



Southwestern Texas Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# Part-Time Ministry Guidelines

February 2026

## OVERVIEW

These guidelines outline recommendations made by the Compensation Team to the Southwestern Texas Synod concerning how to do ministry more effectively in the increasing number of congregations being served by Rostered Ministers in less-than-full-time calls.

This team consisted of rostered ministers and lay leaders: the Rev. Ildiko Rigney, Deacon John Dellis, Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt, Vicar Lax Vardhanapu, Rebecca Guengerich, and Angie Weiss. The team acknowledges that this is a working document and can be fairly modified to meet the needs of the various congregations.

This document is divided into the following sections:

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Definition of Shared-Time Ministry** (from the ELCA Roster Manual)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America understands shared-time ministry to exist when an ordained minister is called to serve in one or more settings of this church while earning income from other employment or while devoting substantial time to other activities.

Mission contexts change. Some examples of contexts and settings for which shared-time ministries may be appropriate are:

- Small-membership congregations with significant opportunities for mission and service.
- New ministries are so limited in size or slow in development that they would require a disproportionate and unwise investment of time and money if the more typical mission-development approach were employed.
- Ministries (e.g., inner city, ethnic, and rural) where the community expects that the rostered ministers will receive primary financial support from secular employment.
- Multi-staff congregations looking for ministry specialties, in addition to the services of rostered ministers and contracted laypersons.
- Parishes that would benefit from having two or more persons serving a single congregation or multiple congregations, but that cannot afford full-time salaries for several persons. Specialized rostered ministers or ministry needs of institutions and agencies that may call for a high degree of training and skill, but that may neither warrant investment of an appropriate full-time salary nor justify the engagement of a full-time staff person in that position.

The foregoing list is illustrative, not exhaustive. The particular settings for shared-time ministry will become more evident as this church gains experience with this style.

### **1.2 Background**

The ELCA defines ministry that is less than full-time to be “shared time” (see above). However, we will use “part-time” throughout this document, as it provides more clarity regarding the type of work we are describing, which is primarily that of a solo rostered minister in a ministry setting that is not large enough to support them in full-time ministry.

The context of the church has undergone radical changes since the ELCA was formed. It has moved from the center of society to its edges. There has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of people in our country who identify with no religious affiliation. People who grew up in a faith community are choosing not to join a congregation. Across denominations, worship attendance and giving to the church have declined dramatically on average. Much like the rise of Walmart drove out lots of smaller businesses in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the growth of “mega-churches” has come mainly at the expense of smaller congregations who cannot “compete” in what has become a consumer-driven culture, where people “church-shop” to find the one that best “fits their needs.”

The world has undergone radical changes as well. The advent of the internet, social networking, and smartphones, which keep people connected 24/7, has changed the way we think about work and play. Rostered ministers, like other working professionals, can now stay connected to their parishioners not just in the office, but by keeping their cell phones close by, hanging out in coffee shops, and connecting on social media.

Where rostered ministers used to do ministry by visiting homes, many of the younger generation no longer expect that to be the case. Therefore, rostered ministers must learn new ways to relate to this younger generation while still connecting with many in the older generations in more traditional ways.

The expectations for rostered ministers have changed regarding the types of work they are now expected to do beyond worship leadership, visitation, and teaching. It is a challenge for both rostered ministers and congregations to strike a balance between what they desire and what the rostered minister can realistically accomplish in an average work week. It is a challenge for those who work full-time in the ministry. It is even more challenging for those who have part-time calls. However, it can also provide opportunities for greater flexibility on the part of the rostered minister and the parish, as well as increased growth in the lay leadership of the congregation.

Over 50% of the congregations in our synod are now or will shortly be served by rostered ministers on a part-time basis. Congregations and their rostered ministers are seeking guidance on structuring their work and life together, as well as on justly compensating these leaders in support of the mission they share. This document applies specifically to rostered ministers, although many of the principles and guidelines can also be considered for Synod Authorized Ministers.

This guiding document is considered supplemental to the existing Southwestern Texas Synod Compensation Guidelines.

### **1.3 Philosophy of Call**

Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, rostered leaders may serve as rostered ministers. The process of calling rostered ministers within the life of the church is therefore primarily about discerning God's will for and God's call upon the congregation or ministry in which they will serve. Prayerfully, the church calls forth those it believes God can best use to help it carry out their mission together.

