

Covenant Concerning the Life and Ministry of the Eastern Synod, ELCIC

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Jeremiah 31:31

Our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3: 5-6

Preamble

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, its synods and congregations have been engaged since 2011 in a process of structural renewal. During this same period our National Bishop, Susan Johnson, has called on members of our church to engage in a process of personal spiritual renewal.

This historic moment of regeneration in the life of our church provides a timely opportunity to renew the promises made when congregations first came together, more than 150 years ago, to create our synod.

The Synod and its congregations are committed to ministry together for the sake of God's mission in the world. Our common purpose is the work that marks us as "a church in mission for others" – namely the things we do together that we could not do on our own.

Our covenant with each other is grounded in a promise that we all make to God and to the world. We commit ourselves to be a biblical, confessional, gospel-centred church which is open and welcoming to all people, and participates respectfully and constructively in the lives of the communities of which we are a part. This document makes clear the cooperative basis of our relationship. It affirms that we are a covenant people.

In this covenant, we acknowledge and affirm our determination to remain accountable to one another in the ways stated, and to call each other to account when the reality does not live up to the promise. We declare our commitment, with God's help, to live in a renewed relationship with each other. Our covenant is not of letter, but of life-giving spirit.

As the Bishop and Synod Council of the Eastern Synod, ELCIC, we promise that we will do the following.

With respect to **Communication with congregations**, we will:

1. Be honest about the condition and circumstances of the church in all of our dealings;
2. Listen respectfully to what congregations are saying;
3. Consult with congregational leaders, as appropriate, on matters that affect synodical or congregational life;
4. Keep congregations informed of news and developments that are relevant to them;
5. Communicate synodical initiatives to congregations, and explain how they can help;
6. Provide timely responses to requests for information from congregations;
7. Be transparent in financial reporting to congregations and members;
8. Use methods and technologies that are both efficient and effective.

With respect to **Mission and ministry**, we will:

1. Provide public leadership in society and in situations which are beyond the capacity of congregations to address at a local or area level;
2. Sustain the theological integrity of the church in a challenging and creative way.
3. Provide leadership, support and direction to congregations, ministries and rostered ministers when expressions of the church are developing, declining, restructuring or dying;
 - o Provide training and support for lay leaders;
 - o Inspire, equip and assist congregations to engage in ministry beyond their local community.
4. Ensure that our programs address current issues and remain relevant to current conditions in our mission context;
5. Provide education and support to ministry candidates and continuing education to rostered ministers;
6. Act within approved budgets to provide staff, programs and resources for identified priorities.

With respect to **Ministry vacancies**, we will:

1. Be honest and fair in assessing the needs of congregations and the capabilities of rostered ministers;
2. Recommend interim pastors and assist congregations in finding an appropriate rostered minister when a vacancy occurs.

As a congregation of the Eastern Synod, ELCIC, we promise that we will do the following.

With respect to **Communication with the Synod**, we will:

1. Keep the bishop and synod staff informed of all relevant developments in the congregation;
2. Be honest about our condition and circumstances;
3. Remain respectful in relationship, even when we disagree;
4. Respond to requests for information and reports in a timely, accurate and reliable manner;
5. Meet deadlines for remittances and registrations;
6. Strive to use available methods and technologies that are both efficient and effective.

With respect to **Communication with our members**, we will:

1. Educate and inform our members about the Synod and all expressions of the wider church;
2. Share specific information with our members when requested to do so;
3. Forward requests for information to the appropriate individual or group so they can respond on our behalf;

With respect to **Direction and leadership of the Synod**, we will:

1. Participate in programs offered by the Synod that benefit congregational ministry;
2. Participate in collective, collaborative ministry that involves the wider faith community, and offer leadership when appropriate.
3. Listen to and act on direction from the Synod, particularly in times of financial difficulty, membership decline, leadership vacancy, or congregational conflict;

With respect to **Synodical governance**, we will:

1. Send delegates to Synod Assembly and pay the congregation's share of their expenses;
2. Ensure that delegates have opportunities to discuss agenda issues with the congregation both before and after Assembly;
3. Empower delegates to participate in Assembly debates and, after consideration of all points of view, vote as their conscience dictates;
4. Be governed by the decisions made at Synod Assemblies on matters affecting congregational life.

With respect to **Financial support of the Synod**, we will:

1. Provide funding for the administrative structures and common ministry programs of the wider church;
2. Ensure that our financial support is both generous and proportional to our capacity to give;
3. Remit payments on a regular and timely basis;
4. Increase our giving proportionately when increases to the synodical budget are approved by the Synod in Assembly.