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## SECTION 9

# Welcoming the Congregation's New Pastor

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*For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven Ecclesiastes 1:3*

### Preparation for Welcoming the Pastor

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The word that the pastor has accepted the congregation's Call to serve as its new pastor is exciting news and needs to be shared immediately with all members. The date that the Pastor will lead the first service of worship at the church should be included. Often a social time or reception in honor of the new pastor and his/her family is scheduled after each service of worship providing informal time for some introductions. If it is not a year-round practice, the use of name tags for the first couple of months that a pastor serves the congregation is immensely helpful.

The council president will want to maintain close contact with the new pastor in the days leading to her/his arrival to begin ministry. There will be many questions and concerns to be discussed. In addition to phone contact information, it is most helpful to establish email communications as well.

A member of the Worship Committee or the church secretary should work closely with the new pastor in the planning of the first worship services. This can often be done through email notes and attachments. Worship assistants should be recruited who will assist the pastor in understanding the local worship practices of the congregation, including the manner in which Holy Communion is administered and received at worship. The bulletin should include a gracious welcome of the new pastor and members of his/her family with personal information about the pastor. If the date and time of the Installation Service has been determined, this should be included in this first bulletin and all bulletins leading up to the date of the installation.

### The Pastor's Move to a New Home

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The Pastor and his/her spouse or partner will likely need to make several trips for the purpose of house hunting or to determine where they or the family will live until a permanent home is found. The name of a good realtor, perhaps a member of the congregation, might be helpful. The council will want to do everything possible to facilitate this process, including covering such travel expenses and arranging lodging as may be required. The congregation will pay for all moving expenses, including the expense of driving multiple cars to the new area. Usually, all such expense reimbursements do not need to be reported on W-2 forms, but both the congregation and the pastor should check with current tax laws and information.

### A Farewell for the Interim Pastor

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It is appropriate to celebrate and recognize the ministry of the interim pastor who has served the congregation during the transition period. The celebration should be scheduled for the Interim Pastor's last Sunday, which will be the Sunday prior to the arrival of the newly called pastor. At the end of Section 9 of this manual, the *Order of Farewell for the Interim Pastor* can be found. A simple reception following each worship service helps to make the day special.

## Scheduling and Planning the Installation Service

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The scheduling of the Installation Service needs to be coordinated with the pastor, the congregation and the Office of the Bishop. The service is usually scheduled at a time that makes it possible for rostered leaders and laity from nearby churches to join in the celebration, most often late afternoon on a Sunday. A representative of the Office of the Bishop, often the dean of the conference, will be the installer. Members of the congregation, community and conference leaders, and a representative of the Office of the Bishop may be invited to participate in the service. It is appropriate to recognize and show appreciation to the members of the Call Committee and the council as part of the Installation Service.

If the person called to be the new pastor is a recent graduate of seminary (“First Call”), an Ordination Service also needs to be planned. The Ordination Service is planned by the recent graduate in consultation with the bishop who officiates at an ordination. The Ordination Service is often held at a location other than the church to which the person has been called, possibly the ordinand’s “home congregation.” Participants in this service may include people special to the ordinand’s faith and life development. In such a case, the Installation Service is scheduled at the congregation that has called the ordinand sometime soon after the Ordination Service. However, if the ordinand chooses to have the Ordination Service at the congregation that has called him/her as their new pastor, the Ordination Service and the Installation Service are combined into one service.

A copy of the Service of Installation for a pastor may be obtained from the synod office and is printed in the Occasional Services book, a copy of which most rostered leaders have in their personal libraries.

[Offering: it is appropriate for the offering at the ordination or the installation to model good stewardship practices and generosity. Suggestions for consideration include giving beyond the congregation to a particular ministry passion of the pastor or congregation, and/or to the synod mission fund.]

## The Reception

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As part of the festive celebration of the new pastor’s installation, a reception is usually held following the Installation Service. The council could appoint a task force to plan and set up for the reception. It is appropriate to again introduce the pastor’s family and invite the pastor to say a few words of greeting to those gathered at the reception.

## Invitations

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As soon as the date and time of the Installation Service is known, work should begin on preparing and designing invitations that may be printed professionally or within the congregation. A sample *Invitation to an Installation Service* is included at the end of this section. A task force working with the new pastor should develop a list with mailing addresses of those to receive printed invitations.

