word and Service (Deacon)**

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

- 1) Be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
- 2) Advocate 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;
- 3) 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;
- 4) Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
- 5) Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
- 6) Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
- 7) Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
- 8) Share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
- 9) Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the gospel<sup>6</sup>

### **Trust is the Foundation of Relationships**

From Scripture we learn of God's love for humankind and all of Creation, revealed most powerfully through God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose again to give new life to all. Our Lutheran tradition puts a special emphasis on God's mercy: a kind of love that breaks through human categories of deserving and undeserving, and embraces all.<sup>7</sup>

It is this all-encompassing and merciful love that allows us to trust in God's favor toward us; trust, in turn, is the foundation of our human relationships. Marriage, friendship, community and even government all depend on levels of trust between humans. Our ultimate trust is in God, but we also must be able to trust one another to be faithful to the promises we have each made, and to live faithfully within the responsibilities we each bear.<sup>8</sup>

### **A Trustworthy Life in Rostered Ministry**

In a broken world and among imperfect people, trust is both precious and fragile. It is particularly challenging, for those who are called to be speakers of God's word and bearers of God's sacramental promises, to live out their callings in ways that both acknowledge their own imperfection and yet stay fully deserving of their people's trust. This is the tension in which those called to public ministry in the church must live: to be both true to themselves and at the same time a model to others.<sup>9</sup>

With all Christians, pastors and deacons are called to lead a “life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27, NRSV). Christ’s own self-giving in life and unto death 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 and aspire to use their gifts in lives worthy of the gospel of Christ and equip others to do the same.<sup>10</sup>

Pastors and deacons fulfill their calling not only in what they do by carrying out certain tasks, but also in who they are. The expectations and hopes placed on them, from their congregations and their communities, ask that their very lives proclaim and witness to the gospel of Christ. Even as we confess that as part of a broken humanity, the life of a rostered minister cannot be one of moral or spiritual perfection, yet the hope remains that pastors and deacons strive for daily living that witnesses to the good news that we are justified by God’s grace and called to live out that grace in daily life.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has high expectations for those who serve in public ministry as pastors and deacons of this church. Those who publicly profess to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ also aspire to maintain integrity and character so that their lives give authentic witness to their trustworthiness for the sake of effective ministry. The public nature of the church’s ministries makes the character of its ministers central to the church’s own trustworthiness. The negative impact of a pastor or deacon breaking trust often results in an inability to carry out public ministry effectively.

### **When Trust Is Broken**

When effective ministry depends upon a relationship of trust, the vulnerability of those in that relationship is acute. And when that trust is broken, the wounds are that much deeper and wider, impacting more than just the parties involved, but the whole sphere of ministry influence in the community. Since the possibility for harm is great, the need to hold that trust is all the more imperative.

Sin and brokenness are realities in the lives of all persons, including those who serve as pastors and deacons. But 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 though repentance and forgiveness are always part of the life of faith, they may not be sufficient for restoration to rostered ministry. Rostered ministry is a privilege granted by the community of faith, not the right of any individual. Forgiveness for a break of trust is the hope, but it cannot be assumed that forgiveness results in the removing of consequences. The consequences of such a broken trust may well remain.

### **Leadership Rooted in Faith**

First and foremost, pastors and deacons are people of faith: people who find their identity and meaning in a deep and trusting belief in the God who created, sustains, judges, and loves them, and is known most perfectly in the life and work of Jesus Christ, God’s Word made flesh. This commitment to faith shapes every part of the lives of pastors and deacons and draws them ever toward God’s Word proclaimed, the sacramental means of grace, and the Spirit’s presence in beloved community. Pastors and deacons are expected to be people of prayer and personal devotion, to avail themselves of opportunities for confession and forgiveness and sharing of Holy Communion, and to join with the people of God in daily intercession for the church and for the world. They should cultivate in themselves the spiritual disciplines and gifts they promote in those they serve.

Pastors and deacons are members of the congregations to which they are called. If they are called to ministry in a setting other than an ELCA congregation (including full communion partners and institutional ministries), they are to maintain membership in an ELCA congregation whenever possible, and to consult with their synod bishop if that is impossible because of relational boundaries or geographical or physical limitations.

