

Synod Authorized
Lay Ministry (SALM)
and
Lay Education
Program Handbook

Oregon Synod - ELCA

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Oregon Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's Work. Our Hands

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Purpose

The primary purpose of the SALM and Lay Education Program handbook is to provide a thoughtful and faithful framework for facilitating synod authorized lay ministry in the Oregon Synod. It also outlines one of the synod's efforts to offer an education program for lay leaders serving in a wider variety of roles and congregations. The policies that follow are intended to provide a healthy dose of clarity and consistency, but ultimately, authority for approving synod authorized lay ministry lies with the synod bishop who leans heavily on the guidance of the SALM Board. In extenuating circumstances, the synod bishop can choose to adapt some of the expectations and supports described in this handbook to better suit a congregation's particular context.

Overview

What is the SALM and Lay Education Program?

The Synod Authorized Lay Ministry (SALM) and Lay Education Program is designed especially to help prepare and support lay leaders in the Oregon Synod for ministry in the places where they live, work, and worship. People from other faith traditions and no faith tradition are also welcome to participate. A flexible, on-line curriculum offers people across the Oregon Synod an opportunity to learn and grow together in small group settings.

The goals of the Oregon Synod SALM and Lay Education Program are to:

- (1) Equip curious, courageous, and mature faith leaders by supporting them in the development of:
 - (a) spiritual practices that feed their souls
 - (b) tools for meaningful engagement with their own and others' faith traditions
 - (c) the capacity to live out their faith with integrity and authenticity
 - (d) skills for adaptive leadership in a complex time, both in congregational and community settings
- (2) Cultivate lay ministers to serve remote or otherwise unique contexts.
- (3) Weave a "wild web of relationship" across the Oregon Synod.

Three Tracks of Study

The Oregon Synod SALM and Lay Education Program invites participation in one of three tracks:

1. Individual Courses

People are welcome to participate in a single course that is of particular interest to them and/or their congregation. No future role is expected and no commitment is asked other than active, authentic participation for the length of the course.

2. Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies

People who complete the entire curriculum can earn a Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies from the Oregon Synod. This track includes completion of a small, integrative assignment at the end of each course and recognition at Synod Assembly. If called by one's congregation to do so, those who complete the Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies could be well prepared to preach and facilitate worship (as lay pulpit supply) in their own congregation when the pastor is absent.

3. Synod Authorized Lay Ministry (SALM)

The ELCA recognizes that certain congregations remain vital despite -- by reason of geography and/or economics -- being unable to access or support the ministry of even a part-time ordained pastor. In such circumstances, the synod bishop and SALM Board may consider, together with the congregational council, the possibility of synod authorized lay ministry. If a leader (or small team of leaders) from within the congregation is identified as having potential and a sense of call for ministry as a synod authorized lay minister (SALM), the synod may help equip them for the congregational-based ministries of preaching, sacraments and worship leadership, Bible study, visitation, spiritual growth, and, where appropriate, catechetical instruction. The SALM training track includes a small,

integrative assignment at the end of each course; supplemental training in preaching and presiding at Holy Communion; pastoral mentorship; oversight by the SALM Board; and authorization by the bishop. These courses and mentoring relationships are intended to support SALMs and honor the meaningful challenges that come with the role.

Participation in a program of preparation does not guarantee authorized ministry within the Oregon Synod.

Core Values

The SALM and Lay Education Program is built on the foundational Lutheran value of an **empowered and educated laity**. We are a “priesthood of all believers,” and the riches and responsibility of theological reflection and community building should be available to all. Other core values of the program include:

- **Mutual Accompaniment:** Through these courses, we hope to encourage deep listening, story-telling, and relationship. We want to learn together and from one another.
- **Praxis:** We begin with our lived experience and with practices that can be applied in a variety of ways and settings. Content or information-sharing should enrich our lived experience rather than being the primary goal.
- **Sacred Curiosity and Healthy Humility:** We welcome big questions. We’re invited to dig deep within ourselves and our tradition(s), while also honoring the wisdom of our interfaith and “no faith” neighbors. There is richness both in what we know and in what we don’t know.
- **Wholeness:** We long to be present as whole beings and welcome the wholeness of others. We, therefore, seek out and honor a variety of voices and experiences that reflect the diversity and wholeness of God’s creation. We also strive to care for our bodies, spirits, and minds as we gather.
- **Accessibility:** The Oregon Synod covers a lot of ground (literally), so we offer classes on-line to make it accessible to as many Oregonians as possible. Many lay leaders have full-time jobs or caregiving roles, so most courses meet one evening per week with minimal outside-of-class time. Scholarships and a sliding scale are available. If specific accommodations are needed, please let us know.

The Curriculum

Courses

SALM and Lay Education Program courses are offered on Zoom, in order to serve communities across the Oregon Synod and help weave “a wild web of relationship.” Most courses will meet one evening per week for 1.5 hours with 20-90 minutes of preparation or practice between sessions. In every course, we seek to integrate relationships, spiritual grounding, self-awareness, and action.

Consistent with our core values, we look for guest instructors who welcome the opportunity to help us (a) ground every class in the participants’ lived experience in their community, (b) emphasize practices that can be applied in a variety of ways and settings, (c) encourage relationships, and (d) go deep and learn together. Guest instructors and synod staff are viewed as participants, too. Many guest instructors volunteer their time and expertise to this program.

