

Personnel Policies
Southeastern Minnesota Synod

April 2008

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Southeastern Minnesota Synod Personnel Policies March 2008

Preface

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) ". . .is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world." (ELCA Constitution, Chapter 4.--Statement of Purpose). The Southeastern Minnesota Synod (SEMS) is one of the Geographic Program Units of the ELCA. In all of its service the employees of the SEMS shall carry out the duties to which they are assigned, in faithfulness to the faith and mission of the SEMS.

These personnel policies have been prepared in order that every employee of the synod may know the terms of employment that will govern his/her relationship with the synod. It is the responsibility of the Bishop and Supervisor to administer these polices, with respect to persons in the employ of the synod. Questions regarding interpretation of policies should be directed to the Bishop.

The Executive Committee shall recommend to the Synod Council personnel policies for the synod, except as otherwise determined, including salaries, fair practices, staff position descriptions, and training. Upon approval by the Synod Council, the Executive Committee shall be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the personnel policies.

It is the policy of the synod that all employees shall be treated consistently and shall be able to perform their duties in a safe environment.

These personnel policies do not create, imply, or express promise of continued employment of any employee by the SEMS (hereinafter referred to as synod).

1. GENERAL

1.1. Authority

Adoption of these personnel policies by the Synod Council is granted by the general authority in the Constitution and Bylaws of this church. Nothing in these personnel policies shall conflict with the Constitution and Bylaws of the ELCA or the SEMS.

1.2. Scope

These personnel policies apply to all staff, budgeted or non-budgeted, in the synod, except where the Synod Council has granted an exception, as provided for in section 1.5.

1.3. Synod Council Executive Committee

The Synod Council Executive Committee will bring reports and recommend policies to the Synod Council. The Bishop will make recommendations regarding policies and revisions to the Executive Committee.

1.4. Distribution of Personnel Policies

SEMS Personnel Policies are distributed by the Bishop to all staff.

1.5. Exceptions and Amendments

Exceptions to these personnel policies may be granted and amendments may be made from time-to-time by the Synod Council, in consultation with the Executive Committee when it is judged that such exceptions are in the best interest of both this church and the employees concerned. No exception will be valid unless it is recorded in the minutes of the Synod Council. No rights or privileges which in any way limit or restrict the authority of the Synod Council to make amendments, corrections, additions or deletions to these personnel policies shall accrue to any employee by reason of these personnel policies and the effective application thereof to all such employees.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1. Employee

As used herein, the term "employee" shall apply to any person in the employ of the synod on an established pay basis.

The term "employee" does not include a person employed temporarily through employment agencies or serving as an independent contractor. Such a person is not eligible for employee benefits and these personnel policies do not apply.

2.2. Office Hours

The synod's office hours are from 8:30 am – noon and 1:00 – 4:30 pm. Weekly schedules are to be coordinated through supervisors.

3. EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS

All employees are considered staff of this synod and the underlying organizational principles shall be that of a unified work force. Where it is required bylaw, distinctions will be made between those considered exempt or non-exempt by the Fair Labor Standards Act.

3.1. Full-time Employment

Full-time employment means employment on a regular schedule Monday through Friday, 8:30 am. - 4:30 pm with schedules coordinated through the Bishop or supervisor.

3.2. Regular Part-time Employment

Regular part-time employment shall mean employed for at least 20 but less than 37.5 hours per week may be eligible for benefits on a prorated basis.

3.3. Contract with Independent Contractor

The synod may enter into a contract with an individual or company that provides services or products as an independent contractor. Independent contractors are not entitled to workers' compensation or other benefits provided in these policies.

All contracts for services must be approved by the Bishop and Executive Committee. Copies of such contracts must be given to the office manager, and generally should be of one year or less in duration.

3.4. Temporary Employment

Temporary employment includes summer, part-time, or seasonal workers. These employees are not eligible for benefits; however, temporary employees are entitled to Social Security benefits as required by law.

4. SERVICE TIME

4.1. General Principle

No rights shall accrue to an employee by virtue of service time, except as specifically stated in these policies; however, in the selection of vacation periods and similar matters, if other factors are equal, preference will be given to employees with the longest period of service.

4.2. Creditable Service Time

If an employee's service has been continuous, the date from which creditable service is computed will be the date on which the individual commenced full-time employment with this synod or its institutions, this church, a congregation, another synod of this church or one of the predecessor church bodies.

If a portion of an employee's creditable service time has been on a regular, part-time basis rather than on a full-time basis, the Bishop will determine whether the beginning date will be the date on which the employee began part-time work or if an adjusted date, reflecting the full-time equivalent of that service, will be used. In making such a

determination, consideration will be given to the nature and extent of the creditable time that was not on a full-time basis. This determination is to be communicated to the employee, in writing, by the Bishop.

4.3. Reinstatement

Should a former employee of this synod, this church or of a predecessor church again become an employee of this synod, if he/she is re-employed after an absence of one year or less, he/she will be reinstated without loss of creditable time. Should a former employee be re-employed after an absence of more than one year, accrual of creditable time will commence in the same manner as if he/she were a new employee.

4.4. Anniversaries

The synod is expected to recognize and honor extended periods of service in this church, beginning with the fifth year and at successive five year intervals. This recognition may be given at appropriate times such as board meetings, staff meetings, and synod assemblies. This policy includes executive and support staff, full time and part time.

5. RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

5.1. Inclusiveness in Employment

The synod is committed to equal employment opportunity for all qualified persons, without regard to race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, medical condition, sexual orientation, age, creed, status with regard to public assistance or membership in a local commission to the extent required by law. This applies to all employment practices, including hiring, promotions, training, disciplinary action, termination, and benefits. Functioning as a synod, we can and do discriminate on the basis of religion.

We expect all employees to show respect and sensitivity toward all other employees, and to demonstrate a commitment to the synod's equal opportunity objectives. If you observe, or experience a violation of this policy, you should report it immediately to your supervisor or the Bishop.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.2. Personnel Records

Records will be maintained in the synod office. An individual file for each employee will contain his/her employment application form, payroll authorizations, salary information, attendance records, performance appraisals, and other pertinent documents (i.e., sabbatical leaves, continuing education leave, etc.). Employee records are personal and will be kept in a locked file with access only by persons authorized by the Bishop. However, employees have the right to review their individual personnel file and all documents contained therein, at a time mutually convenient to the employee and the Bishop.

5.3. Employment of Relatives and Contractual Agreements

Persons who are related will not be employed or engaged under contract by the synod; however, two related persons may share one position. Related persons are defined as: children, parents, spouse, brothers, sisters, in-laws, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts and uncles.

5.4. Employment and Call Procedures

After the selection of an executive staff employee has been ratified by the Executive Committee and/or the Synod Council, a Letter of Employment is sent by the Bishop to both clergy and lay individuals. In addition, Letters of Call are sent by the Secretary of the synod to those who have ordained status.

Term calls that set specific start and end dates of employment may be issued for clergy, in conjunction with Letters of Employment, provided that these dated concur with the Letter of Call procedure set out by the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA.

The SEMS also provides for contractual agreements between the SEMS and employees. These contracts are subject to the approval of the Executive Committee of the Synod Council, which provide for a start date, a specific salary, and an end date of employment. Employees on work contracts may or may not be eligible for health and pension benefits, at the discretion of the Executive Committee of the synod.

5.5. Health Examination

The Bishop may require a pre-employment health examination of prospective employees, for the purpose of determining each person's capability to perform the duties of his or her position.

