

March 3-7, 2005

VOTED:

CB05.03.01 To adopt the following "Statement of Understanding Concerning Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament":

**A Statement of Understanding Concerning
Synodically Authorized Ministry of Word and Sacrament**

The Conference of Bishops has reviewed the recommended approval of a revised "Policy and Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized Ministries of Word and Sacrament" document and offers the following statement of understanding related to that policy and guidelines:

1. To affirm the policies and guidelines of this church on synodically authorized ministries as stated in the bylaws, in "Policy and Guidelines Related to Synodically Authorized Ministries of Word and Sacrament" as revised, and in *Use of the Means of Grace*, and to encourage and support one another in applying and interpreting these policies.
2. To affirm that synodically authorized ministry policies are intended to honor the God-given office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession) and this church's commitment to ordained ministry as the primary means for fulfilling this office. Synodically authorized ministry is intended to assist this church to respond pastorally and effectively to emerging opportunities in Christ's mission where it is not possible to provide an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament.
3. To affirm that when addressing the need for Word and Sacrament ministry in a congregation or other ministry where an ordained minister of this church is not available, that synods will seek the utilization of an ordained minister of a full-communion partner church, under the guidelines related to the orderly exchange of ordained ministers.
4. To affirm that synodically authorized ministry of Word and Sacrament is normally intended for a specific congregation or other ministry where appropriate ordained ministry is not available for an extended period of time.
5. To agree that, in keeping with the policies of this church, synodically authorized ministry of Word and Sacrament is not intended for and should not be used to authorize an individual to provide for short-term, intermittent absences of a specific congregation's called pastor. However, we acknowledge that there is often need to provide for the celebration of the sacrament for such circumstances, and we acknowledge that in some areas and at some times neither an ELCA nor a full-communion partner church ordained minister is available to meet such a need. Such situations highlight a tension between a bishop's authority to provide for "appropriate ordained pastoral leadership" (7.61.01.) and the guideline that authorization is only to be used when the need for such leadership is "for an extended period of time" (*Use of the Means of Grace*, Principle 40).

We agree that for congregations in such areas, the inability to provide "appropriate ordained pastoral leadership" may require flexibility in interpreting "for an extended period of time." This flexibility may be accomplished for a transitional period by the authorization of a person or persons to be available to provide Word and Sacrament ministry in congregations in the area where ordained leadership is chronically unavailable. Authorization would be for a renewable term not to exceed one year and for the specific area. Like all synodically authorized ministers, such persons would be appropriately prepared and supervised. Though authorized for an area and for a term, such persons would only serve in specific ministry settings with the approval of the bishop. The synod should continue to seek ways to make available ordained ministers to serve in that area.

6. To affirm that this church's policies and commitments name four clear aspects in synodically authorized ministry: *an invitation to service, the preparation of persons to serve, supervision and accountability, and authorization for specific service*. All four aspects are vital to faithful use of synodically authorized ministries.
 - a. We agree to hold one another accountable for the ongoing recruitment of candidates for the ordained and rostered lay ministries of this church.
 - b. We encourage congregations and other ministries to enhance the mission-effectiveness of the policies and guidelines by commending to the bishop persons who should be prepared for possible service in synodically authorized ministry.
 - c. We encourage bishops and synods to plan for the preparation of persons to meet anticipated and unanticipated mission opportunities of that synod.
 - d. We commit ourselves to seek always to authorize for ministry only individuals who have been well prepared and who will serve under supervision.
 - e. We will encourage congregations and other ministries to become aware of these guidelines and, in collaboration with the synod, to seek to anticipate their own mission needs and opportunities and to plan for them.