



"...sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked by the cross of Christ forever."

PROGRAMS MANUAL

- + LAY WORSHIP LEADERS
- + SYNOD AUTHORIZED MINISTERS

SOUTHERN OHIO SYNOD

Acknowledgements:

Logo: With thanks to The Rev. Rebecca Grate.

With gratitude to the Montana, Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana, Alaska, and Central/Southern Illinois synods of the ELCA and to The Rev. Dr. Cory Driver and The Rev. Dr. Wray Bryant for their hard work assisting with the development of this manual.

All biblical citations are from *The New Revised Standard Version*, 1989, the National Council of Churches.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP



Grace and peace be with you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Stamped deep in the DNA of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the importance of education, particularly when it comes to Scripture, proclamation of the Gospel, music, worship, theology, and care for the people of God in congregations. I am so blessed to serve as a leader in this Church. While we are all called through our baptisms to share in our daily lives the gifts that God has given us, the Holy Spirit may be nudging you to a different kind of service in ELCA congregations in the Southern Ohio Synod as a Lay Worship Leader or Synod Authorized Minister. God may be calling you to be part of an exciting new journey.

We need workers in the vineyard to help share the Gospel, the Good News of God's Love in Jesus. Our call is to spread that Good News, share our faith in Jesus Christ, and invite others to participate in God's activity in the world. What a privilege it is to be carriers of this grace and love. This is a serious and blessed call.

Our prayer for you as you study and work with Dr. Lynn Nakamura, our cohort of instructors, and me is this:

Gracious and loving God, as you call workers to varied tasks in this world and your church, so you call servants to the ministry of worship, proclamation, and care. Grant these servants, humility and joy in this journey, a spirit of bold proclamation, and a life of service knowing that it is your Spirit that calls, gathers, enlightens, and keeps holy, this Church, your Church. In the Name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Blessings be with you as you explore and listen for God's call to serve the church in the Southern Ohio Mission Territory.

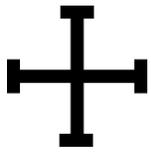
In Christ,

Bishop Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt
Southern Ohio Synod

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MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTHERN OHIO SYNOD, ELCA

THE MINISTRY OF ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

In 2016, the ELCA initiated a process named *Called Forward Together in Christ* as a means of helping the church make decisions about the future identity, direction, and priorities of the ELCA. The result of the process is a guiding document entitled, [Called Forward Together in Christ: ELCA Future Directions 2025](#). In this document, our church affirms that “we are a church grounded in the Lutheran confessions inspiring biblical and theological literacy, gospel fluency and daily vocation and ministry through shared experience and life-long learning” (p. 7). Our gospel fluency, the affirmation of our daily vocations and ministry, and our experience as life-long learners lead us to equip all the baptized for their many roles in the church and in the world.

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE SYNOD

In Baptism, God establishes us as members of the priesthood of all believers and service to the church is part of the common mission shared by all the faithful. As a church, we are also “committed to formation, education and continuing development and care of lay leaders and rostered ministers” ([Called Forward](#), p. 7).

ROSTERED LEADERS

Rostered leadership in the ELCA is composed of the Bishop, Pastors, and Deacons. These categories represent ordained, professional church callings, designed to allow individuals to earn a sustainable income.

The Bishop is the “pastor of the synod,” who discerns and provides vision and leadership for rostered leaders and lay people entrusted to their care. The bishop is elected by rostered ministers and lay voting members to synod assemblies and then serves the synod for a six-year term.

Pastors / Ministers of Word and Sacrament are those who have been specifically trained by the Church. They would typically hold a Master of Divinity degree from a seminary or divinity school and are approved through the ELCA candidacy process for rostering as ministers of Word and Sacrament. The pastor of a congregation, working in connection with the local congregation council, is responsible for oversight regarding the appropriate execution of ministry in the local congregation. When approved, a pastor is considered to be a candidate to all 65 synods of the ELCA. Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament preside at the celebration of the sacraments and may officiate at weddings and funerals.

Deacons / Ministers of Word and Service are ordained ministers who have received special training by the Church and are called to the ministry of Word and Service. Embodying lives of service, their function is to represent the Church to the world and the needs of the world to the church. Their forms of ministry are vast and varied.

NON-ROSTERED LEADERS

The Southern Ohio Synod utilizes two forms of non-rostered leadership. They are Lay Worship Leaders (LWLs) and Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs). *Service in these roles is limited to the Southern Ohio Synod and is not automatically transferable to other synods in the ELCA.*

Lay Worship Leader (LWL)

These are non-ordained leaders who undergo a basic regimen of academic and practical training, which is normally completed within one year. Lay Worship Leaders serve congregations as Sunday pulpit supply. They are NOT authorized to preside at the sacraments and will not do so. LWLs are reviewed annually and recertified by Synod Council according to constitutional requirements.