Rostered leadership is not a self-called vocation but a unique calling from God through the church to serve and equip the whole people of God. This is so that the church can live together faithfully as the body of Christ, equip the baptized for their work, and fulfill its purpose to proclaim and embody the redemptive intentions of God in the world.

A "calling" implies mutuality between those rostered people being called and the agency or congregation issuing the call. This mutuality means that congregations and other ministry sites are to live for the well-being of the rostered ministers that they call, and rostered ministers are to live for the well-being of the communities into which they are called, so that together, with the whole church, they might live in Christ for the life of the world. "We do not live to ourselves..." (Romans 14:7)

The Southwestern Texas Synod embraces biblical values about the relationship between rostered leadership and congregational life and mission:

- The church is the body of Christ, called to live out the implications of the gospel for the sake of the world. As members of the body of Christ, all members of a congregation provide ministry in the name of Christ. **Rostered ministers who equip the church for the work of mutual ministry are valued. (Ephesians 4:11)**
- In the Lutheran tradition, so that the church may be equipped for ministry, high value is placed on equipping rostered leadership. **The personal, ethical, and educational standards required of ministers are valued. (1 Timothy 3:1)**
- Congregations are to be centers of "word and sacrament" and "word and service" as well as caring, compassionate communities that are evangelical in seeking and welcoming the "homeless" and the "stranger." **Rostered ministers who equip the church to be so Christ-centered that it is outwardly focused are valued. (Matthew 25:31)**
- Congregations are continually to seek out Christ's calling to mutual ministry in their context. **Rostered ministers who inspire an ongoing mutual discernment for ministry are valued. (Romans 12:1-3)**

Whether a rostered minister is called into full-time or part-time ministry, this expectation of mutuality and these biblical values should be honored.

## **2. PART-TIME MINISTRY WORK**

### **2.1 Prioritizing Work – A Shared Responsibility**

Congregational mission and ministry needs remain unchanged when a rostered minister is called to serve in a less-than-full-time capacity. The shift must happen in who takes responsibility for various tasks and aspects of mission and ministry. This conversation is essential to have openly and honestly during the negotiation of the call process. It should be revised along the way during the tenure of the rostered minister serving the congregation. This is particularly important if the rostered minister has been under full-time call and is shifting to part-time, as missional areas will be fulfilled by the laity rather than the rostered minister.

Expectations for the rostered minister's role within the ministry ought to be shaped around the gifts the person brings and the percentage of time they are called. Part-time hours do not provide the same opportunities for ministry responsibilities as full-time hours; how will the congregation's mission be reshaped accordingly?

Areas commonly considered the rostered minister's responsibility include:

- Hospital visitation
- Shut-in visitation
- Worship planning
- Confirmation planning and teaching
- Preaching preparation

- Congregational meetings
- Synod committee meetings
- Email correspondence, social media evangelism, and communication

A professional contracting on a part-time basis must limit the scope of work in a particular job to make expectations reasonable. In the case of congregation rostered ministers, the rostered minister and congregation will have to decide on what parts of a full-time rostered minister's job the part-time rostered minister will not do, and over what areas they will not have responsibility but will be covered by lay leaders.

While in staff situations, a part-time rostered minister may be called to serve in a particular ministry, by nature limited in scope (visitation, youth, education, for example), in a solo rostered minister role (most common in new part-time calls), some things will either not be done in that congregation or will be done by lay staff or volunteers. Congregations thinking of calling a part-time rostered minister will have to choose the focus of their leadership position, which may be:

- Focus on community relations, outreach, and evangelism
- Focus on weekly worship
- Focus on adult congregational programming (Bible study, Sunday school, etc.)
- Focus on youth and children's programming (Bible study, Sunday school, confirmation, etc.)
- Focus on visitation (sick and homebound members, hospital, etc.)
- Other focus

One of these could be chosen as the primary focus for a part-time rostered minister, and one or two as secondary foci (which will be attended to if time remains after the primary focus). Secondary areas will need solid lay leadership to assist the rostered minister. The other areas will have to move to lay leadership and staffing. This focus exercise and prioritization will be crucial for congregations preparing for a part-time call. **While equipping leaders is an explicit and distinct role of all rostered leaders, it is essential in part-time calls, so they are feasible and reasonable for the good of the called leader as well as the mission of the congregation.**

For congregations considering calling a part-time rostered minister, a conversation defining the expectations of the rostered minister is an essential part of the call process. These expectations and boundaries must be overtly respected; the roles of the rostered minister and the congregation must be clearly defined, and an emergency plan, in case the rostered minister is unavailable, must be established and widely understood. This emergency plan could include previous agreements with retired rostered ministers, neighboring clergy, lay staff, or other leaders.

