

1 **Amendments to “Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers**
2 **in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America”**

3 *Revised DRAFT 011910*
4
5

6 NOTE - The proposed revisions are all in section III of “Vision and Expectations,” so only
7 that is included here. Proposed insertions are underlined and deletions are struck
8 through. To simplify review, not all attendant changes in capitalization, word and
9 sentence order, and paragraph divisions are marked.
10

11 **III. THE ORDAINED MINISTER AS PERSON AND EXAMPLE**

12 *Will you be diligent in your study of the Holy Scriptures and in your use of the means of*
13 *grace? Will you pray for God's people, nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments,*
14 *and lead them by your own example in faithful service and holy living?*

15 *I will, and I ask God to help me.*

16 The ordained minister is called with all Christians to "lead a life worthy of the gospel of
17 Christ" (Philippians 1:27). It is Christ's own self-giving on the cross that is the example for
18 Christian life for all believers.

19 Because ordained ministers are also recipients of God's gracious gift in Christ Jesus, they are
20 called to use their gifts and abilities to enable others to understand themselves as recipients of
21 that same grace and to live as God's people in the world. In their life and conduct ordained
22 ministers are to witness to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Therefore, ordained ministers
23 will seek to use their gifts in lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

24 Ordained ministers fulfill the calling of the pastoral office not only by what they do in
25 carrying out certain tasks, but also in who they are. They both officially proclaim and in their
26 person witness to the gospel of Christ. Pastoral identity is not one of moral or spiritual
27 perfection. It is, instead, the living out of the good news that one is justified by God's grace
28 and thus called to live out that grace in daily life. The ordained minister is not simply a
29 professional trained in skills to perform a task, but is one sent by the church to lead the
30 community of faith through the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The ordained minister
31 enables and equips others in their lives as Christians and for their ministry in the world by
32 faithful preaching of the Word of God, through the administration of the sacraments, and by
33 example.

34 Pastoral identity carries with it expectations and accountabilities that are determined by the
35 whole church and not simply by a given congregation, synod, institution, or agency served by
36 the ordained minister.

37 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has high expectations for those who serve
38 within the ordained ministry of this church. It does so because it recognizes that when offense

39 is given by an ordained minister, the witness of the gospel may be impaired and the ability to
40 carry out public ministry is threatened.

41 Yet sin and brokenness ~~is a reality~~ are realities in the lives of all ~~persons~~ people, including
42 those who serve as ordained ministers. It is crucial for us all to remember that repentance and
43 forgiveness are to be daily realities in the life of every baptized Christian. Neither perfection
44 nor self-righteousness is asked of the ordained ministers of this church. When there is failure
45 in the lives of those who serve in this office, this church seeks to provide counsel and
46 understanding. When there are repentance and forgiveness, this church rejoices. Indeed, the
47 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believes that God not only calls but sustains those
48 who are set apart for the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament. It is with this recognition
49 that this church can affirm that those who are set apart to the office of Word and Sacrament
50 are to seek to embody those characteristics which are consistent with the pastoral office.

51 The ordained minister is to nourish the people of God through the Word and sacraments. In
52 order to do this, the ordained minister needs to develop and nurture a sound knowledge of the
53 scriptures, both intellectually and devotionally. The ordained minister will seek regular
54 opportunities for personal participation in the means of grace, including the renewal of
55 baptismal grace in individual confession and absolution, and to celebrate and receive the
56 sacrament of Holy Communion, thus receiving God's renewing, sustaining, empowering
57 Spirit both personally and in the practice of ministry.

58 The ordained minister engages in daily prayer and encourages others in the practice of regular
59 prayer.

60 The ordained minister must be a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran
61 Church in America. As a member of such a community of faith, the ordained minister is an
62 integral part of a community in which mutual support is given and in which care, forgiveness,
63 and healing occur.

64 The ordained minister supports not only the work of the congregation, but also the synodical
65 and churchwide ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This church expects
66 its ordained ministers to work in a collegial relationship with one another and to share in
67 mutual accountability with those in positions of leadership and oversight in this church. The
68 ordained ministers of this church are to seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare
69 for the ministry of the gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community.