It is nice to include the members of the congregation on the invitation mailing list even though they will know of the Installation Service through many other means. Invitations could also be sent to the extended family and friends of the pastor, the interim pastor and former pastors and their families, to the congregation councils of surrounding Lutheran congregations addressed to the president, to all rostered leaders within the conference, to the clergy of denominational churches within the community, to community leaders, to members of the Synod Council and the Office of the Bishop, and to any others desired by the pastor and task force.

## Communications and Press Releases

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The Calling and Installation of a new pastor is a wonderful time to provide local media with press releases and appropriate pictures. An early release could share the news of the congregation's Call of a new pastor, providing detailed information about the pastor's background, schooling, other churches served and family information. A second press release could share information about the Installation Service, including information about the new pastor, the congregation, and the participants in the service. Depending upon lead time and awareness of media practices, these releases could be combined into one article.

The religious editor of the local newspaper may wish to conduct an interview and include pictures taken by their own photographer. This might take the form of a feature story even after the Installation Service. Other forms of communication within the congregation and community should also be explored.

The conference dean also sends out a communication to rostered leaders of the synod living in the area of the congregation inviting them to share in the celebration of a colleague's Installation Service. Notice of the installation is also posted in synod communications to all congregations and rostered leaders of the synod.

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*Resource A*  
***Sample Invitation to the Installation Service***

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We request your prayers and presence  
with us for a service of Holy Communion and  
The Order of Installation.

By the Grace of God,

The Rev. Jane A. Pastor

will be installed to the  
Office of Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 12, 2010  
at 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon.

St. John Lutheran Church  
1234 Main Street  
City, State

Reception immediately following In the Fellowship Hall.

Clergy and Rostered Leaders are invited to vest; color of the day.

Please RSVP by Sunday, August 29, 2010.

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*Resource B*

## *Order of Farewell for the Interim Pastor*

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*At the last service in which an Interim Pastor leads worship, the following may be used before the Benediction. The following may be spoken by the President of the Congregation Council or an Assisting Minister.*

A: People of God, the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ has completed his/her work among us as our Interim Pastor and a new Pastor/Interim Pastor will arrive soon. We thank Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ for being our shepherd and guide for our ministry during the past \_\_\_\_\_ weeks/months/years and wish him/her every blessing for his/her continued ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ.

*A review of the highlights of the interim ministry may be shared at this time.*

A: Let us together give God thanks for Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ and for the work that we have done together in Christ's name.

A: Loving God, we thank you for the blessings of your presence during our time of transition, especially as made known to us through the gifts and ministry of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. Through him/her we have received your Word for our lives and celebrated the Sacraments, made plans for our ministry and preparations to receive a new shepherd in our midst. Continue to guide us through the completion of our transition process until all things are brought to fulfillment according to your will. Guide as well Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ that he/she may know the comfort of your love and be a blessing to others as he/she has been a blessing to us. All these things we ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**C: Amen.**

*The Interim Pastor may wish to respond with a few informal remarks.*

*The service concludes with the Benediction by the Interim Pastor.*

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## SECTION 10

# *The Early Ministry*

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*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19*

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### **Transition Team for the New Pastor**

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After the arrival of a new pastor, there will be a significant time of adjustment. The new pastor brings new ideas and different ways of doing ministry. The congregation itself has undergone an in-depth self-study and developed a Congregational Ministry Site Profile. During the interview process and early conversations, many ideas and visions were shared among members and with the new pastor. As the new pastor begins his/her ministry with the congregation, it is helpful to create a Transition Team that will work closely with the pastor and the congregation to shape and support the development of this new ministry.

It is often wise to include several members from the call committee on this team since they were most intimately involved with developing the profile, articulating the congregation's mission and vision, and conducting the first conversations with the new pastor.

The purpose of the Transition Team would be to affirm and strengthen the mission of the congregation and the ministry that the new pastor, the council and the members of the congregation will now undertake together. An important concern of this team will be open communication about expectations and interpreting new visions and directions. This team might serve for six to twelve months and could evolve into a Staff Support Committee (or Mutual Ministry Committee) if one does not already exist within the congregation.

