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Ministers of the Gospel Handbook

Approved by
Church of the Lutheran Brethren
Council of Directors
Revised October 2021

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

All members of Christ's Body have gifts for ministry of various kind. But, some are gifted *to* the Body to oversee the Church and to faithfully minister the Word of God. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB) is a disciple-making movement, founded under the authority and work of the Word to save us and shape us to His will and to join Him in His mission. Those who are called to serve in these leading roles are themselves both under this Word, live in this Word, and minister by this Word.

This is a calling. In 2 Timothy, the great Apostle exhorts the young pastor Timothy to *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”* Those who lead the Church as Ministers of the Gospel have an ‘approval’ both from God and the Church. There is an internal call which God shapes in a person. And, there is the recognizing and affirming call of the Church in local congregational form which sees and receives the gifts and heart and internal call of the minister, and also serves to further shape and prepare that minister.

The Ministers of the Gospel Handbook is provided to guide the minister and the congregation in the manner and processes of ministering in an upright and orderly manner. Scripture says, *God is not a God of disorder but of peace – as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.* (1 Corinthians 14:33). Later in the chapter, again Paul affirms, *But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way* (1 Corinthians 14:40). The Ministers of the Gospel Handbook provides historical background and states the approved policies which govern ordination, licensure, commissioning and colloquy for rostered CLB Ministers of the Gospel. Those who are ordained, licensed or commissioned in the CLB (or who seek to enter our mission via colloquy), do so in a league of support and accountability – to each other, to the denomination which holds our ordination, licensure or commission; and to the congregations and mission settings in which we serve. There is an agreement of all rostered CLB Ministers of the Gospel to abide by and follow the CLB Constitution, position papers, Ministerial Acts, and this Ministers of the Gospel Handbook.

This is a revision of the Ministers of the Gospel Handbook. Because the Church is a living body in a living world with new and changing circumstances and challenges of cultural and congregational context, these policies are subject to periodic review and revision by the CLB Council of Directors.

We present and receive this Ministers of the Gospel Handbook in humility before the Lord and His Church who have called us to His ministry and mission. We trust it will serve the pastors and leaders of our congregations and ministries, providing for good and godly order, that we may give ourselves peaceably and fruitfully to this great disciple-making mission of Christ.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with you all.
(2 Corinthians 13:14)



Rev. Paul M. Larson, President
Church of the Lutheran Brethren

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

OM-D – Domestic Missionary: An ordained CLB pastor serving in a select domestic mission assignment

OM-E – Endorsed Ministries: serving in an endorsed ministry position (see notes below)

OM-I – International Missionary: serving in a CLB international mission assignment

OM-P – Parish Pastor: serving in as CLB parish ministry

OM-R – Retired: Ordained Ministers of retirement age no longer serving in a called position

OM-S – Synod Ministry: serving in a CLB synod, seminary, region, subsidiary or affiliate position

OM-T – 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 or Domestic Ministries
 - 1) A Minister of the Gospel-Ordained shall serve only in a ministry where he can serve in harmony with the CLB Statement of Faith and within the confines of the CLB Position Papers.
 - 2) When a Minister of the Gospel-Ordained is called to serve in an endorsed or domestic ministry and desires to maintain his roster listing, he may seek and maintain endorsement for such service by following established policies stated in the Ministers 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 or domestic 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

LM-A – LBS Graduate or Colloquy Applicant – either in the process to Ordination

LM-P – Pastor who is a layman

LM-S – LBS Seminarian serving in the Pastoral Office

1. Licensed Minister – Applicant

- 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 twice in the process to ordination.

2. Licensed Minister - 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 be encouraged to 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 Minister – Seminarian

- a. The candidate shall be a student at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.
- b. The candidate shall be serving in a congregational or ministry board call under the mentorship of a pastor appointee.
- c. A letter of request for licensure shall originate with the congregation where the student is serving. This letter, and a letter of approval from the Seminary Dean indicating that the student is enrolled and in good standing 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. The Office of the President will assign a mentoring pastor for this candidate.
- d. The license shall be issued semi-annually and is contingent upon his continued enrollment and good standing at Lutheran Brethren Seminary and continuing service in the congregation or ministry board that has requested his licensed status.
- e. The Licensed Seminarian shall meet with his 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* and use *The Ministerial Acts of the CLB* for all ministerial acts.
- g. The Licensed Seminarian will be officially listed on the MOG pastoral listing and published in the annual CLB yearbook.