The “curriculum” outlined below will change in response to feedback and discernment. It is intended to offer a helpful, big picture structure without becoming rigid. When changes are made to the curriculum, people in the midst of SALM training or working toward an Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies will be consulted and arrangements will be made to help them meet their learning needs and goals without added burden.

Curricular Rhythm

September-November (8 weeks)

- Year 1 -- Hebrew Scriptures
- Year 2 -- Invitations into Liberation: Reformation History, Lutheran Theology, and Beyond

January-February (8 weeks)

- Year 1 -- Spirituality, Practices, and Symbols of the Christian Faith
- Year 2 -- Christ, Culture, and Place: Our Context in Oregon

April-May (8 weeks)

- Year 1 -- New Testament Scriptures
- Year 2 -- Leadership in a Liminal Time: Systems, Emergence, and Adaptation

June (4 weeks)

- Year 1 -- Sacraments and Liturgy: Unearthing Hidden Story, Gifts, and Power

- Year 2 -- Preaching I: Crafting a Faithful Sermon (*prerequisite: Hebrew or New Testament Scriptures*)

August (4 weeks)

- Year 1 -- Sacramental Organizing and Evangelism
- Year 2 -- Preaching II: Being Prophetic and Pastoral (*prerequisite: Preaching I*)

Additional training will be made available for synod authorized lay ministers, as needed, including (i) pastoral care, (ii) administering the sacraments, (iii) the Lutheran Confessions and catechetics, and (iv) advanced preaching. Ethical considerations will be integrated throughout the curriculum.

Cost

Course participants are encouraged to donate, as they are able, on a sliding scale between \$20-\$160 per 8-week course. The Oregon Synod does not have sufficient regular income to cover the cost of the SALM and Lay Education Program, so we rely on donations from people who participate and/or believe in the importance of an educated and empowered laity. At the same time, the synod does not want money to be a barrier to participation. All donations made will directly support the administration and provision of the Synod Authorized Lay Ministry and Lay Education Program.

Some courses will also recommend purchasing or borrowing a book. Scholarships for course materials are available through the SALM and Lay Education program coordinator. Congregations are encouraged to financially support the cost of participation for their members. And SALM congregations are asked to cover the cost of course participation for their synod authorized lay minister (SALM) or SALM-in-training.

Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Education

Requirements for Completion of Certificate

People who complete the entire two year (64 session) curriculum can earn an Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies, if they (i) document consistent attendance and completion of preparatory assignments between sessions, and (ii) satisfactorily complete and submit a small, integrative assignment at the end of each course. If it is necessary that a participant miss a session of a course, a replacement

activity can be arranged with the program coordinator. The courses do not need to be completed in a particular order (unless a prerequisite is indicated) nor within two years. The integrative assignment can be requested and submitted within one year of completion of a course.

When the curriculum is changed in the midst of a person's effort toward an Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies, they will be consulted by synod staff and arrangements will be made to help them meet their learning needs and goals without added burden.

Recognition

Those who complete the Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies will be recognized at the annual Oregon Synod Assembly.

Opportunities for Service

Completion of the Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies is intended to help equip and inspire a wide variety of lay leaders throughout the Oregon Synod. More specifically, completion of the certificate is a key part of the preparation for a synod authorized lay minister (SALM), unless equivalent preparation has already been completed. In extenuating circumstances, the synod bishop might choose to authorize someone to serve as a SALM-in-training while they complete their Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies. Completion of the certificate may also be helpful preparation for serving as lay pulpit supply (i.e. preaching and facilitating a worship service) in one's own congregation when the pastor is absent. A congregation's pastor may decide who to invite to preach in their absence, whether lay or ordained, and completion of the certificate may provide assurance of preparation though it is not required.

Pulpit Supply by Lay Leader in Home Congregation or Cluster

The Oregon Synod feels called to work with ordained clergy and congregational councils to empower lay leadership and explore creative models for ministry. The synod, therefore, encourages pastors, deacons, and congregational councils to invite lay leaders to participate in SALM and Lay Education Program courses and, as possible, financially support the cost of such participation. Pastors and deacons may also feel called to invite those who complete the Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies to preach and facilitate worship services (as lay pulpit supply) when the pastor or deacon is absent. When a lay leader preaches and facilitates worship, congregations are encouraged but not required to pay them at the supply rate set by the Oregon Synod. If

Holy Communion is desired as part of such a lay-led service, that portion of the worship service should be led by an ordained minister of word and sacrament unless a special exception is made by the synod bishop.

Guidelines for Authorization of Lay Persons for Word and Sacrament Ministry in the Oregon Synod

Synod Authorized Lay Ministry in Home Congregation

The ELCA and the Oregon Synod recognize that certain congregations remain vital despite -- by reason of geography and/or economics -- being unable to access or support the ministry of even a part-time ordained pastor. Thus the church makes provision for the training and approval of longer-term synod authorized lay ministers (Section 7.61.01 of the ELCA Constitution and By Laws; see Appendix A). In such circumstances, lay leaders who are called by their home congregation, prepare accordingly, and receive authorization from the synod bishop are equipped for the congregational-based ministries of preaching, sacraments and worship leadership, Bible study, visitation, spiritual growth, and, where appropriate, catechetical instruction. Synod authorized lay ministers (SALMs) serve at the approval of the synod bishop and are mentored by an ordained pastor.