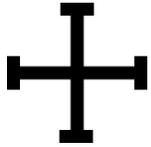
Synod Authorized Minister (SAM)

According to the ELCA Constitution, synod bishops may authorize individuals to serve in congregational settings where it is not possible to provide appropriate pastoral leadership (7.31.10). SAMs are generally bi-vocational or retired from other work. They are trained first as Lay Worship Leaders. They then receive further training that typically takes another year. Once approved and certified, they are appointed by the Bishop in consultation with a specific congregation for part-time service in that setting. Regular worship leadership in a single congregation is the primary focus of a SAM (which is the main difference between a LWL and a SAM). Additional functions, such as working with the church council or providing pastoral care, depend on the needs of the parish and the approval of the Bishop. A SAM may preside at the Sacraments ONLY when authorized to serve a congregation, only in that setting, and at the discretion of the Bishop. Additionally, because a SAM is not pastor, SAMs will not officiate at weddings.

The designation of "Synod Authorized Minister" only applies to a person who has been trained, certified by Synod Council, approved by the Bishop, and is serving a congregation. When not serving, the same person returns to the designation Lay Worship Leader. Certification as a SAM must be renewed annually as required by the Synod constitution.

THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (LA) OF THE SOUTHERN OHIO SYNOD

The Leadership Academy was created for the education and formation of the baptized who have discerned a call to serve in the lay public ministry roles of Lay Worship Leader or Synod Authorized Minister. They will supplement the ranks of Synod supply preachers and provide leadership in congregations that do not have called pastors. To prepare these leaders, the LA provides a structured curriculum in theology, bible, practical ministry skills, and mission over a 1-year period for LWL candidates, with an additional year of instruction for SAM candidates. Since discernment is ongoing, biennial conversations with each LWL and SAM will take up the question of, where is God calling you now? Is a LWL feeling called to be a SAM? Is a SAM feeling called to be a pastor or deacon? In other words, is there a next step, and if so, what is it?



QUALITIES OF MINISTERS

The following qualities are those needed by rostered and non-rostered leaders alike. The list below focuses on the potential lay worship leader and synod authorized minister.

FAITH

A strong faith and commitment to Christ is essential for one seeking a greater role in the leadership of the Church. Some of the indicators would include a humble reliance upon God for leadership and direction in life, an active devotional life, a high level of service to neighbors – particularly in communal worship, a sense of baptismal vocation, the ability to ask pertinent and authentic questions, and a willingness to articulate one's particular walk of faith and an eagerness to share the Gospel story.

How does the student experience, understand and convey God's grace in Christ as the core component of their life? What types of questions does the student bring to the faith? Zeal of the new Christian, depth of faith as a by-product of years of faithful wrestling with God and the Church, and/or a willingness to grow in understanding are all desirable hallmarks of a life of faith.

PERSONALITY

Students must demonstrate emotional stability, maturity, willingness to take the initiative, humility, curiosity, and the ability to relate well to others. One who would serve as a non-rostered leader, in addition to maintaining other regular employment, will need to have a high level of energy and drive, and be attentive to maintaining personal and emotional health.

TALENTS AND ABILITIES

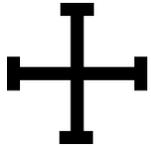
Students must display the potential capacity to articulate the faith in a public/congregational. Can the student help congregants experience the reality of God's love for them, Christ's presence among them in the sacraments, and the Holy Spirit's guiding and inspiration? The biblical witness is that the people that God chooses for leadership are often unlikely choices: Miriam, Moses, Jacob, Jeremiah, Peter, and Paul to name some examples. We confess "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (2 Cor 4:7). We are not looking for the strong, wise, or perfect as much as those who have an ability and desire to communicate what God does for us.

SCHOLARSHIP

Students will need to complete the educational requirements of the Lay Worship Leader (LWL) or Synod Authorized Ministry (SAM) Program. The Psalmist reminds us what a joy it is to study God's word, how useful God's wisdom is, and how a life of praise is intimately connected to a life of study (Psalm 119:97, 98, 12). The ideal participant will model the holy acts of biblical study and seeking to acquire wisdom for the benefit of God's Church.

RELATIONAL SKILLS

Students must exhibit a strong love for people and the skills to relate effectively to individuals and groups. Can this individual both listen and provide effective feedback? Can the student stay engaged and pray and work toward peace in difficult relationships? Is this person sensitive to the needs of others? Other qualities would be caring and compassion, openness, a willingness to share, humility and a strong sense of humor. A final quality would be a love of and a commitment to the church in all its expressions.



LAY WORSHIP LEADER (LWL) PROGRAM

LWL PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The Lay Worship Leader Program of the Southern Ohio Synod forms, evaluates, and prepares candidates to be certified and sent out to provide occasional worship leadership and preaching to congregations and worshipping communities.

LWL PROGRAM GOALS

Students will be able to...

1. Bear witness to an active faith life and commitment to Christ.
2. Demonstrate a basic ability to interpret the Bible.
3. Begin to articulate a greater awareness of who they are and the unique gifts and challenges they bring to ministry.
4. Craft and preach a sermon that is faithful to the biblical text and reflects Lutheran theology.
5. Communicate more effectively both orally and in writing.
6. Lead various types of worship services that are consistent with the Gospel and Lutheran theology.
7. Distinguish Lutheran theology and practice from other common theologies and practices.