5.6. Hiring Procedures

The Executive Committee will be notified in advance of all position vacancies, offers of employment, transfers, promotions, demotions, or terminations in the synod. Any and all negotiations with prospective or existing employees regarding salary, relocation, other benefits or prerequisites will include advance consultation with the Executive Committee. No offers or commitments regarding a compensation package are to be made without the prior approval of the Executive Committee. All letters of offer to potential employees are to be sent to the Executive Committee.

No promises, commitments or representations which are inconsistent with or override these hiring procedures may be made to an employee or prospective employee without the prior written approval of the Bishop. Any such promise, commitment or representation shall be void unless it is contained in a written agreement signed by the employee and the Bishop.

6. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

6.1. Purpose

The performance review process is intended to provide individual support for the employee, to improve individual performance by an objective and constructive assessment of his/her performance and to assist in the development and fulfillment of the individual's career or occupational goals. This is part of the ongoing process in which achievements are noted and the employee is counseled regarding further steps necessary in order to consistently meet agreed-upon requirements.

6.2. Compatibility Evaluation and Performance Appraisals

In order to evaluate and assess mutual compatibility and satisfaction and to provide an opportunity for the open exchange of communication, employees of this synod will receive a performance appraisal from their supervisor three months after their hire date. At the discretion of the employee's supervisor, the employee may also receive an appraisal after six months of employment. Thereafter, employees will receive annual performance appraisals.

The Executive Committee will monitor the schedule for performance appraisals, and a copy of the completed appraisal will become a part of the employee's personnel file for a minimum of three years.

7. COMPENSATION PROGRAM

There are three elements in the compensation program: the job evaluation process, the salary ranges, and the merit pay program.

7.1. Job Evaluation Process

All jobs in the synod will be evaluated periodically, using the same criteria and process.

7.2. Implementation Process

The Executive Committee will review job descriptions periodically, following the completion of performance appraisals.

7.3. Salary Ranges

Salary ranges and/or midpoint policy proposals will be developed by the Executive Committee, at least annually, for review.

7.4. Merit Pay

Merit pay allows an individual to directly influence his or her earnings through on-the-job performance.

Increases may be granted, directly based upon improved or sustained performance. This practice is designed to attract and retain competent employees, to reward each individual in accordance with performance on the job, and to motivate each employee to their highest level of performance. The basis of the merit pay program will be the

performance appraisal.

7.5. Overtime

7.5.1. Overtime, when properly authorized by the immediate supervisor, will be paid to all non-exempt employees. Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay or equivalent time off.

7.5.2. Employees eligible for overtime pay will be paid at the rate of one and one-half times their regular hourly rate for time worked in excess of 40 hours in any normal work week. Sick leave, personal leave, and vacation time will not be considered as time worked. Employees required or requested to work on holidays will be compensated at double their regular rate of pay (but not more than eight hours per holiday.)

7.6. Pay Periods

Pay periods for all employees will be semi-monthly, and payment will be made on the 15th and the last day of the month. If a normal payday falls on a non-working day, paychecks will be issued on the last working day preceding the non-working day.

7.7. Fees for Services and Outside Employment

Additional income for performing the normal duties and responsibilities of a position are not to be expected or accepted by employees.

7.8. Garnishments and Wage Assignments

SEMS must honor wage assignments, as they represent a legal order to withhold and pay out a specified amount of employee earnings. If wages are attached, the employee will be notified immediately, and must seek a release of the court in order to prevent deductions from being made.

8. REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

8.1. General Principle

Employees of the synod who are authorized to travel in connection with the performance of their work will be reimbursed for transportation, food and lodging expense, in accordance with the ELCA Corporate Travel Policy (attached).

8.2. Use of Personal Automobile

When authorized by the Bishop or immediate supervisor reimbursement will be made for the use of an employee's personal automobile in accordance with the ELCA Corporate Travel Policy, Attachment #2.

9. WORKING HOURS AND HOLIDAYS

9.1. Office Hours

Employees are to organize their time schedules within the limits of effective performance of their duties, subject to the approval of the Bishop or their Supervisor. Office hours will normally be Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:30 am.

and 4:30 pm., excluding a lunch period.

Variations in the established hours for individual employees may be made by the Bishop or their Supervisor, to adjust for particular travel or other considerations which might prevail, provided such variations do not conflict with the efficient operation of the office.

Lunch and break periods for employees will be arranged.

9.2. Attendance Records

Adequate attendance records suitable for payroll purpose and for meeting appropriate wage and hour requirements will be maintained.

9.3. Overtime Records

Appropriate records will be kept for all authorized overtime worked by non-exempt employees.

9.4. Holidays

The synod office will be closed on the following official holidays: Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving Day; Christmas Eve Day; Christmas Day; New Year's Day; Martin Luther King's Birthday; Good Friday; Easter Monday; Memorial Day; Independence Day

When a holiday as listed in above falls on a Saturday, synod offices will normally be closed on the preceding day. If the holiday falls on Sunday, synod offices will normally be closed on the following day.

9.5. Election Day and Time off for Voting

For the purpose of voting on the day of general elections, each employee will be allowed up to two paid hours away from work, either at the beginning or the close of normal working hours. The specific time selected must be approved by the Bishop or Supervisor.

This policy will be modified to the extent required in order to comply with the requirements of any applicable state or local laws; however, any time off that is greater than the time proved under this policy will be without pay, unless pay is required by applicable law.

10. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

10.1. Social Security

The synod will make contributions for its lay employees as required of employers under the Social Security Act. The employer is not allowed to do this for ordained clergy because of separation of church and state. However, ministerial employees should be on a par with other employees and be given a social security allowance to pay at least half of the Social Security obligation.

10.2. Worker's Compensation

As required by state law, the synod provides Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage for all employees, at no cost to the employee.

10.3. Health Examinations

All regular employees are expected to take part in the healthy living program offered by the Board of Pension, ELCA.

10.4. Pension Plan and other Benefit Plans

This synod participates in the Board of Pensions, ELCA for the benefit of its full-time employees and other employees who are regularly scheduled to work at least 20 hours per week for six months or more per year.

Detailed information regarding benefits provided to synod employees are contained in brochures published by the Board of Pensions, which are available to all employees. Further inquiries or questions should be directed to the Board of Pensions.

10.5. Supplemental Major Medical/Dental Coverage

The synod provides a medical/dental/optical reimbursement plan. This policy is reviewed by the Executive Committee annually and forwarded to the Synod Council with the salary recommendations.

10.5.1. Procedures for reimbursement are:

Plan members covered by ELCA Medical/Dental:

- save return forms from Blue Cross/Blue Shield/Delta Dental and submit them to the office manager at the end of each quarter
- checks will be distributed at the following pay period
- eligible employees will receive 100% of the difference between the amount allowed by insurance and the amount paid by insurance up to the maximum allowable per employee. All medical, dental, eye care and prescription drug costs are eligible for reimbursement up to the maximum allowable per employee.

Employees not covered by ELCA Medical/Dental and are eligible (and subscribe) to other employee-provided medical benefits through a spouse's employer or through a former employer will receive reimbursement to cover the contribution required by a spouse's plan. Additional out-of-pocket costs will be covered according to the guidelines in 10.5.2.1.

10.6. Counseling Fees for Synod Staff

Non-rostered staff should check with their supervisor to see what opportunities are available for counseling and possible re-imburement of counseling expenses.

10.7. Voluntary Salary Reduction Contributions and Additional Participant Contributions

Under provisions of the pension plan, a signed agreement between the synod and the

employee may reduce the employee's compensation so as to credit that amount to the pension plan under a tax shelter, as approved by the Internal Revenue Service. The employee may also contribute to another pension or annuity plan of his/her choice, provided the total of all amounts under the tax shelter, including the employer's contribution, do not exceed the Internal Revenue Service regulation's current allowable limits.

