

A Memorial to Uphold the Dignity of the Office of Ministry

- Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its rites makes affirmative declarations concerning its rostered ministers;¹
- Whereas these declarations and the affirmations of the rostered ministers which precede them are made without reference to time nor subject to periodic renewal;²
- Whereas continuance of rostered persons in the offices of the ministry is presumed barring death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline;
- Whereas removal of a rostered minister from the roster of this church is the highest, most severe form of discipline and highest penalty which can be imposed;
- Whereas the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of this church provide for definite procedures with regard to discipline, including assurances of due process and fundamental procedural fairness;³
- Whereas the removal of rostered persons from the roster for reasons other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline is fundamentally arbitrary and inconsistent with the affirmations made by church;
- Whereas removal from the roster due to exceeding On Leave From Call Status time limits, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister;
- Whereas synods and synod bishops handle interim, transition, specialized ministry, and diaconal calls, and on-leave-from call status inconsistently;
- Whereas some rostered ministers experience traumatic and/or abusive calls, and some rostered ministers experience this brokenness from the synod, including the synod bishop;⁴
- Whereas deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time of transition, including in On Leave From Call status;⁵
- Whereas those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal; therefore be it⁶

¹ "Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament," https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Ordination_Ministers_Word_Sacrament-pdf.pdf

² ELCA Constitution 7.31.01/7.31.02

³ ELCA Constitution Chapter 20

⁴ Tanner, Marcus, et. al., "Clergy Who Experience Trauma as a Result of Forced Termination," *Journal of Religious Health* (2013 Dec;52(4)):1281-95.

⁵ See ELCA research: "Wait Times For First Call," Survey Report, August 2021.

⁶ ELCA 7.31.06/7.31.07, no appeal exists for roster removal due to on leave from call, unlike the due process laid out in chapter 20 of the ELCA constitution.

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- Resolved that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to create a task force to establish churchwide guidelines for handling interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish based, and innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for deacons), on-leave from call status, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols;
- Be it further resolved that said task force establish a process for rostered ministers to challenge their removal from the roster, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other than the synod from which they were removed from the roster;
- Be it further resolved that said task force include members who are or have recently been involved in specialized ministries (e.g. interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), as well as those currently on-leave from call for a variety of reasons (e.g. family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons;
- Be it further resolved that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy and procedure changes to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the Fall 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before presentation to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for adoption;
- Be it further resolved that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to suggest, recommend, and urge the Conference of Bishops and all Synod Councils to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through formal disciplinary process until the report of the task force has been acted upon by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly;
- Be it further resolved that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to remove the time limit on On Leave From Call Status immediately.