EXPECTATIONS

Persons who serve as lay worship leaders in the Southern Ohio Synod, ELCA are to meet and maintain the following expectations:

- Evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ;
- Active membership in a congregation of the Southern Ohio Synod;

- Satisfactory participation in synod programs of preparation and continuing education, including demonstration of appropriate ministry skills;
- Commitment to show forth in word and deed God's saving gospel of justification by grace through faith, and so equip the baptized for their ministry in daily life;
- Knowledge and acceptance of, and preaching and teaching in accordance with, the Confession of Faith of this church;
- Expressed commitment to, along with public support and positive interpretation of the mission and ministries of the Southern Ohio Synod and the ELCA;
- Willingness to meet and continue in this church's expectations concerning the personal conduct and behavior of persons serving in public ministry as applicable in the document "[Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline](#);"
- Maintain accountability and competency for fulfilling the role of Lay Worship Leader.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Lay Worship Leader will be responsible for preaching and leading worship, consistent with local practice and Lutheran standards of worship and practice. The Lay Worship Leader will practice open communication with congregations before and during fulfillment of duties.

All authorized lay leaders shall:

- Represent the Lord and his Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Southern Ohio Synod with the grace, dignity, respect, and responsibility required of their position.
- Follow the worship practices of the congregations in which they are serving.
- Be diligent in preparing to lead worship.
- Be entitled to compensation for their services at the supply rate set by the Southern Ohio Synod, including reimbursement for mileage at the current IRS reimbursement rate.
- Follow the custom of the congregation they serve, which usually includes wearing a white alb when leading worship, and may include a cincture, and/or cross, if desired.
- Report any difficulties and/or irregularities to the office of the bishop within 48 hours.

The Lay Worship Leader is not to be expected to fill the role of pastor. Therefore, the Lay Worship Leader will not:

- be expected to fulfill administrative responsibilities,
- be addressed as "pastor" or "deacon" in person or in print,
- provide pastoral counseling,
- wear clerical attire (i.e., stole or clergy shirt),

- administer the sacraments, i.e.,
 - preside at communion;
 - conduct baptisms during a regular service of worship or in private except under the provisions of the church for emergency baptisms. (Any Christian may baptize in an emergency and report such a baptism to the pastor of the congregation.);
- officiate at weddings or conduct funerals.

LWL EDUCATION AND FORMATION

Lay Worship Leaders will undergo a structured program of training and formation prior to their certification for service. Training will focus on these areas:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Testament • Hebrew Bible • Lutheran Theology and Practice • Liturgical Practices and Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preaching • Spirituality & Prayer • Healthy Leadership/Interpersonal Skills |
|--|---|

Classes will be held monthly, generally on the third Friday-Saturday of the month (Check the schedule to be certain.). Each course will meet for a minimum of roughly 10 contact hours. Students will be expected to complete both preparatory and concluding work.

Most courses are expected to meet in person at locations to be announced. Courses that meet on Friday evenings will be held via Zoom with in-person sessions on Saturday.

Students will be graded as *Competent – Not Yet Competent*. Successfully completing a class means a student has received a *Competent* final grade. The course must be repeated if a student does not complete a course successfully.

COST

The tuition for the Lay Worship Leader program is \$1000. This fee helps cover the costs of the preliminary evaluation, instructors, administration, program infrastructure, final evaluations and certifying readiness for service. Tuition may be paid at the beginning of the course of study or in installments of \$150 per course for the first 6 courses and \$100 for the last course. If necessary, other plans may be arranged with the director of the program.

If a student desires simply to review a course that they've already taken and passed, the fee will be \$50.

In addition to the cost of tuition are additional expenses relating to program application and courses that are to be paid at the point of service. They are:

1. background check(s) (see below),
2. textbooks and resources (to be acquired by the student), and
3. travel costs.

While application, course, and program costs are the responsibility of the individual, congregations are encouraged to offer full or partial scholarships for individuals studying to become a Lay Worship Leader.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

COMPETENCIES FOR ENTRANCE

Potential Lay Worship Leaders will demonstrate the competencies of candidates listed in the ELCA candidacy manual, namely: A potential Lay Worship Leader...

- ... is rooted in the presence and activity of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ... actively participates in God's mission as a part of the church.
- ... cultivates vision and purpose through participation in the use of spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, biblical and theological reflection, and spiritual direction), and demonstrates knowledge of societal and cultural trends that can inform the church's vision and sense of purpose.
- ... displays leadership skills.

