

At their meeting over this past weekend, the [Conference of Bishops](#) decided to receive pastors on the [Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries](#) roster who were ordained “extra ordinem” and are serving ELCA congregations and related ministries. There are 17 such pastors who could apply for reception under this policy.

The bishops discussed the matter at length, reviewed a proposed rite, and came to a consensus that the pastors would be offered reception onto the roster of the ELCA. Their ordination would be recognized as valid. Recognition of their ministry could be included in the rite of reception. The rite of reception would parallel in some aspects the rite of ordination, but specifically not be an ordination.

In its official release yesterday, the ELCA said that this reception rite would use some “patterns and text” from ordination, and is intended for use with “individuals who have experienced an ordination that this church has not yet recognized,” quoting from the draft proposal, “Reception onto the Roster of Ordained Ministers.”

ELM pastors will have to fully meet the requirements necessary to gain approval by an official candidacy committee within a synod.

The draft proposal will now undergo an internal and external review, following which the members of the Conference of Bishops will be consulted about the final form before it is sent to the Church Council for its deliberation and action at its meeting in early April.

Emily Eastwood, Executive Director, LC/NA, said of this weekend’s actions, “This discussion has been ongoing since the spring of last year. Some ELCA leaders in our church leaned heavily toward requiring reordination for the seventeen. Others engaged the process of discernment within the conference of bishops and beyond with compelling witness of the ministries of these fine pastors. The discussion was heartfelt, spirited, Spirit-filled, and tuned to the intersection of the mission of the church, the healing power of reconciliation and the full-communion agreements of the church. Debate turned to possibility. Anxiety to reconciliation. Reordination to reception. I am thankful, pleased, and most of all relieved that the ministries of these fine pastors will finally be recognized and received by the ELCA. Our thanks to the Conference of Bishops for their careful process and for their willingness to engage those of us

most affected by their decision.”

[The full text of the ELCA’s announcement](#) is reproduced here:

## **ELCA Bishops Reach Consensus on ‘ELM’ Pastors, More Review Needed**

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ITASCA, Ill. (ELCA) — The Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reached a consensus March 8 on a draft proposal for a rite that would bring onto the church’s official clergy roster those pastors who were ordained and are on the clergy roster of “Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM).” ELM “expands ministry opportunities for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the Lutheran church,” according to its Web site.

The ELCA Conference of Bishops is an advisory body of the church, consisting of the ELCA’s 65 synod bishops plus the presiding bishop and ELCA secretary. It met here March 4-9.

The draft proposal, “Reception onto the Roster of Ordained Ministers,” recognizes and affirms the ministry of ELM pastors. It is not the rite of ordination, though it uses patterns and texts adapted from the authorized ELCA rite, including the laying on of hands and prayer by synod bishops. It is intended for use with “individuals who have experienced an ordination that this church has not yet recognized,” according to the draft.

The draft proposal will now undergo internal and external review, said the Rev. Robert G. Schaefer, executive for worship, ELCA Worship and Liturgical Resources. After review conference members will be consulted about final form before the proposed rite is sent to the ELCA Church Council for consideration, he said. The council, the ELCA’s board of directors and interim legislative authority between assemblies, could consider a final proposed rite at its meeting in Chicago next month.

Schaefer explained that such a rite would have a specific, restricted, limited use. The conference was told that there are 17 ELM pastors who could seek to be on the official ELCA clergy roster.

Under the draft proposal, ELM candidates would be received onto the roster of the ELCA after fulfillment of all requirements needed for approval by an official clergy candidacy committee within a synod, said the Rev. Margaret G. Payne, bishop of the ELCA New England Synod, Worcester, Mass. Candidacy committees help guide all clergy candidates on behalf of the ELCA from the time they consider a call to the ministry through their seminary years. Pastors who were not ordained in the ELCA also work with candidacy committees, though the process may be shorter.

"After formal approval these people would be received at a service of worship, (with) the laying on of hands and prayer by a synod bishop," Payne said on a behalf of a committee of bishops appointed to prepare the draft rite following a preliminary discussion by the conference March 6.

"All of us without exception felt it was utterly important and essential that there be the laying on of hands and prayer as a part of a rite," she explained. "We know there are some people who would like to use the word ordination — we are not saying the candidates will be ordained — but we are suggesting that we use words in the authorized rite that replicate the promises of ordination, and will in fact be words from the ordination rite."

The conference took up the ELM issue as part of its work following decisions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis. That assembly approved proposals that would create the possibility for Lutherans in committed, publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships to serve as ELCA clergy and professional lay leaders.

ELM pastors follow the same educational process and credentialing procedure that ELCA clergy follow. Many are serving congregations, anticipating the possibility of becoming ELCA pastors when the church changed its policies regarding professional service in the ELCA.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, recommended the draft proposal to his colleagues. He explained that the draft proposal needed to meet specific criteria. One was a desire for reconciliation with ELM pastors "who long to be fully recognized as ordained ministers

of the ELCA.” Another was that the draft proposal needed to be recognized by the Lutheran World Federation “as consistent with our understanding of ministry as we have understood it in the Lutheran confessions and history.” Third, he said it was important that the draft proposal honor the ELCA’s six full communion agreements.

The ELCA maintains full-communion agreements with the Episcopal Church, Moravian Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. Full-communion agreements provide for mutual recognition of each other’s ministries, provide for exchange of clergy in certain circumstances, and encourage sharing of ministries by the churches.