## **2.2 Some Models for Part-Time Ministry**

As our synod includes an increasing number of part-time rostered ministers, it is helpful for congregations preparing to call a part-time rostered minister to have some models from which to draw as they shape this special call.

A challenge for all part-time professionals is that professional positions, by nature, are not typically hourly or defined by hours; they expect professionals to complete the necessary work within reasonable limits, regardless of the time taken. In exchange for working more than the regular full-time 40-hour

work week, the professional has more flexibility in scheduling their hours (such as working several long days or an evening instead of a morning) than an hourly employee.

For most professionals, there is a societal assumption that the person will work at least 40 hours per week, on a somewhat predictable schedule (that the person will be in the office most weekdays- 5 days- from 8 am to 5 pm, for example). But most rostered ministers will work more than that because the job of a professional (as opposed to an hourly employee) is to work until the job is done.

There is no accurate data on how many hours, on average, a full-time ELCA rostered minister works; some estimates range from 45 to 65 hours. **For these recommendations, we will assume**, as do other professional positions, **that full-time work is 40 hours per week**, with professionals typically working an additional 5-15 hours per week. The 40 hours are somewhat regularly scheduled (see discussion below regarding days of the week), and the 5-15 additional hours are unscheduled and as needed. Regular hours refer to those that are often scheduled, such as office hours, Sunday worship services, other worship services, Bible studies, meetings, and confirmation classes. Unscheduled hours usually include retreats, emergency visits, social media (Facebook, etc.), after-hours calls, and e-mails. For our purposes, the following are approximate guidelines:

- Full-time = 40 hours per week “regular” hours + 5-15 additional unscheduled hours
- 3/4-time = 30 hours per week “regular” hours + 5-10 additional unscheduled hours
- 1/2-time = 20 hours per week “regular” hours + 5-7 additional unscheduled hours

Less than half-time, for these recommendations, will be considered “contract” work and not covered under these “part-time” recommendations (usually meaning that “contract” positions will not be call situations, and will not include regular ELCA benefits).

Rostered ministers often define their job not in hours, but in the number of days worked per week. Full-time, rostered ministers work six days a week, with one full day off each week (usually Friday or Monday). Often, rostered ministers do not work every Saturday but are frequently scheduled for special events. Sunday is almost always a mandatory workday, and Sundays usually determine vacation: the rostered minister has some flexibility in taking other days of the week off, but is expected, and traditionally covenanted, to be present 48 Sundays per year, with four off for vacation, and sometimes an additional 1 or 2 for continuing education.

Any professional contracting on a part-time basis must limit the scope of work in a particular job to make expectations reasonable. (See more on this in section 2.1 above.) If a part-time, rostered minister also has another job, there must be flexibility within the congregation to accommodate that second job.

Within these broad parameters, congregations and rostered ministers in part-time call processes have found several models helpful. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

### 2.2.1 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 1: More Days a Week Off

This is currently the most common part-time model. As indicated in the benefits section of these recommendations (below), the part-time, rostered minister working in this model should receive the full-time number of Sundays off (vacation), which is typically 4 Sundays per year. (Note: Otherwise, part-time rostered ministers will be working more Sundays than full-time rostered ministers.) In addition to this, a part-time rostered minister will have more than one day completely off, when no work is expected. At a

minimum, this will mean that the congregation will need lay visitation people and some lay assistance with office tasks (such as phone messages), ensuring that the part-time, rostered minister is truly off those days and free to work at another job.