C. Commissioned

CM-C – Commissioned Congregational Minister

CM-M – Commissioned Missionary Minister

CM-R – Commissioned Retired Minister

CM-S – Commissioned Synod Minister

- 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 Committee of the Theological Council.
4. The request for commissioning shall be made by the congregation, CLB Ministry 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 Ministers 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. 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 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 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; and the pastor elected from each region to serve on the Council of Directors.

- a. The Theological Council shall examine candidates for ordination who have a permanent call in the CLB, are seeking to be placed on the CLB available-for-call list, or are ordained in another denomination and seeking affiliation with the CLB to ascertain that:

The candidate will:

- 1) Believe, teach, and confess the CLB Statement of Faith.
 - 2) Abide by the CLB Constitution and the Ministers of the Gospel Handbook and minister within the confines of the CLB Position Papers
 - 3) Adhere to the Ministerial Acts of the CLB in his work as a pastor.
- 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 transition out of pastoral ministry.
 - e. The Theological Council has two committees: the Certification Committee, which oversees the licensing and colloquy process; and the Supervision Committee, which oversees the commissioning process.
 - f. The Theological Council shall affirm the decision of the Certification Committee of a candidate that has divorce and remarriage in his history before the candidate moves forward with ordination and/or licensure.

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 one year, 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 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.
 - 2) The candidate shall fill out the pastoral resumé to be filed with the Office of President.

- 3) The Office of President shall conduct background checks for all candidates for ordination.
- 4) The candidate shall complete a Fitness for Ministry Assessment as established by the Theological Council
- 5) The candidate will be sent the Doctrinal and Ministerial Questionnaire to be filled out and returned.
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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 committee (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 committee 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 committee.
8. When a call is extended by a Lutheran Brethren congregation, a CLB affiliated ministry, or a CLB affiliate congregation and has been 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. Licensed Minister – Applicant

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. This is an annual license that is subject to renewal twice in the process to ordination.

2. Licensed Minister – Lay Pastor

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 Licensed Minister (LM-P). The Office of President will issue this license on an annual basis. The criteria for the Licensed Minister are set forth in this Handbook, Section One, Paragraph B.2.

A congregation shall 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 Minister 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 on the basis of Office of the President provided process and criteria

- b. The candidate shall sign a document that affirms his agreement with our Statement of Faith, position papers and the utilization of our Ministerial Acts in all services of the church.
- c. The Office of the President will review the application and its accompanying documents and make a recommendation to the President.
- d. The President or his representative will schedule an interview with the candidate.
- e. With the President's recommendation the candidate will be scheduled, at the Office of the President's discretion, for fitness for ministry assessment as established by the Theological Council.
- f. With the President's recommendation the candidate will be issued a 4 month provisional license contingent upon ongoing successful progress.
- g. Upon receiving a positive assessment, the candidate will fill out a Doctrinal and Ministerial Questionnaire and be scheduled for an interview with the Certification Committee (or the Theological Council).
- h. Following a successful interview the Certification Committee shall together with the candidate develop an In-Service Educational Plan and assign a mentor.
- i. The Office of President will issue him a license as a Licensed Minister (LM-P). This license is issued on an annual basis.

3. Licensed Minister - Seminarian

- a. The candidate shall be a student at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.
- b. The candidate shall be serving in a congregational or ministry board call under the 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, a letter of approval from the Seminary Dean indicating that the student is enrolled and in good standing, and a letter from the regional pastor identifying the mentor, 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. The license shall be issued semi-annually and is contingent upon his continued enrollment and good standing at Lutheran Brethren Seminary and continuing service in the congregation or ministry board that has requested his licensed status.
- d. The Licensed Seminarian shall meet with his pastor appointed mentor on a monthly basis. A brief report of that meeting shall be filed by the student with the Office of the President.
- e. The licensed Seminarian shall adhere to the pastoral policies set forth in the Ministers of the Gospel Handbook and use The Ministerial Acts of the CLB for all ministerial acts.
- f. 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.

E. Divorce

1. All applicants for ordination and licensure that have or their spouse has divorce in their history shall read and follow Section Six.

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. The candidate will believe, teach and confess the CLB Statement of Faith; abide by the CLB Constitution and the Ministers of the Gospel Handbook and minister within the confines of the CLB Position Papers; and adhere to Ministerial Acts of the CLB in his work as a pastor.
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 service rituals provided in the *Ministerial Acts of the CLB*.
6. He shall faithfully discharge the pastoral 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 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

Some congregations 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. (note: Section Three A.3.)