Pastors and deacons of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are leaders not only in the congregation or setting to which they are called, they are an integral part of the ministry of the whole church. Recognizing the church's call as God's call, and in response to their promise to work in harmony with the ELCA, pastors and deacons are expected to be bridge-builders between their own congregations and the other expressions of the church. They are also expected to be trustworthy and engaged colleagues of the other pastors and deacons of this church, to be accountable to those under whose oversight they serve, and to share in responsibility for the whole church's mission. They also have a particular responsibility to help identify other qualified and gifted persons who might be suited to public ministry in this church and encourage them to consider candidacy for rostered ministry.

Pastors and deacons of our church should also be lifelong learners, eager for growth in knowledge and insight into the Scriptures, the teachings and history of the church, and the world around them. The work of ministry in a complex and changing society requires intelligence, mental agility, and curiosity, and pastors and deacons are expected to take advantage both of structured opportunities for expected continuing education, but also to keep themselves aware of current events and the world around them. Pastors and deacons are expected to make personal study and reflection a priority in their lives, and also to study when possible in the company of other pastors and deacons in collegium or other gatherings. They are also encouraged to take advantage of sabbatical or other programs for extended study, and to take advantage of resources made available to them for these. Congregations and ministry settings are also expected to help their pastors and deacons with time and resources to do this. The ELCA expects fifty contact hours of continuing education annually.

### **Faithfulness in Health and Self-Care**

Physical health is central to well-being, vital to relationships, and makes it possible to live out vocations in church, family, and community. Pastors and deacons are expected to make their own health a priority in their lives, and to express their care for others by a concern for others' health as well. Congregations and ministry settings are likewise to respect the needs of pastors and deacons for rest and self-care. If a pastor or deacon is faced with the challenge of serious illness, then it is important that the rostered minister inform both the synod bishop and congregation so that the leader's and congregation's needs may be met and compassionate care extended.

Awareness of and care for one's own physical condition, reasonable and regular physical and mental health care, nutrition and exercise are all parts of the responsibility given to pastors and deacons for self-care, being alert to health care challenges presented by stress and overwork. Pastors and deacons are to be particularly aware of the possible challenges to their health, wellbeing, and professional judgment presented by the overuse of alcohol or other addictive substances or practices.

### **Trustworthiness in All Dimensions of Life**

Pastors and deacons are to be examples of holy living so that their life and conduct do not become an

impediment to the hearing of the gospel or a scandal to the congregation or to the surrounding community. The qualities of such a life include developing and maintaining a public reputation of personal integrity and trustworthiness in all relationships.

Pastors and deacons are expected to be honest and forthright in dealings with others while protecting privileged communications. They are to avoid conduct that is dishonest, deceptive, duplicitous, or manipulative of others for personal benefit or gain.

### **Trustworthiness in Relationships and Friendships**

In all relationships, pastors and deacons are to seek to build up the body of Christ. In public ministry and in private life, pastors and deacons are expected to develop and nurture appropriate relationships, behaving in ways that build and sustain trust.

Friendships are both essential and complicated for those who serve in rostered ministry. On one hand, pastors and deacons will respect the ties of friendships among others and will welcome and nurture friendships for themselves. On the other hand, 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. Wisdom and care are needed to define friendships without inappropriate closeness or over-sharing in communities with a smaller number of peers or when a rostered minister leaves a call or moves into retirement.

### **Trustworthiness in Family Life**

Pastors and deacons will strive to serve others and nurture trust by faithfulness within 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 will maintain responsible relationships with their parents and other immediate relatives wherever that is possible, recognizing that brokenness within family structures is a human reality. Neglect, abuse, desertion, or abandonment of spouse and children, or failure to meet legally determined family support obligations, are all inconsistent with serving as a rostered minister in the ELCA.

### **Trustworthiness in Finances and Use of Intellectual Property of Others**

Pastors and deacons who are faithful stewards of time, talents, and possessions are examples of generous living and earn trust within their community. Pastors and deacons are expected to conduct personal fiscal affairs in accordance with ethical and legal requirements. Included among those fiscal activities considered incompatible with the character and role of a rostered minister are indifference to or avoidance of legitimate and personal debts, embezzlement of money, or improper appropriation of the property of others. The ministerial office is not to be used for personal financial advantage.

Where indebtedness creates a significant burden for pastors and deacons (and their families) consultation with the synod bishop's office and work with a financial counselor is to be approached without shame and with confidence that a solid foundation can be created for managing financial obligations.

Care is also to be given to the thoughts and writings of others when they are used to illustrate, support or enhance the thoughts, presentations, sermons and writings of pastors and deacons. When the intellectual

property of others is used, the source must be identified and referenced. This includes proper use of copyrighted materials in worship.

