

Statement of policy

regarding sexual misconduct by members of the clergy and rostered laypersons

Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod + Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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The Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod of the ELCA is committed to maintaining a caring Christian community free from all forms of sexual misconduct within the Church and to responding with justice and compassion when such misconduct occurs.

In keeping with these commitments to help our congregations and other ministries be wellsprings of healing in the midst of a society which often exploits and abuses our God-given sexuality, this statement describes procedures to be followed when there are allegations of sexual misconduct against a rostered person. These procedures are intended to foster a climate of safety, to remedy injustice, to provide healthy and appropriate nurturing and to protect others from being victimized.

This *Statement of Policy* describes the general approach that the Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod will follow in responding to reports of sexual misconduct within the church by rostered ministers of the synod. It will not be appropriate or even possible for this synod to follow this approach in every case. The synod reserves the right to depart from this *Statement of Policy* as it deems necessary.

Companion documents will be drafted to delineate the synod's plan for education in issues of ministerial sexual ethics and procedures to be followed in professional leader background checks. In addition, a statement of advice and counsel for rostered personnel will be made available to assist our professional leaders in matters of pastoral counseling, maintaining boundaries, avoiding "dual relationships" and related issues.

DEFINITIONS

Sexual Misconduct. Federal and state law make distinctions among various types of sexual misconduct, such as "sexual harassment," "sexual abuse" and "sexual assault." Similarly, the governing documents of the ELCA define what types of sexual misconduct can result in a pastor being disciplined. Some types of sexual misconduct may provide grounds for discipline but may not be unlawful, while other types may be unlawful but may not provide grounds for discipline.

These distinctions should not concern a person who is troubled about the sexual conduct of a pastor or associate in ministry. The synod is concerned about all types of sexual misconduct by these professionals, regardless of whether or how the misconduct is characterized by the law or by the governing documents of the ELCA. Any sexual misconduct committed by one of these persons should be reported to the synod and/or to the pastor's church/employer, including, but not limited

to, any sexual contact between the rostered person and a congregant, counselee, employee, or volunteer.

It should be noted that the synod may not be able to assume primary responsibility for addressing all allegations of sexual misconduct. For example, if a pastor who is under call to a congregation is accused of sexually harassing another of the congregation's employees, civil law may require that the congregation, as the employer, take timely and appropriate action. The law may prevent the synod from interfering in the situation.

Complainant. As used in this *Statement of Policy*, "complainant" means a person who reports sexual misconduct to the synod. This *Statement of Policy* will assume that generally the complainant is also the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct, but that may not always be the case.

Pastor or Clergy. As used in this *Statement of Policy*, "rostered person," "pastor," and "clergy" include ordained ministers and rostered laypersons (deacons.) This *Statement of Policy* assumes that the rostered person who is accused of sexual misconduct is under call to a congregation, and it will be adapted to persons serving other kinds of calls. These standards also apply to rostered leaders who are On Leave From Call or Retired.

Advocate. As used in this *Statement of Policy*, an "advocate" is an individual who is willing to provide support to the complainant throughout the process and to help interpret this synod's policies and procedures.

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

"Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant..." Matthew 20:26

Jesus' words to his disciples defined their leadership among the people of God in terms of servanthood. Repeatedly, in his parables and sayings, Jesus spoke also of stewardship. A steward is one who is given a sacred trust; one who understands clearly the responsibility to care for the gifts of another without exploitation. As leaders in the community, therefore, we are to be servants and stewards engaged in care-giving ministries. The leader represents the group being led and therefore is a model for its members. The leader motivates the group being led and must therefore help it to be what it is supposed to be.

In matters of sexuality and community, these Biblical invitations to servanthood and stewardship define a stance for evangelical leadership. Gospel-guided leaders are good stewards of their own sexuality and the sexuality of other persons. Through our understanding of creation, we recognize sexuality as a good gift from God. As stewards and servants, we are called to exercise respect for the integrity of persons entrusted in our care. Responsible stewardship entails the recognition of the need for clear boundaries in our relationships with parishioners, counselees and persons in the general public who also look to us for spiritual leadership. Misuse of

one's position to satisfy personal needs or desires is a serious infringement of the God-given rights of another; such misconduct is also an abuse of the power and authority of the ministerial office and a violation of the trust given by the community of the faithful to that position.