10.8. Survivor Benefit

In the event of death of an employee, his/her salary will be paid to their surviving spouse through the month in which death occurs, plus one additional month. Where there is no surviving spouse, a decision concerning payment to surviving dependents will be made by the Board of Pensions, in consultation with the Bishop.

10.9. Housing Allowance

Clergy employees are required to provide written notice of the amount of salary declared as housing allowance to be approved by the synod council at the last meeting of the year prior to the beginning of the year for which the allowance is in effect.

10.10. Unemployment Insurance

Synod employees are not covered by unemployment compensation insurance. Therefore, employees upon termination of their employment and who are not immediately re-employed are not eligible to collect unemployment insurance benefits.

11. ABSENCE FROM WORK

11.1. Sick Leave

Paid leave up to eight weeks per year and provision for disability thereafter as coordinated with the ELCA pension and benefit guidelines.

11.2. Family Illness

In the event of an illness in the immediate family (spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchildren, mother-law, father-in-law or legal guardian) that requires the employees presence, sick leave may be utilized for this purpose. Time taken should be identified on the employee's request sheet as "Family Illness" in accordance with Minnesota statutes.

11.3. Vacations

Employees begin to accrue vacation time, on a prorated basis, during their first calendar year of service with the synod. (A calendar year is defined as January 1 through December 31.) Accrued vacation must be used in the calendar year in which it is accrued. Vacation days may only be taken with the approval of the employee's supervisor or the bishop.

11.3.1. Employees will receive vacation time in accordance with the following schedule:

- First through second year: .83 days per month up to 10 working days
- Third through fifth year: 1.25 days per month up to 15 working days

- Sixth year and beyond: 1.67 days per month up to 20 working days
- 11.3.2. The above schedule applies to all employees except the Bishop and his/her assistants, who accrue 20 working days vacation per calendar year, prorated to their period of service.
- 11.3.3. When an employee reaches the anniversary of his/her date of hire and has completed his/her second or fifth year of service, the following month the employee will begin to accrue vacation at the next higher level. (For example, beginning with his/her third year of service, the employee will move from 10 days of annual vacation to 15 days or, beginning with his/her sixth year of service, the employee will move from 15 days annual vacation to 20 days.)
- 11.3.4. Persons who have previously been employed by one of the predecessor churches or by a church-related organization (regional center for mission, synod, congregation, institution and/or agency affiliated with or related to any unit of this church), at any time with a five (5) years period preceding their employment with the synod, shall have 100% of that service counted in determining the rate at which their vacation time is accrued, based on the above schedule.
- 11.4. **Payment for Unused Vacation**
At the time of separation from this synod, an employee will be paid for earned, unused vacation. All benefits will continue through the period of earned vacation.
- 11.5. **Personal Days**
Three personal days will either be specified or allowed by the synod on an annual basis. Employees hired during the first half of the calendar year will be eligible to receive three days. Employees hired during the second half of the year will be eligible for one and one-half personal days that year. Unused personal days do not accrue and may not be carried over into the following year. Employees leaving the employ of the synod will not be reimbursed for unused personal days.
- 11.6. **Compassionate and Emergency Leave**
In the event of a death in the immediate family (spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandparents, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law or legal guardian) an employee will be allowed leave with pay, not to exceed five (5) working days. In emergency situations, leave with pay may be granted for a reasonable period by the Bishop.
- 11.7. **Jury Duty**
An employee who is required to serve on a jury shall be entitled to full pay during the period of such service. If an employee chooses to receive full pay, fees paid to him/her for serving on jury duty are to be given to this synod.

11.8. Leave Without Pay

Leave without pay may be granted by the Bishop to an employee, for personal reasons, after due consideration has been given to the work requirements of the office. Leave without pay may be granted for a period of up to one year. Such leaves of absence are granted by the Bishop. Service credits and other benefits do not accrue to an employee while on a leave of absence.

The synod will hold an employee's position open for the leave period, while he/she is on an approved leave without pay. If the incumbent is unable to return to work at the conclusion of the leave period, his/her position may or may not continue to be held open for him/her. This decision will be made, on a case-by-case basis by the Bishop.

If the individual has been on a leave without pay for medical reasons, he/she must obtain a medical release from his/her physician to indicate that he/she is well enough to return to work, and must submit it to the Bishop.

Service credits and other benefits do not accrue to an employee while on leave without pay. While on an approved leave without pay, the employee may assume responsibility for payment of premiums to maintain continued medical and dental insurance coverage.

11.9. Military Leave

Regular full-time and regular part-time employees who perform military service will be granted leaves of absence for such service in compliance with state and federal laws. For purposes of this policy, "military service" is the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Reserves, of the National Guard under competent authority, and includes active duty, active duty for training, initial active duty for training, inactive duty training, and full-time National Guard duty. Employees may use accrued vacation leave to perform military service, but are not required to do so. The synod will make up the difference, if any, between an employee's military pay and allowances and the employee's regular wages/salary for up to two weeks (10 work days) of military service per calendar year.

Employees are asked to notify their supervisor and submit copies of military orders as soon as they become aware of the military obligation.

An employee's eligibility for reinstatement after completion of military service is determined in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

11.10. Family Leave

In accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act, as of August 5, 1993, eligible employees will be entitled to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during any 12 month period of any of the following reasons:

- Because of the birth of a son or daughter of the employee and in order to care for such son or daughter;
- Because of the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- In order to care for the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee, if such spouse, son, daughter or parent has a serious health condition; or
- Because of a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his/her position.

Eligible employees are defined as those who have worked at least 12 months for the synod and who have worked at least 1,250 hours for the synod during the 12 months immediately preceding the start of the leave.

Prior to applying for a period of unpaid family leave, the employee will be expected to first utilize accrued vacation, personal, and sick leave for the purposes as stated above. When these types of accrued leaves have been exhausted, an eligible employee may apply for a period of unpaid family leave. However, the total amount of leave which the employee will take (paid and unpaid) should total no more than 12 weeks.

Leave because of the birth of a child, or because of the placement of a son or daughter with an employee for adoptive or foster care may not be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis, unless the employer and employee agree. Leave for serious health conditions (either of the employee, or the employee's spouse, child or parent) generally may be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule basis when medically necessary. Leave taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis will reduce the total amount of leave to which the employee is entitled by the amount of leave actually taken.

Where the necessity for leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide 30 days notice of the leave or, if the date of birth or placement of a child with the employee requires leave to begin in less than 30 days, the employee must provide such notice as is practicable. Similar notice must be given where leave is taken for serious health condition (either of a family member or of the employee) based on planned medical treatment. In such situations, the employee must also make a reasonable effort to schedule treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the synod office.

While on an approved, unpaid family leave, the payment of premiums to maintain continued medical and dental insurance coverage is the responsibility of the synod. Payments to the group pension plan will also continue to be made in the usual manner.

Except as provided by the legislation, the synod will hold an employee's position open while he/she is on an approved family leave, and he/she will be entitled to

equivalent employment benefits, pay and other forms and conditions of employment.

Service credits and other benefits do not accrue to an employee while on a approved, unpaid family leave.

11.11. Maternity and Parenting Leave

Leaves under this section are for the purpose of issues related to parenting, and may only be taken after six (6) months of part-time or full-time employment. Leave benefits for part-time employees will reflect their percentage of full-time employment. Employees who will be absent due to maternity/paternity or adoptive leave are requested to provide their supervisor with as much advance notice as possible.

- Maternity/Paternity Leave

Six (6) weeks of paid maternity leave is available to a new mother and six (6) weeks of paid paternity leave is available to a new father following the birth of her/his child. If the expectant mother's physician feels it is necessary for her to stop working prior to the anticipated delivery date, she will be permitted to use accrued sick leave for this purpose.