The SALM role is not intended to prevent or defer the closure of a congregation when closure would be a faithful response to God's call. Indeed, closing a congregation well can allow for resurrection and new life, and synod staff are available for support in such discernment.

Discerning whether synod authorized lay ministry would be a faithful model for leadership in a particular congregation is a shared responsibility. The primary partners in such discernment are the congregational leaders and members, the bishop, synod staff, and the SALM Board. Because of the relationship of a SALM to those serving in ordained ministry of word and sacrament, the cluster dean and ELCA pastors serving near the area are also typically consulted. Before a congregation is considered as a possible SALM site, it is expected that they will have made a good faith effort to secure the services of an ELCA pastor or a pastor from one of our full communion partners.

Synod authorized lay ministers are not rostered ministers (i.e. pastors or deacons); however, synod authorized lay ministers do share some of the same responsibilities as rostered ministers and are viewed as faith leaders in their communities. Therefore, the

assessment, preparation, authorization, and support for the SALM role is informed by the candidacy process for rostered ministers. It is not as extensive as the training and candidacy process for rostered ministers, but it is facilitated and undertaken with similar seriousness.

Qualifications for Synod Authorized Lay Ministry

Persons eligible for training and service as synod authorized lay ministers (SALMs) are expected to meet the following criteria:

1. Evidence of a mature Christian faith and commitment, rooted in the gospel
2. Membership and active participation in their home congregation for at least one year, including regular participation in communion and leadership roles
3. Commitment to participating through community in God's mission of love, redemption, justice, and reconciliation
4. A sense of personal call to serve in a SALM role and the endorsement of their home congregation's council to do so
5. The ability to be a mature, healthy, and trustworthy partner with the synod in the process of preparation, formation, and evaluation for service as a SALM
6. Satisfactory participation in the synod's program of preparation, including indication of a desire to learn and grow and completion of the Oregon Synod Certificate in Spiritual and Theological Studies or equivalent preparation.
7. Demonstration of appropriate ministry skills, including basic preaching of God's grace received through faith; an understanding of the Word as law and gospel; facilitation of liturgy and Holy Communion; hospitality; encouragement of others to share their own faith stories; the use of spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer, biblical and theological reflection, spiritual direction); an awareness of the interconnectedness of the church beyond the local congregation; knowledge of societal and cultural trends that can inform a congregation's ministry; adaptive, servant leadership; an ability to delegate and share tasks tailored to others' gifts; an ability and willingness to address conflict; a sensitivity to people in major life transitions; a commitment to intercultural communication and relationship-building; an ability and willingness to be present with people in the midst of suffering; knowledge of community resources for appropriate referrals and participation; maintaining clear and healthy boundaries; an ability to maintain confidentiality where appropriate; practicing wellness in one's personal life.
8. Knowledge and acceptance of the faith and confessional teachings of the ELCA, as well as an ability to articulate and live out a clear Christian identity.

9. Effective use of supervision and consultation with an ordained mentor pastor and synod staff.
10. Knowledge of and commitment to meeting the ELCA's expectations concerning the character and conduct of persons serving in public ministry, as outlined in "Trustworthy Servants of the People of God" (or a more recently approved ELCA document)
11. Consistent following of the "Code of Practice" for SALMs as outlined in this program manual

The synod bishop and SALM Board are encouraged to look for entry-level competencies in these areas, as well as potential for growth. A synod authorized lay minister, with adequate support from one's congregation and synod, will be engaged in a lifelong process of learning and leadership formation.

An individual who has been removed from rostered ministry or denied continuance in candidacy in the ELCA due to misconduct is precluded from serving in synod authorized lay ministry.

In extenuating circumstances, a person may be authorized by the synod bishop to serve their congregation as a SALM-in-training before they complete the synod's program of preparation to be a SALM. The basic expectations outlined above and in the "Code of Practice" for SALMs remain the same. Serving as a SALM-in-training does not guarantee future authorization to serve as a SALM.

Steps for Authorization of Synod Authorized Lay Ministry

Similar to how the ELCA understands a person's call from God to rostered ministry, the call for someone to serve as a synod authorized lay minister (SALM) is understood by the Oregon Synod as both an internal and external process. Internally, an individual discerns whether God is leading them to consider and prepare for synod authorized lay ministry in their home congregation. Externally, the synod and congregation accompany an individual in "discerning appropriateness and readiness for such service" (ELCA Candidacy Manual, 2020).

Ultimately, authority for approving lay ministry of word and sacrament lies with the synod bishop who leans heavily on the guidance of the SALM Board. Expected steps toward such authorization are as follows:

1. **Identification of Need:** The synod staff and SALM Board identify a congregation or other ministry where ordained pastoral leadership is not

available for an extended period of time and where synod authorized lay ministry may be appropriate. It is possible that the need and potential for synod authorized lay ministry may first be brought to the synod's attention by members of the congregation itself.

