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Ministers of the Gospel Handbook

Approved by
Church of the Lutheran Brethren
Council of Directors
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This Handbook may only be amended by the CLB Council of Directors. Copies of this Handbook and any revisions to it shall be made available to all congregations and related ministries and to those who serve as Ministers of the Gospel.

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Preface

The call to serve Jesus Christ by proclaiming and teaching God's Word is a sacred calling. The Apostle Paul describes it as a noble task in his first letter to Timothy. We understand this calling to be from God because of His will and grace.

It is a gift of grace to the one called and a gift of grace to the people of God who shall be fed and nurtured in the Word of God. We believe the pastoral call from God is confirmed by the Church. We thank God for calling people to serve as Ministers of the Gospel.

Paul taught it should be a community that functions in good order. *But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way* (1 Corinthians 14:40). God's Word provides instructions for godly and peaceable living but He also directs us to conduct ourselves in an orderly manner in reverence to Him and love for each other. The *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook* contains processes this church has adopted to aid us in conducting these affairs *in a fitting and orderly way*.

The *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook* provides an historical background and states the approved policies that govern ordination, licensure, commissioning and colloquy for the Ministers of the Gospel roster of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB).

This revision of the *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook* applies Biblical teaching and our historical practices to the ministry. Previous editions were titled *The Pastoral Office Policies*. Because the Church is a living body, always encountering new situations, these policies are subject to periodic review and revision.

It is with gratitude for the work of the writing committee composed of Luther Larson (chairman), Eugene Boe, Brad Martinson, Matthew Rogness, and Tim Ysteboe that this revision is presented to the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. Brent Juliot served as final editor.

The Council of Directors of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren adopted these policies in humility before the Lord of the Church believing that they will serve the clergy, congregational leaders and the congregations in their ministry as the body of Christ working in good order.

From God, and to God, is all glory.

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Rev. Joel R. Egge, President
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Ministers of the Gospel Handbook

Church of the Lutheran Brethren

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Section One

Ministers of the Gospel Roster

The Ministers of the Gospel roster of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB) is a listing of all persons who serve as Ministers of the Gospel whether they are ordained, licensed or commissioned. These persons serve in many different capacities within the life of the church and its related ministries.

Minister of the Gospel is both a spiritual calling and a professional standing within the church. Those who are listed on this roster are recognized as qualified Ministers of the Gospel in the CLB.

The congregations and ministries of the CLB shall call its pastors, missionaries and commissioned workers from the Ministers of the Gospel Roster. The CLB Office of President shall maintain and publish annually, the Ministers of the Gospel roster. The Office of President is authorized to issue temporary roster status to qualified applicants as Ministers of the Gospel-Licensed.

The Theological Council is responsible for answering questions relative to the roster, reviewing the roster annually and making such recommendations as may be necessary to the Council of Directors. The individual affected by these recommendations has the right of appeal to the Council of Directors through the Theological Council.

Roster Classifications:

A. Ordained

OEM—Endorsed Ministries: serving in an endorsed ministry position (see notes below)

OM—Missionary: serving in a world mission assignment

OP—Parish Pastor: serving in parish ministry

OR—Retired: no longer serving in a called position

OSM—Synod Ministry: serving in a synod, Seminary, region, CLB subsidiary or CLB affiliate position

OT—Transition: between calls (see notes below)

1. Notes on Endorsed Ministries Classification

a. Types of Endorsed Ministries

1) Military Chaplaincy

- a) A Minister of the Gospel-Ordained serving in the military chaplaincy serves according to guidelines already established by the respective branches of the armed services.
- b) The military chaplaincy considers a chaplain to be a Minister of the Gospel-Ordained on special assignment and he is therefore accountable to his denomination.

2) Institutional Chaplaincy

- a) The chaplain shall request a letter of endorsement from the Office of President.
- b) He shall submit a job description of the proposed position indicating institutional expectations and accountability.

3) Evangelist

- a) The evangelist shall request a letter of endorsement from the Office of President.
- b) He shall provide a description of his ministry indicating whether or not he has a board to which he is accountable and what financial accountability structures are in place.

4) Para-Church Ministry

- a) The Minister of the Gospel-Ordained shall provide a job description of the proposed ministry, indicating organizational expectations and accountability.
 - b) He shall provide a statement of faith of the organization or provide a letter indicating that this organization's beliefs and values do not conflict with the CLB Statement of Faith.
- b. Requirements of Ministers of the Gospel serving in Endorsed Ministries
 - 1) A Minister of the Gospel-Ordained shall serve only in a ministry whose Statement of Faith is not in conflict with the CLB Statement of Faith.
 - 2) When a Minister of the Gospel-Ordained is called to serve in an endorsed ministry and desires to maintain his roster listing, he may seek and maintain endorsement for such service by following established policies stated in the Minister of the Gospel Handbook, Section One, Paragraph A.1.
 - 3) He shall maintain membership in a CLB congregation whether or not he is able to attend that church regularly.
 - 4) He shall file an Annual Ministry Report with the Office of President and other reports as may be required for the CLB roster listing.
 - 5) He shall, each fifth year (years ending in 0 and 5), sign the Statement of Faith indicating his adherence to the statement.
 - 6) He shall minister in harmony with his Lutheran Brethren ordination vows.
 - 7) He is accountable to the Endorsed Ministry and to the Office of President of the CLB.

2. Notes on Transition Classification

- a. When a Minister of the Gospel-Ordained leaves a called position for a non-disciplinary reason and remains open to call, he will be placed in the Transition category for a period of up to two years. This time period may be extended on a year by year basis when necessary, by the Office of the President.
- b. If he does not accept a call he will be removed from the roster and shall place his Ordination Certificate with the Office of President.
- c. If, at a later time, he seeks reinstatement for the purpose of resuming a called position, he shall file his request with the Office of President.
- d. His request for reinstatement shall be approved by the Theological Council prior to his becoming available for call. His reinstatement will be subject to his acceptance of an approved call.

B. Licensed

LP—Licensed Pastor: a seminary graduate serving in parish ministry

LLP—Licensed Lay Pastor: a lay person serving in a parish ministry

LS – Licensed Seminarian: a seminary student serving in parish ministry

1. Licensed Pastor

- a. He shall normally be a graduate of an approved seminary program who is now preparing for ordination.
- b. He serves in a called position where pastoral gifts are exercised. The holder of a license is accountable to the requirements incumbent with the office of pastor as stated in this handbook.
- c. The request for licensed status shall be made to the Office of President by the congregation or board under which the Licensed Pastor will serve. The President shall report to the Theological Council the names of those who are licensed.

d. This is an annual license that is subject to renewal.

2. Licensed Lay Pastor

- a. He shall demonstrate through his Christian service the gift of pastor and serve in a called position. The holder of a license is accountable to the requirements incumbent with the office of pastor as stated in this handbook.
- b. He shall avail himself of further education through programs approved by the Office of President being willing to enter a guided study program to enhance ministry skills and theological understanding and/or work towards ordination with the Church of the Lutheran Brethren
- c. The request for licensure shall be made to the Office of President by the congregation or CLB affiliated ministry under which the Licensed Lay Pastor will serve.
- d. He shall file an Annual Ministry Report with the Office of President. The Ministry Report shall identify any educational opportunities and in-service training opportunities that the candidate has completed in the past year.
- e. This is an annual license that is subject to renewal.

3. Licensed Seminarian

- a. The candidate shall be a student at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.
- b. The candidate shall be serving in a Seminary-approved assignment or congregational call under the supervision of a Seminary faculty member or mentorship of a regional pastor appointee.
- c. A letter of request for licensure shall originate with the congregation where the student is serving. This letter, together with a letter of approval from the Seminary Dean, wherein a supervising faculty member or a regional pastor appointee is identified, shall be submitted to the Office of the President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. The candidate shall prepare a Licensed Seminarian Resume obtained from the Office of President and submit with all accompanying documents to the Office of President.
- d. The license shall be issued annually and is contingent upon his continued enrollment at Lutheran Brethren Seminary and continuing service in the congregation that has requested his licensed status.
- e. The Licensed Seminarian shall meet with his supervising faculty member or regional pastor appointed mentor on a monthly basis. A brief report of that meeting shall be filed with the Office of the President.
- f. The licensed Seminarian shall adhere to the pastoral policies set forth in the Ministers of the Gospel Handbook.
- g. The Licensed Seminarian will be officially listed on the MOG pastoral listing and published in the annual CLB yearbook.