- 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 NAM Director. 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. (see Section Six)

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 Committee of three persons (one of whom shall represent the Lutheran Brethren Seminary) will serve as the Supervising Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee.
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 Committee 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
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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)

D. 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 Ministers 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.

Section Six: Ministers of the Gospel-Ordained and Licensed: Principles and Procedures for Processing Pastoral Candidates Or Pastors With Divorce

2019 Policy on Clergy and Divorce

Principles and procedures for processing pastoral candidates for licensing, ordination and colloquy applicants with divorce in their history, or in the history of their spouses, or who experience divorce while in ministry, or a pastor who is considering marriage to one who has been previously divorced.

Introduction

The CLB does not readily consider for license, ordination, colloquy, or restoration to ministry a person who has divorce in his history. In view of the significant portion of the work in the pastoral office that relates to teaching about the family, teaching of children and ministering to people in various kinds of personal and family crises, we find that the deep wounds of divorce are potential disqualifiers for professional ministry. However, because the range of reasons for divorce is significant, and because of the redemptive nature of our calling, consideration will be made for fitness for ministry for those desiring to apply.

Preamble

We as the CLB believe that "The Bible, including both Old and New Testaments as originally given, is the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God and is free from error in the whole and in the part, and is therefore the final authoritative guide for faith and conduct." It is on the basis of this belief that we understand what marriage is and what we should believe and practice regarding divorce and remarriage.

We affirm that standards of sexual morality must be consistent with Biblical principles. We deny that unscriptural standards may be accepted by the church simply because they have been accepted by society. 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 12:2

We affirm that God established marriage between one man and one woman. The Bible sanctions only heterosexual marriage. We deny that God intended sexual intimacy between members of the same sex. Genesis 2:20c-24; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 7:2

We affirm that Biblical morality restricts legitimate sexual activity to heterosexual marriage. Any extramarital sexual practice, whether homosexual or heterosexual, is outside of the limits of Biblical morality, and is sinful. We deny that sexual activity outside of marriage is morally neutral. Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Ephesians 5:3

We affirm that one of the basic reasons for God's creation of human beings as male and female is to propagate the human race and to provide a caring home for the nurture of children. We deny the

assertions that the traditional Biblical concept of the home is passing, outmoded, and outdated. Genesis 1:27-28; Ephesians 6:1-4

We affirm that true love seeks the well-being of the person loved. When sex is the expression of married love, it seeks the mutual fulfillment and joy of both husband and wife. We deny that the chief purpose of sexual activity is self-gratification. 1 Corinthians 7:1-6

We affirm that marriage is a covenant bond between one man and one woman, created by God himself, characterized ideally by physical, spiritual, and emotional oneness and by permanence, regulated and recognized by the state. We deny that marriage can be redefined by the state.

Genesis 1:27, 28: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 2:20 – 24: “So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Matthew 19:4-6 “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Acts 5:29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! Biblical summary on marriage:

1. Marriage presupposes maleness and femaleness. Genesis 1:27
2. Marriage is God’s idea. Genesis 2:18, 24a
3. Marriage is meant to be monogamous. Genesis 2:24a, 25; 1 Corinthians 7:2
4. Marriage is a commitment of love and faithfulness. Ephesians 5:21-33
5. Marriage is both union and communion. Matthew 19:5

We affirm that marriage is intended by God to be a life-long covenant bond, but it can be broken and put asunder and when it is, there is always guilt of hardness of heart and sin. We deny that marriage is indissoluble. Matthew 19:6-9

We affirm that when the marriage bond is put asunder those who have sinned are called to repentance and confession in full agreement with God’s law in relation to God and spouse. We deny that the putting asunder of one’s marriage is not to be treated as serious sin. 1 John 1:5-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

We affirm that on the basis of the finished work of Christ the repentant and believing sinner is forgiven, washed, sanctified and justified. We deny that the putting asunder of one’s marriage is the unpardonable sin and therefore not included on the cross. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Colossians 2:13-15

We affirm that repentance and forgiveness received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ express themselves in the way of seeking reconciliation and restoration with those sinned against. We deny that reconciliation and restoration is always possible. Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:30-31

We affirm that one to whom God has granted a repentant heart, a forgiving heart, and faith in the satisfaction for their sin which God has provided on the cross may consider remarriage. We deny that on the basis of being divorced a person may not consider remarriage. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Colossians 2:13-15

(A more complete presentation of the above is given in the CLB exegetical study *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage: An Exegetical Approach* 1988, and the CLB Position Paper, *Divorce And Remarriage* 1989, 2010.)