2. **Invitation to Training and Service:** A member (or small team of members) from the congregation who demonstrates the potential for synod authorized lay ministry is recommended to the synod by the congregation's council. Synod staff have an initial meeting with the recommended person (or small team). If the recommended person (or team) senses a call from God in this direction and demonstrates the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service as a SALM, they are invited to complete a formal application for SALM training and service. At the same time, the congregation will be asked to pay for the background check and psychological evaluation of the SALM candidate, as facilitated by the synod, as well as for the candidate's required course work.
3. **Application for SALM Training and Service:** The recommended person (or team) submits the written Application for SALM Training and Service, after which synod staff and/or members of the SALM Board interview the applicant(s). The synod will also need to obtain a satisfactory background check, as outlined in the ELCA Candidacy Manual, for each individual applying for SALM training and service.
4. **SALM Training:** If authorized by the synod bishop for SALM training, the individual is invited to enter a specific program of preparation, which will include course work, mentorship by an ordained pastor, and a psychological evaluation similar to that completed by candidates for ordination. Those participating in SALM training should keep copies of their integrative assignments to share with members of the SALM Board, as requested. In extenuating circumstances, a person may be authorized by the synod bishop to serve their congregation as a SALM-in-training before they complete the synod's program of preparation and are authorized as a SALM.
5. **Authorization to Serve as a SALM:** Following completion of SALM training, the synod bishop and/or members of the SALM Board will meet once more with the SALM-in-training to determine whether or not to authorize the candidate as a synod authorized lay minister for their home congregation. Feedback from the candidate's mentor pastor and the SALM coordinator will be requested prior to the final interview. Submission of written assignments, reflections, and/or feedback from congregational leadership may also be requested.

Synod Authorized Lay Ministry (SALM) Board

While authority for approving lay ministry of word and sacrament lies with the synod bishop, the bishop relies on the *guidance* of a Synod Authorized Lay Ministry (SALM) Board in making such decisions and the *support* of the SALM Board in fostering the SALM and Lay Education Program.

The Oregon Synod SALM Board is made up of 7-10 members, appointed by the synod bishop. Membership on the SALM Board includes the synod bishop (or an appointee), the SALM program coordinator, a current SALM, and 4-7 volunteers who represent a diversity of perspectives and experiences, including a mix of lay and ordained leadership. SALM Board members are identified in part for their integrity and trustworthiness; self-awareness; commitment to evaluating candidates and congregations fairly; ability to speak the truth in love; and gifts in building relationships, leadership formation, understanding diverse contexts, and thoughtful discernment on behalf of the synod. The SALM Board is led by volunteer co-chairs (or a volunteer chair) with support from the SALM program coordinator.

The Oregon Synod SALM Board meets between one and three times per year, depending on the needs of the SALM and Lay Education Program. The Board's responsibilities include the following:

1. Assessing and advising the synod bishop on the appropriateness of congregations for SALM leadership, the qualifications of SALM applicants, and the reauthorization of existing SALMs. This includes reviewing written material, conducting interviews, and completing reauthorization evaluations.
2. Working collegially to offer important and sometimes difficult advice.
3. Providing trustworthy support, guidance, and resources to assist SALM *candidates* in their ongoing discernment and through the process of training and potential authorization.
4. Providing trustworthy support, guidance, and resources to support *authorized* SALMs in their continued ministry.
5. Maintaining confidentiality, as appropriate, of SALM candidates' application materials and when consulting with authorized SALMs.
6. Providing feedback and support for synod staff and the SALM and Lay Education Program.
7. Honoring the process and policies outlined in this program manual.

Guidance on privacy in the SALM assessment and oversight process is adapted from the ELCA Candidacy Manual (2016) as follows: “The integrity and trustworthiness of each [SALM Board member is] critical to a fair and faithful process for identifying, evaluating, and approving candidates for [synod authorized lay ministry]. The collective wisdom, centered in the work of the Holy Spirit, enlivens, strengthens, and supports the decisions made by [the synod bishop and SALM Board]. Privacy requires honesty, good judgment, respect for others, and an ability to hold privileged information. It is primarily a concern for the interests and well-being of individuals (as well as the church), not a legal concern. Privacy should not hinder or restrict the free flow of information to and from the [synod bishop and SALM Board]. ... On behalf of the whole ELCA, [the synod bishop and SALM Board] may seek any necessary information regarding applicants or candidates to protect this church and its members, but also to protect all people from the possibility of abuse by a [synod authorized lay minister]. What is essential is that the [board] and its members are very clear about why they are seeking the information. [The synod bishop and SALM Board] should seek whatever information is important and necessary to assess qualifications for [synod authorized lay ministry]. Religious institutions may make inquiries and enforce standards of character that apply to the private lives of those involved in [synod authorized lay ministry] to a degree that is not legally permitted in secular occupations and professions. Healthy, honest, and responsible [synod authorized lay ministers] are essential to the faithful witness of the ELCA in the world. While it is not necessary for [board] members to excuse themselves from decisions regarding an individual whom they know personally, [board] members must share the nature of any such personal relationship with the [whole SALM Board]. In fact, such personal knowledge can provide insight and awareness to the [board] in making its decisions. In the case of a family or pastoral relationship with a candidate, [board] members should recuse themselves from the interview. Any information regarding a candidate’s qualifications, history, or life patterns can be valuable in making [these] decisions. Private information, including personal letters to a synod bishop or notes of conversations, should be gathered with great care, shared as necessary, and appropriately safeguarded. Information and analysis from psychological reports and background checks should be used in an ethical and responsible way. ... Although some information received in confidence should not be revealed to a candidate, it is always essential to be fair and allow an individual to respond to negative information and correct misinformation. The [SALM Board] should take all steps necessary to ensure it has dealt effectively and faithfully with any concerns or issues.”