C. Commissioned

CCW—Commissioned Congregational Worker

CSW—Commissioned Synod Worker

CMW—Commissioned Missionary Worker

R—Retired

1. The Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned shall demonstrate through his/her Christian service the gifts necessary to serve in a called position.
2. He/she shall be called to serve in a specific ministry assignment and be installed at a public service.
3. He/she shall avail himself/herself of opportunities for further education through programs required and/or approved by the Supervising Subcommittee of the Theological Council.

4. The request for commissioning shall be made by the congregation or CLB affiliated ministry to the Office of President. The President shall report to the Theological Council those who have been approved for commissioning.

D. Surviving Spouses

The Minister of the Gospel roster includes the names and addresses of surviving unmarried spouses of Ministers of the Gospel-Ordained.

Section Two

Ministers of the Gospel-Ordained and Licensed: Process and Procedure

The pastoral ministry is a sacred calling. In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul describes the ministry as a noble task. As a church we thank God for calling faithful men to serve his people.

To establish and safeguard the integrity of the office of pastor, the church must set policies that establish basic requirements for those who serve in the pastoral office and set boundaries for good relationships. Good policies create freedom and trust. Just as traffic laws protect a major city from total chaos, good policies free us to minister amid the hundreds of human interactions that constitute life in a living congregation.

The policies extend to good relationships in the family of congregations we call the Synod or denomination. The word “synod” comes from the Greek language and means “a walking together.” By having sound policies for our partnership in the Gospel, we can also maintain right relationships, not only between a single pastor and his congregation, but among the successive pastors that serve a congregation and the pastors and people of other congregations that walk together in Christian unity and purpose.

Let us all pray that God will move in our hearts by His Spirit to give us a spirit of faithfulness to His calling and love for each other so that our service to Him and to the world will show forth His glory.

A. Ordination

1. History

Ordination is the term for the church setting apart and putting into ministry one whom God has called. God’s call has two dimensions: the congregational confirmation of one’s gifts, expressed through the external call, and one’s personal or inner call to ministry. The Lutheran Encyclopedia states, “It commits to the ordained that office of public ministry of Word and Sacrament which belongs to the whole church. It pledges him to faithful service in that office. It invokes the Holy Spirit upon him and his work.” Ordination, however, is not a sacrament conveying God’s grace. Neither is ordination to be thought of as an earned degree. It is rather an authorization by the church, in view of that calling and giftedness, to serve in a called ministry position.

The practice of the laying on of hands has roots in the Old Testament where, for example, Moses laid hands on his successor, Joshua. The laying on of hands was received by the Levites as well. In the New Testament we find Jesus and the apostles laying on hands in healing and blessing. Peter and John placed their hands on the Samaritans, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17). The seven deacons, lay workers, were commissioned with the laying on of hands (Acts 7). And Timothy, Paul’s protégé, was ordained through the laying on of hands. “Do not neglect your gift which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Timothy 4:14).

Martin Luther in 1537 ordained Benedict Schumann at Naumberg and then addressed him as follows: “My dear Brother Benedict, you have been appointed by God to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ at Naumberg, in order to further His holy name with the pure doctrine of the gospel. To this task we call and send you in the power of God, just as God has sent us. Therefore be earnestly vigilant, be industrious, pray God to sustain you in this high calling, so that you may not fall away because of false doctrine, heresy, sects or because of your own notions, but that you may begin your ministry in the fear of God, in faithful industry, in constant prayer, and may discharge it properly in Christ.”

2. The Theological Council

The Theological Council consists of the Regional Pastors, the Director of International Mission, two of the ordained lay members of the Council of Directors selected annually by the Council of Directors, the President of the Lutheran Brethren Seminary, one member of the Seminary faculty (selected annually by the Seminary faculty), and the Synodical President as stated in the CLB Constitution.

- a. The Theological Council shall examine candidates for ordination who have a permanent call in the CLB or are seeking to be placed on the CLB available-for-call list to ascertain that:
 - 1) The candidate truly confesses Jesus Christ as Lord.
 - 2) The candidate's life and ministry give evidence of his faith, love for Christ and His church, gifts for ministry, and a divine calling to ministry.
 - 3) The candidate is in harmony with the doctrines and practices of the CLB.
 - b. The Theological Council shall examine ordained men of other denominations who seek affiliation with the CLB. This examination shall seek to ascertain that:
 - 1) The candidate truly confesses Jesus Christ as Lord.
 - 2) The candidate's life and ministry give evidence of his faith, love for Christ and His church, gifts for ministry, and a divine calling to ministry.
 - 3) The candidate is in harmony with the doctrines and practices of the CLB.
 - c. The Theological Council shall examine and recommend appropriate disciplinary action to the Council of Directors when an ordained clergyman has violated the ordination vow. Cases for possible disciplinary action will come to the Theological Council through the Office of President.
 - d. The Theological Council may also serve in an advisory capacity to the President and to pastors when the question is raised as to the advisability of a pastor continuing in the office of pastor even though there may be no violation of the ordination vow. The Theological Council may advise out-placement.
 - e. The Theological Council has two sub-committees: the Supervising Subcommittee, which oversees the licensing and colloquy process; and the Supervision Sub-committee, which oversees the commissioning process.
3. The Ordination Process
- a. When the pastoral candidate who is participating in the Pastoral Candidate Program (a synodical mentoring program for the first-year pastor) has a permanent call and has served in that position for a minimum of six months, the elder board of his congregation or the CLB affiliated ministry under which he may be serving shall initiate the ordination process by making request for ordination in writing to the CLB President.
 - b. The Office of President will initiate the following:
 - 1) The Office of President shall conduct background checks for all candidates for ordination.
 - 2) The candidate will be sent the Doctrinal and Ministerial Questionnaire to be filled out and returned.
 - 3) The board of elders or the CLB affiliated ministry shall give a written evaluation of the candidate as to his readiness for ordination. The Office of President will provide guidelines for the evaluation process.
 - 4) The candidate shall fill out the pastoral resumé to be filed with the Office of President.
 - 5) After all reports are received by the Office of President, the candidate shall be notified of upcoming Theological Council meetings and be assigned a time for his interview.
 - 6) Each member of the Theological Council shall be provided with a copy of the candidate's answers to the Doctrinal and Ministerial Questionnaire, resumé, elder board or CLB affiliated ministry evaluation, seminary faculty evaluation, and a report from the Pastoral Candidate Program director/mentor.

- 7) After the interview, Theological Council shall make its recommendation to the Council of Directors for approval. The decision of the Theological Council and the Council of Directors shall be reported to the candidate through the Office of President.
 - a) If approved, the candidate will be given guidelines for planning the ordination date and service.
 - b) If not approved, the candidate shall be informed as to the reasons and what remedial steps may be taken, if any.
 - c) If the candidate is approved subject to doing additional work, that work and the person to whom he is accountable shall be clearly specified.

B. Colloquy

The term “colloquy” literally means “a formal conversation or dialogue.” We are using this term for the process of receiving an ordained clergyman from another fellowship or denomination into the Ministers of the Gospel roster and for receiving a graduate of a seminary other than Lutheran Brethren Seminary for ordination as a Minister of the Gospel.

If a congregation or CLB affiliated ministry desires to call a pastor who is not on the CLB Ministers of the Gospel roster, the congregation or board, in consultation with the Office of President, shall request the proposed pastoral candidate to initiate the colloquy process in accordance with the procedures outlined below. The congregation or board should not initiate a pastoral call before the Office of President and the Theological Council have approved the candidate for call.