- Adoptive Leave

Six (6) weeks of paid adoptive leave is available to a new mother and six (6) weeks of paid adoptive leave is available to a new father, following the adoption of a child.

- Additional Leave

Employees desiring additional leave may apply for unpaid family leave under Section 11.10 (Family Leave) or Section 11.8 (Leave Without Pay)

11.12. Absence Due to Weather or Travel Conditions

An employee will not forfeit pay for a day on which he/she is unable to report for work because of the closing of the office, a breakdown in transportation facilities due to an accident, strike, or hazardous weather conditions, provided the employee has made every reasonable effort to utilize alternate methods of transportation and has notified the office.

In cases where the synod office is open for business, even though weather conditions may be unfavorable, a non-exempt employee who finds it necessary to remain at home in order to care for their child(ren) because their child(ren)'s school is closed and alternate child care arrangements cannot be made will be expected to utilize accrued vacation leave or a personal day(s) to cover their absence.

11.13. Worker's Compensation Leave

The synod provides workers' compensation insurance coverage for all employees, at no cost to the employee. While on an approved workers' compensation leave due to a work-related injury or illness, the employee's position may or may not continue to be held open for him/her. This decision will be made, on a case-by-case basis, by the Bishop. If it becomes necessary to fill an employee's position while he/she is on

workers' compensation leave, every effort will be made to place him/her in another position within the synod when he/she is ready to return to work.

Accrual of sick leave and vacation is suspended while an employee is on a workers' compensation leave. The synod continues to provide medical/dental insurance coverage and pension benefits for the employee while he/she is on a workers' compensation leave. Workers' compensation insurance provides coverage for medical care and expenses related to the employee's work-related injury or illness.

Work-related injuries or illness are to be reported to the Bishop as promptly as possible. Questions regarding workers' compensation coverage should be directed to the Bishop.

11.14. Other Paid Leave

Circumstances may arise which warrant a decision that is in the best interests of all parties concerned to place a staff member in a special paid leave status for a period of time. Such a decision can be made only by the Bishop or the Executive Committee at the request of the supervisor. This special, paid leave status (to be classified as "Administrative Leave") will be determined on a case-by-case basis, when no other available paid leave is appropriate.

11.15. Children in the Workplace

Children are welcome to visit employees at the office for such purposes as lunch, a brief visit to a work station or for special occasions when they are specifically invited. The hosting employee is responsible for the children during such visits and should remain with them at all times.

Children should not be brought to the work site as a substitute for other child care arrangements. If an employee is faced with an unforeseen circumstance where child care arrangements have been disrupted, the supervisor may grant an exception if the following conditions are met:

- Alternate arrangements are being made and the time the child will be in the work area is brief;
- The child is accompanied by the employee at all times; and
- The employee is able to perform his or her regular job duties at all times.

12. SEPARATION AND RETIREMENT

12.1. Completion of Term

This phrase refers to the expiration of call, election, or employment of an employee who is called, elected, or employed for a specific term. Employment shall terminate at the end of that specified term unless re-election or re-employment occurs.

12.2. Termination Without Prejudice

This phrase refers to any termination of a call, election, or employment by this synod at any time, for any reason other than a discharge for cause. Employees will ordinarily be given two months' notice. The Bishop or supervisor has the right to discharge the synod's obligation in such case, by prepayment of salary for the designated period, in lieu of continued service. If an ordained employee is to be terminated, his or her employment and call will terminate on the same date.

12.3. Discharge for Cause

All employees of the synod, except those elected by assembly are employees "at will", which means that both the synod and the employee have the right to terminate employment at any time. In addition to poor work performance that has been fully documented other examples of discharge for cause are: insubordination, fighting, violating a law, theft, and sexual harassment in the work place.

12.4. Resignation

An employee need not remain in a position beyond the time that he or she believes they can make a contribution to this synod. Employees who wish to terminate their employment are expected to give a two week notice. Employees who resign will receive payment for the time they have worked since the last pay period and for their unused vacation time. However, an employee who resigns will not receive separation pay.

12.5. Severance

These severance benefits are to be understood as providing support during the transition time prior to another call or employment. Severance benefits are not extended beyond such time when the individual begins work under call or finds other employment. Responsibility for notification of a call or other employment rests with the severance benefits recipient.

12.5.1. Eligible Persons

The persons eligible for these benefits are the bishop and staff members of the synod and whose office or employment by the synod was involuntarily terminated due to action of the synod by non-election of the incumbent synodical bishop, budget restraints, change of position functions, or resignation upon request of a newly elected bishop.

Disability is not covered under these provisions, since disability is covered under the provisions of the Disability Benefits Plan of the Board of Pensions.

Persons planning retirement and, therefore, voluntarily declining election or appointment, are not eligible for these severance benefits.

Eligible persons will be hereinafter referred to as severance benefits recipients.

12.5.2. Effective Date

The date this severance benefits policy shall be effective is the date of adoption by the council.

12.5.3. Benefits

The severance benefits shall:

- Be effective for the severance benefits recipient who has served at least one full term as bishop or, normally, in the case of other executive synodical staff, who has served a term concurrent with the bishop's term of service.
- Begin upon vacating the synodical office or position and following the period covered by earned vacation which was unused at the time of the termination.
- Be paid on the benefits recipients' regular pay periods.
- Be three months of benefits.

12.5.4 Amount of Benefits

- Current monthly compensation (salary, housing and FICA reimbursement, if applicable).
- Participation in the ELCA Board of Pension Plans: pensions at the designated rate, Survivor Benefits Plan, and Major Medical/Dental Benefits Plan for the months of severance benefits.

Following the expiration of the severance benefits, recipients may retain their participation in the Survivor Benefits and Major Medical/Dental Plan, and at their own expense according to the provisions of the applicable plans. Solely for the purpose of determining rights to continue benefits under those plans, the recipient's termination of call/employment will be deemed to occur on the date severance benefits cease.

12.5.5 Disposition

In case of a difference of opinion in interpretation of this Severance Benefits Policy, the synod council will make the final disposition.

12.6. Reduction in Work Force

Should the synod need to reduce its work force due to budget consideration, issues of priorities of the mission of the synod and seniority will be considered.

12.7. Outplacement Assistance

To the extent possible, the Bishop will make outplacement assistance available, upon request, to separating synod employees, except those who are separated under adverse conditions.

13. CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing Education is an important benefit provided by the synod for use by all eligible employees. It is a study program by which employees may develop and enhance their present knowledge and specific job performance, acquire new skills and experience personal growth.

13.1. Eligibility

All employees are eligible for continuing education funds as part of the synod benefit package. Independent contractors are not eligible unless it is included in their contract. Temporary employees are not eligible.

13.2. Funding

- Non-exempt full time employees will receive \$500 per year.
- Exempt full time employees will receive \$500 per year.
- Exempt part time employees will receive \$250 per year.
- The Bishop and Synod Ministers will receive \$1000 per year.

These funds may be carried over for a maximum of three years.

13.3. Time

- Non-exempt full time employees will receive 5 days per year.
- Exempt full time employees will receive 5 days per year.
- Exempt part time employees will receive 2 ½ days per year.
- The Bishop and Synod Ministers will receive 10 days per year.

These days may be carried over for a maximum of three years.

14. SABBATICAL LEAVE

By God's command since the creation of the world, human beings have spent only six out of every seven days striving after the things of space: food, clothing and shelter. But on the seventh day we have been commanded to focus our lives on the things of time: the promise of God that a new day is coming when "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying any more, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). Resting in God's word of hope and re-focusing for the days of striving are God's great gifts on the Sabbath.

