

A Memorial to Uphold the Dignity of the Office of Ministry

- 1 Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in its rites makes affirmative declarations
2 concerning its rostered ministers;¹
- 3 Whereas these declarations and the affirmations of the rostered ministers which precede them
4 are made without reference to time nor subject to periodic renewal;²
- 5 Whereas continuance of rostered persons in the offices of the ministry is presumed barring
6 death, incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline;
- 7 Whereas removal of a rostered minister from the roster of this church is the highest, most severe
8 form of discipline and highest penalty which can be imposed;
- 9 Whereas the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of this church provide for definite
10 procedures with regard to discipline, including assurances of due process and
11 fundamental procedural fairness;³
- 12 Whereas the removal of rostered persons from the roster for reasons other than death,
13 incapacity, resignation, or disqualification through discipline is fundamentally arbitrary
14 and inconsistent with the affirmations made by church;
- 15 Whereas removal from the roster due to exceeding On Leave From Call Status time limits, missing
16 deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders
17 actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are
18 serving as an interim, transition, bridge, or other minister;
- 19 Whereas synods and synod bishops handle interim, transition, specialized ministry, word and
20 service calls, and on-leave-from call status inconsistently;⁴
- 21 Whereas some rostered ministers experience traumatic and/or abusive calls, and some rostered
22 ministers experience this brokenness from the synod, including the synod bishop;⁵
- 23 Whereas deacons in general and BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and female rostered ministers
24 disproportionately experience extended time of transition, including in On Leave From
25 Call status;⁶

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 As an example, Metro Chicago Synod uses synod council calls for intentional interim pastors, but also uses retired pastors without synod council call, as well as filling pulpits and pastoral vacancies with synodically authorized ministers. In other synods, intentional interims are treated on-leave-from-call and contracted, and synodically authorized ministers are not used at all.

⁵ Tanner, Marcus, et. al., "Clergy Who Experience Trauma as a Result of Forced Termination," *Journal of Religious Health* (2013 Dec;52(4)):1281-95.

⁶ See ELCA research: "Wait Times For First Call," Survey Report, August 2021, p.3

https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/45th_Anniversary_of_the_Ordination_Women_Ordained_Full_Report.pdf

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- 26 Whereas those removed from the roster have no way to effectively challenge their removal;
27 therefore be it⁷
- 28 Resolved that the Metro Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide
29 Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to create a task force to
30 establish churchwide guidelines for handling interim, transition, bridge,
31 specialized, non-parish based, and innovative calls (with increased attention to
32 calls for deacons), on-leave from call status, removal from roster protocols, and
33 communication protocols;
- 34 Be it further resolved that said task force establish a process for rostered ministers to challenge their
35 removal from the roster, including the possibility of an appeal in a synod other
36 than the synod from which they were removed from the roster;
- 37 Be it further resolved that said task force include members who are or have recently been involved in
38 specialized ministries (e.g. interim, transition, campus, outdoor, college or
39 seminary faculty, chaplains, etc.), as well as those currently on-leave from call
40 for a variety of reasons (e.g. family, personal, disability, between-calls, study,
41 etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons;
- 42 Be it further resolved that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy and
43 procedure changes to the Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the
44 Fall 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before
45 presentation to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly for adoption;
- 46 Be it further resolved that the Metro Chicago Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide
47 Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to suggest,
48 recommend, and urge the Conference of Bishops and all Synod Councils to
49 suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than death, incapacity,
50 resignation, or disqualification through formal disciplinary process until the
51 report of the task force has been acted upon by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

⁷ 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.