We affirm the need to address the situations of real persons considering ministry or in ministry who have experienced the reality and consequences of the real sins of divorce and sinfulness with the truth of God’s Law and the truth of God’s Gospel redemption as given in Jesus Christ. We deny that it is a concession to

culture to address these situations redemptively but rather it stands in contrast to the way that culture responds to such realities.

We affirm that a man who is divorced and/or remarried, to whom God has granted a repentant heart, a forgiving heart, and faith in the satisfaction for their sin which God has provided on the cross may be considered for the pastoral calling. We deny that on the basis alone of being divorced and/or remarried a man may not be considered for the pastoral calling. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Colossians 2:13-15

We affirm all the qualifications set forth in the Bible for church leaders serving in the pastoral calling. We deny that these are culturally conditioned therefore not applicable for all times and places. (See paper “On the Scriptural Qualifications for *Overseers* in the Pastoral Epistles and their Contemporary Application”) 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

The Principles

Two major principles:

1. Leaders in the church, including the clergy, like everyone else, are to be addressed with a Law and Gospel approach as to the issue of divorce and remarriage.
2. Leaders, including clergy, are to be examined as to their qualification for leadership. More is required of them. The Scriptures show that candidates for leadership must be judged, as to their leadership role, by two major principles:
 - a. Their standing in terms of their character qualifications. (Developed below)
 - b. Their ministry standing in grace. (Developed below)

1. Leadership: Law and Gospel and Divorce

It is important to recognize that the Law and Gospel approach is not one which excuses or tolerates divorce, or any other sin. Paul rightly rejects this approach to questions of sin and grace. "God forbid!" he says (Romans 6:1ff.). The teaching of the Law is not diminished in a true Law and Gospel approach. Sin remains sin.

When this strong Law teaching is matched with a clear Gospel presentation, a new power is made known. It is made known through the hearing of the Word; through the Holy Spirit's work awakening to sin, bringing one to repentance and faith resulting in justification and sanctification.

A comprehensive Law and Gospel approach recognizes God's verdict that all sin must be punished. This means that the solution to sin must be found in the cross or else the punishment will fall upon the sinner. Far from excusing the debt of sin, the Gospel proclaims that God has paid it. He grants the blessing of this provision to those He leads to repentance and faith.

Therefore, the remedy for sins associated with divorce is to be found in repentance and faith for candidates for leadership as well as for the other members of the body. In questions of divorce, this means the person recognizes the severity of the many sins that contributed to the divorce, repents of those sins, trusts God's work to forgive those sins, and the work of the Holy Spirit to live in daily repentance and faith with a clear conscience as God's new creation in Christ.¹

2. Leadership: Character Qualifications

General Character Qualifications

In considering persons for leadership positions Paul sets forth basic qualifications for church leaders in the Pastoral Epistles. "These are qualities to consider when reflecting on a certain candidate."² We can

¹ See *Church of the Lutheran Brethren Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage*, 1989 for this approach to divorce and remarriage. The policies and procedures presented here build on this approach.

² "On the Scriptural Qualifications for *Overseers* in the Pastoral Epistles and their Contemporary Application" (CLB Theological Council, Fergus Falls, MN, 2018), 3.

note “that most of these are not beyond the scope of what should be desired of all believers.”³ Nor should we conclude that these are the only qualifications to be considered for ordained positions as if these lists are exhaustive.⁴ “It may be observed that the general qualification of “above reproach” covers all of the other categories, and the rest are just expansions and examples of what that means.”⁵ These qualities are not black-and-white. “There is no absolute threshold for these qualities, but if something contrary to these qualities is present in a candidate, one needs to use their discernment before receiving them into one of these positions.”⁶ With particular relevance for the concerns of this document, the “faithfulness to wife” interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 does not in itself forbid remarried candidates for leadership positions.⁷ “This interpretation is not a lower standard than one that automatically disqualifies divorced-and-remarried persons”⁸ as the “husband of one wife” interpretation is applied by some interpreters. “It should be seen as a higher standard that applies to all married candidates as well. One might prove to be unfaithful in a variety of ways, yet not divorced (nor remarried). Thus, this interpretation becomes relevant for many more candidates, and places a higher demand on the quality of faithfulness they should demonstrate in their marriage relationships.”⁹

The following are the general character qualities that are to be considered for church leaders as set forth in the pastoral epistles.

