

ELCA Word and Service Task Force Update

The ELCA Church Council recommended the following action to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly:

- To unify the three existing official rosters of laypersons (Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses of the ELCA, and Diaconal Ministers) into a roster of Ministry of Word and Service
- To ensure that individuals on the three existing rosters of Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses of the ELCA, and Diaconal Ministers be automatically transferred to the roster of Ministry of Word and Service, unless a person on an existing roster declines, and that the existing rosters be eliminated with the establishment of the new roster on Jan. 1, 2017
- To endorse the other recommendations of the task force regarding this new roster
- To give thanks to God for the ministry of all who have served and are serving on the present lay rosters and to express confidence that God is leading this church into God's future

Other recommendations of the task force endorsed by the Church Council included:

- Give the title Deacon to those people on the new roster
- Modify the candidacy process to include this new roster
- Charge the Office of the Secretary to propose appropriate constitutional amendments to effect this change
- Use consecration as the entrance rite for this new roster until such time as the Entrance Rite Discernment Group makes a final recommendation for an appropriate rite
- Arrange for funding for transition events and ongoing leadership and formation events to ensure growth and understanding of the Word and Service roster
- Arrange for the preparation of appropriate and informative materials for the church's ongoing study

As a result of these recommendations, candidates entering the candidacy process for one of the present three lay rosters before Jan. 1, 2017, may continue under the present process as long as they complete the process by 2020.

If the proposal to unite the present three lay rosters into one unified roster of Word and Service and the necessary constitutional changes are passed at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, the director of candidacy will be given the task of making the necessary candidacy changes for the new roster.

Following a positive vote, the Entrance Rite Discernment Group, led by Co-Chairs Bishop Robert Driesen and Bishop Mark Narum, will continue the work of preparing materials to facilitate discussions across the church concerning the appropriate entrance rite for the new roster. The recommendation will come before the Church Council in the fall of 2018.

Leaders are encouraged to lift up this information alongside the ministry of those on the present lay rosters within their synod and especially at their upcoming synod assemblies and invite conversation through workshops and other venues. Remember that members of the Word and Service Task Force are available to lead workshops.

The report of the Word and Service Task Force to the Church Council stated that, "The recommendation to establish a single roster of Ministry of Word and Service is not only about merging leadership rosters. It is rather a matter of addressing with new urgency the church's response to the needs of the world in the 21st century. ... Partnerships between ministers of Word

and Sacrament and Word and Service open innumerable opportunities for creative and enriched evangelical outreach and mission in the world."

Please pray for all who gather this summer at the Churchwide Assembly to consider the proposal to establish a single, unified roster of Word and Service.

If you have any input or questions, or requests for a workshop in your area, please send them to Cherlyne.Beck@elca.org.

Word and Service Task Force members:

- The Rev. Dr. Said Ailabouni, chair
- Sr. Krista Anderson, deaconess
- Madelyn Busse, diaconal minister
- Tammy Devine, diaconal minister
- The Rev. William Gafkjen, bishop of the ELCA Indiana-Kentucky Synod
- Rebecca Kolowe, diaconal minister
- Sr. Melinda Lando, deaconess
- The Rev. Dr. Duane Larson
- Dr. John Litke
- Dr. Susan McArver, Church Council representative
- Agnes McClain, associate in ministry
- Sr. Janet Stump, directing deaconess
- James Valentine, associate in ministry

ELCA churchwide staff:

- The Rev. Cherlyne V. Beck, program director, Support of Rostered Leaders
- Sue Rothmeyer, associate in ministry, Office of the Secretary
- The Rev. Dr. Gregory Villalon, director, ELCA Leadership for Mission/Candidacy

In Christ's name,

The Rev. Cherlyne V. Beck
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