- For 3/4 time, 2 days per week will be off (plus standard 4 weeks of vacation)
- For 1/2 time, 3 days per week will be off (plus standard 4 weeks of vacation)

#### 2.2.2 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 2: Weeks (Including Sundays) Off Per Month

This model allows a congregation to have an accurate picture of what part-time ministry looks like on a Sunday, and many rostered ministers who have worked part-time consider a model that includes proportionate Sundays off the only fair model for rostered ministers, who are otherwise expected to do a full-time job at a lower salary. This approach would allow a part-time, rostered minister to enjoy some full weekends with their family, who often follow more traditional work and school schedules. In this model, the rostered minister's vacation would also be proportional (a 3/4-time rostered minister would have 3 weeks, a 1/2-time rostered minister would have 2 weeks).

- For 3/4-time, 1 week (including Sunday) per month will be off (plus 3 weeks of vacation)
- For 1/2 time, 2 weeks (including Sundays) per month will be off (plus 2 weeks of vacation)

#### 2.2.3 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 3: Months Off Per Year

This model is a variation of Model 2. This model might make part-time ministry an attractive option (rather than just a lower-paying option) for rostered ministers who are parents of school-aged children or spouses of teachers/ school staff. This could involve either the summer months off, /or January, for example. In this model, the rostered minister's vacation would also be proportional (3/4-time rostered ministers would have 3 weeks, 1/2-time rostered ministers would have 2 weeks, etc.).

- For 3/4 time, 3 months (12 weeks, incl. Sundays) per year will be off (plus 3 weeks' vacation)
- For 1/2 time, 6 months (24 weeks, incl. Sundays) per month will be off (plus 2 weeks' vacation)

#### 2.2.4 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 4: Combination Models

Some rostered ministers have chosen a compromise model between Model 1 and Models 2 and 3 to make the part-time position workable for the small congregation while also benefiting the rostered minister. In this model, the rostered minister might take extra days or partial days off a week, and additional Sundays off, with fewer official vacation days. Alternatively, they could work full-time most of the year, take four full weeks of vacation, and take more Sundays off. These Sundays off can be Sundays that are not crucial liturgically but are essential for families.

(Thanksgiving, spring break, and some during summer vacation months). This could look like one of the following scenarios:

- For 3/4 time, 1.5 days off per week, and 8 Sundays off per year (plus 3 weeks of vacation).
- For 1/2 time, 2.5 days off per week, and 16 Sundays off per year (plus 2 weeks of vacation).
- For 3/4 time, work full-time hours/days, and 6 Sundays off per year (plus 4 weeks of vacation).
- For 1/2 time, work full-time hours/days, and 6 Sundays off per year (plus 4 weeks of vacation).
- Other combinations worked out between the congregation and the rostered minister for mutual minimization of inconvenience and mutual benefit.

Note: For these accurate part-time models (Models 2, 3, and 4) to work for congregations, and as these

situations become more common, the synod will need to equip and support congregational ministry in the rostered minister's absences, including the administration of the Sacraments. See section 9 below for more discussion of this.

It is an unreasonable expectation for a part-time rostered minister to work as many Sundays as a full-time rostered minister. Thus, in Model 1 above, a part-time rostered minister who does not take Sundays as part of their part-time compensation still receives the same number of weeks (and Sundays) off as a full-time rostered minister. However, this move toward part-time ministry will also mean that the church (rostered ministers, congregations, synods, and the ELCA) will need to consider different ways for a congregation to offer additional time off to compensate for this. Additional Sundays off per month/quarter/year are discussed in models 2, 3, and 4 above. These could include an extra Sunday each quarter or additional Sundays off during the summer (50% = 26 Sundays off; 75% = 13 Sundays off).

NOTE: Time off that is part of being part-time (including unpaid time and unpaid Sundays) is different from vacation time (paid time off, including Sundays). In Model 1, above, the rostered minister receives four paid Sundays off for vacation. In Models 2, 3, and 4, the rostered minister receives three paid Sundays (3/4 time) or two paid Sundays (1/2 time) for vacation, with some Sundays included in their part-time plan.

For these accurate part-time models--those that include Sundays off as part of being part-time (Models 2, 3, and 4)--to work for small congregations, and as these situations become more common, the synod will need to equip and support congregational ministry in the rostered minister's absences, including administration of the Sacraments. Can worship be shaped differently to accommodate the absences of rostered ministers? How can neighboring congregations or mission partners support the rostered minister's ministry to facilitate these additional Sundays? See section 9 below for more discussion of this.