Above reproach: 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6
Faithfulness to wife: 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6
Sober-minded: 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7
Self-controlled, Gentle: 1 Timothy 3:2, 3; Titus 1:8
Respectable: 1 Timothy 3:2
Hospitable: 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
Able to teach: 1 Timothy 3:2
Manages his own household well: 1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6
Good reputation in the community: 1 Timothy 3:7
Loves what is good: Titus 1:8
Upright: Titus 1:8
Holy: Titus 1:8
Disciplined: Titus 1:8
Holds firm to the trustworthy word as taught, able to give instruction in sound doctrine and able to rebuke those who contradict it: Titus 1:9
Not a drunkard: 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7
Not violent: 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7
Not quarrelsome: 1 Timothy 3:3
Not a lover of money, Greedy for gain: 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7
Not a new convert: 1 Timothy 3:6
Not arrogant: Titus 1:7
Not quick-tempered: Titus 1:7

³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Ibid., 2-3.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For the basis for this interpretation see the paper: “On the Scriptural Qualifications for *Overseers* in the Pastoral Epistles and their Contemporary Application”

⁸ “On the Scriptural Qualifications for *Overseers* in the Pastoral Epistles and their Contemporary Application” (CLB Theological Council, Fergus Falls, MN, 2018), 6

⁹ Ibid.

Character Qualifications Considered in the Context of a Divorce

Because of the high nature of the offices involved, qualifications must be set. Because of the far-reaching consequences of divorce for the immediate persons involved - for the children, for concerned families, for society, and for the church - the pastoral candidate, and to a lesser degree, other leaders, must be examined to determine whether they can be trusted with these offices if they have in the past been associated in some way with a broken marriage.

Among the considerations which must be made is an examination of the character faults which might have been revealed in a divorce situation. When calling a pastor, such character concerns are entirely appropriate. Therefore, while it may be true that a person is not necessarily automatically barred from ministry by the class of sins associated with divorce, it may also be true that the candidate will not be chosen for pastoral service because of general character faults revealed in the divorce history. "A divorce history often does reflect that one has not been faithful to their wife, has not managed their household well, or it may lead to a poor public reputation."¹⁰ Some specifics to consider are:

Character

1. Does the divorce history reveal a character issue that would disqualify the person from Pastoral ministry? Is there anything in the divorce history which leaves in question his qualifications to serve the church or the general public in his preaching, teaching and counselling ministries going forward? Has he demonstrated that he has processed issues related to his divorce history which might cause him to be weak on family and marriage issues? Is there anything in his divorce history which disqualifies him as to ministry to children or vulnerable adults?
2. Has this issue (s) been satisfactorily resolved?

Reputation

1. Is he considered to be above reproach and have a good reputation in the community?
2. Does the person's divorce and remarriage history indicate that this person is not characterized by 'faithfulness to one's wife' (*1 Timothy 3:2*)?
3. Does any case of previous infidelity loom large, with the result that people will be unable to view him/them as faithful?

Restoration (cases where discipline has been exercised)¹¹

1. Does his/their local congregation view him/them as faithful?
2. Does the community?

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook* Section Two. D.

3. Does the CLB church family view this man as faithful?

Ministry Standing in Grace Considered

The Apostle Paul introduces a standard which must be considered in some settings in order to bear witness to God's redemptive purpose through grace.

1 Corinthians 15:8 "Last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect."

1 Timothy 1:12-17 "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that He considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Paul recognizes that he would not qualify as a leader of the church by the general criteria he established for others to use in choosing leaders. He remembers his past as a blasphemer, a persecutor of the church and as a violent man. How then can he be an apostle?

His answer is that he is what he is by the grace of God. Here we must understand all he teaches about his standing in grace because of the cross, plus the gracious design of God to use him despite his past. He was given strength to be in grace what he was not in personal history. Of course, he had been through some disciplines since becoming a believer. He had been hammered and shaped by God for this calling, and Paul had not wilted and run. In his trust of the Lord during hard times he had allowed God to shape him for service (Romans 5:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 4). By grace he was someone new both in his relationship to God and in his character.

