

Keeping The Church Safe

Keeping the Church safe, through the maintaining of proper boundaries, is a steadfast commitment of the Northern Illinois Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This commitment for safe congregations begins in seminary where the students are not only taught professional ethics in the classroom but are required to practice these disciplines under thorough supervision in ministry settings such as Field Work, Internship and Clinical Pastoral Education.

The Approval Process for Ministerial Leaders in the ELCA is led by the Synod Candidacy Committees and is an additional check and balance to seminary education to assure the high standards of future Rostered Leaders. Just because someone graduates from Seminary does not mean that they will necessarily be recommended for Ordination. The Candidacy Committee screens all potential Rostered Leaders through psychological testing, background checks, interviews, references, congregational recommendations and much more.

Then Bishops and Synod Staffs get involved to assist Congregational Call Committees and Councils to discern whether a particular ministerial candidate would be a good match for a specific congregation. Calls to Rostered Leaders are voted on at Congregational meetings. The Congregational Council, serving as the church's board of directors, supervises the staff.

Be assured that Rostered Leaders who do not maintain proper professional ethics and boundaries are not passed on from Synod to Synod and are not recommended by Bishops to congregations for interview as potential pastors. Unethical Rostered Leaders are removed from the Clergy Roster of the ELCA and are always reported to proper authorities, if their misconduct involves children.

Finally, keeping the Church safe is an ongoing commitment. For example on November 17 we are sponsoring a Boundary Workshop for Lay and Rostered Church Leaders at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moline. We endeavor to continually raise these important concerns in a variety of ways to assure that all are indeed welcome in the congregations of the Northern Illinois Synod.