## **Communications**

The social teachings of the church guide the public advocacy of pastors and deacons, whether from the pulpit or social media, the state house or the local restaurant. It is important, especially when using social media, to distinguish between one's personal convictions and the teachings of the church, if they diverge. Pastoral sensitivity, respect and common sense are important in using social media and in ordinary conversations. Citing sources and using intentional, thoughtful speech in posts can help insure clarity of position. A public figure page, separate from one's personal page, also aids the separation of official and personal positions.

## **Human Sexuality and Gender**

Sexuality is a rich and universal aspect of human life. In the teachings of the ELCA, human sexuality is understood as a gift and trust from God.<sup>11</sup> Those who serve as pastors and deacons reflect a variety of sexual orientations and diverse gender identities. Whether single or married, the personal attitudes and conduct of pastors and deacons are to honor this understanding of sexuality as a good gift and trust from God in the lives of all people.

## **Trustworthiness in Sexual Conduct and Speech**

In a cultural context in which sexuality is often objectified and used for commercial purposes, pastors and deacons are called to a counter-cultural ethic.<sup>12</sup> Whether single or married, they embrace a holistic understanding of sexuality that counters a rigid or shame-filled attitude about the human body. It is useful to remember Martin Luther's view of vocation. For Luther the celibate life is not intrinsically holier than the life of those who marry nor is marriage itself a life-saving sacrament.<sup>13</sup> God hates nothing that God has made, and sexual desire and procreation are parts of God's good intention for humankind. Like every other aspect of human life, our dual "saint and sinner" nature makes the most powerful human impulses also the most challenging ones. With this in mind, pastors and deacons are to reject sexual promiscuity in their own lives and are never to use their role in the church to manipulate, exploit or abuse another person sexually or emotionally. To prevent such abuse and exploitation, pastors and deacons should refrain from emotional or sexual intimacy with those among whom they serve, such as congregation members, staff, and other active participants in the ministry.

In the entrance rites for pastors and for deacons prayers are offered, calling for them to "serve without reproach" and to live in such a way as "to reflect God's grace so that many may come to know and love God".<sup>14</sup> This exemplary role is meant to give joy, as well as responsibility, to those serving in the public ministries of the church. Aligning this with the ELCA's understanding of the deeply significant, lifelong nature of marriage, the expectations upon sexual expression by pastors and deacons may well run against the grain of contemporary culture.

This church teaches<sup>15</sup> that degrees of physical intimacy should be carefully matched to degrees of growing affection and commitment and that the greatest sexual intimacies should be matched with

marriage. Pastors and deacons, as public witnesses to this church's respect for marriage, are therefore to live in accordance with the understanding that deepening degrees of sexual intimacy are aligned with deepening levels of commitment to one another and the relationship. Such relationships are to be exclusive, monogamous, consensual, and in the ELCA, require marriage before cohabitation for those serving as pastors and deacons.

In speech and in action, pastors and deacons are to refrain from sexual harassment and to address such behaviors within their ministries. Ignoring or excusing language and behaviors that belittle, bully or harm others undermines the responsibility of pastors and deacons to uphold a safe and supportive climate for all within the congregation or ministry site.

### **Trustworthiness in Marriage**

This church does not permit its pastors or deacons to marry or to be married without a valid civil marriage license. This church recognizes the legality of divorce to end a marriage.

It expects all pastors and deacons in committed relationships to enter into (or be expecting to enter into) a legally recognized marriage. It also encourages them whenever possible to participate within a congregation in a public marriage or service affirming the relationship.<sup>16</sup> Should unmarried pastors or deacons seek to marry; the counsel and guidance of their bishop is to be sought and the rostered minister will make the decision known among those they serve.

All married pastors or deacons are expected to live within a marriage relationship that is mutual and faithful to their spouse. Pastors or deacons, who are married, are expected to keep their marriage promises until death, to cultivate love and respect for their spouse, and to seek marital counseling whenever it is needed.

Because of sin and brokenness, some marriages may dissolve. Pastors and deacons who seek to separate or divorce will enlist the counsel and guidance of the synod bishop. Similarly, a pastor or deacon planning to remarry following a divorce will seek the counsel and guidance of their bishop.