THE LWL ENTRANCE PROCESS

Entrance into the LWL Program will be determined after consideration of the following:

- Ideally, the applicant attends a **Region 6 spiritual discernment retreat** (offered every spring and fall) prior to applying for the LWL program. There may be circumstances where doing so would interfere with starting the program. Be sure to discuss this matter with the Director of the Leadership Academy before deciding when you hope to start the program.
- The applicant must submit the **application documents** (i.e., application, application information form, and essays) to the Director of the Synod's Leadership Academy. This information includes evidence of active membership in an ELCA congregation for a minimum of one year, during which the applicant has demonstrated appropriate leadership.
- **Two letters of recommendation** (from non-family members) are to be submitted by the recommenders directly to the Director of the Leadership Academy using the form provided. *At least one recommendation must come from an ELCA pastor.*
- The applicant applies for **background checks** (see below for the process).
- The applicant will **be interviewed** by the Director of the Leadership Academy.
- Please note that entrance to and completion of the program is not a guarantee of certification.

BACKGROUND CHECK

Potential Lay Worship Leaders will be leading holy communities in worship and will be the visible leadership and representatives of the ELCA. They will be charged with spiritual leadership of potentially vulnerable individuals. Therefore, background checks for criminal and/or abusive activity

will be undertaken to ensure transparency. Believing in the forgiving and restoring mission of Jesus, it is important to note that former criminal conviction is not automatically disqualifying.

Please note that these checks are only viewed by necessary Synod staff. The results should be sent directly to Dr. Lynn Nakamura at the Southern Ohio Synod, 9200 Worthington Road, Suite 140, Westerville, OH 43082. The applicant is responsible for these expenses.

1. FBI – This check is only required if you have been a resident of Ohio for fewer than 5 years.
 - a. If you need this check, it would be best that you choose a location that will do both the BCI and the FBI checks.
 - b. You should also inquire ahead of time about the cost and form of payment that will be accepted.

2. Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) – Go to <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Business/Services-for-Business/WebCheck/Webcheck-Community-Listing>, and locate a convenient organization or agency where you can be electronically fingerprinted. Use search by county or by zip code tool.
 - a. If an agency code is required, use: **IA Boo2**. If an Ohio Revised Code section number is required, use: **NO ORC** (and as the description, write: **CLERGY**).
 - b. The cost for this usually runs between \$30-\$40, depending on the location. We suggest you contact your location prior to visiting to confirm the cost and method of payment they will accept. Some may not accept personal checks or cash.

MENTOR

Potential Lay Worship Leaders will be assigned to a mentor who is a rostered minister in the ELCA. Typically, the mentor will be one of the recommenders of the candidate.

The mentor has several responsibilities:

- Confer with the Director of the Leadership Academy to help the synod discern if/when the lay worship leader candidate is ready to lead Christian communities in worship,
- Meet with the candidate and later the LWL at least twice a year to help the LWL reflect on growth, improvement, and any issues that need to be addressed,
- Update the Director of the Leadership Academy on the growth of the LWL and areas for development.

ON-GOING ACCOUNTABILITY

1. At least twice a year, LWLs will meet with their Lay Worship mentor who will help the LWL reflect on growth, improvement, and any issues that need to be addressed.
2. LWLs are to lead worship at least three times a year.
3. LWL's will ensure that the Director of the Synod's Leadership Academy receives at least six evaluations of their worship leadership per year (usually two evaluations from three different worship occasions spaced throughout the year).

CONTINUING EDUCATION

LWLs will be expected and invited to participate in at least 10 hours of ongoing education and enrichment opportunities each year. In addition, LWLs will participate in a boundaries workshop every three years, as do rostered leaders.

DISCIPLINE

Authorized lay leaders hold a unique and important public position and responsibility in the Southern Ohio Synod and the church at large. This position should never be taken lightly. Failure to function appropriately as an authorized lay leader shall result in immediate discipline through the Office of the Bishop and may include termination of authorization and removal from the roll of authorized lay leaders of this synod. Questionable or inappropriate behavior on the part of an authorized lay leader shall be reported to the office of the bishop immediately.

MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION

Recertification as a Lay Worship Leader is dependent on participation in continuing education, as described under "On-Going Accountability," above. In addition, it is expected that every 2 years, each LWL will meet with the Director of the Leadership Academy or the Director of Candidacy for discussion. Topics will include: How pulpit supply has gone during the preceding years, areas of need for further study, and interest and fit of the LWL in the Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) program.

FINAL PROCESS

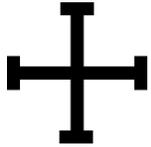
Following the successful completion of the coursework, the process culminates as follows:

1. Final Interview: Potential LWLs will interview with both the Director of the Leadership Academy, the Director of Candidacy, and the Bishop.
2. After a positive interview and following certification by Synod Council, the LWLs will be added to the pulpit supply list.
3. At the next synod assembly, LWLs will be recognized by the assembly and will receive a certificate.

Currently Serving LWLs

Lay Worship Leaders currently serving on the Synod pulpit supply list who wish to remain on the list are invited to apply for the new LWL program and to participate fully in that program. During the program, students will remain on the supply list. Those who successfully complete the coursework within 18 months of the inauguration of the new LWL Program will be eligible for reapproval by the Bishop and recertification by Synod Council for continuing service on the list.

