

Hosting a Lay Preacher: What You Need to Know

The Virginia Synod is thrilled that your congregation is hosting one of the Synod's commissioned lay preachers. Lay preachers participate in a year-long training process that includes small group study of preaching and Lutheran theology, preaching practicum including peer and rostered minister evaluation, and approval by the synod bishop. As they are a lay preacher and not a rostered minister, here are some tips for how to welcome them into your congregation's worship.

How do we find lay preachers who have been commissioned and can preach at our congregation?

The VA Synod Office of the Bishop updates the list of supply preachers on the VA Synod website:

<https://www.vasynod.org/resources/pulpit-supply/> The Bishop's Office will include information on all commissioned lay preachers who choose to have their information shared.

Welcoming the Lay Preacher - As a way of communicating with your congregation about your lay preacher, we encourage you to print the following in your bulletin or make an announcement at the beginning of worship:

"We welcome (NAME) this morning as our guest preacher. (NAME) is a commissioned lay preacher in the Virginia Synod. The Lay Preaching Academy began in 2021 and has commissioned two cohorts of preachers. Participants explored Scripture study and preaching through small groups, giving sermons, and intentional feedback. Each lay preacher is endorsed to serve in this capacity by the bishop. We are excited to have (NAME) with us this morning."

How do we share the details about the worship service with our lay preacher? At least two weeks prior to the date on which the lay preacher is preaching, please contact your lay preacher using the contact information provided when you scheduled the lay preacher to serve. You should provide a bulletin, details, etc. Be sure to share information about whether the worship service is live-streamed and about general AV information as well (microphone, etc.).

You may want to be sure that the lay preacher has seen the information in *You are a commissioned Lay Preacher – Here's What You Need to Know*. You are welcome to review that information with the lay preacher.

How early will the lay preacher arrive? We have suggested that the lay preacher arrive 30 to 45 minutes early for a worship service. This gives everyone time to review the worship layout and the bulletin. The congregation sound person and/or AV person should confirm whether or not the lay preacher will use a microphone and whether they need to turn it on/off themselves or if that will be done by the soundboard. Confirm whether the service is being live-streamed and, if so, point out the location of cameras in the sanctuary.

Worship Leadership – The lay preacher may have some experience with parts of worship; however, the congregation should not expect them to lead the whole worship service. Please be sure you communicate with the lay preacher regarding worship leadership outside of preaching. We highly

encourage you to use your lay leadership to lead the liturgy. Please provide a bulletin to the lay preacher as soon as the bulletin is available.

Preaching text – In general, the Lay Preaching Academy training has focused on preaching on the assigned gospel text for the day. However, lay preachers are invited to preach on the text that calls to them in a particular way. **Please confirm - prior to the Sunday that they are preaching - which lectionary texts will be included in worship.**

Children's Sermons – Lay preachers are not expected to lead a children's sermon. If you have a children's sermon time and want to invite the lay preacher to lead it, please communicate that **prior to the Sunday that they are preaching**. However, our recommendation is to use a lay leader in the congregation to lead the children's sermon.

Presiding at Communion – Lay preachers are not authorized by the bishop to preside at the table. Therefore, lay preachers should not preside at the sacrament of holy communion nor at the sacrament of holy baptism.

We loved our lay preacher. Can they come back? A lay preacher is not intended to serve as de facto pastor in any congregation. The lay preacher cannot preach more than six weeks in a row in a congregation at a given time. If a congregation is seeking someone to serve in a way that is more than occasional Sunday supply, they should contact the Synod Office for more information on additional options.

Compensation – The 2023 compensation for a lay preacher is \$200 for one service and \$75 for each additional service, plus the current [IRS rate for the ROUND TRIP mileage](#) or the cost for public transit or rideshare. Congregations should pay the lay preacher on the Sunday on which they preach.

Tax Documentation - Generally, if a congregation pays a lay preacher \$600 or more during a calendar year, the congregation will need to provide the lay preacher a 1099 (<https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-1099-misc>). Typically, if an individual receives less than \$600 in compensation from the congregation, then they are responsible for tracking and reporting their compensation to the IRS as additional income. Please consult with a tax professional for more information.

Again, we are thankful for your hosting of lay preachers and look forward to hearing how it has been a mutual blessing for both the lay preacher and host congregation.