

REGION 9 BISHOPS' RELATIONAL AGREEMENT

for boundaries, candidacy and call process

Updated May 2021

Committed to always reforming for the health of leaders, vitality of congregations, and the flourishing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we agree to work together as a region to address systemic issues facing rostered ministers who are women. Together, we will work to create a culture change in our region through deepening trust and relationship – creating authentic avenues for reporting, responding, education, advocacy and care.

1. All rostered ministers in Region 9 are expected to be current on boundaries education. Records of up-to-date boundaries education will be required in order to:
 - a. activate an RMP
 - b. transfer into a synod
 - c. be available for any call or appointment, including interim work
 - d. serve as a synod-recommended supply preacher
2. All candidates for rostered ministry in Region 9 are expected to be current on boundaries education. Candidacy committees will:
 - a. expect all of our candidates to participate in Region 9 boundaries education during their candidacy process.
 - b. require a signed FERPA release from all candidates that gives the bishop and their designee permission to discuss the candidate's performance with seminary faculty.
3. Candidates in the synods of Region 9 will be held to the same standard as all rostered ministers. The process we will follow for candidates with boundaries violations will be:
 - a. if/when a report of a boundaries violation is made against a candidate, the bishop from the candidate's home synod will initiate an investigation into the allegation.
 - b. the bishop (or their designee) will share the results of the investigation with the candidacy committee and make a recommendation to the candidacy committee regarding the candidate's status.
 - c. the candidacy committee will make a decision regarding the candidate's status.
 - d. bishops will be fully transparent with one another about issues concerning candidates from their synods.
4. Because the church is the Body of Christ, grounded in the gospel, boundaries and inclusion education is framed in the covenant promises of baptism and vows of ordination. Therefore, we commit as a region to establish clear objectives, outcomes, and pedagogy for boundaries and inclusion education across the region. The education will include an expanded boundaries and inclusion conversation to include racial and gender justice. We will pay particular attention to a variety of vehicles and congregational resources.
 - a. The synods of Region 9 will appoint a diverse team to create a more robust three-year boundaries education rotation.
 - b. The intention is to have Boundaries and Inclusion Education every year.
5. A complicating factor for all our boundaries work is the exploration of the question, 'Who is the pastor to the pastor?'. We are committed to exploring avenues to provide pastoral care and mental health services for our rostered ministers.

6. The bishops commit to finding new ways to raise the profile of rostered ministers who are women as leaders in the synod and in congregations, including:
 - a. relying upon rostered ministers who are women in mock interviews in synods in which mock interviews are used
 - b. encouraging the use of rostered ministers who are women as supply preachers and interim pastors
 - c. regularly inviting rostered ministers who are women to preach at synodical gatherings, especially synod assembly
 - d. striving for gender parity in appointments as deans and other public leadership roles.
 - e. identifying, encouraging, and fostering the leadership gifts of rostered ministers who are women for congregational and synodical leadership roles.
7. The bishops agree to work together through the sharing of resources to improve the pay equity for rostered ministers who are women.
 - a. We will develop and utilize a regional worksheet to guide conversations with congregations around rostered minister compensation for use during call processes.
8. When a call committee makes it clear that they will not interview or call a woman, the bishops agree that they will require a congregation council vote to ensure this is a council decision rather than the reflection of the prejudices of one or more members of the call committee.

This agreement was originally signed by the Bishops of Synods in Region 9 on July 1, 2019. It has been renewed on December 10, 2020 and on July 6, 2021.

9A, Virginia Synod—Bishop Bob Humphrey
9B, NC Synod—Bishop Tim Smith
9C, SC Synod—Bishop Ginny Aebischer
9D, Southeastern Synod – Bishop Kevin Strickland
9F, Caribbean Synod—Bishop Idalia Negrón
9E, Florida-Bahamas Synod—Bishop Pedro Suarez