

Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Position Description: CONFERENCE DEAN (during a Time of Transition)

Rationale: The Sierra Pacific Synod currently finds itself in a time of transition, with an Interim Bishop (Rev. Claire Burkat) and a pending Bishop's election in 2023. Additionally – with the resignation of DEM / Asst. to the Bishop Tita Valeriano – our synod is understaffed to current need and those staff who remain are significantly overstretched. Nonetheless, pastoral transitions and call processes continue apace.

Because of the obvious and significant need for additional staff hours across our synod during this interim time, Bishop Burkat has recommended the temporary engagement of our nine Conference Deans as part-time deployed staff of the Sierra Pacific Synod. It is hoped that this move will facilitate better pastoral care of our rostered leaders throughout the synod and will ensure that congregations in transition receive significantly more support than is currently available.

This is envisioned to be an eighteen-month-long stop-gap solution to our current staffing void, with the understanding that it MAY provide a new model for synodical ministry among us as we transition into a new bishop's administration in 2023/24.

Purpose: The Conference Dean shall support collaborative ministry within the Conference, and serve as principal liaison from the conference to the Office of the Bishop. The Conference Dean shall represent the Office of the Bishop within their conference in order to enhance ministry, equip leaders, expand service, and extend communication among our congregations, as well as our rostered leaders. The Conference Dean will represent conference concerns within the Committee of Deans.

Qualifications: Conference Deans shall be pastors under call serving within the territory of the conference which they serve. Those well-qualified to serve as Deans are those who:

- center their lives in Christ,
- hold sensitive information in strict confidence,
- support the mission and purpose of the Sierra Pacific Synod and the ELCA, and share information and direction concerning the larger church,
- are collegial and cooperative, participating actively in conference and synodical events,
- effectively offer pastoral care to other rostered leaders and congregations as needed,
- communicate openly and honestly while respecting confidentiality,
- set and keep healthy personal and professional boundaries,
- provide leadership to the conference and to the Synod for an average of 20-25 hours per month (with the understanding that they will be compensated for same),
- demonstrate a spirit of accountability and mutuality in their mission support and parochial reporting.

- lead their congregation to be missionally-vital and financially-viable.

Election: Because the terms of all the current deans are envisioned to extend beyond the term of this agreement, no constitutionally-mandated election procedure is offered at this time. In the event that there is a vacancy among the roster of Deans, the Bishop – upon mutual conversation with the rostered ministers of the Conference – may appoint a Dean to fill out the dean’s unexpired term. Otherwise, the current constitutional orders for election of a new Dean within a given conference shall be observed.

Duties: The Dean will work closely with the Bishop, the synod staff and with the Committee of Deans. The duties of the Conference Dean will include the following:

- Convene and facilitate Conference Assemblies according to the constitution of the Sierra Pacific & gatherings as needed and appropriate.
- Maintain a collaborative relationship with the synod council representative from their conference and any at-large synod council members in their conference.
- ensuring the facilitation of regular meetings of the conference’s rostered leaders,
- participation in bi-monthly meetings of the Committee of Deans,
- providing a perspective from the Conference to the Office of the Bishop on pending issues and actions,
- support for call processes which may include the following meetings with appropriate congregational leaders:
 - walking with the congregation and pastor in the leave-taking (see When Your Pastor Leaves)
 - supporting the Interim Pastor and congregation during self-study and preparation
 - Being a resource to the congregation & council during the call process.
 - reviewing the Ministry Site Profile and supporting documents with the call committee as requested
 - Consult with the synod staff on placement of rostered ministers in call processes
- provide for the pastoral care and visitation of rostered leaders within the conference on a regular basis,
- participate in installations, welcoming new rostered leaders, and wishing Godspeed to rostered leaders leaving the conference,
- representing the Office of the Bishop as deployed staff of the Synod as needed,
- serving as a first-point-of-contact for matters relating to leaders and congregations.

Accountability: Office of the Bishop, Conference Rostered Ministers and Committee of Deans

Support: Bishop, synod staff, colleague deans