

Congregational Council Reference for Lay Ministry Training Program

Thank you for serving as a reference for an applicant for the Lay Ministry Training Program in the Northeastern Iowa Synod. Please complete the final page of this form and return it to Pr. Kristen Rod at the synod office. The form may be emailed to rodk@neiasynod.org or mailed to the Northeastern Iowa Synod, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677.

What is the Lay Ministry Training Program?

The Holy Spirit is at work in the Church lifting up local leaders to serve congregations when an ordained pastor is not available for an extended period of time. We believe this training program is one way of coming alongside the Holy Spirit in this time.

The full program consists of two layers— a Formation layer, which focuses on practical ministry skills, and an Academic layer, which focuses on topics like Bible, Church History, and Lutheran Theology.

Participants who complete both layers of this program will become Certified Lay Assisting Ministers (CLAMs). Certified Lay Assisting Ministers are equipped to serve in the life and ministry of their congregation and the larger Church, and may be authorized to serve as Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) when a need arises.

- *In the ELCA, a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) is a person who is not ordained to Word and Sacrament ministry (pastors) or one of our full-communion partners, and has been authorized by the Bishop of their synod to preside over the sacraments in a particular place (typically one congregation or parish) for a particular length of time (typically one year).*
- *Certified Lay Assisting Ministers (CLAMs) may also serve one or more congregations alongside an ordained minister, but they will not preside over the sacraments unless they have received a SAM authorization.*

What might a SAM or a CLAM do?

The primary responsibility of the SAM in a congregation is to plan and lead worship, equipped with basic scriptural understanding, Lutheran theology and worship practices. SAMs and CLAMs ministry may also include:

- Leading worship at care facilities and assisted living units
- Hospital and homebound visitation/communion
- Funerals
- Teaching Confirmation classes
- Congregational administration

Who is eligible?

A well-qualified applicant will be someone who has demonstrated leadership in their congregation and has been received by their congregation as an accepted leader. They will have a good sense of the local context/community and a heart to be connected to the larger church through the Northeastern Iowa Synod and the ELCA.

An applicant may commit the time to begin serving as a worship leader while they are going through the training (potentially 15-20 hours/week). They will be humble of heart and serve for the sake of their congregation not for their own glory.

What is expected from a congregation served by a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM)-- a CLAM who has been authorized to by the bishop to preside over the sacraments?

The congregation can expect a worship leader who is learning as they go. A SAM should not be expected to serve as a full-time pastor. Additional expectations for the congregation include:

- Prayers for and public support of the SAM's leadership
- Negotiating a renewable contract with the SAM
- Adhering to a relational covenant between the congregation, SAM, and Synod.
- Fairly compensating the SAM.
- Recruiting other members to do the ministry of the congregation beyond worship planning and leadership (i.e. visitation, teaching, administration).
- Working on a Congregational Vitality Plan which may include steps to conclude congregational ministry and/or partner with other congregations and ministry sites for shared ministry opportunities.
- Hold the ministry of the Gospel we all share on par with the welfare of the congregation and the SAM.

Congregational Council Reference

Name of Applicant:

Name of Reference:

Email:

Phone:

Position on Council:

Relationship to Applicant:

Describe how you have experienced the applicant as a leader in a congregation.
(200-250 words)

How do you imagine the congregation responding to and working with the leadership of the applicant? (200-250 words)

What concerns do you have in regard to this applicant serving a congregation or parish as a Certified Lay Assisting Minister (CLAM) or a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM)? (200-250 words)