### **Trustworthiness with Creation**

Together with all Christians, pastors and deacons are called to respect the integrity of God's creation and to live in a way that acknowledges the special role of humans in stewarding this gift.<sup>17</sup> Such trustworthy stewardship involves the temperate use of resources as individuals and the work of promoting care of creation in congregations and ministry settings. As leaders in the congregation and in the community, pastors and deacons are in a unique position to raise awareness of the human impact on the environment and lead people towards behavior and practices that minimize damage to natural resources. Personal, congregational, and community-wide efforts toward recycling, reusing, and energy conservation witness to the care of God's creation.

### **Conclusion**

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 for 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.*<sup>18</sup>

---

**Footnotes:**

1. Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Updated November 2016). In the remainder of this document citations from this church's governing documents are codified variously as "ELCA 3.04." (a churchwide provision), "ELCA 7.31.01." (a churchwide bylaw), and "ELCA 5.01.A16." (a churchwide continuing resolution).
2. Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Printed May 2010).
3. ELCA 7.21-7.22; 7.51-7.52.
4. These expectations are outlined in documents accompanying a letter of call and in provisions for mutual ministry committees.
5. ELCA 7.31.02.
6. ELCA 7.61.02.
7. Examples of this inclusive mercy are found in Psalm 86:5; Luke 6:36; Romans 5:8.
8. The crucial role of trust is made clear in passages like Luke 16:10-12; 1 Cor 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:3.
9. This paradoxical role is illustrated in passages like Matt 23:11; Mark 10:45; Gal 5:13.
10. Matthew 28:16-20.
11. A detailed theology of human sexuality can be found in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2009).
12. See "Social Trust and the Common Good" in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. Pages 12-13.
13. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), in LW 36:92-106 and 114-115. (Pelikan and Lehman, eds. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959).
14. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Occasional Services for the Assembly*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009. Pages 191 and 205, respectively.
15. *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, pages 31-33.
16. The 2009 Churchwide Assembly acted to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize and support same-gendered couples and to hold their relationships publicly accountable. (*Gift and Trust*, pages 20-21). The ELCA has not created a separate liturgy for the marriage of same-gendered persons. At the recommendation of the "Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and Families" work group, authorized by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, supplemental resources were created that both same-gendered couples and all couples could use.
17. *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1993), 2.
18. Prayer for the Third Sunday after Epiphany. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.

## **Further Options for Foundational Courses**

*(Not included with tuition)*

### **Old Testament**

Select Learning DVD: Introduction to the Old Testament

**Text:** A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures. Michael D. Coogan, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006

**Presenters:** Dr. Ralph W. Klein, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Dr. Katheryn Schifferdecker, Luther Seminary.

This ten-lesson course introduces students to the high points of the Old Testament. Each session contains four 20 minute segments:

- The Primeval History in Genesis 1-11
- The stories of Sarah and Abraham
- Exodus-Deuteronomy
- The Deuteronomistic History (Joshua-Kings)
- Amos and Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Isaiah 40-55
- Job
- Psalms

**Cost:** \$179.00 + Textbook

**Background:** Select is a program of continuing theological education intended specifically for clergy, Deaconesses, Diaconal Ministers, Associates in Ministry and for laity. Select is a program of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), working in cooperation with Lutheran seminaries. However, most of the courses offered are appropriate for use by persons of all denominations.

**Notes:** This option is the most “Lutheran” perspective on the Old Testament. The course is supported by an up-to-date textbook and a study guide, including web resources.

## **Old Testament**

Great Courses: Old Testament DVD/Audio CD/digital download

**Presenter:** Dr. Amy-Jill Levine is University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies, and Professor of Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and the College of Arts and Sciences. She is also Affiliated Professor at the Woolf Institute, Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

**Text:** Course Guidebook (152-page course synopsis), Portraits & illustrations, Suggested readings

### **24 lectures/ 30 minutes each**

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 In the Beginning                  | 13 The Book of Judges, Part I                  |
| 2 Adam and Eve                      | 14 The Book of Judges, Part II                 |
| 3 Murder, Flood, Dispersion         | 15 Samuel and Saul                             |
| 4 Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar         | 16 King David                                  |
| 5 Isaac                             | 17 From King Solomon to Pre-classical Prophecy |
| 6 The Jacob Saga                    | 18 The Prophets and the Fall of the North      |
| 7 Folklore Analysis and Type Scenes | 19 The Southern Kingdom                        |
| 8 Moses and Exodus                  | 20 Babylonian Exile                            |
| 9 The God of Israel                 | 21 Restoration and Theocracy                   |
| 10 Covenant and Law, Part I         | 22 Wisdom Literature                           |
| 11 Covenant and Law, Part II        | 23 Life in the Diaspora                        |
| 12 The "Conquest"                   | 24 Apocalyptic Literature                      |

**Cost:** Price Varies depending on the options you choose (DVD, Audio download, CD) also, there are often sales that can give a significant discount.

