



A Summary of the Policy on Sexual Ethics Related to Sexual Misconduct in Ministry

Florida-Bahamas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

This summary contains the introduction and topics that are defined and discussed in the full version of the policy, found at www.fbsynod.com under the resources for congregations tab.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is a good gift of God. The faithful response to God who has created us male and female is our commitment to use our sexuality only in ways that glorify God.

When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the Church is a safe place for all to worship, learn, work, and be helped in a manner that is free from sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. When the Church becomes an unsafe place, the integrity of the gospel is impaired, particularly among those who are victimized.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to preventing sexual misconduct within the church and to responding with justice and compassion when such misconduct occurs. This Statement of Policy describes how this Synod intends to fulfill these commitments. This Synod recognizes that responding to allegations of sexual misconduct requires determination, sensitivity, flexibility, respect and care for all persons affected, including the victim, the rostered person, their families and friends, the congregation, this Synod, and the whole church.

This policy is intended to provide a framework for guidance in dealing with these cases while preserving this Synod's discretion to treat each person and each case in a manner necessitated by differing facts, circumstances, and needs of those affected. This policy cannot be imposed as rigid law, binding this Synod and others to its dictates; it must be interpreted and applied compassionately in accordance with the theological and biblical principles of the Gospel.

- A. Definitions
- B. The Role of Congregations
- C. Role of This Synod

II. SYNOD POLICY

An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church (Nov. 1992) recommended that nine elements be included in any synodical policy regarding clergy sexual misconduct and applies as well to sexual misconduct of lay rostered persons. This Synod has decided to incorporate those nine elements as follows:

- A. Adequate Preparation
- B. Initial Contact—First Response
- C. Initial Investigation of the Complaint
- D. Conversation with the Rostered Person
- E. Assess the Information
- F. Consultation or Advisory Panel
- G. Formal Hearing
- H. Disclosure
- I. Follow-up