

**SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD GUIDELINES  
FOR SYNODICALLY AUTHORIZED MINISTRIES**

**Originally effective November 2005  
Modified March 2008**

**These guidelines are a complement and addition to the  
policy and guidelines related to synodically authorized ministries of  
Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).**

- 1) Synodically Authorized Lay Ministers (SAMs) will be utilized in the South Dakota Synod to provide ministry leadership on a **temporary** basis when rostered persons are not available.
- 2) It is expected that congregations being served by SAMs will continue in the call process to obtain an ordained pastor. A SAM in the TEEM process fulfills this requirement.
- 3) Potential candidates for authorized lay ministry shall be identified by synod staff and congregational leaders. The candidates shall be interviewed by the bishop and/or executive staff as authorized by the bishop.
- 4) After one year, it is expected that the SAM shall enter the candidacy process for a roster of the ELCA.
- 5) Within the first two months of service, the candidates for synodically authorized ministry shall undergo the psychological and career assessment and background checks that are required of candidates in the ELCA. The costs for such assessment and background checks shall be the responsibility of the synod with contribution from the congregation or parish the SAM will serve.
- 6) SAMs shall be expected to abide by the ELCA's Vision and Expectations document regarding the conduct of rostered leaders.
- 7) SAMs shall be expected to preach and teach in accordance with the Lutheran Confessions, the Holy Scriptures, and the constitutions of the ELCA.
- 8) The bishop's recommendation of a candidate for a specific setting shall be approved by the Support to Ministries Committee.
- 9) The bishop may authorize candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry for a period of one year. (Open for renewal on a year-to-year basis)
- 10) SAMs shall relate to a neighboring ELCA pastor who is a mentor approved by the bishop and/or executive staff.
- 11) SAMs shall submit a written quarterly report to the bishop.
- 12) SAMs are expected to participate in conference/synod events, complete parochial and other reports, and encourage greater congregational involvement and participation in the life of the South Dakota Synod and ELCA.
- 13) A copy of the contract/agreement between the SAM and the congregation(s) shall be filed with the synod office. The agreement shall be reviewed annually. The agreement shall include goals and expectations established by all parties (congregation/parish, SAM, and synod). Synodical guidelines for compensation and benefits of synodically authorized ministers shall be followed.

- 14) The synod staff will maintain regular communication with SAMs and the congregation or parish through annual worship visitation and meeting with all parties. Synod staff will meet annually with SAMs for a ministry review.
- 15) Other pastoral acts, such as weddings, confirmations, funerals, pre-marital counseling, etc., are not sacraments so do not require authorization. However, since they are significant faith events in the live of the congregation, we urge the involvement of an ordained pastor (mentor, neighboring clergy, etc) when dealing with them.
- 16) The title 'Pastor' is reserved for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synodically authorized ministers. Additionally, SAMs will not wear clerical stoles but often wear albs when conducting worship.

### **MENTOR STANDARDS**

It is expected that a mentor shall

- be an ELCA pastor serving in the SouthDakota Synod;
- meet regularly with the SAM, such as twice monthly, for prayer, sharing and planning together;
- establish goals for the relationship and mutual ministry involvement;
- seek to provide theological, practical and spiritual direction for the SAM;
- seek to establish a mentor/Sam relationship in which the two encourage one another and participate together in conference and synod activities and events;
- provide an annual report to the bishop that reviews the components of the relationship and the mentor's observation about the ministry conducted by the SAM;
- initiate and foster intentional conversations with the SAM about discernment of a sense of call to ministry;
- involve the bishop, synod staff or Support to Ministries Committee in the event of difficulties for the SAM or the mentor relationship.