

1                                   **Vocation and Education Unit Draft Revisions to**  
2                                   **“Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers**  
3                                   **in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America”**

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5   NOTE 1 - The proposed revisions are all in section III of this document and are indicated  
6   below in red type, with underlinings for additions and strike-throughs for deletions. This  
7   section begins with a question from the ordination service, as do the other sections.

8   NOTE 2 – The same changes are also proposed for the “Vision and Expectations” document  
9   for the three Word and service rosters—associates in ministry, diaconal minister and  
10   deaconesses. Since the original wording and the proposed changes are identical, save for the  
11   naming of the rosters, only the one document is quoted here.

12  
13   NOTE 3 – Both of the “Vision and Expectations” documents need some additional editing to  
14   update points unrelated to the recent ministry policy changes. In the near future, staff intends,  
15   after consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to propose those additional amendments to  
16   the Church Council.

17  
18   **III. THE ORDAINED MINISTER AS PERSON AND EXAMPLE**

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

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

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

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

31   Ordained ministers fulfill the calling of the pastoral office not only by what they do in  
32   carrying out certain tasks, but also in who they are. They both officially proclaim and in their  
33   person witness to the gospel of Christ. Pastoral identity is not one of moral or spiritual  
34   perfection. It is, instead, the living out of the good news that one is justified by God's grace  
35   and thus called to live out that grace in daily life. The ordained minister is not simply a  
36   professional trained in skills to perform a task, but is one sent by the church to lead the

37 community of faith through the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The ordained minister  
38 enables and equips others in their lives as Christians and for their ministry in the world by  
39 faithful preaching of the Word of God, through the administration of the sacraments, and by  
40 example.

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

44 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has high expectations for those who serve  
45 within the ordained ministry of this church. It does so because it recognizes that when offense  
46 is given by an ordained minister, the witness of the gospel may be impaired and the ability to  
47 carry out public ministry is threatened.

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

58 The ordained minister is to nourish the people of God through the Word and sacraments. In  
59 order to do this, the ordained minister needs to develop and nurture a sound knowledge of the  
60 Scriptures, both intellectually and devotionally. The ordained minister will seek regular  
61 opportunities for personal participation in the means of grace, including the renewal of  
62 baptismal grace in individual confession and absolution, and to celebrate and receive the  
63 sacrament of Holy Communion, thus receiving God's renewing, sustaining, empowering  
64 Spirit both personally and in the practice of ministry.

65 The ordained minister engages in daily prayer and encourages others in the practice of regular  
66 prayer.

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

71 The ordained minister supports not only the work of the congregation, but also the synodical  
72 and churchwide ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This church expects  
73 its ordained ministers to work in a collegial relationship with one another and to share in  
74 mutual accountability with those in positions of leadership and oversight in this church. The

75 ordained ministers of this church are to seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare  
76 for the ministry of the gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community.

77 The ordained minister is concerned for the whole person and provides for the care of those  
78 troubled with spiritual or emotional problems. This church expects that its ordained ministers  
79 will honor and respect privileged communication, particularly within the context of individual  
80 confession and absolution, and will not disclose such communication except with the express  
81 permission of the person who has confided it or if the person is perceived to intend great harm  
82 to self or others. The ordained minister recognizes the importance of life-long growth in  
83 learning. Such growth is intended to renew, extend, and deepen insight into the Scriptures and  
84 the doctrinal teaching of the church, and to enable one to respond to the insights and  
85 challenges of the world with greater awareness and a more faithful confession. In an  
86 increasingly complex and educated society, the development of an informed intellect and  
87 professional skills is crucial to competent ordained ministry. This church expects of its  
88 ordained ministers regular and disciplined time for personal study, study in the company of  
89 others, participation in programs of continuing education, and periodic times for extended  
90 study. Congregations and other entities of this church are expected to provide the ordained  
91 minister the time and assistance with the financial resources needed for such study.

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

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

102 The ordained minister is to be an example of holy living, so that the ordained minister's life  
103 does not become an impediment to the hearing of the gospel or a scandal to the community of  
104 faith. As this church asserts in its social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, “Trust is  
105 a critical element that holds together couples and relationships, households and families,  
106 social structures and institutions.”<sup>1</sup>

107 The qualities of such a life include the following:

108 *Responsibility to family*

109 Ordained ministers, whether single, married<sup>2</sup> or in a publicly accountable, lifelong

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<sup>1</sup> p. 7

<sup>2</sup> This documents uses the terms “marriage “and “married” to refer to marriage between one man and woman. “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” has the same usage but acknowledges (p. ....) that some in this church understand the term as being appropriate also for the relationship of a same-gender couple.

110 monogamous, same-gender relationship,<sup>3</sup> are expected to uphold an understanding of  
111 marriage and family in their public ministry as well as in private life that is biblically  
112 informed and consistent with the teachings of this church. Spouse or same-gender partner, and  
113 children, if any, are to be regarded with love, respect, and commitment. Within the family,  
114 forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and mutual care are to be expressed. It is also expected  
115 that ordained ministers maintain responsible relationships with their parents and other  
116 immediate relatives.

117  
118 *Faithfulness, Commitment, Separation, Divorce and Remarriage*

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

122 Ordained ministers are expected to keep their marriage inviolate until death, to cultivate love  
123 and respect for their spouse, and to seek marital counseling when it is needed. It is recognized  
124 that due to human sin and brokenness, in some cases the marital relationship may have to be  
125 dissolved. Should an ordained minister and spouse seek to divorce, the counsel and guidance  
126 of the synodical bishop is to be sought. Similarly, should an ordained minister decide to marry  
127 following a divorce, the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought.

128  
129 Ordained ministers in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationship  
130 are expected to keep that relationship inviolate until death, to cultivate love and respect for  
131 their same-gender partner, and to seek counseling with their partner when it is needed. It is

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<sup>3</sup> The terms in the phrase “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship” are intended to have their common meanings. “Lifelong” means that the relationship is intended to last as long as both parties to the relationship shall live. “Monogamous” means that the relationship is between two people—one to one. “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, 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 to which he or she is accountable. Public accountability for an ordained minister in a heterosexual marriage includes recognition and support in a congregation of this church and legally recorded civil recognition. Similarly, public accountability for an ordained minister in a lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship includes recognition and support in a congregation of this church and may include a legally recorded civil recognition and other evidence that the relationship is lifelong and monogamous.

The ELCA social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” recognizes that within this church diverse convictions about homosexuality and about the rostered service of people in same-gender relationships are faithfully held on the basis of Scripture. The ELCA intends both to allow the rostered service of people who are in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship and to provide for those whose convictions do not favor such service.

132 recognized that due to human sin and brokenness, in some cases such a relationship may have  
133 to be dissolved. Should an ordained minister and partner seek to end their relationship, the  
134 counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought. Similarly, should the ordained  
135 minister, following the ending of the relationship, decide to enter another such relationship,  
136 the counsel and guidance of the synodical bishop is to be sought.

137  
138 *Sexual conduct*

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

142  
143 Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for  
144 purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual harassment,  
145 including taking physical or emotional advantage of others.

146  
147 Single ordained ministers are expected to live a chaste life.

148 This church's social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* states, "Sexual intimacy,  
149 together with promises of fidelity and public accountability, nurtures bonds that allow people  
150 to thrive and provides a rich context for the care and support of children."<sup>4</sup>

151 It also states, "It is in marriage that the highest degrees of physical intimacy are matched with  
152 and protected by the highest levels of binding commitment, including legal protection. It is in  
153 marriage that public promises of lifetime commitment can create the foundation for trust,  
154 intimacy, and safety."<sup>5</sup>

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

159  
160 An ordained minister who is in a publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous same-gender  
161 relationship recognized and supported by an expression of this church is expected to live in  
162 fidelity to his or her partner, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a publicly  
163 accountable relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful.

164  
165 *Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ,*  
166 *you turn us from the old life of sin. Grant that we who are reborn to new life in him may*  
167 *live in righteousness and holiness all our days, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
168 **Prayer for Renewal, Lutheran Book of Worship**

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<sup>4</sup> *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009, p. 9

<sup>5</sup> *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009, p. 10