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### **Post Call Retreat**

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Every new call will include the expectation that a retreat with the new pastor and congregation be scheduled within three months of the start of a ministry. At least 20% of the congregation should attend retreat for it to be successful throughout the congregation. The purpose of the retreat can vary based upon the congregation's needs. The Director for Evangelical Mission can assist the congregation in facilitating a retreat or in identifying the proper resources. The retreat design could include team building activities; spiritual enrichment; roles and expectations clarification; vision, planning and strategy development; or other important leadership emphasis and can be tailored to the needs and desires of the congregation. This may also be a good setting in which to continue to think about the short- and long-term future of the congregation. Visioning and goal setting are important to the success of a good ministry and should be a constant feature of the work of the new pastor and council leadership together. When the design and date of the retreat is set, good publicity and personal invitations will ensure the greatest level of participation by congregational leaders.

## Reflecting on the Transition Process

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Every congregation experiences the transition process in unique and different ways. An important step to make this process the best that it can be is for those who have completed the process to provide feedback to the Office of the Bishop. A copy of the form, *Reflections on the Transition Process*, is included with the resources at the end of this section. This form invites responses to the Office of the Bishop regarding the congregation's experience of the transition period. By completing this form, members of the Call Committee, and the council, if desired, provide valuable information to assist other congregations in similar transition processes.

The form may be copied and completed by each individual member of the call committee, or the committee may choose to work together to complete only one form. The council or council president may also desire to reflect on the transition process and complete a form. All completed forms should be sent to the Office of the Bishop.

## A Gathering for New Pastors

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While an ordained minister is called by a congregation to serve as its pastor, the pastor also remains a pastor of the whole church.

The conduct of all ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is governed by the document *Definition and Guidelines for Discipline*, which may be found on the synod website at [www.fbsynod.com/transitions](http://www.fbsynod.com/transitions). At the end of this section are resources on *Expectations of Rostered Leaders*.

At the Synod's annual Conference on Ministry the new pastor has opportunity to meet with other rostered leaders who have accepted new Calls during the previous year and with the bishop and members of the bishop's staff. This invaluable time together helps provide orientation and support for new ministry settings and a greater sense of collegiality. It is an expectation that each congregation will cover the cost of attendance for each rostered leader.

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## Resource A

# Reflections on the Transition Process

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This form invites helpful feedback on the Transition Process. It may be copied and completed by individual members of the Call Committee and of the Council, or the Call Committee and the Council may each complete one form. Completed forms should be sent to the Bishop's office.

1. Please rate the overall experience of the Transition and Call Process:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

2. Please rate the helpfulness of the resource manual *Walking Together Through The Transition Process*:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

3. What was most helpful or useful about the *Walking Together Through The Transition Resource*?

4. What was least helpful or useful about the manual *Walking Together Through The Transition Process*?

5. Please rate the experience of working with the representatives of the Office of the Bishop:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

6. Please rate the experience of developing the Congregational Ministry Site Profile:

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

7. Please rate the Interview Process in the call process (Call Committee, only):

Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

8. How did the participation in the transition process and the development of the Congregational Ministry Site Profile affect the congregation's sense of mission and ministry?
  
9. In what ways did the participation in the transition process bring greater understanding of the congregation's inter-connectedness with the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (synod and churchwide)?
  
10. What was most helpful in the transition process?
  
11. What was least helpful in the transition process?
  
12. Please share any helpful or creative ideas that could strengthen and improve the transition process in the Florida-Bahamas Synod:

Name of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

This form was completed by:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Call Committee as a whole
- \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation Council as a whole
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call Committee members individually
- \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation Council members individually

Name of Person Completing this Reflection Form: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this completed Reflections Form to:  
Office of the Bishop  
3838 W. Cypress Street  
Tampa, FL 33607**

# **DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE**

**ROSTERED MINISTERS,  
CONGREGATIONS, AND  
MEMBERS OF CONGREGATIONS**



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

Originally approved November 19, 1989, and subsequently approved Dec. 5, 1993, April 10, 2010, Nov. 10, 2014, March 8, 2020, April 17, 2021, Nov. 12, 2021, and April 6, 2025, by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, pursuant to ELCA constitutional provision 20.21.

Published April 2025

Citations from the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* are based on the April 2025 edition of that document.

# DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE

## Grounding Values

Rooted in God’s grace and steadfast love, we are called as followers of Jesus to live a life “of bold trust in God and joyful, generous service to everyone we know and meet in daily life.”<sup>1</sup> Affirming God’s gracious covenant made with us in baptism, we commit to live in right relationship with God and our neighbors.

When the gift of relationship with God and our neighbors is violated or used inappropriately, there is a need for accountability and just action. It is in this context that we, as a church body, establish guidelines for our conduct, actions, and ways in which we communicate with one another. These guidelines are necessary as we “continue in the covenant God made with us”<sup>2</sup> in our baptism to ensure that all people, and the church in particular, are protected from harmful or inappropriate actions, speech, communications, or other misconduct. As church, we must abide in a context that holds ourselves, and one another, to account for the sake and care of the whole church.