70 The ordained minister is concerned for the whole person and provides for the care of those
71 troubled with spiritual or emotional problems. This church expects that its ordained ministers
72 will honor and respect privileged communication, particularly within the context of individual
73 confession and absolution, and will not disclose such communication except with the express
74 permission of the person who has confided it or if the person is perceived to intend great harm
75 to self or others. The ordained minister recognizes the importance of lifelong growth in
76 learning. Such growth is intended to renew, extend, and deepen insight into the scriptures and
77 the doctrinal teaching of the church, and to enable one to respond to the insights and
78 challenges of the world with greater awareness and a more faithful confession. In an

79 increasingly complex and educated society, the development of an informed intellect and
80 professional skills is crucial to competent ordained ministry. This church expects of its
81 ordained ministers regular and disciplined time for personal study, study in the company of
82 others, participation in programs of continuing education, and periodic times for extended
83 study. Congregations and other entities of this church are expected to provide the ordained
84 minister the time and assistance with the financial resources needed for such study.

85 The ordained minister needs to be an example of self-care, as well as caring for others. The
86 significant demands of time and effort within the office of ordained ministry can lead one to
87 neglect proper nutrition, exercise, and time for recreation. The congregation, or whatever
88 agency or institution the ordained minister serves, should respect the need for the ordained
89 minister to have adequate time for self-care. Caring for self also includes seeking counseling
90 and/or medical care when there is evidence of physical or mental illness, substance abuse,
91 eating disorders, or relational problems.

92 The ordained minister is to be an example of holy living, so that the ordained minister's life
93 does not become an impediment to the hearing of the gospel or a scandal to the community of
94 faith. The qualities of such a life include the following:

95 *Trustworthiness and Integrity*

96 The ordained minister is expected to be honest and forthright in dealings with others while
97 protecting privileged and confidential communications. The ordained minister should
98 strive to develop a public reputation for integrity and to nurture trustworthy personal
99 relationships. Ordained ministers must avoid conduct that is dishonest, deceitful,
100 deceptive, or manipulative of others for personal benefit or gain.

101 The ordained minister is expected to be fiscally responsible and is to be a faithful steward
102 of time, talents, and possessions. The ordained minister is to be an example to the
103 community of generous giving.

104 *Trustworthiness in Family Relationships*

105 In their public ministry as well as in private life, ordained ministers ~~whether married or~~
106 single are expected to uphold an understanding of family ~~marriage in their public ministry~~
107 as well as in private life that is biblically informed and consistent with the teachings of
108 this church. The baptismal vocation of all, including ordained ministers, is expressed in
109 service to others, and all are called to build and protect trust in relationships.

110
111 The ordained minister will strive to serve others and nurture trust by enhancing family
112 life. Within the family, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and mutual care are to be
113 expressed. Children, if any, will be regarded with love, respect, and commitment. It is also
114 expected that ordained ministers maintain responsible relationships with their parents and
115 other immediate relatives.

116

117 The social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* states: “Marriage¹ is a covenant of
118 mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by
119 God. The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized
120 marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10:6-9....”² The
121 public promises of marriage are to be honored and trust is to be nurtured for the good of
122 all.

123
124 Acknowledging a lack of consensus about homosexual relationships, the social statement
125 lifts up the call to discern God’s love in service to the neighbor and urges the honoring of
126 conscience-bound belief.³ Seeking to support responsible actions that serve others, this
127 church has committed itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to
128 recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender
129 relationships and it has committed itself to finding a way for people in such publicly
130 accountable, lifelong monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders
131 of this church. This church also has committed itself to make provision in its policies to
132 recognize the conviction of members who believe that this church should not call or roster
133 people in such relationships.⁴ In all relationships, an ordained minister is expected to
134 honor public promises, bear the burdens of others, and seek to build up the body of Christ.

135
136 *Trustworthiness in Beginning, Sustaining, and Ending Relationships Separation, Divorce*
137 *and Remarriage*

138 Should an ordained minister seek to marry, the counsel and guidance of the synodical
139 bishop is to be sought and the minister shall make the decision known among those he or
140 she serves.

¹ This “Vision and Expectations” document uses the terms “marriage” and “married” to refer to marriage between one man and one woman. Some states allow the marriage of same-gender couples. This document addresses those relationships with other publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.