Our confessional stance is grounded in the Trinitarian God who is creative, redemptive and empowering. Instances of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment require a response of which empowers, stands with, and seeks to provide restoration of wholeness to victims of abuse. To the greatest extent possible, the church's response to victims will seek to re-establish their trust in the faith community. Our response to one who has engaged in misconduct will include a call to confront the sin, to repent, to evaluate the call to service, and to live a renewed life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARDS OF CONDUCT IN MINISTRY

Members of congregations look to pastors and deacons as their spiritual leaders, mentors and role models. Ordained ministers serving as parish pastors, those in specialized ministries, and deacons are highly involved in the personal lives of their parishioners and people they serve. Pastors and deacons often deal with people who are in crisis situations or who are otherwise vulnerable. Leadership inevitably connotes power. Pastors and deacons may not perceive or understand the degree of power held in relationship to their congregational and community members. This power is heightened when persons come to them for counseling or spiritual help.

The office of ministry implies trust. The power of the pastoral office contains the authority and symbols derived from God. Such symbolic authority not only gives clergy and deacons power but also establishes the expectation that persons may come to them without fear of exploitation or abuse. Pastors and deacons should not become sexually involved with congregation members, counselees, or employees of the congregation. To do so constitutes an abuse of the power inherent in the role of pastor or deacons and substitutes personal gratification for the needs of the people served. The power of the pastoral office makes it very difficult for a pastor or a deacon to be in a relationship of equality with parishioners or counselees. Full awareness and free and mutual choice without any fear or coercion is necessary to a truly consensual relationship.

THE ROLE OF CONGREGATIONS

The synod and congregations have different responsibilities and thus different roles to play in preventing and responding to reports of clergy sexual misconduct. Each ELCA congregation calls its own pastor, determines its pastor's duties and responsibilities, supervises its pastor's day-to-day ministry, and decides whether to terminate its pastor's call. The synod has neither the authority nor the ability to make those decisions. Obviously, then, the synod cannot be a safe place unless every congregation shares its commitment to ending clergy sexual misconduct.

This *Statement of Policy* is the synod's policy, and therefore says little about the role played by congregations in preventing and responding to reports of clergy sexual misconduct. This should not obscure the fact that congregations also have a vital role to play. The synod expects congregations to develop their own sexual misconduct policies.

THE ROLE OF THE SYNOD

The synod's role is essentially twofold. First, the bishop is responsible for providing pastoral care and leadership to the synod's congregations and pastors. Reports of clergy sexual misconduct invariably create an acute need for such care and leadership. Second, pastors who commit sexual misconduct may be disciplined - that is, they may be suspended or removed from the clergy roster of the ELCA. The bishop is primarily responsible for overseeing the preliminary or consultation stage of the disciplinary process and for initiating the formal stage of the disciplinary process.

When the synod provides pastoral care and leadership in the wake of clergy sexual misconduct, it is performing acts of ministry. The freedom of the synod to decide for itself how God has called it to minister to those harmed by sexual misconduct is a precious one that is constitutionally protected from governmental interference. The same is true of the synod's freedom to decide who will be on its clergy roster, and of the freedom of each congregation to decide who will preach and teach from its pulpit. Nothing in this *Statement of Policy* is intended to diminish these freedoms in any respect or to create any legal rights or responsibilities.

In every sexual misconduct case, the bishop and the bishop's staff will attempt to make available pastoral care to the complainant, the complainant's family, the pastor who is alleged to have committed the misconduct, the pastor's family, the members of the pastor's congregation, the pastor's colleagues, and others. The ultimate responsibility of the bishop and the bishop's staff is to the synod, and not to any individual within the synod. If a conflict arises between what is the synod's interests and what is in the interests of someone else, the

bishop and the bishop's staff are obligated to act on this synod's behalf.

SYNOD POLICY AND PROCEDURES

A. Adequate Preparation

This synod is committed to preventing clergy sexual misconduct in the following ways:

First, the synod will not tolerate clergy sexual misconduct. The synod will make that clear in educational opportunities that it provides, in the manner in which it responds to reports of clergy sexual misconduct, in discussions that it has with seminarians and others who seek to join its clergy roster, and in its public and private statements regarding this issue.

