

## The Basics

As the Holy Spirit continues to form and reform Christ's Church, the Lay Ministry Academy of the Virginia Synod seeks to respond to the new and varied ways that worship and ministry are happening in our congregations and in other worship settings.

The Spirit has already been at work lifting up lay people who sense a call to serve in worship and ministry leadership, especially for the various congregations in our synod who are without the regular services of an ordained pastor. Seeing God's grace in providing for the Church, we give thanks for all faithful lay leaders who answer God's call to service.

In response to the Spirit's work, the Lay Ministry Academy (LMA) offers to those discerning a call to these ministries a community, and the education, training, support, supervision, authorization, and continuing education to enable them to serve in the Virginia Synod as a Commission Lay Ministers.

## LMA Leadership

The LMA Leadership Team consists of rostered ministers and Commissioned Lay Ministers who give their time and expertise to guide the LMA candidates during the formation and placement process. Their work is supported by rostered ministers who mentor SAMS after they have been placed.

The Rev. Kristen Van Stee serves as chair of the LMA Leadership Team and is the first point of contact. The Rev. Colleen Hetrick, Assistant to the Bishop, works with the leadership team.



## Feeling Called?

If you are interested in learning more about the Lay Ministry Academy or becoming a Commissioned Lay Minister, please contact Pastor Kristen Van Stee at



[LMA@vasynod.org](mailto:LMA@vasynod.org)

For more information:



[vasynod.org/LMA](http://vasynod.org/LMA)

## Virginia Synod, ELCA



540-389-1000



[www.vasynod.org](http://www.vasynod.org)



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## Formation process for Commissioned Lay Ministers

*Now there are varieties of gifts  
but the same Spirit, and there are  
varieties of services but the same Lord,  
and there are varieties of activities,  
but it is the same God who activates  
all of them in everyone. To each is given  
the manifestation of the Spirit  
for the common good.*

(1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NRSVue)



## **Commissioned Lay Ministers: Lay Preachers, SAMS, & More!**

Commissioned Lay Minister is the updated and inclusive term for those who serve as lay preachers, SAMS, and in other roles.

**Commissioned Lay Preachers** are persons who have been equipped and formed through the LMA to formally proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in the congregations of the Virginia Synod. They serve at the endorsement and commission of the bishop, after completing training and practicum work. They provide occasional worship leadership and preaching to congregations and worship communities; not serving as the essential pastor or deacon of the congregation. Lay Preachers may share their gifts in both their home congregations and in other worship settings.

**Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMS)** are identified and equipped persons for service in congregations as described by the ELCA constitution (7.31.09) and administered by the ELCA Conference of Bishops. SAMS are assigned by the VA Synod bishop and authorized for certain leadership functions in specific synod-related locations for a specified length of time. SAMS are paired with a supervising pastor for as long as they serve. SAMS must attend annual boundary training, complete continuing education, and abide by ELCA guidelines.

## **Formation Process**

**APPLICATION:** Complete and submit the LMA application, background check, references, entrance essay, and \$50 fee.

**ENTRANCE:** The LMA Leadership Team will review the documents and schedule an entrance interview before making an entrance decision.

**EDUCATION & FORMATION, PART 1:** Part 1 include six courses: Lutheran Theology, Bible Essentials: Hebrew Bible, Bible Essentials: New Testament, Boundaries and Communication, Worship and Sacraments, and Preaching (with small group). The cost for Part 1 is \$1,500.

**ENDORSEMENT:** After the first year of classes, LMA candidates will be invited into further mutual discernment with the LMA Leadership Team about whether they are being called to serve as a Commissioned Lay Minister or by continuing in their current roles as a lay person in their congregation. The process will include personal reflection, mentor evaluation, and psychological evaluation.

**COMMISSION OF LAY MINISTERS:** Those who are endorsed as Commissioned Lay Ministers will be commissioned by the Office of the Bishop.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION:** It is expected that all Commissioned Lay Ministers will continue their education and formation throughout their time of commissioned service.

**EDUCATION & FORMATION, PART 2:** Those who are endorsed to continue in the formation process to become a SAM will complete additional courses, covering pastoral care, leadership, and other contextual learning. The additional cost for Part 2 is \$750.

**APPROVAL:** The LMA Leadership Team will do a final approval interview. The approval decision will be forwarded to the bishop, who, in consultation with the synod council, may approve the candidate for ministry as a SAM. The LMA Leadership Team is developing discernment support for Commissioned Lay Ministers who complete Part 2, are approved, and do not have an available SAM placement.

**COMMISSION of SAMS:** The Office of the Bishop will work with SAMS and congregations to match them together for ministry leadership. Once a SAM is appointed to serve a ministry site, the bishop authorizes that person as a Synod Authorized Minister. Each authorized and serving SAM is paired with a supervising pastor. They are expected to meet together monthly as long as the SAM is serving in a congregation.