As an alternative path for ongoing service, current Lay Worship Leaders may instead apply for the SAM program. During participation in this program, students will remain on the supply list. Successful completion of the first year of this program will make students eligible for reapproval by the Bishop and recertification by Synod Council for continuing service as Lay Worship Leaders until the entire SAM program is completed.



SYNOD AUTHORIZED MINISTER (SAM) PROGRAM

SAM PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) Program of the Southern Ohio Synod forms, evaluates, and prepares candidates to be certified and sent into ministry to meet congregational needs for worship and pastoral leadership in situations where the placement of ministers of word and sacrament is impractical or where pastors are not readily available.

SAM PROGRAM GOALS

Year 1 – (Lay Worship Leader)

Students will be able to...

1. Bear witness to an active faith life and commitment to Christ.
2. Demonstrate a basic ability to interpret the Bible.
3. Begin to articulate a greater awareness of who they are and the unique gifts and challenges they bring to ministry.
4. Craft and preach a sermon that is faithful to the biblical text and reflects Lutheran theology.
5. Communicate more effectively both orally and in writing.
6. Lead various types of worship services that are consistent with the Gospel and Lutheran theology.
7. Distinguish Lutheran theology and practice from other common theologies and practices.

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Year 2 – Synod Authorized Ministers

Building upon the LWL competencies, SAM students will additionally be able to ...

8. Demonstrate a deeper spiritual awareness along with an ability to listen and to provide care and concern for others.
9. Develop and lead effective learning experiences for diverse congregational groups.
10. Exhibit an insight and curiosity about life and ministry along with an ability to solve problems.
11. Identify and gather appropriate resources for ministry and utilize them in congregational leadership.
12. Demonstrate a fundamental knowledge and appreciation of the ELCA as one church in three expressions— congregation, synod, and churchwide organization—that work together for the sake of mission.

GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

The SAM program is designed as a two-year program. Successfully completing the first year, being approved by the Bishop, and receiving certification by Synod Council, will result in students becoming **Lay Worship Leaders (LWLs)** who are expected to serve as worship leaders in the Synod as described above in the LWL section of this manual.

After successful completion of the second year of study and upon the Bishop's approval and appointment to a congregation (as well as certification by Synod Council), the candidate becomes a SAM. The SAM may serve as a stated supply or in an interim role thus serving a congregation as its most visible source of pastoral ministry. SAMs will receive support from a mentor pastor and oversight from a rostered minister appointed by the Bishop.

A recognized SAM:

- Agrees to live in accordance with the values stated in the ELCA document "[Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.](#)"
- Grows in faith and knowledge through continuing education consisting of a minimum of 12 contact hours per year and provides certification to the synod office.
- Is active in the congregational life of his/her home congregation when not assigned elsewhere.
- Serves in the home congregation at the discretion of the Bishop.
- Displays evidence of mature Christian faith and commitment to Christ.
- Displays knowledge in and acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church.
- Is aware of, and maintains, the distinction between ordained clergy and a recognized SAM.
- Is diligent in educating others concerning the distinction of various leadership roles and titles.

- Works to promote harmony and unity among ELCA congregations and the Christian Church as a whole.
- Promotes the initiatives of the ELCA and Southern Ohio Synod.

Additionally, when appointed to interim service by the Bishop, a SAM will attend to...

- congregational matters –
 - provides regular worship opportunities for the congregation, including the administration of the sacraments,
 - provides pastoral care for the congregation’s members,
 - provides for confirmation instruction,
 - attends congregation council meetings,
 - presides at funeral services within the congregation,
 - assists the congregation in developing leadership from within its membership,
 - installs congregational members serving in a leadership capacity,
 - provides ill and home-bound visitation and communion,
 - provides a yearly report of ministry activities and congregational health to the Bishop;
- personal activities –
 - seeks, identifies, and utilizes sources of support in their ministry,
 - has regular conversations with their supervising/consulting pastor,
 - keeps the supervising/consulting pastor and/or synod office aware of any concerns involving the congregation;
- when leaving a congregation –
 - when the assignment to serve a particular congregation has concluded, the SAM must adhere to accepted policy concerning leaving a congregation. The SAM must not interfere with or complicate the new ministry of the incoming leader of the congregation.

While the Synod Authorized Minister provides some aspects of pastoral ministry, a SAM is not a pastor. Therefore, a SAM will not:

- be addressed as “pastor” or “deacon” in person or in print,
- provide pastoral counseling without appropriate counseling credentials and the prior consent of the Bishop while serving as a SAM,
- wear clerical attire (i.e., stole or clergy shirt),
- officiate at weddings.

SAM PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The SAM Program has been developed with the goal of strengthening discipleship through theological education, training, and spiritual formation. Persons completing this program, approved by the Bishop, and certified by Synod Council will supplement available rostered ministers by serving as non-rostered lay minister. In addition to worship leadership, SAMs will provide limited pastoral services when ordained leadership is not available or otherwise not practical. SAMs will serve regularly in one congregation, preaching weekly, and providing additional leadership as agreed upon/contracted between the congregation, SAM, and Synod.