This concept of time for striving and time for hallowing has carried over from the commandment concerning the days of our weeks, to the blueprint of the Israelites for the "sabbatical Year" (every seventh year when the ground was to lay fallow and debts were to be canceled) and the "Jubilee Year" (the year following every seventh sabbatical year). Both the sabbatical and the jubilee years had as a component the release of debts (things physical).

Based on this model of space versus time, one gains insight into the rhythm and focus of

the sabbatical. Further, one begins to gain insight into the need for time spent hallowing the God of creation, putting to rest the things of space, and re-creating for another period of striving.

14.1. Eligibility

Every full time (at least 25 hours per week) staff person (both lay and ordained) who has served the Southeastern Minnesota Synod or a predecessor synod for at least five years.

The applicant is encouraged to continue to serve the Southeastern Minnesota Synod for at least one year following the leave.

14.2. General Themes for Sabbatical Leave

- Classes or independent study at a seminary or other institution of higher learning
- Travel that is carefully planned and documented
- Reading and reflection or personal study and growth also carefully planned and documented
- Workshops, conferences, and seminars that deal with revitalization of one's position.

14.3. Funding

The leave applicant will continue to receive full salary and benefits.

The leave applicant may receive up to \$2000 from the Synod Staff Sabbatical Fund. Outside funding may be sought by the applicant.

14.4. Other

The encouragement, interpretation and promotion of the sabbatical program shall be carried out by the Synod Vice president and Executive Committee, in consultation with the Bishop of the Synod.

Applications will be submitted to the Executive Committee of the synod for approval. The application, with goals and objectives, should be presented not less than 90 days prior to the sabbatical.

The Executive Committee will act as the "Sabbatical Committee" giving guidance, encouragement, and disseminating information following the leave. The applicant shall submit a report to the Executive Committee within 60 days following the conclusion of the Sabbatical leave.

Sabbatical leaves will last a minimum of six weeks to distinguish them from continuing education. Sabbatical leaves will be encouraged for up to three months.

Accumulated continuing education funds may be used by the employee to supplement sabbatical expenses. Accumulated continuing education days may not be used to

increase the sabbatical leave time.

The Sabbatical Leave Application (Synod staff) can be found as attachment 1 to this policy manual.

15. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The synod strives to provide fair and equitable consideration of all employee grievances and appeals. Therefore, the purpose of this document is to establish the policy and procedures to be followed when an employee initiates such an action. Grievances should initially be discussed with the employee's immediate supervisor. Every effort should be made to settle the matter through such discussion, and employees are encouraged to utilize this method to resolve problem situations.

15.1. Filing of Grievance

If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, the employee may file a written grievance with the Bishop, with a copy to the Executive Committee. The Bishop will provide a written response to the grievant within five (5) working days after the grievance is received, with a copy to the Executive Committee.

15.2. Response to Grievance

If the employee is not satisfied with the disposition by the Bishop, the employee may submit a written request for a hearing with the Grievance Committee to the Bishop. This request must be received within ten (10) working days after the disposition of the grievance by the Bishop.

15.3. Grievance Committee

The chairperson of the Executive Committee will select a Grievance Committee, in order to make determinations in the case of unresolved employee grievances. The Grievance Committee will consist of: A representative from among the clergy staff, a representative from among the lay staff and a member of the Executive Committee (who will serve as chair).

15.4. Processing of Grievance

If a grievance is filed with the Bishop, the appropriate staff representative to the Grievance Committee will provide assistance, if required by the grievant, in processing of the grievance. If the staff representative is involved in the grievance process prior to presentation of the grievance to the Grievance Committee, the representative's participation in the final resolution of the grievance will not be restricted.

15.5. Hearing on Grievance

The Grievance Committee will make the final determination of a grievance. The committee will schedule a hearing within ten (10) working days of receiving the grievance. At least five (5) working days in advance of the date set for hearing,

notice of the hearing will be given to the grievant, the grievant's supervisor and the Bishop. All hearings will be closed to the public. The grievant may be present at the hearing and is entitled to an advocate of his/her own choosing. The grievant will be notified, in writing, regarding the disposition of the grievance, within five (5) working days after the hearing.

Employee grievances are to be processed promptly: however, time limits may be waived or extended with the written consent of both parties, if imposition of the time schedule would create an obvious burden.

16. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND ANTI-HARASSMENT

16.1. Policy

In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions at the synod will be based on merit, qualifications, and abilities. The synod does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any characteristic protected by law. As a church, the synod may consider religious factors, including clergy or lay status, in making personnel decisions.

The synod will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities unless doing so would result in an undue hardship. This policy governs all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, and access to benefits and training.

The synod is committed to provide a work environment free of all forms of conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive, including sexual harassment.

Any employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the bishop or the Executive Committee. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear or reprisal/. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

16.2. Anti-Harassment

The synod is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from harassment. Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on a person's protected status, such as sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or other protected group status.

The synod will not tolerate harassing behaviors that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

All employees are responsible to help assure that the workplace is free from

harassment. An employee, who feels that he or she has experienced or witnessed workplace harassment, should notify the bishop or the Executive Committee. The synod forbids retaliation against anyone for reporting harassment, assisting in making a harassment complaint, or cooperating in a harassment investigation. If an employee feels he or she has been retaliated against. He or she should notify the bishop or the Executive Committee. It is the synod's policy to investigate all such complaints thoroughly and promptly. If an investigation confirms that a violation of the policy has occurred, the synod will take corrective action including discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

16.3 Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances, or unwelcome visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment with a person of the same sex as the harasser. Unwelcome sexual advances (either verbal or physical), requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; 2) submission or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for making employment decisions; or, 3) the conduct has the purposes or effect of interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

16.4 Violations

An employee who experiences or witnesses sexual or other unlawful harassment in the workplace should report it immediately to his or her supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or it is believed it would be inappropriate to contact that person, the bishop or the Executive Committee should be contacted there will be no retaliation for good faith complaints of, reports about, or participation in an investigation. All allegations of sexual harassment will be quickly and discreetly investigated. To the extent possible, the employee's confidentiality and that of any witnesses and the alleged harasser will be protected against unnecessary disclosure.

17. EMPLOYEE ETHICS POLICY OF THE SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD

The employee ethics policy of this synod addresses business ethics and does not include the other ethical values and policies of the church. The ethics policy applies to all employees of the synod in matters relating to the performance of their duties and responsibilities for the synod.

All funds and property received and administered by the synod are entrusted to the organization by God through the faithful financial support of congregations and friends. The highest degree of stewardship and fiduciary responsibility is expected of all employees, including the receiving, reporting, and use of funds, property, and time. Employees are responsible for complying with laws, regulations, and synod policies and procedures.

17.1. Standards of Ethical Conduct

1. Duty of Loyalty Each employee is responsible for acting in the best interests of the synod. These responsibilities are set forth below.