The following definitions and guidelines for discipline are set forth with the understanding that, following misconduct, the desired outcome is restoration of right relationships with God and with one another. This church embraces disciplinary processes which may include elements of counseling, admonition, and correction with the objective of healing and reconciliation. This church also acknowledges certain circumstances where reconciliation and restoration to the community may not be possible or may cause further harm. Particularly egregious conduct may result in suspension or removal from the roster or from membership.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://elca.org/Faith>

<sup>2</sup> In the rite of Affirmation of Baptism (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 236), the presiding minister asks:

“You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:  
to live among God’s faithful people,  
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,  
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to  
serve all people, following the example of Jesus,  
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?”

## **Grounding Context**

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* (CBCR) outlines the grounds for discipline, the discipline that may be imposed, and who may bring charges:

- for ministers of Word and Sacrament at 20.22.01. through 20.22.03.;
- for ministers of Word and Service at 20.23.01. through 20.23.03.;
- for congregations at 20.31.01. through 20.31.03.; and
- for members of congregations at 20.41.01. and 20.41.02.

The constitution also outlines the processes for discipline. The disciplinary process for ministers of Word and Sacrament is set forth at 20.22.04. through 20.22.24. These same processes also apply to ministers of Word and Service by operation of 20.23.04. and 20.23.05. and to congregations by operation of 20.31.04. and 20.31.05. The detailed operations of these processes are set forth in the rules governing disciplinary proceedings, a separate document also created by the Committee on Appeals and approved by the Church Council (20.22.14.). The disciplinary process for members of congregations is set forth in 20.41.03. through 20.41.11. and also in \*C15.01. through \*C15.07. of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*.

The CBCR assigns primary responsibility for the discipline process to synods (20.11.). Accordingly, it provides synod bishops with substantial discretion in the investigation of misconduct (20.22.04. through 20.22.06.).

Provision 20.21. of this church's constitution specifically calls for the Committee on Appeals to "establish **definitions and guidelines**, subject to approval by the Church Council, to enable clear and uniform application of **the grounds for discipline** of officers, rostered ministers, congregations, and members of congregations." The purpose of this document is to elaborate on the grounds for discipline and to guide rostered ministers, congregations, and members in our lives together. Additionally, it is intended to help bishops, synod staff, hearing officers, discipline committee members, and consultation committee members in their work and to clarify what conduct is not acceptable in this church.

This document is written in accordance with the decisions of churchwide assemblies. It is grounded in our biblical and Lutheran confessional sources, which help to shape this church's social teachings. No language in this document may be construed to contradict or override a current authorized social teaching of this church.

## DEFINITIONS

Unless the context indicates otherwise, for the purpose of this document:

1. “Adultery” means voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than that person’s current spouse.
2. “Constitution” means the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
3. “Church” or “this church” means the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
4. “Family” means not only persons related by genetics or marriage<sup>3</sup> but may also include “a variety of forms, more akin to the older term of ‘household,’ exclusively employed by Luther to include immediate family members, relatives, and others.”<sup>4</sup>
5. “Harass” means to persistently annoy another or to create an unpleasant or hostile situation by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct. Mere criticism or disagreement is not harassment.<sup>5</sup>
6. “Hate group” means an organization or group that encourages or promotes the dehumanization of others through hate speech, hostility, violence, or bigotry towards an individual or group on account of group characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, national origin, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, language, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, or immigration status. “Hate group” does not include groups solely because they hold differing political or philosophical views regarding social controversies or advocate for the advancement or protection of historically underrepresented groups.
7. “Hate speech” means the expression of animosity or disparagement of an individual or group on account of a group characteristic such as race, sexual orientation, national origin, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, language, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, or immigration status.
8. “Infidelity” means the act or fact of having a romantic or sexual relationship with someone other than one’s spouse or partner.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2009, the ELCA adopted “A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” as a social statement of this church. In its section on marriage (pages 15–21), “Gift and Trust” described a range of views existing within this church. Included among these views was both a recognition of an understanding of marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman and a commitment to the support of couples in lifelong, monogamous, same-gendered relationships. In the intervening decade, the action of the United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015), guaranteed access to legal marriage to LGBTQIA+ couples in all fifty states.

