

## Pastor's Message, June 2005

Dear Members of Neighbors in Christ Parish,

Grace and peace to you.

At the meeting of our Neighbors in Christ Council at the end of May, the council members and I discussed new forms of ministry that many congregations in our Synod—and also many congregations throughout our national church (the ELCA)—have adopted to carry out their mission to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments.

One newly developed and expanding form of this ministry is called: Synod-Authorized Ministry (or SAM).

Here is a short description of the ministry of Synod Authorized Ministers (or SAMs) from a recent publication by the ELCA:

Most synod-authorized ministers preach, preside, offer pastoral care, teach and lead in ways that ministers of Word and Sacrament [ordained Pastors] would otherwise. Patterns of formation for synod-authorized ministers differ widely, though most of these ministers complete a series of retreats, intensive courses and/or online course offerings, combined with significant mentoring. The increased use of synod-authorized ministers in the ELCA is one of the key indicators that a new, nonprofessionalized model of ministry is emerging alongside the more conventional model of rostered ministry [ordained Pastors].

<https://resources.elca.org/congregations-and-synod-data/synod-authorized-ministers-in-the-elca-2024/>

I believe that the NIC Council and I had a straightforward and helpful conversation about the pros and cons of incorporating Synod Authorized Ministry throughout the ministries of the ELCA and the pros and cons of adopting this ministry for our congregations: Augustana Lutheran Church, First Lutheran Church, and Saint John-Bismarck Lutheran Church.

In our discussion, I emphasized the “pros” this new form of ministry as I also tried to be mindful of the “cons”—the difficulties that may accompany adjusting to any form of ministry that differs from what all of us have experienced throughout our lives.

Accordingly, I also believe that, in both the near and not-so-near future, the members of the congregations of Neighbors in Christ will be called on to prayerfully consider the adoption of ministries such as of Synodic Authorized Ministry for the ministries of each of your congregations.

My prayers for you, Members of Neighbors in Christ, as you prayerfully consider how you will carry on the ministries of your congregations.

As your pastor, I will serve you as you prayerfully consider how you will carry on the ministries of your congregations.

Pastor Leonard Hummel