The four broad models presented here should be part of the conversation among a call committee, the council, and the rostered minister. No single model will work for every situation, and each call is contextual; however, congregations must be aware that calling a part-time, rostered minister entails a different model of ministry, characterized by more lay leadership, in any size congregation or ministry situation. This needs to be negotiated between the congregation's leadership and the rostered minister and then communicated to the congregation continually.

### **3. FAIR AND JUST COMPENSATION**

The Southwestern Texas Synod Compensation Guidelines require fair and just compensation for rostered ministers, ensuring it is comparable to that of other professionals in the local community with similar education and responsibilities in not-for-profit, mission-driven organizations that serve society. We affirm that for rostered ministers in part-time calls, this should also be the case. An average hourly wage can be derived by taking an average full-time salary and dividing it by an assumed 40-hour workweek. This would then be multiplied by the number of expected work hours to determine the salary. The congregation should also provide housing and a Social Security Tax Allowance. More information on this can be found in the Southwestern Texas Synod Compensation Guidelines. Please refer to the worksheets in the Compensation Guidelines to help determine part-time salaries. We recommend a minimum of \$30 per hour as a starting point.

#### 4. PENSION AND HEALTHCARE BENEFITS

Rostered ministers who are under a part-time call receive less than full-time pay and work less than full-time. Some benefits for part-time rostered ministers can be easily calculated by applying a straight percentage of benefits compared to those of a full-time rostered minister; others will need to be negotiated differently. For example, determining the dollar amount for pension contributions through Portico's ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program is easily calculated once a percentage of contribution is determined (at least 10%). A contribution calculator can be found at [Portico Benefits Website](http://www.porticobenefits.org). However, negotiating full healthcare coverage for a rostered minister and their family, as recommended by the ELCA, may not be as straightforward. If a spouse/partner's insurance covers a leader, a contribution could be made to a supplemental pension account to keep this benefit in the congregation's spending plan and as a benefit for the rostered minister.

- **Full percentage (at least 10%) calculation for pension (Portico) contributions** (contribution calculators are available at [www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org) to assist congregations in figuring out these total costs)
- **Full coverage for Rostered Minister + family for health insurance** (as recommended by the ELCA). If a leader is covered by a spouse/partner's health insurance, a contribution could be made to a supplemental pension account to keep this benefit in the congregation's spending plan and as a benefit for the rostered leader.

#### 5. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

##### 5.1 Travel Expense

A full mileage allowance, as per the current IRS business rate, should be paid to the rostered minister for all travel expenses exceeding the cost of transportation to and from the office.

##### 5.2 Professional Expenses

Rostered ministers have routine expenses such as the purchase and care of robes and stoles, magazines, books, and other professional costs. A set annual limit on professional expense reimbursement may be agreed to each year.

#### 6. RENEWAL AND SELF-CARE

##### 6.1 Vacation and Days off

It is expected that rostered ministers will receive the full benefit of vacation and that they will also have regular days off as part of their ministry (sabbath) as prescribed in Genesis 2:1-2 and Exodus 20:8-11. This time is crucial for rostered ministers to prioritize the health of their families and other relationships, as well as to take time for rest. This time off and vacation are just as vital to part-time, rostered ministers as they are for those working full-time.

Vacation is a benefit, but it differs from regular time off because a rostered minister is not full-time. Days off and vacation time are both parts of negotiating a part-time call, and different models can include modifications of the number of days off and the number of Sundays included in vacation time. See section 2.2 for further discussion of this topic.

### **6.2 Compensatory (Comp) Time**

It can be mutually beneficial to offer comp time for working more extraordinary hours in a single week, particularly for overnight events such as summer camp. An example might be providing a week of comp time for each week spent at camp, which may vary from year to year.

### **6.3 Sick Leave and Disability**

Sick leave that is reasonable and necessary for personal illness is assumed, with the congregation paying pulpit supply as needed. In this event, a conversation with congregational leaders is also considered.

Disability compensation of up to two months in 12 months, along with contributions to the ELCA Pension and/or other benefits programs, should be provided if the rostered minister is physically or mentally disabled.

No sick leave or disability time should be considered cumulative or compensated for at the end of a call.

## **7. MUTUAL BENEFIT**

### **7.1 Continuing Education and other Synodical and Churchwide Events**

If at all possible, the congregation shall offer standard amounts of time and money for continuing education. Rostered ministers on part-time salaries have less of their own money to spend on continuing education, but they still need ongoing education, just like full-time leaders.