When one of these persons wishes to seek clergy affiliation or ordination with the CLB, he shall follow these procedures:

1. The interested person shall secure a Colloquy Candidate Application from the Office of President and submit it and all accompanying documents to the Office of President.
2. The Certification Subcommittee (consisting of the CLB President and three members of the Theological Council) shall review the application, including academic transcripts, resumé, background check, letters of reference, additional coursework and any other documentation deemed necessary. With Subcommittee approval the process moves to the next step.
3. The Synodical President or his appointed representative shall arrange for a personal interview with the candidate.
4. With the President’s recommendation the candidate will be scheduled for fitness for ministry assessment as established by the Theological Council.
5. The Doctrinal and Ministerial Questionnaire shall be completed and filed with the Office of President.
6. The candidate shall be interviewed by the Theological Council.
7. Upon tentative approval from the Theological Council, the candidate who does not have a call will be placed upon the available-for-call list. The colloquy process proceeds from this point only on the basis of a call to serve a congregation and the candidates’ agreement to complete any coursework assigned by the Certification Sub-committee.
8. When a call is extended by a Lutheran Brethren congregation, a CLB affiliated ministry, or a CLB affiliate congregation and is accepted by the colloquy candidate, the candidate will be assigned a mentor pastor for a period of one year. The purpose of this mentor relationship shall be to provide a planned program of incorporation, fellowship, and encouragement for the new pastor. The colloquy candidate shall serve as a Licensed Pastor until final approval.
9. Upon the successful completion of the one year mentor program and upon the recommendation of the mentor, the ordained candidate will meet with the Theological Council for recommendation to the Council of Directors for final approval as a member of the CLB Ministers of the Gospel roster. In the case of an unordained colloquy candidate, his employing congregation or CLB

affiliated ministry may request his ordination. The Theological Council will meet with the candidate again, will hear reports on his colloquy mentoring year, and will make a recommendation to the Council of Directors.

C. Licensure

1. CLB Seminary Graduates

Within the CLB, Lutheran Brethren Seminary graduates serve in their initial calling assignment for approximately one year before they are eligible for ordination. During this initial year of pastoral work each graduate is assigned a mentor. Together they work through the Pastoral Candidate Program, which is designed to assist in the transition from the classroom to the parish setting.

The ordination process is initiated by the board of elders of the church where the candidate is serving. The board of elders will make a request for ordination of the pastoral candidate to the Office of President as set forth in this Handbook, Section Two, Paragraph A.3.

In order that the pastoral candidate may serve in all the aspects of the pastoral office, such as officiating marriage ceremonies, the Office of President will license the candidate as a Minister of the Gospel-Licensed.

2. Laymen

The CLB recognizes and encourages the use of spiritual gifts by the laity. We believe that God may call gifted laymen to serve in the pastoral office. These are men who have demonstrated their giftedness in ministry but are not seminary graduates. In order that a gifted layman, when serving in a pastoral position, may carry out all the functions of the pastoral office and be officially recognized through listing on the CLB Ministers of the Gospel roster, he will be designated as a Minister of the Gospel-Licensed Lay Pastor. The Office of President will issue this license on an annual basis. The criteria for the Licensed Lay Pastor are set forth in this Handbook, Section One, Paragraph B.2.

A congregation should not initiate a pastoral call to a layman before the Office of President and the Theological Council have approved the candidate for call. The candidate, along with the interested congregation, shall proceed in the following manner:

- a. The candidate shall secure a Licensed Lay Pastor Candidate Application from the Office of President and submit it and all accompanying documents to the Office of President. The application should include a letter from the person's elder board affirming the candidate's pastoral giftings.
- b. The Certification Subcommittee of the Theological Council will review the application and its accompanying documents and make a recommendation to the Office of President.
- c. The President or his representative will schedule an interview with the candidate.
- d. With the President's recommendation the candidate will be scheduled for fitness for ministry assessment as established by the Theological Council.
- e. Upon receiving a positive assessment, the candidate will fill out a Doctrinal and Ministerial Questionnaire and be scheduled for an interview with the Certification Subcommittee (or the Theological Council).
- f. Following a successful interview the Certification Subcommittee shall together with the candidate develop an In-Service Educational Plan.
- g. The candidate will then be declared available for call.
- h. Upon acceptance of a call the agreed-upon plan goes into effect and the candidate is assigned a mentor to work with him.

- i. The Office of President will issue him a license as a Licensed Lay Pastor. This license is issued on an annual basis.

3. Licensed Seminarian

- a. The candidate shall be a student at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.
- b. The candidate shall be serving in a Seminary-approved assignment or congregational call under the supervision of a Seminary faculty member or mentorship of a regional pastor appointee.
- c. A letter of request for licensure shall originate with the congregation where the student is serving. This letter, together with a letter of approval from the Seminary Dean, wherein a supervising faculty member or a regional pastor appointee is identified, shall be submitted to the Office of the President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. The candidate shall prepare a Licensed Seminarian Resume obtained from the Office of President and submit with all accompanying documents to the Office of President.
- d. The license shall be issued annually and is contingent upon his continued enrollment at Lutheran Brethren Seminary and continuing service in the congregation that has requested his licensed status.
- e. The Licensed Seminarian shall meet with his supervising faculty member or regional pastor appointed mentor on a monthly basis. A brief report of that meeting shall be filed with the Office of the President.
- f. The licensed Seminarian shall adhere to the pastoral policies set forth in the *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook*.
- g. The Licensed Seminarian will be officially listed on the MOG pastoral listing and published in the annual CLB yearbook.

D. Discipline, Transfer and Restoration

1. Allegations of behavior in violation of the pastoral office shall be reported to the Office of President. (See *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook* Section Three, Paragraph A, Requirements of a Pastor, and Paragraph C, Ethics for the Pastoral Office). The Office of President shall have as a consulting resource the Council of Directors' Pastoral Care and Discipline Committee. The President shall appoint two pastors and one elder to serve as the Pastoral Care and Discipline Committee. The Committee shall serve in a resource and advisory capacity to the President to assist him, as needed, in handling pastoral care and discipline situations. Appointments to the Committee shall be made annually and approved by the Council of Directors.
2. If the allegations against a pastor are deemed substantial, they shall be referred to the Council of Directors executive board, and if necessary to the Theological Council for recommendation to the full Council of Directors. All procedures shall follow in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20.
3. If the allegations result in the Council of Directors placing a pastor under discipline, the discipline shall be supervised by the Office of President together with the Pastoral Care and Discipline Committee, or as designated by the Council of Directors. All matters relative to clergy status shall be under the ultimate control of the Council of Directors, but as much as possible, the spiritual discipline and restoration process shall be referred to the local congregation to which the pastor belongs, or to a congregation approved by the Council of Directors.
4. The Council of Directors may request the return of the ordination certificate or license:
 - a. For violation of ordination vows or license agreement.
 - b. Upon transfer to a secular vocation.
 - c. Upon transfer to another denomination, except where such a transfer is arranged by mutual agreement.
5. If the offending Minister of the Gospel-Ordained or Licensed does not cooperate in returning the ordination certificate/license, the Council of Directors may declare the certificate/license to be null and void and may publish this information to concerned offices and communities. The ordination certificate/license is an official document of the CLB issued at the time of

ordination/licensing by the Office of President. It is an expression of an agreement to work together in accordance with the established policies of the pastoral office within the CLB.

6. If a Minister of the Gospel-Ordained or Licensed is no longer in harmony with the doctrine and practices of the CLB and if efforts to resolve the difference have not been successful, he shall be removed from the Ministers of the Gospel roster by the President upon the decision of the Council of Directors. The ordination certificate or license shall be returned to the Office of President. If the pastor affiliates with another denomination, the ordination certificate may be transferred.
7. In cases of discipline that warrant such action, the President may ask the pastor involved for a letter of immediate resignation from his current ministry assignment and for his ordination certificate/license. All such actions shall be reported to the Theological Council and to the Council of Directors.
8. The Office of President together with the Pastoral Care and Discipline Committee shall make arrangements in so far as possible for ongoing spiritual care and possible counseling for the pastor and his wife and family. When possible, the Office of President shall arrange for spiritual care and accountability for the pastor under discipline and his family with the pastor and elders of a local church (Lutheran Brethren, if possible) in the community where they will reside. The objective shall be Biblical repentance and spiritual restoration. Public exercising of spiritual gifts within the congregation will be at the discretion of the elders.
9. When the pastor under discipline gives evidence of Biblical repentance and spiritual restoration, he and the elder board to whom he is accountable may consult with the Theological Council about restoration to ordained roster status. With the approval of the Theological Council and the Council of Directors, the pastor may be placed on the available-for-call list. Ordination status will be restored upon his acceptance of a call.

