

B. On Leave from Call

7.61.06. On Leave from Call. A minister of Word and Service of this church, serving under a regularly issued letter of call, who leaves the work of that ministry without accepting another regularly issued letter of call, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod of which the minister of Word and Service is a member, under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

- a. Normative Pattern: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, a minister of Word and Service who is without a current letter of call may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of three years, beginning at the completion of an active call.
- b. Study Leave: By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, with the approval of the synodical bishop and in consultation with the appropriate churchwide unit, a minister of Word and Service engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the ministry of Word and Service, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church for a maximum of six years.
- c. Family Leave: A minister of Word and Service who has been in active service under call for at least three years may request leave for family responsibilities. By annual action of the Synod Council in the synod of which a member, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, such a minister of Word and Service who is without a current letter of call and who requests leave for the birth or care of a child or children of the minister of Word and Service or the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church—under policy developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council—for a maximum of six years, beginning at the completion of an active call.
- d. Exception to these limits for the purpose of serving the needs of this church may be granted in accordance with established policy of this church by the Synod Council in the synod of current roster after having received approval by the Conference of Bishops.

1. Definition and criteria for on-leave-from-call status

- a. At the termination of the call of a rostered minister, if the rostered minister has not received and accepted a subsequent call, the following procedure is to be followed:
 - 1) The rostered minister must inform the bishop of the date his/her current call is coming to an end. The bishop shall, in a timely manner, make sure that the rostered minister is aware of the necessity to comply with these guidelines.
 - 2) A rostered minister seeking on-leave-from-call status shall make a written request to the synod bishop within 45 days following the termination of a prior call, providing a rationale as to why on-leave-from-call status should be granted. Failure to do so may result in removal from the roster.
 - 3) The request for on-leave-from-call status must include:
 - a) a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call;
 - b) a statement of how the rostered minister's gifts and abilities can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;
 - c) the anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a letter of call;
 - d) a statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services while on leave from call at the direction of the synod bishop;
 - e) the rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave from call; and
 - f) a statement describing the rostered minister's current and intended participation in a congregation of this church.
 - 4) If a rostered minister requesting on-leave-from-call status desires to make a personal statement relative to the request, the Synod Council may, at its discretion and in the manner of its determination, allow for a personal appearance by the rostered minister to the Synod Council (or its designated committee).
 - 5) On-leave-from-call status is not automatically granted. Action granting or denying leave from call is to be taken by the Synod Council [ELCA constitutional provision 20.17., bylaw 7.61.06., and †S8.12.i.9. in the *Constitution for Synods*] upon endorsement by the synod bishop. A committee may be designated by the bishop to evaluate applications and bring recommendations to the Synod Council through the synod bishop for action.

- 6) The effective date for on-leave-from-call status, if granted by the Synod Council, begins the day the rostered minister is no longer serving under a regularly issued letter of call. This date is not affected by severance payments.
 - 7) Synod Council action related to a rostered minister's on-leave-from-call status is reported as information to the annual Synod Assembly in the report of the bishop or the Synod Council.
 - 8) Written notification is sent to the rostered minister requesting on-leave-from-call status reporting the action of the Synod Council.
 - 9) The action of the Synod Council in granting on-leave-from-call status must be reported to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services. Similar notification is given by the synod to the secretary of this church and Portico Benefit Services when such status is ended.
 - 10) Prior to the annual anniversary of the effective date of the rostered minister's on-leave-from-call status, the rostered minister must request renewal of the on-leave-from-call status. Annual action by the Synod Council is necessary for the continuation of that status.
 - 11) While on leave from call, a rostered minister must be an active member of a congregation of this church.
 - 12) A rostered minister on leave from call remains accountable to the synod bishop and must be willing to meet the criteria and standards of this church for its rostered ministers.
- b. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may be retained on the roster of this church for a maximum of six years by annual action of the Synod Council, in consultation with the appropriate unit. *(See bylaw 7.61.06.)*
A person already granted on-leave-from-call status, whose life circumstances change, may apply for a change to study leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.
- c. Family Leave: On leave from call for family responsibilities is available to rostered ministers who have had at least three years of active service under call, with demonstrated circumstances that fulfill the criteria for this status. A rostered minister may request on-leave-from-call status for family responsibilities for a maximum of six years, by annual action of the Synod Council, based upon either of the following reasons. *(See bylaw 7.61.06.)*
- 1) For the birth or care of a child or children of the rostered minister.
 - 2) For the care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health problem. A serious health problem is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either a period of incapacity or treatment with inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility, or a period of incapacity or subsequent treatment following inpatient care. A medical certification of such a serious health problem must be submitted to the Synod Council as part of the request for on-leave-from-call status.
A person already granted on-leave-from-call status, whose life circumstances change, may apply for a change to family leave. The Synod Council may approve such a change; however, the original date the leave began remains the same, thus allowing a maximum leave of six years.
- d. With approval of the Synod Council, either by general policy or by specific authorization, the synod bishop may place limitations or restrictions upon the availability for service of a rostered minister who is on leave from call.
- e. At least three months prior to the end of a rostered minister's on-leave-from-call status, the bishop or bishop's designee will contact the rostered minister to review:
- 1) Pension and health insurance implications, with a recommendation that Portico Benefit Services be contacted.
 - 2) The criteria for continuation of on-leave-from-call status beyond three years, if applicable.
 - 3) The implications and expectations of being removed from the roster.
 - 4) The process for reinstatement to the roster.
- f. The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is on leave from call may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.
- g. The secretary of this church shall report semi-annually to the Conference of Bishops any person whose on-leave-from-call status is coming to an end within the next six months.