Second, the synod will provide ongoing educational opportunities regarding clergy sexual misconduct for pastors, congregations, and others. Those efforts will focus on such subjects as the dynamics of clergy sexual misconduct and the impact of such misconduct on its victims. The synod strongly urges its pastors and congregations to take advantage of these educational opportunities.

Finally, the bishop and the bishop's staff will continue to take advantage of educational opportunities that are available to them. The synod recognizes that society generally and the churches particularly have much to learn about sexual misconduct. As the synod's understanding of this problem changes, its *Statement of Policy* and educational efforts will change as well.

These preventative efforts are intended to complement similar efforts that have been or will be made by the synod's congregations, by the ELCA churchwide organization, by ELCA seminaries, and by other entities affiliated with the ELCA.

B. Reporting

Even the best preventative measure cannot completely eliminate clergy sexual misconduct. The synod must always be prepared to respond to reports of misconduct. The more open it is to receiving such reports, the more often clergy sexual misconduct will be reported.

Anyone who knows or suspects that a pastor may have been involved in sexual misconduct should report that knowledge or suspicion to the bishop or assistant to the bishop directly by phone, in person or by letter stating the complaint. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the bishop and the bishop's assistant(s) are attached to this *Statement of Policy*. If a complainant is uncomfortable about contacting the bishop or the assistant to the bishop, then the complainant should contact one of the other people, who include men and women, clergy and lay persons, listed in the attachment. However, it must be stressed that these people are acting on behalf of the synod, and any information that they are given will be

shared with the bishop (unless it is the bishop who is being accused of sexual misconduct, in which case the bishop of the ELCA will be contacted).

A contact may be made with the bishop or other authorized person by mail, by telephone, or in person. The complainant need not identify herself or himself when (s)he first contacts the synod. The complainant may anonymously ask questions about how the synod would respond to a particular complaint of misconduct. However, the synod can do little about a report of sexual misconduct until the complainant identifies herself or himself and the pastor involved in the misconduct.

The bishop or other person contacted by the complainant will (1) assure the complainant that the synod does not tolerate sexual misconduct and takes seriously all reports of such misconduct; (2) explain the synod's process for responding to reports of sexual misconduct and offer to provide a copy of this *Statement of Policy*; (3) answer the complainant's questions about the policies and procedures of the synod; (4) express care and concern for the complainant; (5) when the complainant is anonymous, encourage the complainant to identify herself or himself and the pastor involved in the misconduct.

The bishop or other person contacted by the complainant will also offer to provide the complainant with a list of advocates who are available to provide support and to help interpret the synod's policies and procedures. The complainant will be invited to contact an advocate and to be accompanied by that advocate through the reporting, investigative, and if necessary, disciplinary processes. If the complainant requests, the synod will contact an advocate for her or him. The complainant is welcome to use an advocate who does not appear on the list - such as a friend or family member - or to decline to use an advocate.

Promptly after a report of clergy sexual misconduct has been received from an identified complainant, the bishop and/or bishop's designee will interview the complainant in person or, if that is not possible, by telephone. In this and all meetings with synod personnel, the complainant may be accompanied by a friend, family member, support person, or advocate of her or his choice. The bishop or bishop's designee will ask the complainant to provide as much information about the sexual misconduct as the complainant is comfortable sharing. The complainant may be asked to provide information in writing or to sign a written summary for the sake of clarity of the allegations. The bishop or bishop's designee will also ask the complainant what (s)he is seeking in coming forward and whether the complainant is prepared to participate in the disciplinary process if necessary. The complainant will be given a copy of this *Statement of Policy* if (s)he has not already received it.

The bishop or bishop's designee will discuss with the complainant how (s)he feels about the possibility

that her or his identity may become known to the accused or others. Insofar as possible, the synod will respect the wishes of the complainant regarding confidentiality. However, at some point, the synod may be required by civil law or by the governing documents of the ELCA to disclose the identity of the complainant. Also, in unusual circumstances, the fact that the bishop or bishop's designee is responsible to the synod may require action contrary to the wishes of the complainant..

If the bishop or the bishop's designee learns that a child or vulnerable adult may have been sexually abused, the bishop or the bishop's designee may be legally required to report that information to law enforcement authorities. If possible, the complainant will be notified before such a report is made.