Authorization by the Synod Bishop

For Synod Authorized Lay Minister (SALM)

Ultimately, authority for approving lay ministry of word and sacrament lies with the synod bishop. In consultation with the SALM Board and with consent from the congregation to be served, the synod bishop may authorize an individual member (or small team) from a congregation for training and eventual service as a synod authorized lay minister (SALM).

Satisfactory completion of SALM training involves (i) documenting attendance and actively participating in all required class sessions. If a participant needs to miss a session, an acceptable replacement may be agreed upon with the SALM program coordinator; (ii) satisfactory completion of integrative assignments (keeping copies until the authorization process is complete); (iii) at least monthly meetings with their mentor pastor; and (iv) additional trainings and/or assignments outside of the set curriculum, as requested by the synod bishop. Equivalent preparation may be substituted at the discretion of the synod bishop.

SALMs are authorized by the bishop for a period of up to one year with the possibility of renewal following an annual evaluation. A letter of authorization from the bishop to a SALM or SALM-in-training, including a description of the terms and conditions of service, serves as the license for this specific ministry. Congregations are encouraged to hold an installation service for their SALM, in cooperation with the bishop and synod office.

Renewal and Revocation

Renewal of authorization for a SALM may be given after one year when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synod bishop after a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the SALM, in consultation with the SALM Board and with the consent of the congregation or other ministry being served.

Authorization to serve as a SALM may be revoked in writing at any time by the synod bishop.

Congregational Support and Compensation of Synod Authorized Lay Ministers (SALMs)

When the synod bishop authorizes a SALM or SALM-in-training for service in their home congregation, the bishop will work with the congregational council to develop a memorandum of understanding outlining the roles and expectations for the SALM, appropriate financial compensation and benefits, mentorship and/or consultation to be provided by an ordained pastor, and other supports to be provided for the SALM by the congregation.

Application for Synod Authorized Lay Ministry (SALM)

The application for training and potential service as a synod authorized lay minister (SALM) includes the following:

- A completed application form, including basic personal information and a written reflection.
- A letter of reference from the applicant's congregational council
- A written or oral reference from an ordained ELCA pastor
- A background check facilitated by the Oregon Synod
- A psychological evaluation facilitated by the Oregon Synod

Guidance on the purpose and use of background checks is adapted from the ELCA Candidacy Manual (2016) as follows: The synod bishop and SALM Board seek people most likely to do well in synod authorized lay ministry. They are obligated not to consider people who might use their position as a SALM in damaging or illegal ways. The principles that undergird screening for service as a SALM include fair and equitable application and interpretation of screening tools, which are to be applied consistently with all applicants. The results are normally shared with the applicant, especially if there is any negative information. Such practice provides the applicant with an opportunity to explain and verify the information. A criminal background check is only one part of the SALM application and discernment process. The SALM Board should exercise care and good judgment in using information about an applicant so as not to damage the person's reputation or self-identity as a beloved child of God. Background checks are not a substitute for using other screening tools or risk-reduction techniques, nor are they infallible records of a person's previous conduct or misconduct. The absence of any reported misconduct is not a guarantee of future behavior. Because of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and laws separating church and state, the

synod bishop and SALM Board have greater freedom in asking applicants questions than employers do. Both the SALM Board and the ELCA are protected by law; therefore, it is possible to ask whatever is necessary in assessing future church leaders.

The primary purpose of a psychological evaluation are (i) to provide the synod bishop and SALM Board with insights regarding a SALM applicant's psychological health and readiness for training and service, and (ii) to help the SALM applicant develop greater self-understanding and appreciation of their own emotional well-being (ELCA Candidacy Manual, 2016). The synod bishop and SALM Board should refer to the guidelines for use of psychological evaluations developed by the ELCA's Domestic Mission unit (see ELCA Candidacy Manual, 2016, Appendix B). A psychological evaluation is one part of a larger discernment and growth process. The desired outcome is an evaluation that candidly assesses an applicant's psychological health and readiness for potential service as a synod authorized lay minister.

The criminal background check company and the psychologist who completes the synod's psychological evaluations both provide forms through which a SALM applicant authorizes release of relevant information to the Oregon Synod. Once received by the Oregon Synod, this information is kept confidential among synod staff and SALM Board participants.

Mentor Pastors

Qualifications for Mentor Pastor Role

Mentor pastors are a key partner in the training and supervision of synod authorized lay ministers (SALMs). They offer individual attention and support to participants engaged in education and ministry, helping them to explore and apply what they are learning. Mentor pastors also provide valuable feedback about a SALM or SALM-in-training's development to both the participant and the Oregon Synod.

A mentor pastor for a SALM shall:

- Be an ELCA rostered minister (or a full communion partner)
- Be approved for the mentor pastor role by the synod bishop
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of and commitment to the SALM program and participant
- Be an effective model and guide for pastoral ministry
- Be committed to a mentorship relationship for at least two years

- Be accountable to the standards set forth in “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline,” as established by section 20.21 in the [ELCA constitution](#).