2. Criteria for extension of on-leave-from-call status

- a. A rostered minister may remain on leave from call beyond three years when such an extension contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the on-leave-from-call status warrant an exception to the normal three-year limitation. Such continuation on the roster of this church beyond the third year is contingent upon recommendation by the synod bishop and action of both the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops.
- b. A rostered minister who is eligible for retired status should not be considered for an extension of on-leave-from-call status.

- c. A rostered minister who seeks to remain on leave from call beyond three years must provide a written request to the synod bishop and Synod Council for an extension of that status. This request should be received no later than six months prior to the end of the third year of on-leave-from-call status.
- d. This request must state clearly the reason(s) for such a request and how these reasons relate to this church's ministry and mission.
- e. The request must include the following information:
 - 1) The rationale for the rostered minister to remain on leave from call, including a statement of the rostered minister's commitment to be available for a letter of call, and an articulation of how the rostered minister's gifts and circumstances can contribute to the ministry and mission of this church;
 - 2) The anticipated date when the rostered minister will be available for a call;
 - 3) A statement describing the ability and willingness of the rostered minister to provide ministry services at the direction of the synod bishop, consistent with the ministry and mission needs of the synod;
 - 4) The rostered minister's plan for continuing education while on leave from call;
 - 5) A statement describing the rostered minister's current participation in a congregation of this church.
- f. Study Leave: A rostered minister engaged in graduate study, in a field of study that will enhance service in the rostered ministry of this church, may remain on study leave beyond six years when such continuation contributes to the ministry and mission of this church and when the particular circumstances of the study leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave from call (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the educational goals of the rostered minister, the time line for completion of study, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of study. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon recommendation by the synod bishop and action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council upon request of the synod bishop after notice to the rostered minister.
- g. Family Leave: A rostered minister on leave for care-giving responsibilities may remain on family leave beyond six years when the particular circumstances of the family leave warrant an exception to the normal six-year limitation. A written request must be made to the synod bishop and Synod Council as outlined for the extension of leave from call (e. above) but must also indicate clearly the continuing care-giving needs of the rostered minister, the possible time line for conclusion, and a statement of commitment that the rostered minister intends to be available for a letter of call within this church upon completion of these circumstances. Such continuation on the roster of this church is contingent upon recommendation by the synod bishop and action of the Synod Council and the Conference of Bishops, and may be terminated by subsequent action of the Synod Council upon request of the synod bishop after notice to the rostered minister.
- h. Action by the synod bishop and Synod Council
 - 1) The synod bishop reviews the request for continuation of the on-leave-from-call status beyond three years (six years in the case of graduate study and family leave) and forwards that request to the Synod Council together with the bishop's evaluation of the request.
 - 2) At the request of the synod bishop, the Synod Council considers the request of the rostered minister and how it relates to the mission and ministry of the synod. Should the decision of the Synod Council be to recommend approval, the Synod Council shall make such a request to the Conference of Bishops.
 - 3) On behalf of the Synod Council, the synod bishop forwards the request and rationale to the Conference of Bishops.
 - 4) A rostered minister on leave from call must provide an annual written request to the synod bishop for recommendation to the Synod Council for continuation of that status.
 - 5) The Synod Council must review and act annually on requests for continuance of on-leave-from-call status beyond the three-year norm (six years for graduate study and family leave).
- i. Action by the Conference of Bishops
 - 1) The Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops reviews such requests and reports its recommendations to the Conference of Bishops.
 - 2) The Conference of Bishops, at a regular meeting of the conference, by a majority vote acts upon requests for continuation of on-leave-from-call status. It shall report its decision to the synod seeking such a continuation.
 - 3) The action of the Conference of Bishops in approving the request of a Synod Council is valid for two years, if approved annually by the Synod Council.