<sup>4</sup> See “A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” p. 21. See also pp. 15ff. and 25ff.

<sup>5</sup> See the social message, “Gender-Based Violence.”

9. “Intellectual property” means property that derives from the work of the mind or intellect and can be registered and protected under state or federal copyright, trademark, or patent laws.
10. “Libel” means a written defamatory statement or representation that conveys an unjustly unfavorable impression.
11. “Plagiarism” means wrongly representing the works of others as one’s own, in oral or written form.
12. “Promiscuity” means having casual or indiscriminate sexual relations which do not proceed from or contribute to mutual respect, intimacy, commitment to, and care of others.
13. “Retaliation” or “retaliatory action” means the discharge, suspension, demotion, or other punitive action taken against an individual. Appropriately defending oneself against false accusations is not considered retaliation.
14. “Rostered minister” includes ministers of Word and Sacrament, ministers of Word and Service, and, in this context, candidates for rostered ministry.<sup>6</sup>
15. “Slander” means a false and defamatory oral statement about a person.
16. “Serious crime” means a crime that could be punishable by imprisonment for more than six months.
17. “Sexual abuse” means rape; sexual assault; sexual harassment; sexual relations with a minor child or a person otherwise not capable of consent; sexual relations resulting from threats, intimidation, coercion, blackmail, extortion, or manipulation; and sexual relations (outside of marriage) between a rostered minister and a person with whom the rostered minister has a pastoral or supervisory relationship, including, but not limited to, an employee, volunteer, student, or counselee, or a person in the congregation or other ministry served by the rostered minister.

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<sup>6</sup> See paragraph 3, “Report of Actions of the Church Council (March 6–8, 2020).” The Church Council voted to include the following language in the candidate statement on the Entrance Information form provided in the ELCA Candidacy Manual:

“As a candidate for rostered ministry in this church, I understand I will be held accountable to the synod’s candidacy committee regarding this church’s expectations for my speech and conduct as set forward in *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers*. I understand that my candidacy for rostered ministry brings increased attention to my life. I am responsible for informing my bishop regarding any circumstance that might subject me to discipline according to *Definitions and Guidelines* were I a rostered minister. I understand that the candidacy committee may modify my candidacy status in response to my speech and conduct.”

## GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE OF ROSTERED MINISTERS

The normative expectations of this church for its rostered ministers focus on faithful and effective exercise of ministerial leadership. In all matters of morality and personal ethics this church expects its rostered ministers to be exemplary in conduct.

**Grounds for discipline of rostered ministers are as follows:**

- A. Preaching or teaching in conflict with the faith confessed by this church** is grounds for discipline of rostered ministers. A summary of the faith confessed by this church is found in Chapter 2 of this church's constitution.
- B. Conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office** is grounds for discipline of rostered ministers. These guidelines define and describe kinds of behavior which are incompatible with the character of the ministerial office and may be grounds for discipline.
- 1. Confidentiality:** Ministers of Word and Sacrament must comply with 7.45.<sup>7</sup> of this church's constitution and not disclose information protected by that provision unless expressly permitted by that provision. All rostered ministers must respect and protect other confidential information and not disclose it absent good cause. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, permission of those who shared the confidence, disclosure required by law, or disclosure necessary to prevent great harm.<sup>8</sup>
  - 2. Integrity:** Rostered ministers must be honest and forthright in their dealings with others. Dishonesty, deception, duplicity, or the manipulation of others for personal benefit or gain is conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.
  - 3. Professional attention to duties:** A rostered minister of this church has made commitments through ordination and through acceptance of a letter of call or appointment. Continued neglect of or indifference toward such commitments constitutes conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.

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<sup>7</sup> "In keeping with the historic discipline and practice of the Lutheran church and to be true to a sacred trust inherent in the nature of the pastoral office, no minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall divulge any confidential disclosure received in the course of the care of souls or otherwise in a professional capacity, nor testify concerning conduct observed by the minister of Word and Sacrament while working in a pastoral capacity, except with the express permission of the person who has given confidential information to the minister of Word and Sacrament or who was observed by the minister of Word and Sacrament, or if the person intends great harm to self or others." (CBCR 7.45.)

<sup>8</sup> Communication in the nature of confession may be privileged by law. Other confidential information does not fall under this privilege. The question of which communications between a rostered minister and member are "privileged," such that their disclosure may not be compelled by law, varies from state to state. Questions regarding this issue should be directed to local legal counsel.