2. Conflicts of Interest. All employees shall avoid conflicts of interest, potential conflicts of interest, and situations that give the appearance of conflicts of interest.

a. Conflict of interest means any situation in which the employee may be influenced or appear to be influenced in decision –making or business dealings by any motive or desire for personal advantage other than the success and well-being of the synod. Personal advantage means a financial interest or some other personal interest, whether present or potential, whether direct or indirect. This standard applies to all actual and contemplated transactions. When in doubt, the employee is to assume there might be a conflict.

b. All present and potential conflicts of interest issues must be disclosed. If the conflict is known in advance of any meeting, business transaction, contract, or other activity at which issues may be discussed or on which the issues may have a bearing on the employee's approach, whether directly or indirectly, it shall be disclosed ahead of time. If the conflict is not known in advance, it shall be disclosed when the actual or potential conflict becomes apparent. Disclosure is to be made in writing.

c. When issues relate to a meeting, disclosure is appropriate to the person in charge of the meeting and, at the discretion of the person in charge, to the full meeting. The employee shall leave the meeting room, to avoid all discussion, voting, and deliberation on the issue. Following full disclosure of the present or potential conflict, the board, program committee, or advisory committee may decide that no conflict of interest exists and invite the participation of the employee. All such actions shall be recorded in any minutes or records kept.

d. All employees are likewise to disclose, in writing, matters and relationships that have the potential for giving rise to the appearance of a conflict in business dealings with the synod. Business dealings with friends and family are particularly sensitive and are to be disclosed and carefully evaluated because of the potential for inferences of tangible or intangible personal advantage and the appearance of impropriety.

e. To avoid appearances of impropriety, any gifts, gratuities, and hospitality to an employee—such as free travel, hotel, or residential rooms—typically will not be accepted by any employee from any person or organization that sells, delivers or received any goods, materials and services to or from the synod. Occasion gifts of less than \$45.00 value such as flowers or foodstuffs are exempt from this rule.

Gifts that primarily benefit the synod and not an individual, such as gifts of hospitality given to the synod by hotels, convention centers and conferences in relation to official synod business, are exempt from this rule. Employees also may participate in reasonable, normal relationship-building activities, such as meals, sporting events, and other such activities. All gifts and such participations are to be reported, in advance if possible, to the bishop or the Executive Committee.

3. Confidentiality. Employees shall not disclose information about the synod that is not known outside of the synod or is not known by public means.

4. Duty of Care. The duty of care and obligation of good stewardship requires all employees to act first in the best interests of the synod. All employees shall exercise reasonable efforts to inform themselves of the mission and ministry of the synod and the ELCA. All employees shall act as a reasonable employee would act under the same or similar circumstances.

5. Transactions and Reports. Each employee has a duty to prepare, process, maintain, and report complete, accurate, and timely records pertaining to their role, including, but not limited to, expense reports, disbursement requests and payroll transactions. This also includes safeguarding all physical, financial, informational, and other company assets. In addition, no undisclosed or unrecorded fund or asset will be established and no artificial or false entries will be made in the financial or other records of the synod. The use of the synod's funds for any unauthorized or unlawful purpose is prohibited.

6. Duty to Disclose. Employees have a duty to disclose all breaches of this policy including misconduct, fraudulent transactions, errors related to overpayments, or any other impropriety, whether by themselves or by other. Likewise, concerns about the appearance or the possibility of breaches should be reported. Care must always be taken to be factual and objective. Breaches shall be reported to the bishop or the Executive Committee. There will be no retaliation for good faith complaints, reports, or participation in an investigation.

7. Violations. Violation or noncompliance may result in discipline, including possible termination.

**Sabbatical Leave Application (Synod staff)
Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA**

1. Background Information
 - a. Name
 - b. Educational history (institution, dates attended and degrees)
 - c. Professional history (positions held [current position first] and dates)
 - d. Previous leaves (dates and sources of support):

2. Conditions of the Leave
 - a. Time requested (number of months or weeks)
 - b. Location
 - c. Funding requested from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod (please attach a proposed sabbatical budget)
 - d. Source of outside funding (personal, grant application, none)
 - e. List of special arrangements to facilitate (office space, library space, study with a recognized authority, access to special materials or research materials, etc.)

3. Learning Objectives
Write learning objectives for your sabbatical. They should be specific and measurable.

4. Any additional information that describes your plans and objectives.

TRAVEL POLICY FOR THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

Employees of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are required to follow this policy in regard to travel arrangements and reimbursements. Non-employees traveling on behalf of this church also are to comply with this policy.

This policy outlines the approved procedures^[1] for arranging travel and seeking reimbursement of expenses related to the work of the churchwide organization by staff members and others^[2] who travel on behalf of Chicago-based churchwide units.^[3]

SECTIONS:

- A. AIRLINE RESERVATIONS
- B. HOTEL RESERVATIONS
- C. MEALS
- D. AUTOMOBILE RENTAL
- E. OTHER EXPENSES
- F. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT, GENERAL
- G. AMERICAN EXPRESS CARDS
- H. BOARD AND COMMITTEE TRAVEL
- I. DEFINITION OF “REASONABLE...”

A. AIRLINE RESERVATIONS

A.1. Making Reservations: *All tickets for travel by churchwide staff and participants in ELCA meetings and events are to be purchased through Best Travel and charged to the ELCA’s account*, except for some international travel. Failure to do so may result in denial of reimbursement for the ticket. Travel-Accident insurance coverage is provided through American Express.

a. Contacting Best Travel: 1-800-638-3522 x2440; after hours: 1-800-543-8016

b. Best Travel on Intranet: Click on “Travel Reservations” on the right-hand side of the Intranet Main Page.

c. Best Travel on WEB:

<http://wx1.getthere.net/DispatcherServlet?requestType=loginingq&site=bestres>

d. Emergency: Except in an emergency, no airline tickets for ELCA churchwide staff are to be charged to the American Express credit card or a personal credit card.

- (1) An explanation of the emergency situation and the unit executive’s approval are required for reimbursement of airline tickets charged on an American Express card or a personal credit card.
- (2) Payment of a schedule-change fee is to be noted on the expense reimbursement form.

e. International Tickets: International travel can be arranged through Best Travel or Menno Travel Service of Minnesota, 1-800-635-2032.

- (1) A traveler may wish to check with Menno Travel on an international route to determine if a significant saving is available through use of a Menno “consolidator” ticket compared to the quoted ticket price from Best Travel.
- (2) Global-mission travel *in developing countries* may be arranged through either Best Travel or Menno Travel.

f. Statement of purpose: The “business purpose” of the travel is to be provided at the time the reservation is made.^[5]

g. Cancellation: All purchased tickets that will not be used must be reported (and returned if a paper ticket) to the travel agency before the scheduled date of travel, if possible. Credit will be given according to the regulations of the specific airline.

A.2. Lowest Fare Available:

- a. Travelers are expected to accept the lowest fare available at the time of reservation.^[6]

- b. If an individual chooses to upgrade to a higher class, the incremental cost is a personal expense.
 - (1) Such a ticket is to be charged by Best Travel to the individual's personal credit card.
 - (2) The ELCA corporate card insurance benefit would not apply to any ticket charged to the individual's personal credit card.
- c. Tickets purchased for personal use are to be charged to the individual's credit card by Best Travel, *not* to the churchwide organization's account.

A.3. Advance Purchase: Airline reservations must be made at least 14 days in advance to obtain maximum cost savings.

- a. Exceptions to the normal advance purchase requirement must be approved by the unit's executive director or the section's executive authorized for that unit before the reservation is made.

A.4. Flexibility:

- Allow a **one-hour "window"** before and after desired flight times for greater possible saving on airfares.^[7]
- **Saturday-Night Stay:** Be open to an over-Saturday-night stay and use of alternate airports if the airfare savings exceeds by more than \$200 the cost of housing, food, and ground transportation.
- **Connection:** Agree to one connection each way if that will result in reduced cost.

A.5. Mileage Programs: Any travel incentives earned through airline mileage programs may be retained for personal use.

- a. Travel arrangements for specific airlines, however, must be in accordance with the policy of using the lowest fare available. Thus, reservations for specific airlines cannot be made to gain incentive mileage credits via inappropriate routes or use of other than lowest fare available tickets.
- b. The churchwide organization will not purchase flight coupons from employees for use toward church-related employee travel, nor will the churchwide organization reimburse any amount of the ticket cost to employees who use a frequent flyer miles ticket for church business.