² *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009, p. 15

³ *Human Sexuality*, p. 19

⁴ Action of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly – CA09.05.23, CA09.05.24, CA09.05.26, and CA09.05.27.

Because of these actions, this document includes this church’s vision and expectations for single people, married people, and people in “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.” The terms in the latter descriptive phrase are intended to have their common meanings. “Lifelong” means that the two parties intend the relationship to last as long as they both shall live. “Monogamous” means that the relationship is between two people only and excludes the possibility of other partners. “Same-gender” means that the relationship is between two men or two women. “Public accountability” means that the two parties to the relationship openly acknowledge the relationship, have a demonstrable commitment to the relationship as monogamous and lifelong, and have a willingness to seek and accept the aid of individuals and community in sustaining the relationship.

For an ordained minister, both church and community are part of the public within which he or she is accountable. Public accountability for a married ordained minister should include recognition and support of the marriage in his or her ELCA congregation and recorded civil recognition of the marriage. Public accountability for an ordained minister in a lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship should include recognition and support of the relationship in his or her ELCA congregation and the highest level of legal recognition available in the state where he or she resides. Where legal recognition of the relationship itself is not available, there should be other evidence that there is legal and social accountability of the partners to one another and to any dependents.

141 An ordained minister ~~Ordained ministers~~ who is ~~are~~ married is ~~are~~ expected to keep his or
142 her ~~their~~ marriage inviolate until death, to cultivate love and respect for her or his ~~their~~
143 spouse, and to seek marital counseling when it is needed. It is recognized that due to
144 human sin and brokenness, in some cases the marital relationship may have to be
145 dissolved. Should an ordained minister and spouse seek to divorce, the counsel and
146 guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought. Similarly, should an ordained minister
147 decide to marry following a divorce, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is
148 to be sought.

149 Should an ordained minister seek to enter a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous,
150 same-gender relationship, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought
151 and the minister shall make the decision known among those he or she serves.

152 An ordained minister in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender
153 relationship is expected to keep that relationship inviolate until death, to cultivate love and
154 respect for his or her same-gender partner, and to seek counseling with the partner when it
155 is needed. It is recognized that due to human sin and brokenness, in some cases such a
156 relationship may have to be dissolved. Should an ordained minister and partner seek to
157 end their relationship, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought.
158 Similarly, should an ordained minister, following the ending of a publicly accountable,
159 lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship, decide to enter another such
160 relationship, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought.

161
162 *Trustworthiness in Sexual Conduct*

163 The expectations of this church regarding the sexual conduct of its ordained ministers are
164 grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift and trust from God and that
165 ordained ministers are to live in such a way as to honor this gift and trust.
166

167 Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others
168 for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual
169 harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others.

170 This church's social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* states: "Sexual intimacy,
171 together with promises of fidelity and public accountability, nurtures bonds that allow
172 people to thrive and provides a rich context for the care and support of children."⁵ It also
173 states: "It is in marriage that the highest degrees of physical intimacy are matched with
174 and protected by the highest levels of binding commitment, including legal protection. It
175 is in marriage that public promises of lifetime commitment can create the foundation for
176 trust, intimacy, and safety."⁶

177 Single ordained ministers are expected to live a chaste life, holy in body and spirit,
178 honoring the single life, and working for the good of all.
179

⁵ *Human Sexuality*, p. 15

⁶ *Human Sexuality*, p. 17

180 A married ordained minister is expected to live in fidelity to his or her spouse, giving
181 expression to sexual intimacy within a marriage relationship that is mutual, chaste, and
182 faithful. ~~Ordained ministers who are homosexual in their self understanding are expected~~
183 ~~to abstain from homosexual sexual relationships.~~

184
185 An ordained minister who is in a publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous same-gender
186 relationship is expected to live in fidelity to his or her partner, giving expression to sexual
187 intimacy within a publicly accountable relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful.

188
189
190 *Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ,*
191 *you turn us from the old life of sin. Grant that we who are reborn to new life in him may*
192 *live in righteousness and holiness all our days, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

193
194 **Prayer for Daily Renewal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship***