

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

3                                   *Revised DRAFT 010410*  
4

5 NOTE 1 - The proposed revisions are all in section III, so only that is included here. Proposed  
6 insertions are underlined and deletions are struck through. To simplify review, minor  
7 attendant changes such as capitalization, word and sentence order, and paragraph  
8 divisions are not indicated.

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

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  
15 intends, after consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to propose those additional  
16 amendments to the Church Council.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

76 The ordained minister is concerned for the whole person and provides for the care of those  
77 troubled with spiritual or emotional problems. This church expects that its ordained ministers  
78 will honor and respect privileged communication, particularly within the context of individual

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

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

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

101 *Trustworthiness and Integrity*

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

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

110 *Trustworthiness in Family Relationships*

111  
112 ~~Ordained ministers whether married or single~~ are expected to uphold an understanding of  
113 marriage in their public ministry as well as in private life that is biblically informed and  
114 consistent with the teachings of this church. The ELCA teaches: "Marriage is a covenant  
115 of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by

116 God. The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized  
117 marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10:6-9.”<sup>1</sup>  
118

119 This church has committed itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do  
120 so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable life-long, monogamous, same-  
121 gender relationships and to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, life-  
122 long monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church.<sup>2</sup>  
123 This church has also committed itself to make provision in its policies to recognize the  
124 conviction of members who believe that this church should not call or roster people in  
125 such relationships.<sup>3</sup>  
126

127 In all circumstances, the ordained minister will strive to enhance family life and will  
128 regard her or his spouse, same-gender partner, and children, if any, with love, respect, and  
129 commitment. Within the family, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and mutual care are  
130 to be expressed. It is also expected that ordained ministers maintain responsible  
131 relationships with their parents and other immediate relatives.  
132

133 *Trustworthiness in Beginning, Sustaining and Ending Relationships Separation, Divorce*  
134 *and Remarriage*

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

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<sup>1</sup> “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” A Social Statement of the ELCA, August, 2009, p. 9. In accord with the social statement, this document uses the terms “marriage” and “married” to refer to marriage between one man and woman. The social statement also says, “recognizing that this conclusion differs from the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions, some people, though not all, in this church and within the larger Christian community, conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships.

<sup>2</sup> Actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Because of these actions, this document includes vision and expectations not only for single and married people but also for people who in a “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship.” The terms in that 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—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 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 an ordained minister in a heterosexual marriage will include recognition and support of the relationship 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 will include recognition and support of the relationship in his or her ELCA congregation and the highest level of civil recognition available in the state where he or she serves. Where such civil recognition of the relationship itself is not available, there shall be other evidence that there is legal and social accountability of the partners to one another and to any dependents.

<sup>3</sup> Action of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

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

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

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

157  
158 *Trustworthiness in Sexual Conduct*

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

162  
163 Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others  
164 for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual  
165 harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others.

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

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

173 A married ordained minister is expected to live in fidelity to his or her spouse, giving  
174 expression to sexual intimacy within a marriage relationship that is mutual, chaste, and

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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.

175 faithful. ~~Ordained ministers who are homosexual in their self understanding are expected~~  
176 ~~to abstain from homosexual sexual relationships.~~

177  
178 An ordained minister who is in a publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous same-gender  
179 relationship recognized and supported by an expression of this church is expected to live  
180 in fidelity to his or her partner, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a publicly  
181 accountable relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful.

182  
183 Single ordained ministers are expected to live a chaste life.

184  
185 *Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ,*  
186 *you turn us from the old life of sin. Grant that we who are reborn to new life in him may*  
187 *live in righteousness and holiness all our days, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
188 **Prayer for Renewal, Lutheran Book of Worship**