**Notes:** This is an academic approach to the Old Testament.

**Details:** Find more information at [www.greatcourses.com](http://www.greatcourses.com).

## **Old Testament**

Yale Divinity School Open Online Streaming Course

**Presenter:** Christine Hayes is the Robert F. and Patricia Ross Weis Professor of Religious Studies at Yale. She received her Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley in 1993. A specialist in Talmudic Midrashic studies, Hayes offers courses on the literature and history of the biblical and Talmudic periods.

**About the Course:** This course examines the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) as an expression of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel, and a foundational document of Western civilization. A wide range of methodologies, including source criticism and the historical-critical school, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and literary and canonical approaches are applied to the study and interpretation of the Bible. Special emphasis is placed on the Bible against the backdrop of its historical and cultural setting in the Ancient Near East.

**Text:** Introduction to the Bible. Dr. Christine Hayes, Yale University Press., 2012 \$25.00

- Lecture 1 The Parts of the Whole
- Lecture 2 The Hebrew Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting
- Lecture 3 The Hebrew Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting: Genesis 1-4 in Context
- Lecture 4 Doublets and Contradictions, and the Historical-Critical Method
- Lecture 5 Critical Approaches to the Bible: Introduction to Genesis 12-50
- Lecture 6 Biblical Narrative: The Stories of the Patriarchs (Genesis 12-36)
- Lecture 7 Israel in Egypt: Moses and the Beginning of Yahwism (Genesis 37- Exodus 4)
- Lecture 8 Exodus: From Egypt to Sinai (Exodus 5-24, 32; Numbers)
- Lecture 9 The Priestly Legacy: Cult and Sacrifice, Purity and Holiness
- Lecture 10 Biblical Law: The Three Legal Corpora of JE P and D
- Lecture 11 On the Steps of Moab: Deuteronomy
- Lecture 12 The Deuteronomistic History: Life in the Land (Joshua and Judges)
- Lecture 13 The Deuteronomistic History: Prophets and Kings (1 and 2 Samuel)
- Lecture 14 The Deuteronomistic History: Response to Catastrophe (1 and 2 Kings)
- Lecture 15 Hebrew Prophecy: The Non-Literary Prophets
- Lecture 16 Literary Prophecy: Amos
- Lecture 17 Literary Prophecy: Hosea and Isaiah
- Lecture 18 Literary Prophecy: Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk
- Lecture 19 Literary Prophecy: Perspectives on the Exile (Jeremiah, Ezekiel and 2nd Isaiah)
- Lecture 20 Responses to Suffering and Evil: Lamentations and Wisdom Literature
- Lecture 21 Biblical Poetry: Psalms and Song of Songs
- Lecture 22 The Restoration: 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah
- Lecture 23 Visions of the End: Daniel and Apocalyptic Literature
- Lecture 24 Alternative Visions: Esther, Ruth, and Jonah

**Cost:** Free Web Streaming.

**Details:** This is an online free course by a Yale professor. You will need a computer and decent internet streaming capability to view these videos. The text you can purchase online.

**Website:** <http://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies>

**Notes:** This is an academic approach to the Old Testament.

## **New Testament**

Select Learning DVD: Introduction to the New Testament

**Text:** The New Testament: An Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings, Bart D. Ehrman, 2004

**Presenters:** Dr. Ray Pickett, Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, Dr. Sarah Henrich, Luther Seminary, and Dr. Rick Carlson, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Each session contains four 20 minute segments.

