

“The following response was written and shared with the membership of NAME, who were asked whether they wished to sign the statement. The intent was that should a significant percentage of NAME members (set at two-thirds by the executive committee) sign the statement, it would then be sent to the convention floor committee and District presidents. Although a majority of NAME members supported the statement, due to a large number of abstentions and ministries also preparing their own statements and not wanting to pen their names to two or more statements, the two-thirds majority was not achieved. Therefore, the executive committee did not feel that we could in good conscience submit it as a statement representing the views of NAME.” -- The Executive Committee of NAME, Winter 2015

N.A.M.E. Response to the Report & Recommendations of Task Force 4-06A (Licensed Lay Deacons) The Purpose of N.A.M.E. (North American Mission Endeavor)

To vigorously make disciples through a movement that multiplies new starts in the LC-MS.

NAME is the only LC-MS network of LC-MS District Mission Executives and leaders of other organizations partnering with districts to multiply new starts in the LC-MS. On Sept. 24th-25th 2015, two representatives of the Task Force (TF) 4-06A, Revs. Vogel and Sommerfeld, met with NAME to discuss the report and its recommendations. NAME appreciates the work and thoughtful approach portrayed by TF 4-06A, and thanks them for their service.

The report by TF 4-06A recommends, in brief:

- All trained, ecclesiastically supervised Licensed Lay Deacon (LLD) ministry phased out by January 2018.
- Deacons older than 55 be ordained through a regional colloquy process.
- Deacons younger than 55 apply and enter the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) training at seminary.
- Congregations served by LLDs a) become multi-point ministries served by one pastor, b) be served by inactive and retired pastors, c) be assisted by Synod to cover the cost for SMP training for any deacons needing financial assistance, d) utilize technology such as “live-streamed sermons or services.”
- A potential role of “Evangelist,” an “outreach” role not allowed to administer sacraments or preach.

NAME believes this issue falls primarily within the area of ministry practice: We have great freedom in the Gospel to accomplish mission and ministry within our existing structures and congregational polity (as illustrated in the 1981 CTCR document, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature*). NAME respectfully disagrees with TF 4-06A’s recommendations that press all deacons into tracks to ordination. Certainly, some LLDs have felt called by God to enter the Office of the Public Ministry. Developing a simpler, less difficult, path to that goal is of great need. However, eliminating LLDs, a crucial auxiliary function that extends the Office of the Public Ministry, is not in keeping with LC-MS ministry practice. Eliminating LLD’s also inhibits the law of love. That is, many in need of God’s grace and mercy will be denied that opportunity as a result of these recommendations. Information gathered from the districts and contexts in which NAME leaders serve indicates that the removal of trained, ecclesiastically supervised LLD ministry would eliminate or severely reduce Word and Sacrament ministry, particularly among small, poor, aging, remote, or new congregations. Given the trends within and without the LC-MS, NAME is especially concerned that eliminating LLD ministry will restrict the ability of districts and congregations to multiply new starts*.

NAME Respectfully Recommends the Following

NAME requests that Synod in its 2016 convention, rather than eliminating Licensed Lay Deacons by directing them to become ordained ministers of the Gospel through various avenues as recommended by Task Force 4-06A, act in the following ways:

1. Vote to continue to utilize the services of well-trained and ecclesiastically supervised LLDs for ministry as Synod in convention in 1989 prayerfully determined to do, recognizing the transparochial support of the work of LLDs as a result of that 1989 vote.
2. Encourage districts and congregations to continue to determine ministry needs within their context and the most suitable and appropriate ways to utilize LLDs in those contexts.
3. Encourage districts using LLD’s towards ongoing collaboration in existing LLD training and supervision programs.

We, the undersigned, as members of North American Mission Endeavor (NAME), contribute our names to this document indicating support of Licensed Lay Deacon ministry in the LC-MS.

* NAME may in the future provide a document that includes data, trends, and other evidence at our disposal used to arrive at this decision as executives of mission and mission partners.