

**SUMMARY OF THE ACTIONS OF THE 2007 SYNOD ASSEMBLY OF THE
METROPOLITAN NEW YORK SYNOD**

**MEETING AT
ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH HUNTINGTON STATION, NEW YORK**

During its meeting on May 18-19, 2007 the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly took the following actions:

ADOPTED AMENDMENTS TO GOVERNING DOCUMENTS:

SA2007.05.04 To delete Bylaw S7.01.03.c.

~~S7.01.03. c. The Report of the Bishop to each regular Synod Assembly shall be referred to a Committee on Report of the Bishop which shall study the same, make appropriate comment thereon, and present to the Synod Assembly the recommendations of the bishop together with any additional relevant recommendations of its own that it deems desirable.~~

SA2007.05.03.(a) To adopt a new Continuing Resolution

S6.03.A.5.SA2007

To assist the synod in its consultative role in the call process for rostered ministers, a policy on the Transition and Call Process shall be presented to the synod assembly for its endorsement and shall continue in force until amended by the assembly. Exceptions to the policy for exigent circumstances may be granted by a two-thirds vote of the synod council upon the recommendation of the bishop of the synod. This policy will be reviewed at least every five years.

ADOPTED SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS:

SA2007.05.03.(b) Endorsing the Transition and Call Process Policy

**THE POLICY OF THE METROPOLITAN NEW YORK SYNOD
ON THE TRANSITION AND CALL PROCESS**

I. Transition

Consistent with *C9.06, when a vacancy in the primary pastoral call to a congregation occurs or is anticipated, a transitional pastor shall be appointed by the bishop to assist the congregation and provide basic pastoral services during the transition. Consistent with *C9.07 a transitional pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor within the congregation, though they may delegate certain duties and responsibilities in consultation with the congregational council. Notification of the appointment of a transitional pastor is to be made in writing to the concerned congregation as soon as practicable following the announcement of the vacancy but no later than the departing pastor's last Sunday.

If notice of the impending vacancy is short (less than 30 days), the bishop will appoint an oversight pastor until the needs of the congregation can be discerned.

The time of transition will include a self-study process and evaluation by the congregation that will examine their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and goals for ministry, and challenges to growth, as well as issues relevant to their situation such as: transition issues following a long term pastorate or relational conflict, changes or trends in the community or congregation, and especially the availability of financial resources to implement their vision.

Transitional ministry is described in four categories:

- A. Oversight Pastor
- B. Discernment Pastor

- C. Term-Call Pastor (candidate/non-candidate)
- D. Intentional Interim Pastor (non-candidate)

The first two categories presume less than half-time service. These ordained ministers are appointed by the bishop with the consent of the congregational council.

- A. Oversight Pastor -- These transitional pastors assist the congregation in the administration of the basic operations of the congregation, meet with the congregational council, and provide for basic pastoral care and services.
Ordinarily these pastors will be the dean of the conference or another neighboring pastor who has received basic training in the care of congregations in transition. They will be familiar with the transition and call process and will aid the congregation in understanding the process.
- B. Discernment Pastor -- These transitional pastors cover all the duties and responsibilities of the oversight pastor along with bringing particular skills and experience in managing transitions. They may spend a greater number of contact hours with the congregation as they help the congregation clarify its needs and goals for the future of their ministry.

The third and fourth categories of transitional ministry reflect the need in some congregations for greater pastoral presence in the time of transition, whether because of on-going program or staffing needs or because of specific issues of transition which the congregation seeks to address in the transitional period. These transitional ministers are appointed by the bishop with the consent of the congregational council, but if their service is anticipated to last longer than a year, the synod council or congregation may extend a term call under ¶S14.18. Such term calls will generally be for 12 to 24 months or until the arrival of the newly called pastor whichever comes first. They may be renewed for an additional 12 months, if necessary. Term calls may not exceed three years. Consistent with ELCA 7.41.12, if a first-call pastor is considered for a transitional ministry term-call, the call shall be for a 3-year term.

- C. Term-Call Pastor -- The duties of these transitional pastors include those of categories A and B, but these pastors also assume a significant level of the day-to-day pastoral work that might be expected of a pastor under regular call.

The bishop may recommend for term-call a pastor who might be a suitable candidate for the regular call. If the transitional pastor is eligible for call in the congregation, when ready to consider candidates the call committee shall determine if they will recommend the term-call pastor for the regular call. If they agree to receive the term-call pastor as a candidate, the congregation may not entertain other candidates until they have released this pastor as a candidate.

If they decline to recommend this candidate, the congregation may ask for the appointment of another transitional pastor at the conclusion of the term.

Once the term-call pastor is no longer a candidate, the congregation may continue the call process in either the one or three candidate options.

If the term-call pastor will not be a candidate for the regular call, the source of the term-call shall be the synod council.

- D. Intentional Interim Pastor -- In this fourth category, the transitional pastor will provide the transitional ministry described earlier, but in these situations, they will also work with the congregation on specific issues prior to entry in the call process. Because this type of ministry requires special skills that the interim pastor receives in specific training provided by the ELCA, it is not appropriate that these transitional ministers entertain candidacy in the congregations they serve so that, once their tasks in a given congregation are complete, they can bring their particular skills to other places of need within the church. As the Intentional Interim pastor cannot be a candidate for the regular call, the source of interim call shall be the synod council.