Also, the congregation shall provide full allowance for synod and churchwide events, such as Synod Assembly and leadership convocations, which are expected for all rostered leaders. Time and money spent on synodical and churchwide events do not count against the continuing education allowance or vacation; it is part of the ministry to the broader church, which is part of the call. The congregation and clergy are encouraged to apply for scholarships as necessary.

### **7.2 Sabbatical**

The ELCA recommends sabbatical leave at regular intervals for extended study and renewal. Sabbatical time of 3 months for every 7 years of ordained ministry, and after at least 5 years of service in the current call, is highly encouraged.

### **7.3 Mutual Ministry Committee**

It is beneficial to establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to mediate any issues that arise between the rostered minister and the congregation. This committee can also provide direction for the rostered minister in setting priorities for the congregation and continue to remind the rostered minister and the congregation of their mutual boundaries and responsibilities to one another.

## **8. SUPPLY PREACHING AND PRESIDING**

It may be desirable for rostered ministers to raise lay leaders within the congregation who could preach on Sundays when the rostered minister is unavailable, thereby allowing different voices to proclaim the good news within the congregation. This would require an investment on the part of the rostered minister and/or synod to train/coach these preachers. They could be youth or adult preachers. Preaching can creatively involve different ways of proclaiming the gospel, including dramas, testimonies, and congregation participation, among others. This affirms the priesthood of all believers and helps our disciple-members understand that we are all called to bear witness to the resurrected Christ in the world and in our lives.

On Sundays when it is not possible to have a lay leader from the congregation preach, and the rostered minister is absent, the Synod Council of the Southwestern Texas Synod recommends the following baseline levels for those providing supply preaching, since sermon preparation is involved:

- Supply preaching: \$250 for one service, \$350 for two services; plus, mileage at the current annual IRS business rate.

Based on the number of Sundays off granted to the rostered minister as part of their compensation package, minus the number of Sundays the congregation plans for lay preaching, the remaining amount should be allocated in the yearly budget for regular pulpit supply.

Currently, the sacrament of Holy Communion can only be presided over by a pastor or a synod-authorized lay minister. On Sundays when the pastor is absent, the congregation can either have a service of the Word (without Holy Communion) or they can invite another pastor to preside in their absence (often a retired pastor in or near the congregation). If the pastor is already providing pulpit supply for the congregation, the above rates would also include presiding at Communion. Otherwise, if there is a lay preacher but the congregation still desires to have Communion, the Synod Council of the Southwestern Texas Synod recommends the following baseline levels for those who are presiding only:

- Supply presiding: \$100 for one service, \$150 for two services; plus, mileage at the current annual IRS business rate.

In exceptional circumstances, the bishop may choose to authorize a lay person to preside at Communion. The presiding supply rate would be the same as that of a pastor.

## **9. OPEN ISSUES**

Moving to more part-time rostered ministers in the ELCA will require a radical rethinking of the role of the rostered minister, what kind of training is necessary for both clergy and lay persons, and how we can support congregations as they transition to these new models, including the theological and practical issues around the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

All of these are beyond the scope of this task force and individual congregations, but we believe they need to be wrestled with as vital components of our future together as the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. What follows are some beginning thoughts on these issues.

### **9.1 Training for Rostered Ministers and Congregations**

Ephesians 4:11 says, “The gifts that God gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some rostered ministers, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work in ministry.”

In the earliest churches, there were no mega churches and no multi-staff personnel hired to do the work of the church. The people of the church did the ministry of the church. From what we can gather from historical research, preachers traveled from location to location. For example, in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Stephen was assigned the task of ensuring that the Hellenist widows and orphans were cared for.

Congregations with rostered ministers serving in a less-than-full-time capacity very much reflect the earliest church, where all members contribute to the church's ministry with their various skills and abilities. Two challenges facing congregations attempting to become more self-sufficient are: 1) rostered ministers are not trained to equip leaders. Rostered ministers are trained to think theologically, read Scripture accurately, and understand historical contexts. 2) In a survey of rostered ministers serving in part-time calls, most of the available time was spent in sermon preparation. A rostered minister called to part-time ministry might find it challenging, if not overwhelming, to settle into the new ministry setting, prepare for weekly worship, and learn to appreciate the structure and dynamics of the congregation.

