



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

September 6, 2016

Dear colleagues in ministry,

This letter is to inform you of the changes to the rosters of ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that were adopted by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The major change is that on Jan. 1, 2017, the current rosters of associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses will be merged into one roster of "Ministers of Word and Service." Anyone currently on any of the lay rosters will automatically be listed on the new roster. We will be working to update the website and online records by Jan. 1, 2017. It may be that this part of the transition will continue into early January.

We have also changed the title of the rosters. Previously, one roster was referred to by its entrance rite. Now we will use the rosters' primary functions to describe them: "Ministers of Word and Sacrament" and "Ministers of Word and Service." Those on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament will still be called pastors. Those on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service may be called deacons.

The issue of what entrance rite will be used for the new roster has been deferred to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for final decision. In the interim, the rite of consecration will be used for this new roster while the whole church engages in conversation on this issue. Ordination continues to be the rite used for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

The impetus for this change has come from those on the current lay rosters and from the Word and Service Task Force, which was formed by the ELCA Church Council to study the way in which this church recognizes and implements the ministry of the diaconate. Those involved with this change hope that the discussion of the role of diaconal ministry will be enhanced in all of the expressions of this church.

A significant number of constitutional changes will need to take place to facilitate this new roster. The Churchwide Assembly adopted changes to the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Synod constitutions have been modified by the certification of the required sections of the Constitution for Synods. The non-required sections will need to be acted upon by synod assemblies. All of the amendments in the Model Constitution for Congregations will need to be adopted at a congregational meeting.

The entrance rite and questions about the place of the new roster in the representational principles of this church are being studied by the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group, which will have a series of Bible studies and FAQs available shortly. I want to encourage you, your congregation and other groups to participate in these discussions so the proposals to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly will reflect the best thinking of this church.

God be with you as you continue in your call to serve in Christ's church.

Grace and peace,

Wm Chris Boerger

Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America