Section Three

Ministers of the Gospel—Ordained and Licensed: Requirements, Support and Ethics

A. Requirements of a Pastor

1. Every pastor in the CLB shall confess personal faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. This confession will express itself in a circumspect walk before God and man.
2. He shall consider himself a servant of God and of the Church of Jesus Christ.
3. He shall confess the Statement of Faith as his belief and subscribe to and follow the Constitution of the CLB. He shall adhere to the written practices and polity of the denomination.
4. He shall seek to work in harmony with the constitution of the congregation he serves as well as with all officials of the synod and of the congregation.
5. He shall follow the special service rituals provided in the *Ministerial Acts of the CLB*.
6. He shall faithfully discharge the duties outlined for him in his letter of call from the congregation or CLB affiliated ministry.
7. He shall become a Minister of the Gospel-Ordained or Licensed through one of the processes given in Handbook Section Two.
8. He shall seek to encourage a healthy and vital spiritual emphasis in the life of the congregation. He shall do this in the public services of the congregation as well as in the other activities which the congregation sponsors.
9. He shall endeavor through his teaching and example to lead the congregation to spiritual maturity by equipping the saints for the works of service as outlined in Ephesians 4:11-16.
10. He shall cultivate a warm working relationship with his congregation, especially members of the elected boards. He shall understand that the board of elders, with whom he works most closely, are the spiritual leaders of the congregation and are also his spiritual stronghold as he faithfully discharges his duties. When a pastor serves under a CLB affiliated ministry, he shall exhibit the same attitude to this group and recognize his accountability to them.
11. He shall seek to fulfill the pastoral duties described in his letter of call.
12. He should seek to establish good relations with community leaders and be involved in community affairs to the degree he has the time and inclination to do so. He should have the elder board's approval before becoming involved in specific community service.

B. Support for the Pastoral Office

1. Pastoral Support
 - a. The heritage of the CLB belongs to all of its pastors. The congregations and various other ministry networks of the CLB shall seek to encourage and strengthen its pastors through the fellowship of believers, brotherly love, enrichment programs and prayer. In addition, every pastor shall be assured that the Council of Directors and the regional officers shall by prayer, personal support and counsel assist him in being an able servant and minister of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The pastor shall be allowed four vacation weeks a year with salary. The pastor shall also be allowed up to two additional weeks to speak at other churches or camps or to attend pastoral enrichment programs. These activities shall be scheduled in consultation with the board of elders or CLB affiliated ministry.
 - c. Churches are encouraged to grant their pastor, after five to seven years of service, a paid sabbatical of at least three months.
 - d. The pastor's attendance at the Biennial and Regional Conventions of the CLB shall be encouraged, with financial assistance and pulpit supply provided by the congregation or CLB affiliated ministry.
2. Letter of Call

The letter of call shall stipulate the following information (see also the publication *The Pastoral Calling Process*, available from the Office of President):

- a. The calling assignment and expectations of the pastor.
- b. The details of the financial support and benefit package.
- c. A statement including the congregation's or CLB affiliated ministry's assurances of prayer support, goodwill and encouragement.

3. Pension Plan

Every full-time Lutheran Brethren pastor shall participate in the benefits of the synodical pension plan in accordance with the provisions of the plan. Pastors serving in Canada may participate in a Canadian plan per guidelines of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Canada. If a congregation incurs difficulty making the benefit payment, they are urged to discuss their problem with the synodical financial office. In most cases a congregation's inability to make pension contributions for a qualified pastor should not adversely effect his pension participation.

4. Housing Allowance

Congregations traditionally provide a parsonage for the pastor. When a parsonage is not available, a housing allowance sufficient to cover the costs of rental is provided, or the pastor may apply the housing allowance toward purchasing his own home. Canadian and United States tax codes allow a portion of the pastor's salary to be designated as a tax exempt housing allowance. The pastor and congregation should consult a tax advisor concerning current regulations governing housing allowances. This allowance applies to both ordained and licensed pastors. It may also apply to Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned. (See Section Four, paragraph C.)

5. Financial Arrangements

The congregation shall do all in its power to provide the pastor with adequate financial support and benefits. Both the pastor and the congregation shall strive to maintain open communication concerning financial issues so as not to hinder the spirit and effectiveness of congregational ministry or the welfare of the pastor and his family. The financial support package shall be reviewed annually. When a pastor must seek employment outside the church in order to provide adequate support for his family he shall do this in consultation with the responsible boards. Together they shall make any necessary adjustments in ministry expectations. As 1 Timothy 5:18 states, "...The worker deserves his wages."

6. In the Event of the Death of a Pastor

In the event a pastor dies while serving a congregation, that congregation shall make every effort to provide the surviving family with salary and housing, either in the parsonage or in some other location, for a period of three to six months.

7. The Pastor and a Multiple Staff

Where a congregation employs a multiple staff, separate calling assignments shall be written for each position. The congregation should also stipulate lines of authority and policy governing employment status of staff members when the senior pastor resigns. It is recommended that all staff members submit their resignation when the senior pastor resigns so the incoming pastor, along with the elder board, may determine whether they should continue to serve. A period of six months should be allowed for the incoming pastor and the elder board to go through this process.

8. The Pastor and the Congregation

The congregation shall, by God's grace, mutually share responsibility with the pastor in seeking to fulfill God's will for the ministry of the church as outlined in Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Peter 4:7-11 and James 1:26-27.

C. Ethics for the Pastoral Office

1. Ethics in Pastoral Ministry

- a. Each pastor's attitude toward his fellow pastor should be characterized by the words of Romans 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above

- yourselves.” The pastor must evidence this attitude if he is to live in a good relationship with God and his brothers. If a pastor believes that a colleague needs special counseling or help in his ministry, he should first approach him alone in brotherly love (Galatians 6:1-5).
- b. A pastor shall wholeheartedly support the synodical and regional ministries through prayer, financial support and personal involvement. He shall actively encourage his congregation to participate also.
 - c. If at any time a pastor’s doctrinal convictions should change so that he can no longer accept and promote the teachings and written practices of the CLB, he shall immediately and gracefully resign from the congregation and surrender his ordination credentials to the Office of President.
 - d. The pastor shall endeavor to safeguard the good name of the ministry as he serves his Lord, his congregation, and his denomination. He will speak the truth in love and live a disciplined life of honor and integrity before his God, his family, his congregation and his community. The good reputation of a pastor is not optional—it is mandatory. In 2 Timothy 2:15, we are admonished, “Present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” Titus 1:7-8 calls for an overseer to be “blameless,... self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.” The pastor is to be above reproach in the congregation and community, and growing in his walk with God. This will manifest itself in godly character, lifestyle and pastoral functioning appropriate to the servant of God.
 - e. As a called servant of God, the pastor will continually prepare himself for effective ministry through study and prayer. He will also seek to enhance his ministry through continuing education as opportunities present themselves.
 - f. The pastor shall be a good role model by being a good husband and father. He will, to the best of his ability, “manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect” (1 Timothy 3:4). He shall teach and lead his own family in the ways of the Lord. He should emphasize to his children that an exemplary life is motivated through love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire to serve Him and not because he is a pastor. Even though a pastor carries heavy responsibilities with respect to his congregational duties, he must give proper priority and attention to his wife and children.
 - g. The skillful management of a pastor’s time will enable him to engage in a more effective ministry. He must arrange time for personal solitude and meditation which will include a rich devotional life where he meets His God in the Word and in prayer. Since the pastor needs a day of rest and relaxation each week, he should determine which day is most suitable both for the congregation and for his family and jealously guard that time for the benefit of himself and his family.
 - h. The pastor shall be a good steward of his finances. He shall also seek to maintain a good credit rating in his community.
2. Ethics in the Call Process
 - a. No pastor shall actively compete with another pastor for a call to a congregation. “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others” (1 Corinthians 10:24). “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:4-5).
 - b. When a call is extended to a pastor by a congregation or by a CLB affiliated ministry, it shall always be done on the basis of what is believed to be the will of God. All personal considerations and circumstances shall be secondary. Local CLB congregations and CLB affiliated ministries may call a rostered or approved-for-call pastor. Both the synodical and the regional boards shall endeavor to work with the pastor and congregation in order to make their ministries fruitful.