### **Sessions:**

1. Introduction, Dr. Ray Pickett, Dr. Sarah Henrich, and Dr. Rick Carlson
- 2 Gospel of Mark, Dr. Ray Pickett
3. Gospel of Matthew, Dr. Rick Carlson
4. Gospel of Luke, Dr. Sarah Henrich
5. Gospel of John, Dr. Ray Pickett
6. Acts, Dr. Sarah Henrich
7. Letters of Paul I, Dr. Ray Pickett
  - a. 1 & 2 Thessalonians
  - b. Galatians)
8. Letters of Paul II, Dr. Rick Carlson
  - a. 1 & 2 Corinthians
  - b. Romans
9. Letters of Paul III, Dr. Sarah Henrich,
  - a. Philippians & Philemon
  - b. Deutero-Pauline Epistles
  - c. Pastoral Epistles
10. Revelation, Dr. Rick Carlson

**Cost:** \$179 + Text

**Background:** In the course participants are introduced to key themes and issues in the New Testament and learn basic skills to equip them to be faithful, creative interpreters of New Testament texts. The Introduction to the New Testament DVD presents a model for interpreting Scripture that emphasizes the importance of reading New Testament texts in their cultural and literary contexts with a view to relating them to contemporary cultural and ministry contexts. The course will focus on the practice of interpreting New Testament texts. Students will use the models and insights from presentations on the Select DVD to explore questions raised by the study of specific New Testament texts and then discuss how these texts continue to shape our faith and practice in today's world.

**Notes:** This is a Lutheran resource

## **New Testament**

Great Courses: New Testament DVD/Audio CD

**Presenter:** Dr. Bart D. Ehrman is the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He completed his undergraduate work at Wheaton College and earned his M.Div. and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary.

**Text:** Course Guidebook (168-page course synopsis), Portraits & illustrations, Suggested readings

### **24 lectures/ 30 minutes each**

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 The Early Christians and Their literature   | 17 Paul's Letter to the Romans      |
| 2 The Greco-Roman Context                     | 18 Paul, Jesus, and James           |
| 3 Ancient Judaism                             | 19 The Deutero-Pauline Epistles     |
| 4 The Earliest Traditions About Jesus         | 20 The Pastoral Epistles            |
| 5 Mark—Jesus the Suffering Son of God         | 21 Hebrews                          |
| 6 Matthew—Jesus the Jewish Messiah            | 22 First Peter suffering Christians |
| 7 Luke—Jesus the Savior of the World          | 23 The Book of Revelation           |
| 8 John—Jesus the Man from Heaven              | 24 Do We Have the Original          |
| 9 Noncanonical Gospels                        |                                     |
| 10 The Historical Jesus—Sources and Problems  |                                     |
| 11 The Historical Jesus—Solutions and Methods |                                     |
| 12 Jesus the Apocalyptic Prophet              |                                     |
| 13 The Acts of the Apostles                   |                                     |
| 14 Paul and his Modus Operandi                |                                     |
| 15 Paul and the Crises of His Churches        |                                     |
| 16 Pauline Ethics                             |                                     |

**Cost:** Price Varies depending on the options you choose (DVD, Audio download, CD) also, there are often sales that can give a significant discount.

**Details:** Find more information at [www.greatcourses.com](http://www.greatcourses.com).

## **New Testament**

Yale Divinity School Open Online Streaming Course

**Presenter:** Dale B. Martin is the Woolsey Professor of Religious Studies at Yale. He was educated at Abilene Christian University, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Yale University. His work explores the New Testament, Christian origins, the Greco-Roman world, the ancient family, and gender and sexuality in the ancient world.

**About the Course:** This course provides a historical study of the origins of Christianity by analyzing the literature of the earliest Christian movements in historical context, concentrating on the New Testament. Although theological themes will occupy much of our attention, the course does not attempt a theological appropriation of the New Testament as scripture. Rather, the importance of the New Testament and other early Christian documents as ancient literature and as sources for historical study will be emphasized. A central organizing theme of the course will focus on the differences within early Christianity (-ies).

**Text:** Downloadable resources from Yale Open Courses

### Sessions

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Introduction: Why Study the New Testament? | 15 Paul as Pastor   |
| 2 From Stories to Canon                      | 16 Paul as Jewish Theologian                                |
| 3 The Greco-Roman World                      | 17 Paul's Disciples   |
| 4 Judaism in the First Century               | 18 Arguing with Paul?                                       |
| 5 The New Testament as History               | 19 The "Household" Paul: The Pastorals                      |
| 6 The Gospel of Mark                         | 20 The "Anti-household" Paul: Thecla                        |
| 7 The Gospel of Matthew                      | 21 Interpreting Scripture: Hebrews                          |
| 8 The Gospel of Thomas                       | 22 Interpreting Scripture: Medieval interpretations         |
| 9 The Gospel of Luke                         | 23 Apocalyptic and Resistance                               |
| 10 The Acts of the Apostles                  | 24 Apocalyptic and Accommodation                            |
| 11 Johannine Christianity: The Gospel        | 25 Ecclesiastical Institutions: Unity, Martyrs, and Bishops |
| 12 Johannine Christianity: The Letters       | 26 The "Afterlife" of the New Testament                     |
| 13 The Historical Jesus                      |   |
| 14 Paul as Missionary<br>(Old Resource)      |   |