In all cases, the congregation will pay a stipend to the transitional minister commensurate with the duties and hours required. For service half-time or more, a housing allowance or use of the parsonage should be included in the stipend. Pension and health benefits shall be negotiated under guidelines provided by the Board of Pensions.

Associate/Assistant Pastors and other Rostered Leaders

It is expected that the calls of associate and assistant pastors are coterminous with the call of the primary pastor. The effective date of the resignation of associate or assistant pastors on staff shall be set in consultation with the bishop and the congregation council but should be before the arrival of the new pastor. Consistent with *C9.09, this restriction shall be incorporated into the letter of call before it is submitted to the bishop for attestation.

This same principle may be applied to the calls of other rostered leaders, depending on the nature of their position and their duties described in their Letter of Call. Exceptions shall be at the discretion of the bishop.

The portion of this policy regarding the appointment of transitional ministers is not applicable to the position of an assistant or associate pastor. The bishop will consult with congregations with regard to their needs during vacancies in secondary staff ministries.

II. Call Process

Before a transitional ministry begins, the synod will provide for an exit interview with both the pastor who is leaving and the congregation council (or leadership) so that appropriate decisions about the level of transitional ministry needed may be made.

The congregation will conduct a self-study. Using materials provided by the synod they will assess the needs and goals of the congregation and prepare the congregational profile using the forms and guidelines provided through the ELCA. The congregation will also determine the resources available to fund the pastoral compensation package and disclose this information to their synod.

Following the self-study, the congregation will appoint or elect a call committee in a manner consistent with the constitution and bylaws of the congregation [c.f. C13.05.].

The call committee will participate in at least one call committee training session. The call committee then decides, after appropriate consultation with congregation leadership, how to proceed in the process of interviewing candidates for the call to the congregation. Two options will be available.

One candidate at a time. In this option, the call committee will have exclusive interview privileges with the recommended candidate for the first interview and an opportunity to hear the candidate preach and conduct worship. The period of exclusivity shall last for thirty days following the initial interview, after which the candidate may entertain interviews with other congregations.

Congregational settings appropriate for “first call” candidates will operate under the “one-candidate-at-a-time” option.

Up to three candidates at a time. In this option, the congregation may interview and hear up to three candidates before making any recommendation to call a candidate. Candidates considered under this option may interview in several ministry settings concurrently. When a call committee has voted to recommend a candidate to the congregation, the other candidates will be released and may not be considered further. Candidates who are recommended for call must notify all other interviewing congregations that a call vote is pending or must withdraw from the call process where they have been recommended. Both candidates and congregations should notify their counterparts at the earliest opportunity if it becomes clear that they are no longer interested in pursuing the call.

These procedures for calling ministers may be used as deemed appropriate for the calling of assistant or associate pastors and other rostered laypersons to staff positions in congregational settings.

Pastors. Ordained ministers seeking call shall prepare profile documents provided by the synod. When their names are to be submitted to a congregation, they shall be informed as to the interview process being used (one or three candidates). Ordained ministers may request that they be considered only under the one candidate option. Pastors shall make their minimum salary needs known to the synod.

SA2007.05.05 On HIV/AIDS Ministries

Whereas, New York City remains the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S; and
Whereas, More than 100,000 New Yorkers are living with HIV, but thousands don't know they're infected; and

Whereas, New York City has the highest AIDS case rate in the country, with more AIDS cases than Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, and Washington DC combined; and

Whereas, HIV is the 3rd leading cause of death below age 65 in New York City; and

Whereas, HIV is also the health problem with the largest racial disparity; 80% of new AIDS diagnoses and deaths are among African Americans and Hispanics; and

Whereas, Prevention, testing, and treatment programs are being expanded, but more must be done; be it

RESOLVED, That the Metropolitan New York Synod, through already established appropriate committee (s), focus on mechanisms for increasing HIV/AIDS awareness in the church, reducing the effects of stigmatization by HIV/AIDS and continuing the process of identifying those whom we are called to serve but may overlook; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Synod, through appropriate committee (s) begin a process of identifying and cataloguing the availability of HIV/AIDS ministries and resources at all levels of the church, utilizing the resources of other organizations, including but not limited to the Lutheran AIDS Network, and the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition.

SA2007.05.08 Adopting a budget of \$4,350,409 for fiscal year 2008.