A.6. Confirmation of Authorized Travel: The unit director is responsible for ensuring that all airline tickets charged to the unit by Best Travel represent authorized travel.

A.7. Airline Flight Clubs: If an individual traveler wishes membership in an airline flight club(s), such membership is a personal cost that is not reimbursable.

B. HOTEL RESERVATIONS

B.1. Through Best Travel: Hotel reservations are made through the in-house travel counselors.

- a. A traveler may request a specific property and Best Travel will advise if a lower priced property is available in the same area.
- b. Cost and location are to be considered in making lodging reservations.

B.2. Chicago Rates: In the Chicago O'Hare area, the churchwide organization has negotiated rates with several hotels. Travelers will be housed on the basis of the rate and availability. Cost and location are to be considered in making lodging reservations.

B.3. Responsibility for Payment: Travelers are **responsible for payment upon check out** unless prior arrangements are made by the unit. Reimbursement is provided through the traveler's expense statement.

B.4. Detailed Bill for Documentation: Hotel bills will **not** be reimbursed unless a detailed hotel bill showing separate amounts for lodging, meals, phone, and other charges is attached to the expense report.

- a. **Names and Purpose of Meals:** If a meal that included other individuals is charged to a hotel bill, the name(s) of the individual(s) and the purpose of the meal are to be recorded on the bill or an attached note.
- b. **Personal Expense:** Movies and alcohol purchases on detail hotel bills are personal expenses and will not be reimbursed.
- c. **"No Show" Expense:** "No show" hotel fees will be reimbursed only upon documentation and approval by the unit's executive director or the section's executive. To prevent possible discrepancies, it is recommended that the traveler obtain a confirmation number when a room is cancelled.

C. MEALS

C.1. Individual Meals: When traveling on behalf of the churchwide organization, a traveler will be

reimbursed reasonable expenses for three individual meals per day. **Note: Many restaurants are now adding service charges/tips to invoices for groups. Check your invoice before adding a further tip.**

- a. Meals should be appropriate to the nature of the travel.
- b. A per meal expense of more than \$25 for an individual will **not** be reimbursed without an itemized receipt.
- c. No alcoholic beverages will be reimbursed.

C.2. Group Meals: A receipt must be attached for all “business” meetings where an employee met with one or more individuals and paid for the meal. All meals with other individuals must indicate the following information in order to be reimbursed:

- a. **Documentation of Names:** The individuals who attended the meal must be listed *by name* on either the meal receipt or expense form.
- b. **Defined ELCA Groups:** For defined groups—such as all or most members of a unit program committee--the reimbursement form may be submitted with the indication of the defined group (for example, “program committee members and staff of the Church in Society unit” or “voting members and staff of the Conference of Bishops”), without having to list by name the entire group.
- c. **Purpose Must be Indicated:** The church-related purpose of the meal must be listed on the receipt or expense report.

D. AUTOMOBILE RENTAL RESERVATIONS

D.1. Economy: Use the most reasonable, least costly mode of ground transportation available. Avoid automobile rentals unless public transportation is unavailable, inadequate, or more expensive.

D.2. Reservations: Automobile rental reservations are to be made through Best Travel. Compact or smaller vehicles will be used unless 4 or more people are traveling together.

D.3. Rates: Best Travel will use the lowest price available from automobile rental firms. Corporate contracts are established to assure that a reasonable car rental is attainable, but sometimes a lower promotional rate is available. Use the ELCA corporate rate only when a lower rate is not available.

D.4. Charges and Insurance: Charge the payment of the rental car on the ELCA authorized credit card. This provides the necessary insurance coverage. **Decline any additional insurance coverage.**¹⁸ **Note: Insurance cards are available from the Office of the Treasurer.**

D.5. Attach Agreement: The car rental agreement must be attached to the applicable expense report for payment of the expense

D.6. Personal Use: Corporate discount rates through the churchwide organization are available for personal use. In such circumstances, purchase of insurance coverage is your personal decision. Employees are **not covered** under the ELCA’s churchwide policy **when renting on a personal basis.**

E. OTHER EXPENSES

E.1. Automobile Mileage:

a. **Mileage Rate and Reimbursement:** Personal use of your automobile in connection with official responsibilities of the churchwide organization will be reimbursed at the IRS standard mileage rate in effect at the time of such use.

(1) Mileage between a Chicago-based employee’s residence and the churchwide office is not reimbursable at any time.

b. **Tolls and Parking:** Tolls and parking fees will be reimbursed on the expense form.

c. **Limitation:** Mileage, tolls, parking, and other expenses associated with automobile travel may be reimbursed up to the amount of the lowest airfare available, as determined by the director for meeting management and travel in the Office of the Secretary.

(1) For deployed staff, a supplemental mileage log form is available from the Office of the Treasurer to provide documentation required for mileage reimbursement, including:

(a) indication of the cities, towns, or locations to which the employee traveled;
and

(b) the purpose for the travel.

E.2. Telephone: Actual expenses for telephone calls related to churchwide responsibilities will be reimbursed. When making calls, travelers are expected to use the least expensive means.

a. Telephone call documentation: All reimbursements for telephone charges must include a copy of the billing and a detailed listing of all calls, with business calls identified. Travelers must be able to provide the business purpose for all calls upon request.

b. Personal calls: During domestic travel, reimbursement for personal calls normally is limited to a daily call to the family home. For international travel, reimbursement is provided for reasonable personal calls as determined by the unit.

c. Calling Cards (Long Distance Carrier): The use of a calling card from the ELCA long distance provider is the approved method for frequent travelers. Calling cards are available from the Information Technology section of the Office of the Treasurer with the approval of the requesting unit's executive director.

d. Pre-paid Telephone Cards: Pre-paid cards are available through the Information Technology section of the Office of the Treasurer..

e. Credit card calls: Credit card (e. g., Visa, MasterCard) calls are discouraged. [\[10\]](#)

f. Hotel Telephones: Calls from hotel phones can be very expensive and should normally be avoided in favor of other means.

g. Cellular Phones: Use of cellular calls should be avoided whenever possible because such calls usually are charged at a higher rate than regular, calling card or pre-paid telephone card rates.

(1) Reimbursement for business use of personal cell phone: A unit may authorize reimbursement of telephone charges for business calls made from a cell phone owned by an employee upon presentation of documentation as noted in E.2.a. The allowable reimbursement for any business use of personal cell phones will be determined based on procedures set by the Office of the Treasurer.

(2) Approval for purchase of corporate cell phone and wireless connectivity devices: The ELCA churchwide organization does not normally purchase cell phones or other wireless connectivity devices for employees. Any exceptions to this policy require the approval of the executive for administration.

(3) Reimbursement for personal use of corporate cell phone: Personal use of corporate cell phones is strongly discouraged. The amount to be reimbursed to the ELCA by the employee for any personal use will be determined based on procedures set by the Office of the Treasurer.

i. Airphones: Airphone calls will only be reimbursed for emergency situations. The nature of the emergency must be indicated on the expense reimbursement form, and a copy of the charge must be attached.

j. International Calls: When placing a call from an international location to the U.S.A., the least expensive means should be used. .

E.3. Laundry: For trips of more than eight days, laundry expenses will be reimbursed. Laundry expenses for trips of shorter duration are not reimbursable, unless the unit approves the expenses as emergency in nature.

E.4. Gratuities:

a. Shuttle: Hotel-shuttle gratuities should be identified on the expense reimbursement form.

b. Description: For other gratuities, a brief description should be included for reimbursement (i.e., coat check, housekeeping, airport baggage, or similar items).

