

# FAQs

## Update on Licensed Lay Deacons

*Eighteen months ago, Synod adopted Resolution 13-02A "To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry." The chairman of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry, First Vice-President Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller provides a progress report.*

### How many men are affected by this resolution?

In a 2017 survey the district presidents reported a total of 591 licensed lay deacons. Of these 335 are not functioning as de facto pastors but assist pastors in other roles. This resolution potentially affects 256 men, because they preach and preside for the Lord's Supper on a consistent and continuing basis. For these men the resolution directs the "Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry [to] establish and implement an expanded regional colloquy program (with appropriate regional colloquy committees) to regularize the status of current licensed lay deacons (LLDs) who are 50 years of age or older and who have been preaching the Gospel and/ or administering the Sacraments publicly on behalf of the church for the past two years (de facto pastors), so that these servants of Christ can be called and ordained according to the order of the LCMS and be rostered as pastors with [Specific Ministry Pastor]SMP status" (2016 Proceedings, p. 237).

### Does Resolution 13-02A end the lay deacon program?

No. The resolution concentrates the future focus of the deacon program on assisting roles: evangelism, visitation, mercy work, etc. (335 men fit this category now). District presidents may continue to recruit, train and credential new deacons for service in assisting functions. The resolution states that "nothing in this resolution shall be construed as impeding the training, recognition, credentialing or service of deacons who do not publicly preach or administer the Sacraments, namely, those who serve in ministries of mercy, education, or visitation, and so forth, or in an outreach role, assisting in evangelism and church planting (but not in public preaching and administration of the Sacraments)."

### What does the resolution require for those who are preaching and presiding on a consistent and continuing basis?

The approximately 250 men included here have until July 1, 2018 to decide a course of action. They must (a) apply for a seminary program (e.g., alternate route, regular seminary SMP), OR (b) if they qualify, apply for colloquy to the SMP roster through the regional colloquy process, OR (c) apply for an exception or cease

functioning as a *de facto* pastor. Please note that since 1998 licensed lay deacons who have served 10 or more years in full Word and Sacrament pastoral ministry also have the right to apply for colloquy to the general pastor roster.

### What does the colloquy application process look like?

First, the deacon prepares an application package with the help of the district office. The district office sends the completed package to the First Vice-President of Synod, who assigns the application to the appropriate regional colloquy committee. This committee evaluates the application and invites the applicant for an interview. When all necessary requirements have been completed, the regional committee will certify the applicant for call and placement (subject to ratification by the Colloquy Committee). See the Policy Manual available at: [lcms.org/about/leadership/president/pastoral-colloquy](http://lcms.org/about/leadership/president/pastoral-colloquy).

### How are things proceeding? Where are we now?

As of this writing (January 15, 2018), we have received in the Colloquy Office a total of 14 applications for colloquy to the SMP roster. Five men have been certified for call and placement as SMP pastors, and nine are presently in process, with many more to come. One of the markers for progress includes the number of men taking the one week "seminary intensive" courses. Eighteen men finished the course in Memphis, Tenn., in June 2017. Thirty-four took the course in Portland, Ore., in July. Two more sessions are scheduled: Fort Wayne, Ind., in February 2018 and Irvine, Calif., in March.

### When are these men to be ordained?

Please note: the Colloquy Committee certifies a man for call and placement in a call. For a licensed lay deacon to apply for colloquy (either regular or SMP), there must be a congregation committed to calling the man once he is certified. No one can be ordained without a valid call to the pastoral ministry. Ordination is therefore the last step in this process.

## What about exceptions?

The resolution allows two types of exceptions: (1) Exceptions to the age (50 or over) and experience (at least 2 years) requirements may be made by the regional committee and the Council of Presidents (COP) and (2) After January 1, 2018, district presidents may, in exceptional cases defined in the resolution, continue to grant licenses to preach and preside with the consent of the COP and the Colloquy Committee.

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## A concluding word:

We have made a good beginning. The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry and the COP are working together to implement the provisions of 13-02A in a fair and sensitive manner. Pray for these efforts, as we seek to live out biblical teaching *“that a right calling to the Office of Public Ministry requires that a man be properly prepared and examined regarding doctrine and life, be called by the congregation (or ministry) where he is to serve, and publicly appointed in a way so that the entire church fellowship recognizes the validity of his service”* (3rd Resolve, 13-02A).

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