## Lutheran Theology

Getting Down to Basics: Augsburg Confessions and Small Catechism

**Textbook:** *Book of Concord*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, (2001)

**Presenter:** Timothy Wengert

**About the Course:** For Lutherans, *The Book of Concord* provides the definitive collection of their confessions of faith, including the all-important Augsburg Confession (1530) and Small and Large Catechisms (1529). This course provides an overview of the historical development of all the documents in *The Book of Concord*, as well as in-depth looks at their theology, focusing particularly on the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechisms. Here participants will discover not only the basic doctrinal commitments of the Lutheran Confessions but also how they may apply in contemporary parish settings. This course provides a lively, down-to-earth

examination of such central Lutheran teachings as justification by grace through faith on account of Christ, the distinction between law and gospel, the theology of the cross, the Church and public ministry, the sacraments, and Christian callings in daily life. Here the students will gain new insight into the basics of Lutheran teaching and how it can strengthen their faith and witness today.

The students will:

1. Become thoroughly familiar with the Augsburg Confession and Small Catechism
2. Understand the historical and theological context out of which they speak
3. Discover new ways to apply these teaching to life in today's parish

Sessions:

1. Confessing Justification (Augsburg Confessions Articles II, IV, XX)
2. Law and Gospel; Theology of the Cross (III, V, XII)
3. God's Two Hands (XVI, XVIII)
4. Good Works and Christian vocation (VI, XVI, XX, XXVI)
5. The Sacraments (IX-XIII; XXII, XXIV)
6. Church and Ministry (V, VII, XIV-XV, XXVIII)
7. Other Confessional Documents
8. The Small Catechism: 10 Commandments and Creed
9. The Small Catechism: The Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and Confession
10. The Small Catechism: The Lord's Supper with Luther's Preface, The Household Chart of Bible Passages, and Liturgies for the Christian Household

**Cost:** \$179.95 + Text

**Details:** Find more information at <https://www.selectlearning.org/store/all/getting-down-basics>



Guidelines for Licensing Worship Leadership (Holy Communion/Preaching) September 2020

<b>WHO?</b>	<b>License?</b>	<b>For what?</b>	<b>How often?</b>
Ordained Clergy, ELCA	No		
Ordained Clergy (or equivalent), Ecumenical Partners	No		
SAM (Synodically Authorized Ministers)	Yes	HC, Preaching, and long-term ministry	Once a Year (in January) – this is done by the Associate to the Bishop
LPA (single service pulpit supply)	Yes	HC, Preaching	For the single specific date only
LPA (weekly fill-in for limited time)	Yes	HC, Preaching	For a specific date-range or indicated dates
LPA in training	Yes, but given only in limited circumstances	HC, Preaching	For specific date only
Non-LPA lay person	Yes, though very rarely granted except in certain circumstances	HC, Preaching	Specific date-- the request must contain a description of the person, their relationship to the congregation and their qualifications
Intern	Yes	HC, Preaching	Upon start date for the whole year
Clergy Candidate for ministry (as supply preacher only)	Yes	HC (after internship), preaching anytime	For specific date

**How to request a license?**

- Call or email Candi Standall at 406-453-1461 or [cstandall@montanasynod.org](mailto:cstandall@montanasynod.org) . She will pass your request along to the bishop.

**When to request a license?**

- The best option is at least 10 days in advance if known, but as soon as possible before the worship service. For LPAs, in a last minute emergency, send an email request immediately and then lead the service with Holy Communion. For lay people, in an emergency, send an email request immediately and lead the service without Holy Communion.

**What to include in the license request?**

- The name & role of the person requesting the license.
- The name and location of the congregation(s).
- The name of the person receiving the license.
- Their role: LPA, lay person, intern, or clergy candidate. (Please include contact info if the clergy candidate is not from the MT synod).
- Specific date(s) or date range of worship leadership. No general licenses will be granted.
- For preaching, Holy Communion or both.

**Who may request a license?**

Current pastor, church secretary, council member, worship committee member. Only when none of the above are able or available to do so should the LPA make the request themselves.