We need to remind ourselves that his past is not covered over as if it had never happened. He does not act as if he has always lived the exemplary Christian life. Undoubtedly his willingness to confess his sins, his open agreement with God about his unworthiness puts Paul on the side of the Law, agreeing with the Law against himself.

Knowing his own bleak history, Paul acknowledges that his lack of fitness for his present calling is moderated by ignorance. Certainly, he does not assert that if he were to return to his former blasphemous life that he would still be acceptable as an apostle. God's mercy sees his ignorance, God's grace removes his guilt.

What is more, his former life is turned into an opportunity to reveal the unlimited patience and grace of God as an encouragement to other undeserving people who would follow Paul in the Kingdom of God. The wonder of it all causes Paul to break out into benediction.

The Process

The Theological Council shall affirm the decision of the Certification Committee of a candidate that has divorce and remarriage in his history before the candidate moves forward with ordination and/or licensure.

By pastoral candidate we mean an applicant who has graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary or a non-ordained person who is otherwise a candidate for licensing or ordination. By colloquy applicant we mean a person who is a graduate of a seminary other than Lutheran Brethren Seminary and is seeking licensing or ordination; or one previously ordained by another church body and is seeking recognition of ordination.

- A. A pastoral candidate or colloquy applicant who has been divorced and is single or has remarried. If such a person gives evidence of a right relationship with God, that is, demonstrates genuine repentance and living faith which includes contrition for the sins involved in the divorce, he shall not be disqualified because of the divorce history alone. However, the nature of the divorce shall be considered, as would other character concerns, in the general qualifications of the candidate. He shall be examined according to the principles as set forth in this document.

The divorced pastoral candidate or colloquy applicant who is single at the time of his approval by the examining committee shall be free, as that freedom is understood in the position paper of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren on divorce and remarriage, to remarry in the Lord. We would apply the same criteria used to consider any divorced person(s) approaching a pastor/elder board with a request for marriage.¹²

- B. A pastoral candidate or colloquy applicant whose wife has been divorced previous to their marriage. If such a person gives evidence of living in a right relationship with God, that is, demonstrates genuine repentance and living faith, and his wife demonstrates genuine repentance, which includes contrition for the sins involved in the divorce, and living faith, he shall not be disqualified because of the divorce history of his wife and her remarriage alone.

- C. Lutheran Brethren pastors who become involved in divorce proceedings. “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.”¹³

As stated in the *Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage*:

“The qualifications established for service and the degree of restoration to service should be determined by the nature of the church or place of ministry to which a restored person may be called. Where there is a strong redemptive ministry, restored people bearing witness to grace may be among the best witnesses to the cross of Christ. Where the ministry is primarily

¹² See *Church of the Lutheran Brethren Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage*, 1989, and *Ministerial Acts* E8-E10.

¹³ *Ministers of the Gospel Handbook*. Approved by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren Council of Directors, March 15, 2018, 18.

either prophetic witness or nurture, exemplary character history may be of central importance.”¹⁴

The principles according to which the Theological Council shall determine if he may remain on the Ministers of the Gospel roster and if he may return to his ministry are set forth in this document.

D. Lutheran Brethren pastors who, having been divorced, seek to remarry.

In order to retain his status as a pastor in the CLB any Lutheran Brethren pastor who becomes divorced and seeks to remarry must secure the consent of The Theological Council. He shall remarry only within the guidelines stipulated in the position paper of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren on divorce and remarriage. We would apply the same criteria used to consider any divorced person(s) approaching a pastor/elder board with a request for marriage.¹⁵ Failure to comply with these guidelines shall result in the revocation of his ordination.

E. Lutheran Brethren pastors who seek to marry a woman who has previously been divorced.

Any Lutheran Brethren pastor who seeks to marry a divorced woman must secure the consent of The Theological Council in order to marry. They shall marry only within the guidelines stipulated in the position paper of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren on divorce and remarriage. We would apply the same criteria used to consider any divorced person(s) approaching a pastor/elder board with a request for marriage.¹⁶ Failure to comply with these guidelines shall result in the revocation of his ordination.

¹⁴ *Church of the Lutheran Brethren Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage*, 1989, 8.

¹⁵ See *Church of the Lutheran Brethren Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage*, and *Ministerial Acts E8-E10*.

¹⁶ See *Church of the Lutheran Brethren Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage*, 1989, and *Ministerial Acts E8-E10*.