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a mentor pastor include:

1. Regular meetings with mentee(s). During a mentee’s first two years of training and/or service as a SALM, it is expected that mentorship meetings occur monthly. After two years of SALM experience, mentorship meetings are expected quarterly. Rather than simply “checking in,” mentor pastors and SALMs are encouraged to cultivate conversations that dive deep and support each person’s spiritual and leadership growth. Below are some ideas:
 - a. Check in on how they are doing.
 - b. Provide opportunities to explore questions that come up in classes and congregational ministry related to topics such as:
 - i. theology
 - ii. spiritual practices
 - iii. boundaries, systems theory, and self-care
 - iv. visitation and pastoral care
 - v. ministry of sacraments
 - vi. preaching
 - vii. worship planning
 - viii. working with a church council
 - ix. ethics
 - c. Offer feedback and encouragement.
2. Facilitation of relationships with clergy and lay leaders in the area, as needed, in order to help create a network of support, learning, shared ministry and resources.
3. Encouragement of one’s mentee to participate in clergy activities, such as workshops, retreats, installations, and ordinations.
4. Modeling and teaching worship and education planning, as needed
 - a. Invite the mentee to attend meetings and classes in order to gain exposure to a variety of ideas and ways of teaching and planning.
 - b. Discuss these topics in monthly mentorship conversations
 - c. Over the course of the first two years, be sure to include a focus on (i) planning and leading Bible study, (ii) preparation for preaching, and (iii) administering the sacrament of Holy Communion.

- d. If the mentee is still in training and doesn't already have a means to practice these skills, invite them to preach when you are away, lead a Bible study, teach a confirmation class, etc.. Offer feedback.
5. Modeling and teaching pastoral care, as needed
 - a. Especially during the first two years, invite the mentee to participate in visitation and offer prayers
 - b. Model, then invite the mentee to take the lead. Offer feedback.
6. Sharing resources to support the mentee's learning and ministry.
7. Providing honest, productive feedback to the Oregon Synod on the growth and ministry of the SALM or SALM-in-training.

These guidelines may need to be adapted to meet the contextual needs of a SALM candidate and congregation. Regardless, the emphasis should be on growth and development, self-awareness, and effective and ethical ministry.

If a mentor pastor is no longer able to fulfill their role, they should inform the Oregon Synod office as soon as possible to allow time to find a new mentor pastor.

Compensation of Mentor Pastors

Congregations or ministries served by a SALM or SALM-in-training are encouraged to compensate the mentor pastor for their time, when possible and appropriate, and reimburse them for any expenses related to the mentoring relationship. When the synod bishop makes arrangements for such a mentoring relationship, the bishop will work with the mentor, SALM or SALM-in-training, and home congregation to develop a shared understanding of the roles and expectations of mentorship and appropriate financial compensation.

Code of Practice for Synod Authorized Lay Ministers (SALMs)

Ministry in Home Congregation

Synod authorized lay ministers (SALMs) are called and authorized to serve their home congregation in a longer-term capacity. This includes authorization to preside at Holy Communion and baptism. SALMs may also conduct funerals for members of their congregation and, as permitted by law, officiate at marriage services for members of the

congregation, with the concurrence of the congregation's council and specific approval by the bishop.

All SALMs are expected to:

- Represent the church, the ELCA, the Oregon Synod, and their congregation with integrity, respect, compassion, and responsibility.
- Be diligent in preparing to lead worship, offer pastoral care, facilitate study, and perform other SALM responsibilities.
- Use only the title Synod Authorized Lay Minister (SALM) to identify their role in print or person. They are not to use the title Reverend, Pastor, or Deacon.
- Ensure it is clearly communicated on bulletins, the church website, social media, and other publications that they serve their congregation as a synod authorized lay minister.
- Not offer counseling or therapy as part of their ministry, though they may provide appropriate pastoral care. (Pastoral care is understood here to include activities such as visiting and supporting people when they are sick, homebound, grieving, and/or otherwise distressed. Pastoral care is as simple and as profound as being a spiritually grounded presence, helping people remember God's grace and love. This often includes reminders that a person is prayed for and supported by their church community, family and friends, and sometimes includes sharing from the communal table the blessed sacrament of Holy Communion. If needed, offering a compassionate space to express doubts about, anger at, or a sense of absence from God can be profound and holy. Ultimately, pastoral care does not substitute for professional counseling, but stands alongside it, and is usually shorter in duration and more connected to a larger faith community. Ideally, pastoral care includes a prayer, a nonjudgmental listening ear, and a referral to counseling if that is needed.)
- Not wear a clerical collar, stole, chasuble, or other attire which specifically identifies those individuals called and ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Ministers of Word and Service. If desired, it is appropriate for a SALM to wear a white alb, cincture, and/or cross when leading worship.
- Complete the same regular ethics and boundaries trainings as rostered ministers in the Oregon Synod.
- Attend Synod Assembly as the faith leader of the congregation. (Reach out to the synod office with questions about how to register for Synod Assembly as a SALM.)
- Make intentional, regular, and effective use of supervision and consultation with an ordained mentor pastor and synod staff.

- Meet the ELCA’s expectations concerning the character and conduct of persons serving in public ministry, as outlined in “Trustworthy Servants of the People of God” (or a more recently approved ELCA document).
- Participate fully and transparently in reviews or evaluations by the bishop’s office.
- Report any difficulties or concerns to the office of the synod bishop in a timely fashion.

Although SALMs are not rostered ministers, they serve in many of the same roles and are the recognized faith leader(s) of their congregation. As such, SALMs are encouraged to participate in the Oregon Synod’s rostered leader meetings and the annual Bishop’s Convocation as full and equal partners. When in need of pastoral care and support, they are encouraged to reach out to the bishop, bishop’s associates, their cluster dean, and/or their mentor pastor.