4. **Care of family:** For rostered ministers in a family, the following conduct is considered incompatible with the character of the ministerial office:
- Desertion or abandonment of a family member;
  - Abuse of a family member; or
  - Repeated failure to meet legally determined support obligations of a family member.

5. **Sexuality and public ministry:**<sup>9</sup> This church does not tolerate the abuse of the ministerial office for personal sexual gratification or exertion of authority over others. This church's understanding of human sexuality is stated in its authorized social teachings.

Rostered ministers who abuse the trust placed in them by engaging in infidelity, adultery, promiscuity, or sexual abuse of another are engaging in conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.<sup>10</sup>

6. **Addiction and substance misuse:**<sup>11</sup> Misuse of substances (such as alcohol or drugs) or compulsions (such as gambling or use of pornography) that impair the ministerial function of a rostered minister is conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office. Continued high-risk behavior or refusal to comply with treatment also constitutes conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See "A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and the social message, "Sexuality: Some Common Convictions."

<sup>10</sup> In 2009, this church expressly addressed the question of sexuality and public ministry in "A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," which states (p. 35):

This church does not tolerate the abuse of the ministerial office for personal sexual gratification. This church holds high expectations for those individuals called to serve as rostered leaders. Pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers who abuse the trust placed in them by engaging in promiscuity, infidelity, adultery, or forms of sexual abuse violate those high standards. Such violations severely damage the credibility of the public ministry to which this church and its leaders are called.

Provision B.5. is substantially based on this teaching of this church. This provision does not change the aspirational teaching of this church, set forth in its social statements, that all members of this church should abstain from sexual intercourse until married. See "A Social Statement on Abortion" (p. 4) and "A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (p. 31).

<sup>11</sup> See the social message, "Commercial Sexual Exploitation."

<sup>12</sup> Consistent with the value of restoration of right relationships, the approach of this church to such misuse may be referral for and insistence on evaluation, and the church may counsel inpatient or outpatient treatment should addiction be identified. Refusal to explore the possibility of misuse may result in referral to behavioral health resources with the expectation that they will be used and recovery maintained. Public ministry may not be appropriate until health and wellness are restored.

**7. Fiscal responsibilities:**<sup>13</sup> The following fiscal misconduct is considered conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office:

- a. Indifference to or avoidance of legitimate and neglected personal debts;
- b. Embezzlement of money or improper appropriation of the property of others;
- c. Using the ministerial office improperly for personal benefit or financial gain;
- d. Soliciting members or others to directly or indirectly acquire gifts, bequests, or similar benefits for personal gain.

**8. Membership in certain organizations:** This church has specifically declared in 7.31.11.<sup>14</sup> and 7.61.05.<sup>15</sup> that discipline may be administered to any of its rostered ministers who belong to any organization other than the Church which claims to possess in its teaching and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to the Church.

Conduct considered incompatible with the character of the ministerial office includes membership in, or taking actions in concert with, a hate group or groups.

**9. Commission of a serious crime:**<sup>16</sup> A rostered minister who commits a serious crime is subject to discipline for engaging in conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office. If the violation of law is purposefully and exclusively done as a principled act of civil disobedience to protest or to test a law which is reasonably perceived as unjust or contrary to Christian beliefs, it may not be grounds for discipline. Rostered ministers charged with a crime shall promptly notify the bishop's office in their synod of roster.

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<sup>13</sup> See "A Social Statement on: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All."

<sup>14</sup> "No person who belongs to any organization such as a lodge or fraternal order which claims to possess in its teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to the Church shall be called and received onto the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament or otherwise received into the ministry of this church, nor shall any person so called and received onto the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament or otherwise received by this church be retained in its ministry who subsequently joins or is discovered to be a member of such an organization. (CBCR 7.31.11.)

<sup>15</sup> "No person who belongs to any organization such as a lodge or fraternal order which claims to possess in its teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to the Church shall be called and received onto the roster of Ministers of Word and Service or otherwise received into the ministry of this church, nor shall any person so called and received onto the roster of Ministers of Word and Service or otherwise received by this church be retained in its ministry who subsequently joins or is discovered to be a member of such an organization. (CBCR 7.61.05.)

<sup>16</sup> See "A Social Statement on: The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries," Section 2D.