The SAM program is committed to providing opportunities for challenging and enriching study as well as practical application of the Word of God as it speaks to our times. Participants are expected to undertake robust preparation in biblical studies, church history, systematic and biblical theology, religious pedagogies, ecumenical dialogue, worship, congregational administration, pastoral care, and church leadership. Potential SAMs will undertake training with the direct supervision and support of a mentor whose role is to help connect learning and training to service to Christ's Church and God's people. All preparation is grounded in the evangelical Lutheran tradition, nourishing the life of the whole Church through the gracious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As a rule, persons who wish to serve as SAMs will first become Lay Worship Leaders (LWLs). The first part of the SAM program will prepare them to do so. Once certified as an LWL, the SAM student will begin to serve as a synod supply preacher in order to gain experience. The second part of training and formation will build upon the first, with more content relevant to preaching, worship, and other areas of practical ministry (See [The Curriculum in Outline](#), below).

EDUCATIONAL FORMATION

The Synod Authorized Ministry Program typically requires a two-year program of study. These will be taught by seminary professors or teaching theologians with expertise in the specific field being taught.

SAM CURRICULUM IN OUTLINE

Year 1 – Successful completion of these courses will qualify a student to be a LWL – Serving as a LWL is a requirement for SAM certification.

LWL Courses	
Spirituality & Prayer Liturgical Practices & Leadership Lutheran Theology & Practice Preaching 1	New Testament 1 Hebrew Bible 1 Healthy Leadership/Interpersonal Skills

Year 2

SAM Courses	
Church History Christian Education Preaching 2 Pastoral Care Administration	Lutheran Confessions New Testament 2 Hebrew Bible 2 Worship Design Engaging the Context

Classes will be held monthly, generally on the third Friday-Saturday of the month (Check the schedule to be certain.). Each course will meet for a minimum of roughly 10 contact hours. Students will be expected to complete both preparatory and concluding work.

Most courses are expected to meet in person at locations to be announced. Courses that meet on Friday evenings will be held via Zoom with in-person sessions on Saturday.

Students will be graded as *Competent or Not Yet Competent*. Successfully completing a class means a student has received a *Competent* final grade. The course must be repeated if a student does not complete a course successfully.

COST

The first year of the SAM program is the LWL program for which the tuition is \$1000. The second year of training for SAM students is an additional \$1600 tuition. These fees help cover the costs of the preliminary evaluation, instructors, administration, program infrastructure, final evaluations, and certifying readiness for service as a SAM. SAM Tuition may be paid at the beginning of the second year of study or in installments of \$160 per course. If necessary, other plans may be arranged with the director of the program.

If a student desires simply to review a course, the fee will be \$50.

In addition to the cost of tuition are additional expenses relating to program application and courses that are to be paid at the point of service. They are:

1. background check(s),
2. psychological evaluation,
3. textbooks and resources (to be acquired by the student), and
4. travel expenses.

While application, course, and program costs are the responsibility of the individual, congregations are encouraged to offer full or partial scholarships for individuals studying to become a Synod Authorized Minister.

ACCOUNTABILITY

COMPETENCIES FOR ENTRANCE

Potential SAMs will demonstrate the competencies of candidates listed in the ELCA candidacy manual, namely: A potential SAM ...

- ... is rooted in the presence and activity of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ... actively participates in God's mission as a part of the church.
- ... cultivates vision and purpose through participation in the use of spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, biblical and theological reflection, and spiritual direction), and demonstrates knowledge of societal and cultural trends that can inform the church's vision and sense of purpose.
- ... displays leadership skills

THE SAM ENTRANCE PROCESS

Entrance into the SAM Program will be determined after consideration of the following:

- Ideally, the applicant attends a **Region 6 spiritual discernment retreat** (offered every spring and fall) prior to applying for the LWL program. There may be circumstances where doing so would interfere with starting the program. Be sure to discuss this matter with the Director of the Leadership Academy before making a decision about when you hope to start the program.
- The applicant must submit the **application documents** (i.e., application, application information form, and essays) to the Director of the Synod's Leadership Academy. This information includes evidence of active membership in an ELCA congregation for a minimum of one year, during which the applicant has demonstrated appropriate leadership.¹
- **Two letters of recommendation** (from non-family members) using the form provided are to be submitted by the recommenders directly to the Director of the Leadership Academy. *At least one recommendation must come from the home pastor, or if there is no home pastor, another ELCA pastor who knows the applicant. Additionally, if there is no home pastor, the second recommendation must come from the congregation council.*
- The applicant applies for **background checks** (see below for process).
- The applicant will need to undergo a **psychological evaluation** through Midwest Ministry Development. Since this evaluation entails significant cost to the applicant, this evaluation may be postponed until February of the first year of training. A positive entrance decision will be

¹ The Bishop may approve an exception to this rule if the individual is a member of a full communion partner congregation or ordained in another tradition.

provisional until the report of the psychological evaluation is received and reviewed. In the event that the Bishop seeks to place a SAM candidate early, the evaluation may be required sooner.