- c. When a pastor receives a call, he shall by prayer and careful evaluation determine whether he has fulfilled his ministry in his present location and whether the calling congregation or synodical ministry board and he can work together to the glory of God. A two or three week period after the pastor has received the call should be sufficient for him to arrive at his decision. Should an extension of time be desired, the pastor shall request such from the calling congregation or board.

3. Ethics in Resigning a Call

- a. When a pastor resigns from the congregation, one of the following procedures shall be followed (see also the publication *The Pastoral Calling Process*, available from the Office of President):
 - 1) He shall write a letter of resignation to the congregation, submitting it in person or by mail to the secretary or chairman of the congregation.
 - 2) He shall write a letter of resignation to the congregation, presenting it first in person to the board of elders. The reading of a resignation letter at the Sunday morning worship hour is not recommended. The board shall address a letter to the members and friends of the congregation announcing a congregational meeting to receive the resignation and initiate the calling process.
- b. The pastor's letter of resignation is final and should be regarded as such by the board of elders and the congregation. Only in an unusual situation should a congregation request a pastor to reconsider his resignation. A pastor should normally not ask for a congregation's vote of confidence.
- c. After resigning, the pastor shall continue to fulfill his pastoral responsibilities until the mutually agreed upon date his resignation is effective. He shall not be present at the business meeting when his letter of resignation is read, and he shall refrain from entering into the deliberations in the calling of his successor unless the board of elders and/or the congregation requests his assistance.
- d. The resigning pastor shall not leave any unfinished business for his successor which he himself should have completed. He shall do what he can to make the transition as smooth and pleasant as possible for his successor.
- e. When a pastor resigns from a congregation and departs at the mutually agreed upon time, he severs all official responsibility with that congregation. He shall not accept invitations to preach, officiate at baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc. without the consent of the board of elders and the present pastor. He will be careful not to endanger or undermine the ministry of his successor. He will follow the Lord's words in Matthew 7:12, "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you," as a guide in his relationship with his former congregation.
- f. If a pastor should retire in the community where he has recently been serving, he should use caution in accepting any position of leadership within that congregation. He shall verbally support the pastor or else be silent. He shall endeavor to practice the words of Philippians 4:8, "Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things."

D. Conflict Resolution and Discipline in Relation to the Pastoral Office

1. The Nature of Conflict

Conflicts that occur in congregations often focus on ministry goals, methods or roles. Frequently one party feels attacked and becomes defensive. Conflict resolution should seek to shift the focus from critical statements about people or roles, to the solution of problems by applying the positive strengths of all the members of the body.

Attempts to resolve conflict can escalate into full church discipline procedures. Full discipline procedures should be a solution of last resort. Church leaders may feel undue pressure to use church discipline to address spiritually immature behavior and personality problems that should rather be addressed with less confrontive approaches. A careful use of the Law and Gospel in preaching and pastoral care and the use of the gifts of exhortation, mercy and teaching administered in love, is often sufficient.

There may be pressure to use the civil courts to resolve conflicts between believers. We are cautioned by Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:7b) to resist such pressure. For the sake of Christ's honor and as a witness to the reconciliation He obtained on the cross, Scripture admonishes believers to settle disputes among themselves within the Church of Jesus Christ. For the sake of the Gospel, rather than to go to court before unbelievers, congregational leaders need to set the example in submitting themselves to God by heeding Paul's words, "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" (1 Corinthians 6:7b, cf. John 13:34-5). Believers are called to submit themselves to God's church and to his ultimate judgment and vindication (Romans 12:14-21).

2. Conflict Resolution

- a. When conflict develops between the pastor and the board of elders, and they are not making progress in solving the problem, both parties bear responsibility to seek outside assistance from either the region or synodical offices to effect a resolution. When the board of elders is in conflict with other church leadership or the congregation, the board of elders shall be responsible to seek region or synodical assistance to bring resolution. When such a situation occurs, all parties to the conflict will be expected to show good faith through their cooperation, openness and honesty in working with the mediating person/s. The spirit of Christian brotherliness shall be the expected standard for all persons.
- b. If a congregation is in conflict with its pastor and/or board of elders and a majority of the congregation's members petition the board of elders for mediation, the board shall seek the assistance of either the region or the synodical office to mediate a resolution to the problem. At least two members of the region or synodical office shall be present.
- c. If strife arises between the pastor and the congregation, the pastor shall seek the counsel, encouragement and assistance of the board of elders in resolving the problem. If the board of elders is divided they shall immediately seek the counsel and/or assistance of the region or synodical office in resolving the issue.
- d. When a pastor serving a mission congregation encounters conflict, he shall first consult the regional pastor. Then, if necessary, he shall consult the chair of the region in which he is serving. If further assistance is needed, he shall consult the CLB President.
- e. When a board of elders believes that a pastor is no longer effectively serving the congregation, they shall privately convey that message to the pastor. Should the pastor choose not to resign, the board and the pastor shall as soon as possible seek the assistance of the region or synodical office to review the situation, and if possible, work together to effect resolution or the termination of the pastor's ministry in a reasonable and harmonious manner.
- f. When a congregation finds it necessary to dismiss its pastor, the dismissal shall become effective immediately following a duly called congregational business meeting where the procedures outlined in the congregation's constitution have been followed. The congregation shall, in brotherly love and concern, provide the pastor with at least one month's severance salary and housing for each year of service up to a maximum of three months.
- g. If a pastor is temporarily incapable of continuing his ministry because of physical, mental or emotional problems, he shall confer with his elder board or his employing CLB affiliated ministry concerning this condition. It is imperative that the well-being of both the pastor and the congregation be fully considered in this situation. Should the pastor and/or his wife not share the problem with the elder board and the circumstances become evident to the

congregation, the board shall go to the pastor offering assistance and counsel. The elder board shall have the authority, if necessary, to allow the pastor a temporary leave of absence with full salary. The elder board shall exercise consideration of both the pastor and his family as well as the congregation during this time of crisis. If the health problems do not improve, the elder board together with the pastor may determine that it is best for the pastor to terminate his ministry.

- h. Should a pastor and his wife experience marital problems, they must seek counsel in an effort to resolve their differences. If they are unable to resolve their differences and if it leads to a filing for divorce, he shall immediately take a leave of absence from his ministry. The Office of President will work with the congregation to determine if and how he will be compensated during this leave of absence. The Pastoral Care and Discipline Committee shall assure that he has available to him appropriate spiritual counsel and care. The Theological Council shall determine if he may remain on the Ministers of the Gospel roster and if he may return to his ministry.

3. Discipline

- a. When conflict resolution attempts have failed and the situation has escalated to the point of overt sin against the Body of Christ or against a fellow believer, or when there is an accusation of overt sin made by two witnesses, or by a single witness with substantial circumstantial evidence, then formal church discipline may be initiated.
- b. Should a pastor be accused of a sin which he is not willing to confess to God and the offended party, the Biblical process outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 shall be followed: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."
- c. If the alleged incident took place within the congregation in which he serves, the process shall begin with the board of elders. If it occurred within another Lutheran Brethren congregation, the board of elders of that congregation, together with two members of the region or Council of Directors executive boards, shall confront the accused pastor. Instances which are alleged to have taken place outside of the Lutheran Brethren congregational jurisdiction shall be handled by the region and/or Council of Directors executive boards. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5:19-20, "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning." The accused shall have the right to face his accuser(s) in the presence of those who are hearing the case. The accused also has the right to have present with him a person of his choice.
- d. An accusation may be brought in one of two ways:
 - 1) A written and signed statement by the accuser which sets forth the charge and other pertinent details.
 - 2) A verbal statement by the accuser to the elder board or synodical ministry board that has responsibility related to the situation or to the designated persons. Interview notes will be taken to establish necessary information.
- e. If the transgression is theological or moral, the Council of Directors executive board in consultation with the Theological Council may recommend to the Council of Directors the necessary disciplinary action against the pastor if he is found guilty.