Accountability

Accountability for authorizing SALMs lies with the synod bishop in consultation with the SALM Board. Accountability for synod authorized lay ministry occurring in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the congregation’s council. Accountability for synod authorized lay ministry occurring in a non-congregational setting within the synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body of the entity that conducts that ministry or, if there is no such entity, the Synod Council.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is an important way in which faith leaders acquire new skills and experience personal growth for more effective ministry. After SALM training and authorization are complete, in order to remain active, SALMs are expected to complete at least 20 hours of relevant continuing education per year. Examples of appropriate continuing education would include: formal classes or workshops, intentional study groups with ministry peers, participation at Bishop’s Convocation, and documented independent study (e.g. reading a relevant book) with reflection. Questions about continuing education can be posed to the SALM program coordinator. A summary of completed continuing education will be included in a SALM’s annual report to the bishop.

Annual Report and Evaluation

The synod bishop authorizes synod authorized lay ministers for a period of up to one year with the possibility of renewal following an annual evaluation. The annual

evaluation will include: (a) a written annual report to the bishop completed by the SALM or SALM team; (b) a written evaluation completed by the congregation's personnel team or council; (c) a written or verbal evaluation offered by the mentor pastor; and, after those first three documents are received by the SALM program coordinator, (d) a conversation between the SALM (or SALM team), SALM program coordinator, and bishop or bishop's associate.

Discipline

Synod authorized lay ministers (SALMs) hold a unique and important public position and responsibility in the Oregon Synod and the church at large. This position should not be taken lightly. Failure to serve appropriately and ethically as a SALM will result in immediate discipline through the office of the bishop and may include termination of authorization. Questionable or inappropriate behavior on the part of a SALM should be reported to the office of the bishop immediately.

Oregon Synod Responsibilities

The Synod Authorized Lay Ministry and Lay Education Program is administered by the Oregon Synod in cooperation with rostered and lay leaders. The responsibilities of the Oregon Synod related to synod authorized lay ministry include:

- Establishing clear and readily available policies and procedures for the Synod Authorized Lay Ministry and Lay Education program
- Creating a code of practice for synod authorized lay ministry, distributing it widely among impacted leaders and congregations, and consistently holding all involved to those standards
- Assessing congregations appropriate for potential synod authorized lay ministry and providing support to the leaders and members of such congregations in their discernment
- Overseeing the SALM application process
- Determining, monitoring, and providing access to a suitable curriculum for training
- Offering support and guidance to SALMs-in-training, SALMs, mentor pastors, and impacted congregational leaders
- Evaluating annual reports and the ministry of continuing SALMs and mentor pastors

Appendix A: Guidelines for synod authorized ministry from the “Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” (adopted by the Church Council of the ELCA, March 2020)

I. Synod Authorized Ministries

7.31.10.Synod Authorized Ministry. When need exists to render Word and Sacrament ministry for a congregation or ministry of this church where it is not possible to provide appropriate pastoral leadership, the synod bishop—acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council—may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer this ministry. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop; such service shall be rendered during its duration under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod’s pastor. Such an individual will be trained to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, remuneration, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synod leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.

This synod authorized ministry policy is intended to honor the God-given office of Word and Sacrament (Article V, The Augsburg Confession). Synod 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 a minister of Word and Sacrament. Principle 40 and related sections in “The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament,” which was adopted “for guidance and practice” by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, also address this subject.

Synod authorized ministry of Word and Sacrament is normally limited to a specific congregation or other identified ministry where a pastor is not available for an extended period of time. Individuals authorized for such ministry within a synod are not rostered by the ELCA (unless already serving on a roster of this church) but are authorized to provide a ministry only within a particular setting for a designated period of time.

A. Identification of need

The synod identifies a congregation or other ministry where pastoral leadership is not available for an extended period of time and where synod authorized ministry may be appropriate. Because of the relationship of such authorized lay ministry to those serving in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, pastors serving congregations within the area where this ministry need is located normally will be consulted concerning this determination.

When determining the need for a pastor in a congregation or other identified ministry where a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church is not available, synods will first consider the utilization of an ordained minister from a full communion partner church, under the guidelines related to the orderly exchange of ordained ministers.

Synod authorized ministry is not to be used to authorize an individual to provide for short-term, intermittent absences of a congregation's called pastor. However, there is sometimes a need to provide for the celebration of the sacrament in circumstances when neither an ELCA nor a full communion ordained minister is available. Such situations highlight a tension between a bishop's authority to provide for "appropriate pastoral leadership" (7.31.10.) and the limitation that such 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). On rare occasions, this tension may require flexibility in interpreting "for an extended period of time" so that an individual is authorized by the synod bishop to provide Word and Sacrament ministry in congregations in a location or area where ordained leadership is chronically unavailable.

B. Invitation to service

Congregations and other ministries within each synod are expected to assist in making this ministry available and beneficial by commending to the bishop individuals who should be considered for possible service in synod authorized ministry. Individuals who demonstrate potential for service as synod authorized ministers are invited by the synod to enter a program of preparation.

