

R-2: A Memorial to Uphold the Dignity of the Office of Ministry

WHEREAS, people in the United States increasingly consider themselves not religious, spiritual not religious, atheist, agnostic, or another variation of unchurched or dechurched and reaching them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires adjusting expectations and actions, and

WHEREAS, the nature of worship and church community is changing, requiring creativity, innovation, and flexibility, and

WHEREAS, congregations are exploring alternatives to one or more full-time clergy on staff (i.e., part-time ministry, multi-point parishes, contracts), and

WHEREAS, multi vocational ministry and unpaid ministry are increasingly encouraged for consideration by synod leadership and seminaries, and

WHEREAS, individuals, congregations, synods, and the ELCA as a whole invest a great deal of time, money, and energy into training rostered ministers, and

WHEREAS, ELCA Churchwide and several ELCA synods have been expressing concerns about a clergy shortage for 20+ years, and

WHEREAS, many areas experience a shortage of interim/transition/bridge ministers and supply preachers, and

WHEREAS, synods and synod bishops handle interim/transition clergy calls, specialized ministry calls, calls for deacons, and on-leave-from call status inconsistently, and

WHEREAS, some rostered ministers experience challenging calls, and

WHEREAS, deacons in general and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Color), LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spirit), disabled, and/or female rostered ministers disproportionately experience extended time in On Leave from Call status, and

WHEREAS, removal from the roster due to exceeding on-leave from call status, missing deadlines, or unclear communication is not uncommon, even when rostered leaders actively maintain a Rostered Minister Profile in the ELCA mobility system and/or are serving as an interim/transition/bridge or other minister, and

WHEREAS, there is no appeal process provided for rostered ministers when on-leave-from-call status is denied by the Synod Council resulting in their removal from the roster;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly and Conference of Bishops to suspend removal from the roster due to anything other than formal disciplinary reasons (i.e., no removal for exceeding maximum time periods for on-leave from call status, serving in ministry positions that don't offer a formal Letter of Call, or missing communication deadlines); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod memorialize the Churchwide Assembly and Conference of Bishops to create a task force to establish national guidelines for handling interim/ transition/bridge calls, specialized ministry calls, other non-parish based or innovative calls (with increased attention to calls for our deacons), on-leave-from-call status, removal from call protocols, removal from roster protocols, and communication protocols; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that said task force establish a process for the clergy to challenge their removal from call and/or roster outside of the synod involved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that said task force include members who are currently (or have recently been) involved in specialized ministries (interim/transition ministry, campus ministry, outdoor ministry, college or seminary professors, chaplains of all sorts, etc.), as well as those currently On Leave from Call for a variety of reasons (family, personal, disability, between-calls, study, etc.), and to include a minimum of two deacons; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this task force present a report and recommendations for policy changes to the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops prior to the fall of 2024 meeting of the Conference of Bishops for evaluation before being presented for consideration for adoption at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Contact person: Pastor Karen E Tews, Interim Pastor
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Adopted by the Central Conference Pastors on April 13, 2022: Pr. Scott Ralston (Conference Dean), Pr. Roger Asplund, Pr. Josh Ehrler, Pr. Jacob Gawlik, Pr. Andrew Kayes, Vicar Ryan Mackey, Pr. Carol Soderholm, Pr. Karen Tews, Pr. Terrie Wilder & Pr. Janet Wold.

Adopted by the Northwest Conference on April 11, 2022: Pr. Nord Swanstrom (Conference Dean), Pr. Shellie Knight, Pr. Bob Stark, Ms. Barbara Stark, Ms. Mary Ann Rath, Pr. Robin Luckey, Pr. Traci Maass, Pr. Jim Mehlretter, Pr. Miho Yasukawa & Ms. Deb Ehrler.

Action of the Resolution Committee: Forward without recommendation

Date of Action: May 3, 2022

2022 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly
Anticipated Implementation Analysis for Assembly Resolutions

(This resource impact form must accompany any Resolution submitted)

Resolution Title: Reviewing On Leave From Call Removal Process

Anticipated financial cost for implementation of resolution, if adopted, for:

Synod Organization: none

Congregations: none

Anticipated staff time or other personnel implications of resolution, if adopted, for:

Synod Organization: none

Congregations: none

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