- f. The procedure for discipline is outlined in the *Ministerial Acts of the CLB* and shall be followed both in the case of a pastor as well as a lay person.
- g. Anyone involved in dealing with another person regarding alleged sin should carefully follow Galatians 6:1-2, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
- h. A congregation must not tolerate ongoing sin. Sinful behavior must be confronted in accordance with the Scriptures, both Law and Gospel, through preaching and teaching and when necessary through church discipline. Discipline is given to confront sinning believers in their sin and lead them to repentance and restoration. Discipline is redemptive. In addition to the Scriptures quoted above, the following will help to provide a framework of reference: Matthew 6:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-22; James 2:9, 5:19-20; 1 John 1:7-9.

Section Four

Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned

The CLB recognizes the fact that there are vital ministry positions within the ministry of the church that do not require the level of training expected of those who serve as ordained pastors. For men and women who serve in these capacities the CLB has established a group called Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned. Eligibility will be limited to persons who serve in a position that is at least half-time.

This designation is provided for men and women who may serve in positions such as (but not limited to) teachers, administrators, missionary specialists, youth workers, and parish nurses. Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned, serve God and the CLB by performing public ministry functions including evangelizing; preaching; teaching; providing spiritual care to individuals; chapels; leading Bible study groups; devotions; translation; leadership training; literacy, literature production and distribution; caring deeds of love and justice; planning and providing worship services for youth and children; music ministry; children's sermons; coordinating family ministry events; special needs ministry; and caring spiritually for the sick and imprisoned and their families. The CLB regards these ministries as important duties of the Ministry of the Gospel. Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned may also serve in various congregational callings as part of their ministry.

Because these persons may from time to time fulfill many of the responsibilities normally associated with an ordained person, specific requirements have been established for persons to qualify for this designation.

A. Roster Requirements

1. Specific requirements for Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned, are as follows:
 - a. Membership in a local congregation of the CLB.
 - b. Acceptance of the CLB Statement of Faith.
 - c. Completion of or enrollment in the prescribed theological curricular requirements. (See Paragraph B, Education Requirements, below.)
 - d. Participation in the required in-service courses that are offered.
2. The Theological Council is responsible to annually review the Lutheran Brethren Ministers of the Gospel roster. A subcommittee of three persons (one of whom shall represent the Lutheran Brethren Seminary) will serve as the Supervising Subcommittee to see that all Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned are in compliance with the stated requirements.
3. Theological curricular requirements and in-service courses are established by the Supervising Subcommittee and are offered through the services of the Lutheran Brethren Seminary. In some cases acceptable courses may be offered through other institutions. Acceptance of such a course must be pre-approved by the Supervising Subcommittee.
4. A Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned shall be listed on the CLB Ministers of the Gospel roster as long as he/she serves in a called position and fulfills in-service requirements. Reasons for removal from the roster by the Supervising Subcommittee include:
 - a. Failure to comply with in-service education requirements.
 - b. Not serving in a called position.
 - c. Not in doctrinal agreement with the CLB.
 - d. Conduct not in harmony with the employing organization.
 - e. Violation of CLB Policies on Employee Relations and Sexual Ethics. (See Handbook Section 5.)
5. When a person's Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned status has been revoked, he/she has the right of appeal to the Theological Council.

B. Education Requirements

1. A person working towards certification as a Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned will successfully complete seventy class hours of study for initial certification. Persons who serve as Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned are required to participate in a minimum of eight hours of theological instruction/training annually.
2. Courses will be offered in conjunction with J-Term at the Lutheran Brethren Seminary in January and in conjunction with the CLB Biennial Convention. Courses are subject to change and may also be offered at other times as determined by the Lutheran Brethren Seminary.
3. For certification, the student will successfully complete the designated hours of instruction in each of the educational areas listed below (Paragraph 9). Courses which are offered in different areas may only qualify against one area of study.
4. Fees: Information on fees and tuition is available through Lutheran Brethren Seminary.
5. Testing Out: Persons who want to challenge a course may do so for credit with the approval of the supervising committee and the respective professor. There will be a fee for testing out.
6. Criteria for accepting courses offered in other places: Persons who would like to have courses taken from other agencies or institutions accepted for credit in the certification process should submit a syllabus from the course for assessment/ approval.
7. Compliance: All applicants will have a period of two years, from the time of application, to complete the required coursework for listing as a Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned.
8. Questions and Applications: For a listing of scheduled courses, an application, or other questions, please contact this office.

Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned
Office of President
Church of the Lutheran Brethren
Box 655
Fergus Falls, MN 56538
218-739-3336
clb@clba.org

9. Areas of Study:

Old Testament Studies (15 Hours)

Goal: To increase understanding of the Old Testament as salvation canon.

Competencies:

- Recognize Law and Gospel in the Old Testament
- Understand central theme of the Old Testament
- Interpret the Old Testament texts in light of that central theme

Course Options:

God's Promise in the Old Testament (5 hrs)

Hosea (5 hrs)

God's Master Plan in the Old Testament* (10 hrs)

Introduction to the Old Testament (10 hrs)

New Testament Studies (15 hours)

Goal: To grow in understanding of the mission of Christ in His incarnation and through His body, the Church.

Competencies:

- Recognize Law and Gospel in the New Testament
- Understand the variety of purposes and unity of message in the New Testament
- Interpret New Testament texts for contemporary hearers

Course Options:

Romans (5 hrs)

1 Peter (5 hrs)

Gospel of John/Luke (5 hrs)

God's Master Plan in the New Testament* (10 hrs)

Introduction to the New Testament (10 hrs)

Christian Doctrine (15 hours)

Goal: To improve understanding of the core teachings of the Bible as the story of salvation and organize those teachings for orderly comprehension, for faithful practice, and clear teaching.

Competencies:

- Know those central teachings of the Bible on which the Church stands and falls
- Understand how some uniquely Lutheran perspectives are important to effective mission, faith-building, and discipleship
- Be able to explain and live out these teachings

Course Options:

Basic Christianity (5 hrs)

Romans (5 hrs)

The Means of Grace (5 hrs)

Law and Gospel (5 hrs)

Dialogue with Doctrine* (10 hrs)

Biblical Interpretation (10 hours)

Goal: To develop people who are competent, accurate interpreters of the Bible.

Competencies:

- Understand basic principles of Lutheran biblical interpretation
- Be able to distinguish between different types of biblical literature and read those different types correctly
- Be able to teach from the Bible so that teaching accurately expresses what the Bible intends for the hearer

Course Options:

Biblical Interpretation (10 hrs)

Church and Mission (15 hours)

Goal: To transfer the information to application in the Body of Christ.

Competencies:

- Understand culture and how culture affects church teaching and mission and how church teaching and mission needs to address culture and to develop some specific abilities that are important for work in the church

Course Options:

Introduction to World View (5 hrs)

Principles of Teaching and Learning for Christian Teachers (5 hrs)

Being the Body of Christ (5 hrs)

Theory and Practice of Evangelism (5 hrs)

Conflict Resolution (5 hrs)

Church Leadership (5 hrs)

1 Peter (5 hrs)
Romans (5 hrs)
Basic Principles of Soul Care (5 hrs)

**Courses offered as directed study via video tape.*

C. Housing Allowance Requirements

(This section applies to those serving in the United States. Persons in Canada should consult with their Canadian church office.)

Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned may be eligible to have a portion of their salary designated as housing allowance in accordance with established policies of the Internal Revenue Service. Note: The CLB cannot guarantee this provision since these policies are established by the IRS and are subject to change.

1. History

For many years the Internal Revenue Service (via provisions in Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code) has allowed clergy the benefit of a housing allowance. This means that a certain portion of the cash salary paid to qualified persons may be designated as housing allowance and that portion is not taxable for income tax purposes. It is, however, included when calculating Social Security earnings and taxes.