Additional training that would be helpful to assist congregations in assuming more of the ministry:

- How to develop a mission plan (connecting with the neighborhood, asset-based planning, etc.)
- Recruiting and equipping new leaders
- Stephen Ministry and/or basic rostered minister care skills to care for the homebound and those facing illness
- Setting up a financial accountability structure within the congregation that includes basic accounting principles
- Thinking theologically and liturgically about worship
- Basic biblical and theological literacy
- Preaching

A congregation may choose to be trained in one or more of these areas as they feel called and gifted to do so. They may want to send individuals in the congregation to be trained in lay leadership or a similar program to gain overall expertise.

## **9.2 Coaches**

The synod has trained coaches for congregations who could organize this support structure within the synod and conferences. These coaches would also be available to both congregations and Rostered Ministers to help each appreciate the changing dynamics of congregations and develop their own support structures, thereby enhancing their joint ministry.

## **9.3 Thinking Theologically and Practically about Holy Communion**

As the ministry of congregations and rostered ministers in congregations is re-shaped for part-time calls, one of the most challenging considerations is how sacraments will be faithfully administered. Presiding at the sacrament of Holy Communion has historically been an exclusive privilege and responsibility of ordained rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament. However, in unusual cases, a bishop may grant a dispensation for trained or designated leaders to preside at the table in the absence of an ordained word and sacrament minister.

In recent years, there has been a shift in our theological understanding of Holy Communion that supports and encourages weekly communion in congregations, leading many to incorporate this practice into their weekly worship. Even as this is a theologically sound position, it does create challenges for congregations considering being served by a part-time, rostered minister.

With the dramatic increase in the number of part-time rostered ministers and the need to implement some of the models described above, the Church must adopt new alternatives to the existing restrictions on presiding at communion. This change is necessary if one wants to live in this new reality and continue the practice of weekly communion. This is a conversation about our understanding of ministry and roles of various people involved, including ordained Word and Sacrament clergy, Synod Authorized Ministers, and laity; as well as a conversation about the sacraments and what it means to administer them “rightly”, both of which are essential but beyond the scope of this team.

However, some creative and practical answers to the question in the meantime may include:

- Asking rostered ministers who are available for worship services (retired, on leave from call, specialized ministries, etc.) to preside over communion for congregations served by part-time rostered ministers, perhaps a certain number of times per year.
- Providing training and authorization for lay leaders in congregations served by a part-time rostered minister to preside at and serve communion in the context of weekly worship, in the absence of the ordained pastor.

How this question is addressed in the absence of a formal policy ought to be the responsibility of the congregation and the rostered minister, in consultation with the synod, and guided by prayer.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this document is to start a series of conversations. First, a conversation in a congregation considering a part-time call. A call committee and/or council must engage the congregation in a discussion about what a part-time call will look like, and specifically, what rostered minister tasks will not be part of the call, what tasks will be prioritized, and what tasks will be taken over by lay staff and members of the congregation. The congregation and call committee/council should also be in conversation with the synod as they shape this new call.

Second, these congregational conversations must be supported by a discussion within our synod about how we, as a body, support congregations with part-time rostered ministers and those with part-time calls. This must include addressing things like supply presiders, funding for synod events and training, and many other issues. These synod conversations also need to include larger congregations that might be able to help their neighbors.

Third, this is clearly part of a larger conversation in the ELCA. The question of what the church will look like in the future includes the growing number of congregations that cannot support full-time ordained rostered ministers. For instance, how will we adapt seminary education so that rostered ministers do not leave seminary with large amounts of debt and arrive at part-time calls? If we expect some rostered ministers to be bi-vocational, how will we design seminary programs and church work schedules that accommodate this? How will we adjust to more part-time rostered ministers while continuing to move toward most ELCA congregations offering communion at every worship service? As with many other issues, navigating the next generation of the church in this place will require deep theological thinking, collaboration, and prayer.

We pray that these conversations will not only result in ways to make part-time ministry possible but also enable it to be a blessing to congregations, strengthen lay leadership, broaden career and family options for clergy, and bear witness to the creativity and tenacity of Christ's church.

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\* This is consistent with the Southwestern Texas Synod-approved compensation guidelines