- The applicant will **be interviewed** by either the Director of the Synod’s Leadership Academy, the Director of Candidacy, and/or the Bishop.
- Please note that entrance to and completion of the program is not a guarantee of certification.

BACKGROUND CHECK

Potential SAMs will be leading holy communities in worship and will be the visible leadership and representatives of the ELCA. They will be charged with spiritual leadership of potentially vulnerable individuals. Therefore, background checks for criminal and/or abusive activity will be undertaken to ensure transparency. Believing in the forgiving and restoring mission of Jesus, it is important to note that former criminal conviction is not automatically disqualifying.

Please note that these checks are only viewed by necessary Synod staff. *The results should be sent directly to Dr. Lynn Nakamura at Southern Ohio Synod, 9200 Worthington Road, Suite 140, Westerville, OH 43082, or emailed to leadershipacademy@southernohiosynod.org* <mailto:cdriver@southernohiosynod.org>. The applicant is responsible for these expenses.

1. FBI – This check is only required if you have been a resident of Ohio for fewer than 5 years.
 - a. If you need this check, it would be best that you choose a location that will do both the BCI and the FBI checks.
 - b. You should also inquire ahead of time about the cost and form of payment that will be accepted.
2. Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) – Go to <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Business/Services-for-Business/WebCheck/Webcheck-Community-Listing>, and locate a convenient organization or agency where you can be electronically fingerprinted. Use search by county or by zip code tool.
 - a. If an agency code is required, use: **IA Boo2**. If an Ohio Revised Code section number is required, use: **NO ORC** (and as the description, write **CLERGY**).
 - b. The cost for this usually runs between \$30-\$40, depending on the location. We suggest you contact your location prior to visiting to confirm the cost and method of payment they will accept. Some may not accept personal checks or cash.
3. Oxford Document background check – Go to www.oxforddoc.com.
 - a. Click on the section titled, “Candidate Registration.”
 - b. Enter Client #349.
 - c. Select Position Code 4.

- d. Complete the requested information.
- e. There is no cost to you for this check.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION.

For the well-being of potential SAMs and that of congregations that they would serve, a basic psychological assessment is required. Call **Midwest Ministry Development** to arrange a time for your psychological evaluation. Ask for the Synod Lay Program Assessments. Often Midwest schedules three or more months in advance, so we recommend that you **do this as soon as possible**. A brochure about Midwest is included at the end of this document. Their number in Columbus is (614) 442-8822. The \$400 cost is the responsibility of the applicant.

This report will only be viewed by necessary Synod staff. *It should be sent directly to Dr. Lynn Nakamura at Southern Ohio Synod, 9200 Worthington Road, Suite 140, Westerville, OH 43082.*

UPON ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM:

- A mentor pastor will be assigned. The choice of a mentor is the responsibility of the Synod. The mentor pastor may be a member of the student's home congregation, but outside pastors are encouraged to fulfill this important role.
- The student must enroll and complete the required course of study after consultation with the Director of the Synod's Leadership Academy.
- The time frame for the completion of the course of study is designated by the Synod. Normally, students must complete all requirements before placement, approval, and certification as a SAM. In certain circumstances, the Bishop may elect to place a SAM student prior to the completion of studies. In such cases the SAM serves while completing their work. Should the student not complete their requirements in the timeframe specified, the student should expect to have their certification revoked.
- The SAM designation remains only as long as the SAM is serving the particular assigned community. When the congregational placement concludes the SAM reverts to a LWL until the next placement.

MENTOR PASTOR

After a student is admitted to the SAM program, a mentor will be assigned.

- The SAM student will spend 1 – 2 hours with the mentor for an introductory interview. The purpose of the survey interview is for the mentor to become acquainted with the student at the beginning of the process so that ensuing growth and development can be determined.
- If the fit is suitable, the mentor will sign the covenant (provided under Forms, in this manual).
- Determine a timeline as to when and how often to meet. The mentor pastor(s) should provide updates twice a year to the Director of the Leadership Academy.

- The official role of the mentor pastor ends when the student completes the program, unless graduate and mentor wish to continue.

Mentor Pastor Duties

The duties of the mentor pastor include, but are not limited to the following areas:

- Meet with the student quarterly (12 to 15 hours a year).
- Interview the student on the content of each course after completion.
- Critique the preaching of one sermon or practice sermon.
- Get to know your student to provide meaningful feedback on strengths and growing edges.
- Provide an initial review of SAM policy and "[Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.](#)"

ON-GOING ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Upon appointment to a specific congregation, the SAM student/candidate becomes a SAM and the Bishop assigns a supervising pastor to the SAM. (See description of the supervising pastor role below.) SAMs are to be in regular communication with their supervising pastor.
2. Meet at least twice a year with the supervising pastor.
3. Submit the Annual Synod Authorized Minister Report on time.
4. Participate in continuing education as described below.
5. At least every other year and prior to the annual certification by Synod Council, a SAM will meet with the program Director and/or the Bishop for a conversation about how things are going and one's on-going discernment of call to ministry.