What about non-ordained persons who are serving in Christian ministry positions? After researching the writings of tax specialists and various IRS rulings, the Church is of the opinion that non-ordained persons who fulfill certain specified criteria *may* qualify as a Minister of the Gospel for tax purposes and accordingly be able to properly receive a tax-free housing allowance. The following guidelines are intended to inform the Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned about historical IRS rulings and positions regarding qualification as a Minister of the Gospel for tax purposes.

2. Basis in IRS Rulings

The following four paragraphs are quoted from IRS Private Letter Ruling (PLR) #92-21025: *Section 1.107-1(a) of the Income Tax Regulations provides that in order to qualify for the exclusion provided by section 107, the home or rental allowance must be provided as remuneration for services which are ordinarily the duties of a minister of the gospel. In general, the rules provided in regulation section 1.1402(c)-5 apply to such determination.*

Section 1.107-1(a) also provides that examples of specific services which will be considered duties of a minister for purposes of section 107 include the performance of sacerdotal functions, the conduct of religious worship, the administration and maintenance of religious organizations and their integral agencies, and the performance of teaching and administrative functions at theological seminaries.

Section 1.1402(c)-5(b)(2) of the regulations provides that service performed by a minister in the exercise of his ministry includes the ministration of sacerdotal functions; the conduct of religious worship; and the control, conduct and maintenance of religious organizations (including the religious boards, societies, and other integral agencies of such organizations) under the authority of a religious body constituting a church or church denomination. Section 1.1402(c)-5(b)(2)(i) provides that whether service performed by a minister constitutes the conduct of religious worship or the ministration of sacerdotal functions depends on the tenets and practices of the particular religious body constituting the minister's church or church denomination. Sections 31.3121(b)(8)-1 and 31.3401(a)(9)-1 of the Employment Tax Regulations contain similar provisions.

If a church or church denomination ordains some ministers of the gospel and licenses or commissions other ministers, the licensed or commissioned minister must perform substantially all the religious functions within the scope of the tenets and practices of his religious denomination to be treated as a “minister of the gospel” under section 107 of the Code. Rev.Rul.78-301, 1978-2 C.B. 103.

In addition, this paragraph is quoted from IRS PLR #200318002:

A balancing test of factors is used to determine whether a person is considered a minister of the gospel. Under Knight v. Commissioner, 92 T. C. 199 (1989) and Wingo v. Commissioner, 89 T. C. 911 (1987), there are five factors that collectively determine whether a person qualifies as a minister of the gospel. A minister of the gospel must do a majority of the following: administer sacerdotal functions; conduct worship services; perform services in the control, conduct and maintenance of a religious organization; be considered a spiritual leader by his or her religious body; and be ordained, licensed or commissioned. Under section 1402(c)(4) of the Code, at a minimum, the person is required to be “duly ordained, licensed or commissioned.”

3. Qualifying Factors

- a. According to IRS PLR #200318002, there is a five factor test that determines if one is considered to be a Minister of the Gospel under IRS Code Section 107. The five factors are:
 - 1) Administer sacerdotal functions.
 - 2) Conduct worship services.
 - 3) Perform services in the control, conduct and maintenance of a religious organization.
 - 4) Be considered a spiritual leader by his or her religious body.
 - 5) Be ordained, licensed or commissioned (in a public service).
- b. Recent IRS tax cases and rulings indicate that “a majority” of the factors, at least three of the five, must be evident for eligibility as a minister of the gospel for tax purposes. The factor that is required is that the person is publicly commissioned (#5 above).
- c. The Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned who seeks to benefit from the tax-free housing allowance under IRS Code Section 107 should be reminded that this guidance is based on case law and private letter rulings, as opposed to being clearly established by statutory law. By definition, private letter rulings are only applicable to the parties that requested them. Also, case law does not have the “weight” of statutory law. Therefore, it is advisable that a Minister of the Gospel-Commissioned who seeks to benefit from the housing allowance provision should also seek the counsel of his/her own tax advisor.
- d. The board or congregation to which the candidate is ultimately accountable is responsible to determine if he/she meets the minimum qualifications for housing allowance eligibility (see Paragraph 3.a. above). That board or congregation is responsible to inform the Office of President of all changes in order that the Ministers of the Gospel roster is accurately maintained.

4. Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned in relation to the Qualifying Factors

- a. Commissioning: In the CLB, Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned are issued a letter of call outlining their specific ministry assignment and expectations. They are publicly commissioned/installed to their ministry position.
- b. Ministry duties: Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned may serve in positions such as (but not limited to) teachers, administrators, missionary specialists, youth workers and parish nurses. Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned serve God and the CLB by performing public ministry functions including evangelizing; preaching; teaching; providing spiritual care to individuals; chapels; leading Bible study groups; devotions; translation; leadership training; literacy, literature production and distribution; caring deeds of love and justice; planning and

- providing worship services for youth and children; music ministry; children's sermons; coordinating family ministry events; special needs ministry; and caring spiritually for the sick and imprisoned and their families. The CLB regards these ministries as important duties of the ministry of the gospel.
- c. Church membership: Within the CLB, Ministers of the Gospel-Ordained, Licensed and Commissioned are placed on the Ministers of the Gospel roster. They are the called and approved Ministers of the Gospel who serve God and the church in performing the various ministry functions necessary for the mission of the church. Because the recognized ministry functions are related to a specific church body and because these ministers are officially recognized by means of the Ministers of the Gospel roster, it follows that these persons must be members of a local Lutheran Brethren congregation. This membership requirement has been clearly established by IRS PLR #92-21025.
 - d. Theological requirements and in-service training: Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned have demonstrated that they are prepared to serve the church. To be commissioned, the person must have completed the educational requirements as detailed in Section Four, Paragraph B, Education Requirements. Persons who serve the church as Ministers of the Gospel-Commissioned are required to participate in a minimum of eight hours of theological instruction/training annually.

Section Five
Ministers of the Gospel-Ordained, Licensed, Commissioned:
Policies on Employee Relations and Sexual Ethics

A. Employee Relations Policy

1. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren practices equal employment opportunity without regard to an individual's race, color, national origin, gender (subject to the requirements of the Statement of Faith), disability, or age in the application of any policy, practice, rule or regulation. The CLB may discriminate on the basis of religion. Employees are expected to adhere to the Statement of Faith and Position Papers of the Church concerning morals and lifestyle.
2. The CLB will not tolerate discrimination in hiring, dismissal, promotion, demotion or other terms and conditions of employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender (subject to the requirements of the Statement of Faith), disability, or age.
3. The CLB prohibits any form of harassment, including sexual harassment. Any employee who is aware of instances of sexual harassment has a responsibility to report the instances to his/her supervisor, or the next higher authority.
4. The CLB prohibits explicitly or implicitly making submission to discrimination or harassment a term or condition of a person's employment, or using submission to discrimination or harassment as a basis for employment decisions affecting the person.
5. The CLB understands harassment to include creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, or one that unreasonably interferes with the person's work performance.
6. The CLB understands sexual harassment to include behaviors such as:
 - a. Unwanted sexual advances.
 - b. Offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors or employment reprisals for refusing sexual conduct.
 - c. Visual conduct such as sexual gestures and/or the display of sexually suggestive or offensive objects.
 - d. Verbal conduct such as making or using derogatory comments, slurs or jokes; verbal sexual advances or propositions; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; degrading words or actions; or, suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations in any format.
 - e. Physical conduct such as touching, rubbing, impeding movement, or assault.
7. It is each employee's responsibility to report harassment or discrimination. If an employee experiences or witnesses harassment or discrimination he/she has an obligation to come forward. Employees should confront the perpetrator directly and tell him/her that the behavior is offensive.
8. If the harassment or discrimination continues or represents a threat, the matter should be brought to the attention of the supervisor or appropriate authorities.
9. All synodical directors/supervisors are informed of this policy. In cases where a supervisor is involved in the allegation, all complaints and allegations should be addressed to the President or Vice-President who will, together with the Council of Directors Executive Board or a committee appointed by them, thoroughly investigate the matter in confidence. This investigating committee will review all the facts and determine whether reasonable grounds exist to believe that harassment or discrimination has occurred.
10. Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, will be taken against any employee who is found to have engaged in harassment or discrimination. No

employee will suffer retaliation for reporting instances of discrimination or harassment.