E.5. Internet Connection

(1) Use of an internet connection while traveling away from home on ELCA business will be reimbursed based on a receipt and a documented business need. Travelers are expected to use the least expensive means for connecting.

E.6. Miscellaneous Expenses: Miscellaneous expenses not listed above, if submitted for reimbursement, must be accompanied by a receipt and sufficient explanation to document the church-related purpose.

F. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

F.1. Timely Filing: Submit expense reimbursement reports promptly.

a. All expense reimbursement reports normally are to be filed within 30 days.

b. Reimbursement of expenses is not guaranteed and may not be made if the expense was incurred more than 90 days before the expense report is submitted.

F.2. Individual Responsibility: Each individual must sign and submit her or his own expense report. Employees who are requesting reimbursement for additional employees must have the prior approval of an authorized signer.

F.3. Documentation to be Attached: Documentation requirements for reimbursement of expenses are listed under the type of expense (above). If additional explanations are necessary to document expenses, those explanations should be entered on additional sheets and attached to the expense report.

- a. The expense report must include destination and statement of purpose of the travel.
- b. Attachments include travel-related statements and itemized receipts, as defined above.

F.4. Signatures Required: Appropriate signatures are required for expense reimbursement.

- a. The unit is responsible for obtaining program approvals as appropriate.
- b. The expense report must be approved by the unit's authorized signer for the employee who is submitting the expense report. No employee is authorized to approve his or her own expense reports.
- c. Expense reports for the unit's executive director or the unit's director must be approved by the Executive for Administration or, in his or her absence, the Treasurer.

F.5. Policy Compliance: The unit is responsible for ensuring that travelers for the churchwide organization comply with established travel policy and providing the necessary information to do so. ^[12]

F.6. Restriction: No travel and entertainment expense vouchers are to be reimbursed through petty cash, regardless of the amount of the reimbursement.

F.7. Consultation: Unusual situations or changing circumstances pertaining to airline tickets or external ELCA-sponsored meetings should be referred to the director for meeting management and travel coordination in the Office of the Secretary.

G. AMERICAN EXPRESS CARDS

G.1. Issuance: American Express cards will be issued to those employees who travel frequently on ELCA churchwide-related business.

- a. In order to obtain a card, the unit executive must approve a request submitted to the Office of the Treasurer. The cardholder must sign an agreement regarding the terms of the account.
 - (1) This request must adequately document the reason for issuing the card.
 - (2) Approval of the request is at the discretion of the Office of the Treasurer.
- b. Cards may be cancelled by the Office of the Treasurer at any time for noncompliance with the terms of the agreement.

G.2. Billing: Cardholders are responsible for ensuring that the balance is paid in a timely manner and that bills submitted for payment include appropriate expense documentation as detailed in this policy.

- a. Any expenses incurred on the card that are not appropriately documented or not in accordance with the policy will not be paid. These will be considered a *personal expense* to be paid by the cardholder.
- b. Any delinquency charges incurred on the card are considered a personal expense to be paid by the cardholder. Delinquency charges are grounds for cancellation of the cards.

G.3. Personal Charges

- a. **Personal charges are not allowed on the corporate card.** The corporate card is to be used for "business purposes" only.
- b. In instances where a portion of the individual charge is personal (such as alcoholic beverages, movies, or a spouse's meal), the personal portion is to be treated as a personal expense. **These expenses must be paid by the employee directly to American Express.**
- c. Other personal charges are considered grounds for cancellation of the card.

H. BOARD AND COMMITTEE TRAVEL

For council, board, committee, and work group members, travel will be reimbursed from the person's normal domestic residence on the geographic territory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

H.1. The ELCA churchwide organization will not reimburse the cost for international travel for council, board, committee, and work group members to attend meetings of an ELCA unit or a governing body. Only in unusual circumstances may such international travel be reimbursed. Such possible reimbursement requires the advance approval of the unit's executive director and the executive for administration.

H.2. Travel will be reimbursed up to the amount of the lowest airfare available from the individual’s normal domestic residence.

I. DEFINITION OF “REASONABLE AND NECESSARY”

I.1. “Reasonable” herein is deemed to mean efforts to practice good stewardship and conservation of the financial resources of this church, be cautious about all expenditures, avoid the appearance of extravagance, and not indulge in spending inappropriate for the work, programs, and activities of this church.^[13]

I.2. “Necessary”, in this context, involves legitimate charges that arise from the work, programs, and activities of the churchwide organization. Good, cautious common sense must prevail.

((POL-TRAV.N02))

Mileage Log

To be used as an exhibit to expense reports of deployed staff or staff with multiple destinations on an expense reimbursement form

Name: _____

Dates of Travel:

Date	Starting Point	Destination	Miles	Business Purpose
		Total Miles		

^[1] Written requests for revision or clarification of this policy are to be submitted to the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Inquiries from units related to the payment of items on an expense report are to be addressed to the controller in the Office of the Treasurer.

^[2] This policy applies for staff, including deployed staff, members of the Church Council, boards, committees, work groups, advisors, and others who travel on behalf of Chicago-based churchwide units. Procedures herein concern methods for making airline, hotel, car-rental, and other reservations. Explanations of expense-reimbursement forms also are included.

^[3] Unit-specific travel requirements necessary for deployed staff are to be jointly approved by the unit’s executive director or the section’s director and the Office of the Treasurer.

^[4] For this policy, “domestic” is understood as all of North America, all states of the U.S.A., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

^[5] Examples of an acceptable “statement of purpose” at the time of purchase and for reporting on the expense voucher would be: “Hickory, N.C., to address the Global Mission Event” or “Minneapolis to meet with the controller of the Board of Pensions on health-benefit rates.” Unacceptable would be: “To attend a meeting in Kansas.”

^[6] Notation on the itinerary will be made for travelers who refuse the lowest fare available. That information also appears on the monthly dollar-savings reports provided to the executive directors, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and the Executive for Administration.

^[7] For example, if a traveler wishes to depart for a destination at 4 o’clock, the travel counselors have been instructed to look at availability for the time period of 3 to 5 and so will inform the traveler. If the traveler insists on a more expensive flight, the itinerary will include that information.

^[8] Effective November 30, 1992, persons holding the American Express Corporate Card issued by the churchwide organization were enrolled in the American Express Car Rental Loss and Damage Coverage Program. This program covers loss or damage to each car rented with the American Express Corporate Card. This applies to both domestic

and international rentals. Therefore, decline the Collision Damage Waiver (or similar option) when renting a vehicle, and thereby the American Express coverage is activated. A \$4 charge per rental car will be billed to the unit by the Office of the Treasurer. Carry the identification card for the American Express Car Rental Loss and Damage Coverage Program to confirm coverage. Enrollment may be confirmed by calling 1-800-848-0240. (If outside the United States, call 1-440-603-4080 collect.)

^[9] Telephone credit cards often are an expensive method of calling. A surcharge per call is applied when using a credit card.

^[10] When no other less expensive options are available, follow the directions on the credit card^[9] to obtain the proper carrier for calling. If an operator responds, the caller is encouraged to advise her or him that you want the *non-operator assisted rates* to apply. These rates normally are substantially lower than operator-assisted rates.

^[11] Wallet size cards explaining how to use your telephone credit cards for local, as well as international calls, are available from the director for meeting management and travel in the Office of the Secretary.

^[12] Consult the controller in the Office of the Treasurer if there is a question in regard to payment of an item on an expense report.

^[13] “Reasonable” costs for food and lodging vary greatly throughout the United States—from generally high charges in cities such as New York, Washington, and San Francisco to more moderate prices in Pittsburgh, Minot, Spokane, or Omaha.