

Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County Formal Agreement for Ministry

with 2008 changes

[The following agreement was approved as "Bylaws" of the congregational constitutions in congregational meetings on May 21, 2000. They apply to St. John in Ellinger, St. Paul in Fayetteville, St. John in Rutersville, and St. John in Warrenton.]

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Agreement is to authorize a relationship between these congregations: St. John Lutheran Church in Ellinger; St. Paul Lutheran Church in Fayetteville; St. John Lutheran Church in Rutersville; and St. John's Lutheran Church in Warrenton.

II. Mission Statement

The Mission of our Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County is to provide a working relationship among these churches, in order that they may carry out the ministry of their respective congregations. We do not exist to serve ourselves, but to serve Christ. Together, we state our Christian Mission as follows:

God's purpose for our ministry is:

Sharing God's Word by embracing and serving all as God's faithful family.

The Guiding Principles of our ministry are:

1. Jesus is Lord and Savior.
2. Pray, listen, and follow Christ.
3. Welcome, love, and serve all.
4. Gather to worship and praise God.
5. Go, make disciples, baptize and teach.

III. Ministry Identity

The name by which the ministry is to be known shall be **Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County**.

IV. Pastor

Any pastor called to serve the Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County shall be on the active clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (or the roster of denominations with which the ELCA is in full communion) with approval of the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod office and shall be called by a

2/3 majority vote of those present and voting in each of the Shared Lutheran Ministry Congregations. Each congregation's Shared Ministry Council members will then represent the congregation, and the Shared Ministry Council will extend a call to a pastor on behalf of the congregations with a 2/3 majority vote of the council.

V. Worship

- A. Each congregation will retain its own order of worship.
- B. Each congregation shall have one worship per Sunday, with others scheduled as necessary in conjunction with the clergy.
- C. Scheduling of regular weekly, occasional and joint worships for Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas Eve/Day, Lent, and Easter will be done by the Shared Ministry Council in conjunction with the clergy.

VI. Financial Obligations

- A. The Shared Lutheran Ministry expenses (including the pastors' compensation) will be divided proportionately among the congregations based on the percentage of active confirmed members of each.
- B. This criterion is used only to determine financial obligation to the Shared Ministry, and does not determine individual congregational expenses.
- C. "Active confirmed member" refers to any member of the congregation who has "communed and made a contribution of record during the current or preceding year."

VII. Congregational Identity

Each congregation will maintain its own identity as it now exists. Each congregation will be accountable to the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. Each congregation will be responsible for representation at synod events and for the expenses of such representation. Exceptions may be made in voting member representation at Synod Assembly with Shared Ministry Council approval.

VIII. Shared Lutheran Ministry Council

The Shared Lutheran Ministry Council shall consist of two members from each congregation. The council of each congregation shall elect from the congregation the following number of persons to serve on the Shared Lutheran Ministry Council: one from council, one from congregation; recommended but not mandatory.

If both of a congregation's two elected representatives are unable to attend a Shared Ministry Council meeting, then they may call on any of their congregation's council members to serve as an alternate with voice and vote.

- A. The Shared Lutheran Ministry Council shall meet at least one time per year and as needed with meeting locations being rotated among the churches of the Shared Lutheran Ministry.
- B. The major areas of responsibility shall be:
 - 1. To identify leadership needs of the ministry and the sharing of the pastor's time in an equitable way.
 - 2. To periodically review the terms of the Letter of Call and the ministry expectations of the Shared Lutheran Ministry and pastor.
 - 3. To be a supportive group for the pastors and families and make an annual review of the parsonages and their needs.
 - 4. Appoint a Mutual Ministry Team to function according to the guidelines of "Mutual Ministry Committee: A Vision for Building Up the Body of Christ."
 - 5. Appoint a "Reconciliation Team" for the purpose of managing conflict within and among the congregations. Each congregation should be equally represented on the team, and team members will be encouraged to be objective in their proceedings. Pastors shall serve in an advisory role. In the event of a conflict, the team shall
 - a. Be proactive in attempting to resolve the issues.
 - b. Meet with all parties, holding forums if necessary, in order to collect information and perspectives on the conflict.
 - c. Collate all information gathered in order to discern a clearer picture of the situation.
 - d. Make a recommendation for action to the Shared Ministry Council, Church Councils, and/or Pastors.
 - e. Use any other means deemed necessary and wise to resolve conflict.
- C. The length of term shall be four years. A member can be off the Shared Ministry Council for one year and be eligible for re-election. The initial council members will consist of one person serving for 2 years and one person serving for 3 years from each congregation. Should a council position become vacant for any reason, the congregation council shall elect a successor for the un-expired term.
- D. A quorum shall be at least 50% of each congregation's representatives.
- E. Each elected congregational representative shall have one vote.
- F. The pastors called by the Shared Lutheran Ministry shall have voice and vote on the Shared Ministry Council.

IX. Shared Lutheran Ministry Officers

The Shared Lutheran Ministry Council shall elect from among its membership four officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer for a term of one year, without term limitations other than those of council membership.

X. Parsonage

The parsonages are to be free of debt and require only to be maintained.

- A. This requirement shall be provided for at the beginning of the year in the following way:

Each congregation, on the basis of active confirmed membership, shall contribute its percentage of \$2,000 annually to the parsonage fund until it reaches a ceiling of \$7,000 or until it drops to \$4,000 when assessments shall resume.

- B. Should the Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County dissolve, the parsonage fund will be redistributed on the same basis as the contributions were made, and the parsonages will be returned to a condition equal to or above their original condition at the time of the Shared Ministry's beginning.

XI. Offering

- A. Envelopes - each congregation may use its own system of offering envelopes. The congregations may decide to make a joint order of envelopes as long as the integrity each congregation offering is maintained.
- B. Joint worship loose offerings shall be dispersed to congregations by percentage of active confirmed membership unless otherwise designated by the Shared Ministry Council. Envelopes go to their designated church.
- C. The Shared Lutheran Ministry Fund will be established. Each congregation will pay into this fund its portion of staff compensation, Shared Ministry expenses, and the Parsonage Fund. From this fund, shared expenses will be paid. This fund shall require two signatures and be audited on an annual basis.

XII. Length of Agreement

- A. This Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County will begin on January 1, 2001 and will be reviewed annually by the Shared Lutheran Ministry Council before December 31. It can be altered only by mutual agreement of all the congregations, together with the approval by Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the ELCA. In order to withdraw from the Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County, a congregation must give due notification of such by October 1 of the year prior to the year it wishes to withdraw.
- B. Prior to withdrawing from the Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County, the congregation wishing to withdraw shall discuss the reasons with the Shared Ministry Council to seek options for remaining in the shared ministry. If conflict arises, the parties involved shall first follow

the designated process for resolution set forth in item VIII. B. 5. above. This policy is set forth not in a desire to be legalist or controlling, but it is set for by well-intentioned members of all congregations to insure due process for the sake of all and especially for the sake of the Gospel.

XIII. Logo¹

The Shared Lutheran Ministry of Fayette County shall have as its logo the following image:



The cross is located at the center of our logo to demonstrate that Christ is at the center of our mission and ministry. The “SLM” grows out of our identity and unity in Christ. The four connected figures of various colors express our congregations’ interconnectedness balanced with our unique individual qualities. The colors used are those also used in the ELCA logo. The colorful stole draped on the cross reflects the joy and peace we experience doing the work of Christ who said,

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30).

¹ The Shared Lutheran Ministry was designed by MiLisa Gaertner of St. John in Ruterville.