B. Sexual Ethics in Ministry

1. The Policy

Any sexual contact between a pastor and parishioner, counselee, employee, or anyone else to whom the pastor is not married, or with whom the unmarried pastor is not in a dating relationship, is wrong. Sexual union outside of marriage is wrong. Any wrongful sexual behavior should be reported to the Office of President. Such behavior includes any sexual advance, a request for sexual favor, a sexually motivated physical contact, or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature. When appropriate, the offending person should be confronted directly. When this is not appropriate, the lead person of the ministry involved and synodical representatives will be responsible both to hear with care and to guard against careless accusation.

2. Procedures for Processing Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

a. Reporting

- 1) Anyone who witnesses or hears credible evidence of sexual misconduct by a Lutheran Brethren Minister of the Gospel should report it. This includes the victim or a member of the victim's family, a member of the congregation or other ministry, the pastor or a colleague of the pastor, or any concerned person.
- 2) Notify the lead person of the ministry involved and the Synodical President or the Vice-President in any of the following ways: by phone at (218)739-3336, by letter or in person at 1020 Alcott Ave. W., Fergus Falls, MN 56537.
- 3) The pastor or another responsible person must report to the proper civil authorities when the victim is under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult (consult your local laws).

b. Investigation

- 1) Upon receipt of an allegation of inappropriate sexual behavior committed by a Minister of the Gospel, the Office of President or someone designated by the President, working together with the congregation or ministry leader, shall thoroughly investigate. All investigations and disciplinary actions against the accused shall be done in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the CLB.
- 2) The investigation shall seek information and documentation from the complainant, the victim, the accused and other sources as appropriate, including any investigative reports that may be obtained from civil authorities.
- 3) The investigation shall be conducted in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20, and other appropriate passages, recognizing the promise of the Lord to be present in the deliberations.
- 4) The Office of President and the particular ministry leader will notify the proper civil authorities of the alleged behavior when required by law and in other appropriate circumstances.

c. Communication

- 1) The Office of President and the ministry leader will strive to ensure that all communication in response to an alleged incident is factually accurate. Distribution of written and verbal material should reflect a responsible balance between the need for people to be informed and the risk of defamation of character and violation of privacy of the victim. Openness will be a guiding principle, recognizing that the calling of the pastor and church is to walk in the light with the Lord.
- 2) The victim, the alleged offender, congregation and others involved will be informed as appropriate, of the sexual ethics in ministry policy, church constitutions and state and

provincial law. Distribution of information should conform to the guidelines of the sexual abuse policy, church constitutions and state and provincial law. The Office of President or the designee will commence and maintain communication through the entire process.

- 3) If the charges are substantive, the Office of President and the ministry leader, after consultation with appropriate boards, may suspend a Minister of the Gospel without making a determination as to guilt or innocence (without prejudice) when the office is informed that a criminal investigation is underway or criminal sexual conduct has been alleged. Suspension shall continue until the synod's and the particular ministry's investigation is completed, and disciplinary action, if any, is taken. Allegations of non-criminal sexual conduct may also result in suspension pending investigation.
 - 4) If, upon completion of the preliminary investigation, the President and ministry leader determines that disciplinary action may be warranted, he shall report to the particular ministry board and Theological Council of the Council of Directors or to the full Council for action pursuant to the synod policies and constitution. Discipline may involve censure, suspension or removal from the roster of the ordained ministry. Conviction of felony criminal sexual conduct normally will result in removal from the ordained ministry. The disciplinary determination shall be reported to the Minister of the Gospel, victim and congregation or ministry.
 - 5) Final disciplinary determination shall be made by the Council of Directors in consultation with the particular ministry board that may be involved.
 - 6) When an investigation of alleged misconduct is being made, the Council of Directors executive board shall normally inform the regional chairman and the chairman of the elder board or CLB affiliated ministry that an investigation is in process.
- d. Response to the Victim, Perpetrator, Congregation, Community
- 1) The response to the victim, perpetrator, congregation and community will follow the order appropriate to the jurisdiction in which the problem is first identified. The Office of President and the ministry leader will, when deemed necessary, assist at any level to provide guidance in securing the help of professionals knowledgeable in sexual exploitation.
 - 2) Advocates, pastoral care and treatment resources may be made available to the victim(s) and immediate families.
 - 3) Advocates, pastoral care and treatment resources may be made available to the accused and immediate family.
 - 4) The pastoral services of the Council of Directors Pastoral Care and Discipline Committee and those enlisted by them will be available to the congregation or ministry through the Office of President.
- e. Guidelines for Responsible Action
- Note: These guidelines set goals for responsible action. Every case involves unique people and therefore, it may not always be possible or appropriate to meet every goal or need. These guidelines are descriptive of a general approach.
- 1) For the Victim(s)
 - a) The President or the President's representative will listen and take seriously the accusation and begin an investigation together with other appropriate church authorities. They will:
 - i) Respect confidentiality to the fullest extent possible.
 - ii) Help the victim to understand that the church cares.
 - iii) Appoint an advocate for the victim when appropriate.
 - iv) Offer spiritual care or refer to an outside counsellor.
 - v) Make regular contact with the victim.

- b) The President or the President's representative will give the victim this policy guideline, and will:
 - i) Explain and make sure the victim and/or the parents or legal guardian understand the disciplinary process.
 - ii) Where appropriate, inform the victim of intended actions in advance.
 - c) Help arrange for protection of the victim if needed.
 - d) Protect from revictimization.
 - e) Seek to discover if there are other victims.
- 2) For the Accused
- a) The President or the President's representative will provide for pastoral care in cooperation with other church authorities.
 - b) The accused will be advised of allegations, process and support.
 - i) The accusation will not be minimized.
 - ii) The accusation will be shared by the President or the President's representative in the presence of the accused and one other person of the President's choosing. The accused may request the presence of another witness of his choosing.
 - iii) Due process of the CLB disciplinary procedure will be followed.
 - iv) Policy guidelines will be provided to the pastor.
 - v) Consequences will be established if guilt is proven.
 - vi) When appropriate, reconciliation will be encouraged.
 - vii) When appropriate, therapy will be encouraged.
 - viii) When appropriate, the accused will be encouraged to seek legal advice regarding possible action against the accused by the victim or the victim's family.
- 3) For the Congregation
- a) The congregation will be informed as to what is going on and why in the following manner.
 - i) The President or his representative will request a meeting with the council.
 - ii) The President or his representative will recommend drafting a letter to the congregation by the officers of its church council.
 - iii) If invited by the church council, the President or his representative will hold a congregational meeting.
 - iv) Allegations will be shared to the fullest extent appropriate.
 - v) Policy guidelines will be shared.
 - b) A synodical representative will be named to talk with and listen to the council and congregation members.
 - c) Assistance in dealing with media will be offered.
 - d) The President or his representative will be available to help in making long-term plans for support of the congregation's pastor(s), other staff and leadership.
- 4) For the Accused's Spouse and Family
- a) If appropriate, they will be informed of the allegation.
 - b) The Synod will offer to arrange pastoral care through an area pastor.
 - c) When appropriate, clarification on financial situation and expectations will be given by the Synod.
 - d) Section Five of this Handbook will be provided.
 - e) When appropriate, counsel will be offered regarding possible reaction against the family by the victim or victim's family.
- 5) For CLB Ministers of the Gospel
- a) When appropriate, they will be informed by letter from the President.
 - b) When appropriate, the President or his representative will meet with the Ministers of the Gospel in the immediate area.

- f. **Communicating the Sexual Ethics in Ministry Policy to the Congregations**
The Council of Directors shall provide for distribution of literature to the congregations that makes a general statement of our denominational attitude concerning proper sexual ethics for clergymen and shows how infractions against these ethical policies may be reported.