Any individual who has resigned or been removed from rostered ministry in the ELCA in connection with alleged misconduct, or who has been denied continuance in candidacy by reason of misconduct allegations, is precluded from serving as a synod authorized minister. Part Three: Non-roster Related Matters — Page 77

C. Qualifications

A person invited to prepare for a synod authorized ministry must be an active member of an ELCA congregation, preferably for at least one year. In addition, prior to preparing to serve in synod authorized ministry, an individual must have:

1. been recommended by the individual's pastor and Congregation Council;
2. met with and been interviewed by synod staff and/or the synod committee responsible for the synod's program of preparation;
3. demonstrated the ability and willingness to participate in a program of preparation leading to possible service in a synod authorized ministry or provided satisfactory evidence of prior preparation toward the goals and standards of the program outlined in this policy;
4. submitted written responses to the questions on the candidacy Entrance Form; and
5. identified references within and outside the church for contact by the synod and authorized the synod to obtain an in-depth background check, as outlined in the Candidacy Manual.

D. Synod committee for authorized ministry

A committee may be appointed by the Synod Council to provide the synod bishop with recommendations concerning the authorization of and accountability for authorized ministries within the synod. This committee should either be a subcommittee of the synod's Candidacy Committee or be structured to work closely with the Candidacy Committee, even though the work of the two is distinct.

The Synod Council or, if appointed, the synod committee determines the educational program within the synod for individuals preparing for service in an authorized ministry; determines eligibility of individuals to enter this program of preparation; and advises the bishop on the suitability of an individual for authorization and service in a synod authorized ministry.

E. Program of preparation

The synod defines the program of preparation for synod authorized ministry consistent with this policy and with any guidelines developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, in consultation with an ELCA seminary. The program of preparation can be accomplished in a variety of ways including educational programs that utilize current rostered ministers within the synod, ELCA seminaries and continuing education centers, and other appropriate resources. Such programs shall prepare individuals to have knowledge and abilities in the following areas:

1. Bible;
2. Lutheran theology, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Confession of Faith and

- polity of the ELCA;
- 3. Worship;
- 4. spiritual discernment and faith development;
- 5. leadership expectations and identity;
- 6. contextual understanding; and
- 7. pastoral skills including preaching, catechetics, worship leadership, visitation, pastoral care, and outreach.

F. Authorization for service

When the synod has determined that a specific need exists, and with the consent of the congregation to be served, an individual may be authorized for service within the synod by the synod bishop, in consultation with the Synod Council. The bishop will authorize for this ministry only those individuals who have been well prepared and who will serve under supervision. Completion of a program of preparation does not mean that authorization for service will follow. There is no guarantee of service within the synod. When authorized, such service shall fulfill assigned responsibilities, and authorization shall be for a specific period of time not to exceed one year, unless terminated earlier.

Individuals who serve in synod authorized ministry are to meet the following criteria:

1. evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
2. satisfactory participation in the synod program of preparation, including demonstration of appropriate ministry skills;
3. knowledge and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church; and
4. willingness to meet this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of individuals serving in public ministry as described in "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers."

G. Letter of authorization

The bishop's authorization shall be evidenced by an appropriate letter describing the terms and conditions of the authorization. The description may limit the activities the person is authorized to perform.

H. Supervision and accountability

Accountability for synod authorized ministry in a congregational setting is the direct responsibility of the Congregation Council. Accountability for a synod authorized ministry in a non-congregational setting within a synod is the direct responsibility of the governing body of the entity that conducts that ministry, or if there is no such entity, the Synod Council. In all cases, a synod authorized minister is to be under the direct supervision of a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop.

The supervising minister of Word and Sacrament shall report to the governing body and seek the advice and counsel of the bishop or designated synod staff in relation to the synod authorized minister.

I. Candidacy for rostered ministry

When, in the judgment of the authorizing bishop, a person whose service as a synod authorized minister likely will be long-term in one ministry or in a succession of assigned ministries, that person normally shall enter the ELCA candidacy process for ordination and shall remain active in candidacy and theological preparation while serving in synod authorized ministry.

It is preferable that a mission development is led by a pastor rather than a synod authorized minister. When a synod authorized minister is serving in that capacity, he or she normally shall have received a positive entrance decision for candidacy for ministry of Word and Sacrament before beginning that ministry and shall remain active in candidacy and theological preparation while serving in that mission development.

J. Renewal and revocation

Renewal of authorization after one year may be given when a demonstrated need exists for its continuation. This need is determined by the synod bishop at the request and with the consent of the congregation or other ministry being served, consultation with the supervising minister of Word and Sacrament, and a review of both the ministry setting and the service of the authorized minister.

Authorization to provide ministry within the synod may be revoked at any time by the synod bishop, who need not specify the reason.

K. Marriage services

Where permitted by law, synod authorized ministers may officiate at marriage services for members of the congregation in which they are authorized to serve, with the concurrence of the congregation and the approval of the synod bishop.

L. Other matters

Individuals may serve in a synod authorized ministry only within the synod that has authorized that ministry. A synod may consider for authorization an individual trained and authorized by another synod, based on the individual's qualifications and ability to meet the new synod's criteria for authorized ministry.

Individuals authorized for such ministries are not to wear clerical stoles and should not wear clerical collars unless authorized by the synod bishop. The title “Pastor” is reserved for ministers of Word and Sacrament and is not to be used by synod authorized ministers.

Synod authorized ministers are not to offer therapy or counseling as a part of their ministries but may provide appropriate pastoral care.