- 10. Hateful speech or actions:**<sup>17</sup> A rostered minister's use of harassing, abusive, discriminatory, libelous, slanderous or hateful speech or actions, at any time, whether in person or on any form of social media, is conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.
- 11. Abusive activity:** A rostered minister's physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual abuse of staff, colleagues, congregation members, or others is conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office. Such abuse could include, but is not limited to, bullying or harassment in written or verbal form, either in person or by remote communication.
- 12. Intellectual property:** Rostered ministers will remain committed to protecting and honoring all intellectual property. Rostered ministers must also work to ensure that they do not misuse the intellectual property of others without appropriate permission and/or citation. Plagiarism is conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.
- 13. Retaliatory action:** A rostered minister may not take retaliatory action toward anyone who submits a complaint against the rostered minister to the leadership of a congregation; to the dean of a conference; to a synod bishop, synod council member, or synod staff member; to the presiding bishop or churchwide staff; or to any other person who holds the capacity to receive a complaint. Such retaliatory actions constitute conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.
- 14. Relationship with prior congregation(s) or ministry:** Rostered ministers who have resigned or retired from or otherwise no longer officially serve a congregation or other ministry shall honor the integrity of the congregation or ministry. They shall respect and honor the current rostered minister(s) and mission of the congregation or ministry they no longer are called to serve.<sup>18</sup> They shall decline invitations from members to perform pastoral acts and refrain from asking members to directly or indirectly seek permission to perform such acts from the currently serving rostered minister. They shall not participate or interfere, whether personally or through a proxy, in the life of the congregation or ministry in any way, unless invited to participate by the current rostered minister(s) in conjunction with the congregation council or governing board. Such interference constitutes conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office or retirement status.

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<sup>17</sup> See "A Social Statement on: Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture," "A Social Statement on: Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action," and the social policy resolution, "Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric."

<sup>18</sup> "Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council. (*Constitution for Synods*, †S14.19.)

**15. Adherence to covenantal relationships:** Rostered ministers who actively and affirmatively incite, initiate, or encourage a congregation to leave the ELCA are engaged in conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.<sup>19</sup> This does not apply to exploring a cooperative relationship with a full-communion partner congregation.

**C. Willful disregard or violation of the functions and standards established by this church for the rostered ministries of this church** is grounds for discipline. Such standards and responsibilities established by this church are found in Chapter 7 of this church's *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*.

**D. Willful disregard of the constitutions, bylaws, or continuing resolutions of this church** is grounds for discipline of rostered ministers.

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<sup>19</sup> "Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ... Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation ... encourage adherence to covenantal relationships with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*." (CBCR 7.31.02.)

## **GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE OF CONGREGATIONS**

- A. Departing from the faith confessed by this church** is grounds for discipline of a congregation of this church. A summary of the faith confessed by this church is found in Chapters 2 and 3 of this church's constitution.
- B. Willful disregard or violation of any of the criteria for recognition as congregations of this church** is grounds for discipline of a congregation of this church. These criteria are set forth in 9.21. and 9.22. of this church's constitution.
- C. Willful disregard or violation of the constitutions, bylaws, or continuing resolutions of this church** is grounds for discipline of a congregation of this church.

## GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS OF CONGREGATIONS

**A. Persistent and public denial of the Christian faith by a member of a congregation of this church** may be grounds for disciplinary action against the member. The behavior must be seen to bring harm to the faith of others and detract from the mission and ministry of the congregation. The Christian faith as confessed by this church is expressed in Chapter 2 of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*. A congregation member who persists in denial of this faith and seeks to convince others to do so may be subject to discipline. In order to warrant discipline, such behavior must be more than occasional expressions of doubt, private comments, or conduct contrary to the Christian faith.

**B. Willful and/or criminal conduct grossly unbecoming of a member of the Church** is grounds for disciplinary action against a congregation member. Commission of violent crimes including murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, rape, attempted rape, sex crimes, hate crimes, child abuse, intimate partner abuse, elder abuse, or any similar offense is seen as reprehensible to the Christian community and may warrant discipline. Persons who are found to have engaged or who are currently engaging in such actions remain in need of pastoral care and compassion.

A member's use of harassing, abusive, discriminatory, libelous, slanderous, or hateful speech or actions, at any time, whether in person or on any form of social media, may be grounds for discipline.

Conduct which includes membership in, or taking actions in concert with, a hate group or groups may be grounds for discipline.