SUPERVISING PASTOR

The synod desires that a SAM be supported and given all the help and guidance necessary for success in ministry.

- The local ministerium of pastors will serve as support and resource for the SAM who is assigned duties in a congregation.
- The SAM may be in an interim role serving a congregation as its most visible source of ministry. A consulting or supervising pastor is a vital support person for a SAM serving in this manner. The Bishop will assign a supervising pastor to provide this support.

Supervising Pastor Duties

The duties of the supervising pastor begin when a SAM is placed. These include, but are not limited to the following areas:

- Serves, first and foremost, as a conduit of information between the SAM and the synod office, especially as a supervisor for the ministry of the SAM in the congregation.
- Provides oversight to ensure that the preaching and practices of the SAM are non-injurious and consistent with the theology and practices of the ELCA.
- Keeps an open line of communication with the SAM. Concerns about the ministry by the SAM are to be discussed first with the SAM directly and, if appropriate, then brought to the attention of the Director of Candidacy and Leadership and the Director of the Leadership Academy.
- Serves as support to the SAM, particularly in supplementing the SAM's educational program by offering invaluable lived experience of service to congregations.
- Advises the SAM on how they might handle difficult situations while recognizing that we each possess differing styles, gifts, and abilities.
- Helps a SAM to understand the distinction between rostered pastoral leadership and lay leadership, and to set ministry boundaries as appropriate.
- Encourages the SAM to reserve time for themselves and their families.
- Strives to maintain a line of communication with the SAM and the lay leadership of the congregation that the SAM is serving.

BOUNDARIES TRAINING

SAMs are expected to undergo boundaries training every 3 years.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

SAMs are expected to continue to grow in faith and knowledge by continuing their education, at a minimum of 12 contact hours per year (excluding boundaries training every three years). The Synod will provide courses for SAMs that build carefully on the content learned. Should a learner wish to have other courses count towards continuing education, this should be discussed with the Director of the Leadership Academy prior to taking such courses. Certification of course work should be provided to the synod office.

DISCIPLINE

Authorized lay leaders hold a unique and important public position and responsibility in the Southern Ohio Synod and the church at large. This position should never be taken lightly. Failure to function appropriately as an authorized lay leader shall result in immediate discipline through the Office of the Bishop and may include termination of authorization and removal from the roll of authorized lay leaders of this synod (See "[Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.](#)"). Questionable or inappropriate behavior on the part of an authorized lay leader shall be reported to the Office of the Bishop immediately.

MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION

Recertification as a Synod Authorized Minister is dependent on undergoing regular continuing education, as described above under "On-Going Accountability." In addition, it is expected that every 2 years, each SAM will meet with the Director of the Leadership Academy or the Director of Candidacy for discussion. Topics will include how ministry has gone during the preceding year, areas of need for further study, and interest and fit of the SAM for a seminary program.

COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM: RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION:

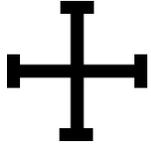
There is a distinction made between recognizing a person's completion of the Synod Authorized Minister Program and that of certifying a Synod Authorized Minister for service.

Individuals who have completed the Synod Authorized Minister Program of study will be *recognized* during worship at the annual Synod Assembly. Following approval of the Bishop, and appointment to a congregation, Synod Council will *certify* the appointed SAM for service. SAM status is valid only while under appointment. When an appointment concludes, the SAM reverts to a LWL.

Synod authorization of SAMs will extend for a period of one year. This status may be renewed annually when the Synod Authorized Minister Report is submitted to the Bishop and/or the Bishop meets with the SAM. Part of the yearly report/conversation will be a discussion of continuing education and/or the suitability of the SAM progressing toward rostered leadership.

If a SAM fails to complete the required continuing education or fails to submit the Synod Authorized Minister Report, they will be placed on probation for one year. To remove the probationary status, the SAM must complete the current continuing education and the missed continuing education, and the SAM must submit both the current report and the missing report.

If a SAM does not fulfill the above requirements within one year, they will be suspended as a Synod Authorized Minister. Reinstatement will be considered on a case-by-case basis upon application to the Bishop.



FORMS LIST

The following listing of forms are the ones you will need for applying to the program, as well as for various stages in and following the program. The entrance forms should be sent to you along with this manual and are available online on the [Synod website](#). These are fillable pdf forms. They are best completed using the free application Adobe Acrobat Reader. You may also print out the forms you need and complete them by hand.

Entrance Forms

- LWL-SAM Application Form
- LWL-SAM Application Information Form
- LWL-SAM Reference Form

Additional Forms

- Preaching Evaluation Form
- SAM Applicant - Initial Mentor Interview Report
- SAM Candidate - Mentor Agreement
- SAM Candidate - Final Mentor Report
- SAM- Annual Report including Continuing Education
- LWL- Annual Report including Continuing Education