The bishop or bishop's designee will discuss with the complainant her or his needs for pastoral care or professional counseling. If the complainant requests, the bishop or bishop's designee will help to put the complainant in touch with persons who can provide such care or counseling. Under no circumstances will any employee of the synod office function as the complainant's advocate, pastor, or counselor.

The bishop or bishop's designee may appoint a contact person within the synod who will keep in regular contact with the complainant and will inform the complainant of significant developments. That contact person will also be available to respond to the complainant's questions and concerns about the process.

C. Initial Investigation of the Complaint

After interviewing the complainant, the bishop and/or the bishop's designee will carefully review the information provided by the complainant. If the report appears credible and involves sexual misconduct for which the pastor might be disciplined, the bishop or bishop's designee may conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether information supporting or contradicting the report exists and to prevent intimidation of the complainant or the accused. The preliminary investigation may include (1) further discussions with the complainant; (2) a review of the records of the synod, another ELCA synod, the ELCA, or an entity affiliated with the ELCA; or (3) interviews of former bishops of the pastor, those who served as assistants to former bishops of the pastor, pastors who succeeded the pastor at congregations that (s)he served, pastors who presently serve on the same staff with the pastor, members of congregations that the pastor served, members of congregations that the pastor now serves, friends of the pastor, or (4) persons identified by the complainant, friends, family members, pastors, or counselors of the complainant.

The preliminary investigation will be conducted as quickly and as discreetly as is possible under the circumstances. All of those contacted will be asked to keep the contact in strictest confidence. If the synod or a

discipline hearing committee later determines that the pastor did not commit sexual misconduct, that conclusion will be communicated to those who were contacted by the synod in the course of its preliminary investigation.

D. Conversation with the Pastor

The bishop will usually meet with the pastor. The bishop should be accompanied by the bishop's designee or another person. If the bishop meets alone with the pastor, the bishop will clarify that the meeting is not confidential, and that the bishop may disclose anything that (s)he is told.

At their meeting, the bishop will provide the pastor with information regarding the complaint and ask the pastor to respond. The bishop may ask the pastor to provide a response in writing. The bishop will also (1) assure the pastor that, while the synod does not tolerate sexual misconduct, the synod will give the pastor a full and fair opportunity to contest allegations of sexual misconduct; (2) explain the synod's process for responding to reports of sexual misconduct and provide a copy of this *Statement of Policy*; (3) answer the pastor's questions about the policies and procedures of the synod; (4) express care and concern for the pastor; (5) strongly discourage the pastor from having any personal contact with the complainant, either directly or indirectly; and (6) invite the pastor to contact an advocate and to be accompanied by that advocate through the investigative, and, if necessary, disciplinary processes. If the pastor requests, the synod will assist the pastor in finding an advocate. The pastor may decline to use an advocate.

Depending upon the circumstances, the bishop may ask the pastor to voluntarily agree to certain restrictions upon his or her ministry - such as agreeing not to have contact with children - until the investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings are concluded. If the pastor refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to impose the restrictions upon the pastor. The bishop may also ask the pastor to take a leave of absence - either with or without pay - until the investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings are concluded. If the pastor refuses, the bishop may ask the congregation to place the pastor on involuntary leave of absence, or, in extreme circumstances, the bishop may temporarily suspend the pastor without prejudice. Finally, the bishop may ask the pastor to resign his or her call or from the clergy roster of the ELCA. The bishop cannot force the pastor to resign. Only a discipline hearing committee can remove the pastor from the clergy roster.

The bishop or bishop's designee will discuss with the pastor his or her needs for pastoral care or professional counseling. If the pastor requests, the bishop or bishop's designee will help to put the pastor in touch with persons who can provide such care or counseling. Under no circumstances will any employee of the synod function as the pastor's advocate, pastor or counselor.

The bishop or bishop's designee may appoint a contact person within the synod who will keep in regular contact with the pastor and will inform the pastor of significant developments. That contact person will also be available to respond to the pastor's questions and concerns about the process.

E. Assessment of Information

After meeting with the pastor, the bishop will carefully review the information provided by the complainant, information discovered during the preliminary investigation, and information provided by the pastor. The bishop will then decide upon a course of action. Among options available to the bishop are the following: no further action; further investigation; requesting the pastor to undergo a psycho diagnostic evaluation; requesting the pastor's congregation to take some action; convening a consultation or advisory panel; or initiating the formal disciplinary process.

