

Ordination of a Pastor

Guidelines from the NT-NL Mission Office

First Call candidates are urged to contact the Bishop to set a tentative date for ordination as soon as they learn that they have received the recommendation of the Call Committee.

Every service of ordination celebrates God's promise to be among us through Word and Sacrament. Your call to serve as a pastor and minister of the church is a celebration of the whole Church and not of any one individual or any one congregation. Keeping that basic principle in mind during your planning will help you develop a service that both brings glory and praise to the One who has called you to this ministry and is deeply satisfying to you.

Preparation for an ordination service may commence immediately following the formal issuance of a call to an ordinand. The service is most often held in the candidate's home congregation with the bishop of the calling synod presiding. If the candidate is called to a synod other than their home synod, the bishop of the calling synod has "right of first refusal" to perform the ordination and may defer to the bishop of the candidate's home synod, if requested. The date of the ordination must be cleared with the ordaining bishop as well as the host congregation before invitations are sent out.

The congregation, neighboring ministers of other denominations, community leaders, synod members, pastors, friends and family of the candidate should be invited to celebrate this special event. Usually the best time is a weekend with focus on a Friday evening or Saturday afternoon or early evening. Sunday afternoon also works.

Since this is a service of the "whole church," the bishop is the Presiding Minister throughout the worship, which is a Eucharist. Another pastor of the ordinand's choice serves as Assisting Minister until the ordination. The newly ordained pastor

serves as Assisting Minister after the ordination. Those serving as lector(s), cantor, communion assistants, ushers, greeters, and other worship leaders should be selected by the ordinand prior to the ordination day so they can be listed in the bulletin.

While the bishop is ready, willing, and able to preach for your ordination service, you are welcome to invite another pastor who has served as mentor or friend to preach. Using the rubrics for ordination, you may select your own scriptures for the service. The service follows good Lutheran principles as well as local practice. Seasonal variations in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* rubrics should be observed, but other liturgies may be used. Please be sure to review your liturgy of choice with the bishop early in your planning process.

The host pastor provides a welcome at the beginning of the liturgy, prior to the processional hymn. The bishop provides a few minutes of introduction to the purpose and meaning of the ordination service following the Prayer of the Day and prior to the reading of the first lesson. The Confession of Sins and Absolution may be included prior to the entrance hymn. The entrance hymn should be a hymn invoking the Holy Spirit, or a seasonal hymn. The procession order is: crucifer, acolyte, bible bearer, ordinand, lay rostered leaders, vested visiting ministers of other faiths, vested visiting ministers of the Lutheran faith, Bishop Assistants, assisting ministers/host pastor, preaching minister, and bishop. The ordinand participates in the procession but then sits in the congregation either with family or alone in the first pew.

It is helpful if marked bulletins, highlighting the responsibilities of each participant, are provided for those who will be serving in a leadership capacity. Reserved seating should be set aside for all worship leaders and clergy. It can be helpful to ask someone to order the processional so that burden doesn't fall on the ordinand or the Bishop who are often pulled in many directions.

Following the sermon is the creed (note the unusual order prescribed for ordinations and installations), followed by the hymn of the day, which ought to focus on the ordination service and call to ministry. The ordination, itself, follows the hymn of the day and uses the rubrics in *Occasional Services* (www.elca.org). The entire order for ordination should be printed in the worship booklet so congregational responses can be made. Copies of previous ordination bulletins are available for assistance in planning the service.

At the conclusion of the hymn of the day, the presenter(s) of your choice (lay or clergy) escorts the ordinand to the chancel and presents him/her to the bishop. Do not carry your bulletin with you, come with empty hands. The bishop asks the questions; the candidate answering from the heart. The Assisting Minister offers the Prayers of the Church which you should prepare in advance for their use. As the candidate kneels and the congregation sings, "*Come, Holy Ghost...*" other pastors gather around. The use of the somewhat unfamiliar hymn is not a "may" but a "shall." It is a hymn of invocation of the Holy Spirit, used in ordination services in the Christian church since the late medieval period, perhaps as far back as 800 AD. If you are not comfortable using this as a hymn of the congregation, it is nicely sung as a solo or small ensemble hymn.

When invited to do so, the clergy present place their right hands on the ordinand's shoulders. All worshippers are also invited forward to participate in the laying on of hands, symbolizing that the whole church, clergy and lay, have called you to Word and Sacrament ministry. Following their blessing, all are seated.

A red stole is placed over the ordinand's shoulders. The stole is often placed by the

ordinand's family and should be laying across the altar rail or some other conspicuous location throughout the first half of the service.

Scriptural admonitions are given. On behalf of the Church the congregation receives the pastor with applause! The new pastor may respond briefly, following which the new pastor is invited to offer the greeting of peace.

The offering should be designated for a special cause with part of the offering going to the **Bishop's MAD Money Fund (Mission / Assistance / DiscipleLife fund)**.

The Eucharist is celebrated with the newly ordained pastor serving as Assisting Minister. When more than one station is used for distribution of the sacrament, the bishop and the newly ordained serve the bread.

Another pastor or the bishop should read the post-communion prayer inasmuch as it includes a prayer for the ministry of the new pastor.

The newly ordained pastor is welcome to speak or chant the benediction. Following the benediction a recessional hymn is sung. The newly ordained dismisses the congregation. A reception usually follows!

Photographs will be taken immediately following the service before clergy and assisting ministers disrobe.

The bishop will review the program prior to its printing so please email it as soon as it is available, to allow time for follow-up printing. Please call the Mission Area office if you have any questions about your Service of Ordination. The bishop looks forward to sharing this day with you, giving thanks to God for your call to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry.

Rubrics

Color: Red
Prayer of the Day: Ordination
Lessons: Suggested ordination texts from *Occasional Services* or Lessons of the Day
Preface: Apostles
Post-Communion Prayer: Ordination