**ADOPTED MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS ADDRESSED TO THE
2007 ELCA CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY:**

**SA2007.05.01 A Memorial to Respond to the Decision of the [ELCA] Discipline
Hearing Committee [in the matter of Pr. Bradley Schmeling]**

Whereas, The 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly urged every part of the ELCA to “concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, recognizing the God-given mission and communion that we share as members of the body of Christ”; and

Whereas, The discipline hearing committee constituted to consider charges against Pr. Bradley E. Schmeling suggested that synod assemblies memorialize the 2007 Churchwide Assembly to request that the Committee on Appeals reconsider and revise the document *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* and that the appropriate churchwide unit reconsider and revise the document *Vision and Expectations* and the policy on reinstatement to the rosters of this church (Decision of the Discipline Hearing Committee, p. 13); and

Whereas, If permitted to decide the case only under the standards in chapters 7 and 20 of the ELCA Constitution, the discipline hearing committee “would find almost unanimously that Pastor Schmeling is not engaged in conduct that is incompatible with the ministerial office, and would find with near unanimity that no discipline of any sort should be imposed against him” (Decision of the Discipline Hearing Committee, p. 12); and

Whereas, The documents known as *Definitions and Guidelines*¹ may be amended by the Committee on Appeals, subject to approval by the Church Council, while the documents known as *Vision and Expectations*,² as well as the policies on reinstatement to the rosters of this church,³ may be amended by the Vocation and Education unit, with review by the Conference of Bishops and adoption by the Church Council; and

Whereas, The Churchwide Assembly, as the highest legislative authority of the ELCA, can “request or direct” that the steps be taken for the development by the Committee on

¹ See provisions 20.71.11. and 20.71.12. of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*.

² See provisions 7.31.11., 7.31.13., 7.51.03.b., and 16.12.C05.d.2).

³ See provisions 7.31.15., 7.52.13, and 16.12.C05.d.2).

Appeals and adoption by the Church Council of an amendment to *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*; and for the development by the appropriate churchwide unit, review by the Conference of Bishops, and adoption by the Church Council of an amendment to *Vision and Expectations* (ELCA Church Council, Minutes of April 9-11, 2006, p. 90, explanation by Secretary Almen): now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Metropolitan New York Synod Assembly submit the following memorial for consideration by the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly:

RESOLVED, That the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly direct the Committee on Appeals to develop an amendment to the documents known as Definitions and Guidelines that removes provisions precluding “practicing homosexual persons” from the rosters of this church; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Churchwide Assembly direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the documents known as Vision and Expectations that removes provisions requiring persons who are “homosexual in their self-understanding” to “abstain from homosexual sexual relationships”; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Churchwide Assembly direct the Vocation and Education unit, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops, to develop an amendment to the policies on reinstatement to the rosters of this church that permits the reinstatement, without the usual requirement of five consecutive years without call, of persons who have resigned or been removed from the rosters solely because they are in a mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same-gender relationship; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this Churchwide Assembly direct the Church Council to take the actions necessary to amend Definitions and Guidelines, Vision and Expectations, and the policies on reinstatement to the rosters of this church in conformity with the amendments developed (pursuant to the preceding directions) by the Committee on Appeals and Vocation and Education unit

SA2007.05.06 On the Elimination of the Stigma of HIV/AIDS

Whereas, The stigma of HIV/AIDS creates a barrier to medical and social services due to the consequences—particularly in some smaller communities—of being identified as a person living with HIV/AIDS; and

Whereas, The barriers will exist as long as the stigma of having HIV/AIDS exists; and

Whereas, The stigma of HIV/AIDS also creates a barrier to sound public policy decisions about prevention education and services. As long as there is blame placed on those who become infected, scientific evidence, particularly about preventing the spread of the virus, will be overshadowed by misinformation; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the ELCA to urge its members to work toward the elimination of the stigma surrounding the issue of HIV/AIDS through the following:

- **Acknowledgement that the stigmatization of anyone due to disease, and particularly due to HIV/AIDS, creates impediments to seeking treatment and care for the disease and education about the disease, resulting in detrimental effects on individuals, the church and society at large.**

- **Reiteration that the example in John 9:3 of Jesus denying a man was born blind due to his or his parents' sin serves as a caution against making the judgment that a person's illness is punishment for his or someone else's sin; and be it further**

RESOLVED, That the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America urges all worshipping communities, missions, parishes, synods, seminaries and educational institutions, boards and commissions to:

- **Educate their constituent members about HIV/AIDS with a goal of reducing and ultimately eliminating the stigma associated with the disease.**
- **Educate their local, state and federal elected officials and representatives about HIV/AIDS with the goal of helping create knowledgeable, compassionate, and sensitive public policy in educational, support services, and medical treatment institutions. These institutions should provide services to those with HIV/AIDS in a manner which reduces the stigma associated with the disease.**

SA2007.05.07 Regarding a Media Campaign for HIV/AIDS Awareness

Whereas, HIV/AIDS has been at pandemic levels for over two decades; and

Whereas, The year 2005 marked the grim milestone of 1,000,000 people in the United States alone living with HIV (and 40,000,000 worldwide); and

Whereas, Ignorance about the subject continues to have a negative impact on the delivery of pastoral and educational services to those infected and affected by HIV, despite a variety of educational resources; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize that ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the Communications Office of the national church to engage in collaborative activities to raise awareness about the issues surrounding HIV disease through the use of a media campaign directed at members of this church as well as the broader population.

ELECTED VOTING MEMBER TO THE 2007 ELCA CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

Replacing the Rev. Mary Chang as a clergy voting member to the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

SA2007.05.02 The Rev. Katrina D. Foster

Prepared by The Rev. James G. Krauser Secretary, MNYS