F. Consultation or Advisory Panel

Reports of sexual misconduct often present a bishop with a difficult decision. To assist him or her in making these difficult decisions, a bishop may, at his or her sole discretion, appoint a consultation or advisory panel. Essentially, a consultation or advisory panel is a small group of clergy and laypersons who are asked to recommend a course of action to the bishop. Before making that recommendation, the panel may interview the complainant, the pastor, the bishop, the bishop's designee, and/or others. If possible, the panel will seek to resolve the controversy through recommendations that are pastoral and therapeutic and that will eliminate the need for disciplinary proceedings if they are accepted by all concerned. If such a resolution does not appear possible, the panel will advise the bishop whether it believes that the disciplinary process should be initiated.

G. Formal Hearing

Disciplinary proceedings are the process by which the ELCA determines if a pastor is guilty of the charges and, if so, what the penalty should be. The process is governed by Chapter 20 of the Constitution and Bylaws of the ELCA and by the Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings. A pastor may be disciplined for committing "conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office," which is defined in Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Ordained Ministers (Dec. 5, 1993) to include "adultery, promiscuity, the sexual abuse of another, or the misuse of counseling relationships for sexual favors." Definitions and Guidelines is available from the synod.

A bishop may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a pastor by filing written charges setting forth the offense that the pastor is accused of committing - e.g., "the sexual abuse of another" - and the alleged facts supporting the charge - e.g., the name of the person that

the pastor is alleged to have abused and the date, place, time, and other circumstances of the alleged abuse.

A committee of twelve persons is appointed to hold a hearing on the charges. The hearing resembles a court trial. The bishop presents testimony and other evidence in support of the charges, and then the pastor presents testimony and other evidence in opposition to the charges. The governing documents of the ELCA provide for certain rights for the bishop, the pastor, and the complaining witnesses. A bishop generally will not initiate formal disciplinary proceedings unless the complainant agrees to testify against the pastor.

Following the hearing, the discipline hearing committee decides whether the charges are true, and, if so, what discipline should be imposed. The options available are private censure and admonition, suspension from the clergy roster of the ELCA for a designated period of time or until the pastor complies with specified conditions, or removal from the clergy roster. The discipline hearing committee's decision is generally made about four months after charges are filed.

H. Disclosure

Except in unusual circumstances, the synod will disclose all serious allegations of clergy misconduct. Although disclosure can increase the short term pain caused by clergy sexual misconduct, experience has demonstrated that disclosure speeds the healing of the primary and secondary victims of the misconduct, empowers unknown victims to come forward and seek help, protects others from being victimized by the same pastor, and demonstrates the commitment of the Church to deal openly and honestly with the problem. The synod also discloses in order to fulfill its mission of reaching out to those who need love, healing and reconciliation.

Decisions regarding who will make what disclosure to whom and when will vary from case to case. In general, though, the synod will abide by the following guidelines:

1. Disclosure of clergy sexual misconduct will be made to the leadership of the pastor's present congregation, the members of the pastor's present congregation, the members of the pastor's family, and other pastors within the synod. In some situations, wider disclosure to previous congregations or even to the news media, when necessary, may be made.

2. Disclosure will be made when (1) the pastor admits to committing sexual misconduct; (2) the pastor resigns his or her call or from the clergy roster of the ELCA after being accused of sexual misconduct; (3) the pastor is placed on leave of absence or temporarily suspended in response to an allegation of sexual misconduct; (4) the pastor is suspended or removed from the clergy roster as a result of formal disciplinary proceedings; or (5) secular legal proceedings (civil or criminal) are initiated against the pastor.

3. This synod intends to work closely with the congregational leaders regarding appropriate disclosure to the members of the congregation. Disclosure to the members will usually be made by one or more of the leaders or by the bishop.

4. To protect the privacy of those harmed by the pastor, only the following will be disclosed; (1) the fact that the pastor has been accused of, admitted to, or been found guilty of committing sexual misconduct; (2) the gender of the complainant; (3) whether the complainant was an adult or a minor at the time of the misconduct; (4) whether the complainant was a member of the pastor's congregation or a person to whom the pastor was providing pastoral care, and (5) if the pastor has denied the allegations, that fact will also be disclosed. Disclosure should never include the name of the complainant or facts from which (s)he could readily be identified.