**C. Continual and intentional interference with the ministry of the congregation** is grounds for discipline of a member engaging in such behavior. A congregation member who repeatedly interrupts the congregation's gatherings, worship services, fellowship or educational activities, congregation or council meetings, or disparages the congregation or its ministry to others in ways that damage or destroy the ability of other members to carry out the church's mission may be disciplined by the church. In order to warrant discipline, such conduct must be more serious than a member merely expressing disagreement, being impolite, or even exhibiting anger. The member must have engaged in a course of conduct and communication so persistent, inappropriate, and objectionable that the congregation's ability to perform ministry is being impaired.

**D. Willful and repeated harassment, abuse, bullying, libel, or slander of member(s) of the congregation** are grounds for discipline of a member. If the treatment of another, including rostered ministers or staff, by a member of the congregation repeatedly devolves into slanderous, vicious, or intentionally hurtful communications, no matter the means of such communications, the behavior is unacceptable and may warrant disciplinary action. Similarly, if any members, rostered ministers, or staff are being constantly harassed by another member for any reason, whether such harassment is based upon race, sexual orientation, national origin, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, language, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, or immigration status or any other reason, perceived or real, the behavior may warrant discipline without regard to the nature of the harassment. The use of phone, email, text messages, social media or other remote communication, and behaviors including anything from shouting and gestures to actual stalking, may all be means of unacceptable defamatory or harassing behavior between members.

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# *Expectations of the Bishop's Office for Rostered Leaders of the Florida-Bahamas Synod*

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*The Mission of the Florida-Bahamas Synod is to  
Share Christ, make disciples and  
Do justice in the world.*

In its role in supporting the Mission Statement of the Florida-Bahamas Synod and in its episcopal task of oversight, the Office of the Bishop has developed expectations for all rostered persons who serve our synod. These expectations supplement constitutional requirements (see Constitution for Congregation, Chapter 9). Their goal is to support and resource the ministries of our congregations and rostered persons by encouraging all to conduct their ministry in as healthy and well-informed as possible.

## **Personal, Spiritual, and Devotional Life**

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The Bishop expects that all rostered persons of this synod will be persons of prayer. A strong devotional life is necessary for ministry.

## **Personal Stewardship of Life**

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The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered persons will be good stewards of their life and health. This includes healthy habits of nutrition, exercise, rest and time management. It means nurturing close relationships with spouse/partner, family and friends. The *Visions and Expectations* document from the ELCA outlines what the church understands to be a healthy life and ministry style. Our Bishop expects careful adherence to that model.

## **Good Personal Financial Stewardship**

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All rostered people of this synod are expected to be good stewards of their own financial resources. Growing stewardship will result in joyful generosity to the work of God's kingdom, moving towards a tithe and beyond. The financial stewardship of our rostered people serves as a role model for congregation members seeking to grow in their own discipleship.

## **Call Process**

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The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered persons will follow the call process established by this Synod. Rostered people will neither initiate nor participate in negotiations with congregations for a new call outside the synodical process. If irregularly contacted, the rostered person will immediately refer the congregation to the Office of the Bishop for further conversation.

## **Continuing Education**

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In support of the 1997 Churchwide Assembly resolution, the Office of the Bishop expects all rostered persons to participate annually in 50 hours of continuing education to keep their ministry skills sharp and to keep current on ministry issues in our rapidly changing context. It is most helpful to develop a plan for continuing education in consultation with your Mutual Ministry Committee or other support group. All first-call pastors are required to participate in First Call Theological Education. This is a program requiring 25 hours of designated study and 25 hours of continuing elective education each of the first three years of ministry.

## **Colleague Contact**

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Experience has shown that some rostered people who encounter difficulties in their ministry have become isolated from their colleagues. The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered persons in our synod will have regular contact with colleagues. This may occur through conference clergy gatherings, pericope studies or other informal settings. However, to assure adequate opportunity for collegial support, the ELCA and the Office of the Bishop in Florida-Bahamas have organized conference colleague groups, with each conference dean convening the gatherings.

## **Synodical Involvement**

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The Office of the Bishop expects that all rostered persons will be involved in the life and work of our synod. Each rostered person is expected to attend the Synod Assembly and the Conference on Ministry annually. Each rostered person files a report to the Bishop annually. Each pastor will lead the effort in his or her congregation to increase the financial covenant support given to the synod and the ELCA (see C9.03.c.4), moving toward a goal of 15% of undesignated congregational income. It is also expected that each rostered person will support our life together through personal involvement and congregational participation in conferences, synod and churchwide committees, workshops and ministry opportunities.