



Lower Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

FAQ

What are Lower Susquehanna Synod's policy and protocols for sexual misconduct?

Our synod is committed to preventing sexual misconduct within the church and responding with justice and compassion to all parties concerned when an allegation of such misconduct occurs. Our [Statement of Policy and Protocol Regarding Sexual Misconduct by Rostered Leaders](#) describes how our synod will act upon these commitments.

How do you define Sexual Misconduct?

The term "sexual misconduct" describes the wide variety of behaviors that are included in the range of clergy sexual abuse. The church has "Vision and Expectations" for all rostered ministers, including ordained pastors, that are clear about the pastor's responsibility to refrain from such activity. The church also has "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline" that describe the behaviors that are out of bounds, and the consequences of violation.

In cases of clergy sexual misconduct, what is synod's role?

Generally, each congregation calls its own pastor, determines its rostered leader's duties and responsibilities, supervises its day-to-day ministry and decides whether to terminate its rostered leader's call. Our synod has neither the authority nor the ability to make those decisions.

Our synod's role is essentially twofold: First, the bishop is responsible for providing pastoral care and leadership to our synod's congregations and pastors. Second, a rostered leader who commits sexual misconduct may be disciplined in accordance with our synod and churchwide constitutions: that is, he or she may be suspended or removed from the 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.

How are we keeping children safe?

Our synod's Statement of Policy and Protocol Regarding Sexual Misconduct by Rostered Leaders was revised and approved by our Synod Council on November 14, 2015, and requires that rostered leaders complete a boundary workshop at least once every three years. Rostered leaders are active and retired ordained pastors and consecrated deacons. We provide multiple boundary workshops throughout the year which are open to all rostered leaders and congregational members. Each educational session focuses on such subjects as the dynamics of rostered leader sexual misconduct and the impact of such misconduct on its victims. We made all rostered leaders and congregations aware of our synod's mandatory requirement for rostered leaders which went into effect January 2016. Failure to attend such training is considered in the rostered leader's eligibility for future calls, interim appointments, pulpit supply, and/or other positions of leadership in a local congregation, related agency, institution, or our synod. Our synod maintains a written record of rostered leaders' compliance.

Are clergy treated differently than anybody else?

No. The exercise of public ministry is sacred trust. Persons on the roster of public ministry are not exempt from the consequences when this sacred trust is violated.

Did the church keep silent on this?

No. We immediately implemented our Sexual Misconduct Policy and cooperated fully with the investigations processes.

Was this pastor permitted to continue ministry while investigations were pending?

No. The church took immediate steps to enact our sexual misconduct protocols and ensured the pastor did not interact with children or serve in a ministerial capacity until the accusations were resolved.

What is a synod?

The word “synod” comes from two Greek words “syn + hodos” that literally means "a way together." Synods are an expression of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, just as are congregations and the churchwide organization. They coordinate the work of congregations within their territories. Synods plan for the ELCA's mission (one dimension of God's larger mission) in their area. The ELCA's 65 synods vary greatly in size, geography, membership, staffing and program.

Who is the Lower Susquehanna Synod?

In the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA we feed the hungry as we have been fed by Christ. We welcome with full participation and inclusion all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Jesus Christ. With 233 congregations and worshiping communities and over 86,000 baptized members, the Lower Susquehanna Synod is one of the largest of the 65 synods in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For more information, visit www.lss-elca.org.

Who is Bishop James S. Dunlop?

The Rev. James S. Dunlop was elected to serve a six-year term as bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in June 2013. Bishop Dunlop was ordained in 2005, and served as pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Littlestown, PA. He received a Master of Divinity degree from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg in 2005, and the Bachelor of Arts, Magna Cum Laude, from Gettysburg College in 1978. Bishop Dunlop and his wife, Connie, a Special Educator in the Northern York School District, have three adult children, all married, and six grandchildren.

Lower Susquehanna Synod Media Inquiries

Deacon Marsha Roscoe, Director for Mission Interpretation, 717-652-1852, x 103.