5. Persons who believe that they have been harmed (directly or indirectly) by the pastor will be invited to contact the leaders of the congregation, the synod, or others who have agreed to be available to those persons.

I. Follow-up

The synod will work with congregations and others to help ensure that care and support are available to those harmed by clergy sexual misconduct. The synod cannot provide this care itself, but it will assist the primary and secondary victims of sexual misconduct to find resources that might help them on their journey to healing. In the instance of false allegations, the synod will communicate that conclusion to all persons who were contacted in the course of the investigation.

This "Statement of policy regarding sexual misconduct by members of the clergy and rostered laypersons" was adopted by the Synod Council of the Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod September 20, 1997.

APPENDIX A: ELCA STANDARDS

Under the Constitution and Bylaws of the ELCA, pastors may be disciplined for committing “*conduct incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.*” In November 1989, the Church Council approved a document entitled “*Definition and Guidelines for Discipline.*” The document defines what types of conduct constitute “conduct incompatible” for which a pastor can be subject to ecclesiastical discipline.

“The expectation of this church is that an ordained minister is to lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed. In keeping with this expectation, chastity and abstinence are required outside of marriage or outside publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, and chastity and fidelity are required within marriage or within such same-gender relationships. Adultery, infidelity, casual sexual relationships, promiscuity, the sexual abuse of another, or the misuse of the pastoral relationship for sexual activity constitute conduct that is incompatible with the character of the ministerial office.”

In October 1990, amended in 2010, the Church Council adopted a document entitled “*Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*” Unlike “*Definitions and Guidelines,*” this document “*is not a juridical document that describes the grounds on which ordained ministers may be subject to discipline.*” Rather, the document sets forth what the ELCA expects of rostered leaders:

The expectations of this church regarding the sexual conduct of its ordained ministers are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift and trust from God. Ordained ministers are to live in such a way as to honor this gift and trust. Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others.

This church’s social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust states: “Sexual intimacy, together with promises of fidelity and public accountability, nurtures bonds that allow people to thrive and provides a rich context for the care and support of children.” It also states: “It is in marriage that the highest degrees of physical intimacy are matched with and protected by the highest levels of binding commitment, including legal protection. It is in marriage that public promises of lifetime commitment can create the foundation for trust, intimacy, and safety.”

Single ordained ministers are expected to live a chaste life, holy in body and spirit, honoring the single life, and working for the good of all. A married ordained minister is expected to live in fidelity to his or her spouse, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a marriage relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful.

An ordained minister who is in a publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationship is expected to live in fidelity to his or her partner, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a publicly accountable relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful.

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APPENDIX B: GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL CARE

This appendix sets forth the goals of the synod in responding to allegations of sexual misconduct. Because every report of sexual misconduct involves unique circumstances and unique people, it will not be possible or appropriate to meet every one of these goals in every case, or to give each goal the same attention in each case.

FOR THE VICTIM(S)...

...the bishop's office will:
listen respectfully to the allegations
affirm that the church cares
refer the victim to an advocate
encourage professional therapy
provide the synod's policy guidelines

FOR THE ACCUSED...

...the bishop's office will:
arrange for pastoral care
advise the pastor of allegations, process and support
present the allegations without bias
follow due process of the ELCA disciplinary procedure
provide the synod's policy guidelines
request psychological assessment when appropriate
outline potential consequences including possible changes in salary and benefits
encourage professional therapy

FOR THE CONGREGATION...

...the bishop's office will:
inform the congregation's lay leaders of the allegations
request a meeting with the council

seek the council's permission to meet with the congregation
share the policy guidelines at the congregational meeting
seek interim pastoral care where needed
update council and congregation regularly
encourage other victims to come forward
provide ongoing care and healing support for the congregation, its staff and its next pastor(s)

FOR THE ACCUSED'S SPOUSE AND FAMILY...

...the bishop's office will:
ensure that the accused's spouse and family know of the allegations
offer to arrange pastoral care through an area pastor
provide the synod's policy guidelines

FOR AREA PASTORS AND ASSOCIATES IN MINISTRY...

...the bishop's office will, as appropriate to the situation:
inform area pastors and deacons of the allegations
invite the pastors/deacons to meet with the bishop
inform them of significant decisions in the process as well as the outcome