



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Synodically Authorized Ministry Policy Feb 2019

SAMS Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is a SAM?** A SAM is a Synodically Authorized Minister, a lay person authorized by the bishop to preach and preside at Holy Communion under special circumstances and specific location.
2. **What are those special circumstances?** When word and sacrament ministry is needed and in the prolonged absence of an ordained pastor, the synod bishop may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the ELCA to offer this ministry. ¹
3. **What can a SAM do?** In the prolonged absence of an ordained pastor, a SAM can preside over communion, lead worship and preach. They may also provide pastoral care, baptize and preside at weddings.
4. **How can our congregation get a SAM?** Your council/parish president or officer may contact the synod office to request a SAM to preside at Communion when you are unable to find a pastor to serve for an extended period of time. See request form below.
5. **Do we need to contact the synod office if a lay person preaches but we don't have communion?** No, the congregation's called pastor may authorize someone who is not an ordained minister to preach and lead a Service of the Word.
6. **Does a SAM need special training?** Yes, a two year course through the NWSWI Lay School of Ministry, additional classes in preaching and pastoral care, continuing education at our Lay School or other approved education, background check, boundaries training and meet with supervising pastor. See below.
7. **May we call a SAM a pastor?** NO
8. **May a SAM wear a robe/alb?** Yes
9. **May a SAM wear a clergy collar or stole?** NO

¹ 7.31.09 Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

10. **Do we pay a SAM?** Yes, the same as a supply pastor including mileage. See synod guidelines.
11. **Should we get a SAM when our pastor goes on vacation, sabbatical, parent leave, disability, or takes a new call?** As rule, find a substitute pastor from the supply list on the synod website for vacations. For longer periods of time, more than four weeks, ask the synod ministers for suggestions. If no pastor is available, than the bishop may authorize a SAM to help out for an extended period of time.
12. **Are there any other situations a SAM might serve?** Yes, for example: During a long vacancy which may happen due to a shortage of pastoral candidates a SAM may be authorized to serve that congregation. If there is a large multi-point parish arrangement of 3 or more congregations, then a SAM may work with an ordained pastor so all can have worship on Sunday mornings.
13. **Do I have to be a SAM to make home communion visits to members who can't come to church on Sunday?** NO, Any person trained as a home communion visitor may take communion to members unable to attend worship provided the elements have been consecrated.
14. **If I move to another synod, will I be a SAM there?** NO, your role as Synodically Authorized Minister does not transfer to another synod.