



# MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

## Temporary Absence Policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure continuity of leadership for daily operations and management of Messiah Lutheran Church (hereafter “the congregation”) and the Trinity Community Center (hereafter “the community center”) when the Pastor & Executive Director is absent from the office or otherwise inaccessible.

It is also an emergency succession plan for contingencies due to the sudden disability, death or departure of the Executive Director to facilitate the transition to both interim and longer-term leadership in the event of an untimely vacancy.

The Congregation Council has a clear understanding of the Pastor & Executive Director’s role in organization leadership, program development, program administration, operations, Congregation Council relationships, financial operations, resource development and community presence and recognizes its responsibility to ensure as seamless as possible any delegation of the authority invested in the Executive Director to other persons.

Nothing in this policy shall contradict procedures and policies outlined in the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions* of the congregation, including the powers of the Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod as outlined in that document.

### Definition

A temporary absence is one that is greater than one normal workweek (five days) but less than 90 days in which the Pastor & Executive Director is expected to return to their position. It may be planned (with approval from the Congregation Council) as in a vacation, extended leave or sabbatical OR unplanned (arises unexpectedly such as an illness) and may include periods of time that the Pastor & Executive Director is on duty (ex. continuing education, a conference, etc.) but away from the administrative offices of the congregation and not readily accessible via email or telephone.

### Steps to Initiate the Policy

1. For a *planned* temporary absence, the Pastor & Executive Director shall notify the President of the absence, including the length of absence and whether it is covered by vacation time, sick leave or other relevant policies of the Congregation. After approval from the President, the Pastor & Executive Director shall forward an amended list of delegated leaders for approval to the Congregation Council IF DIFFERENT than the leaders listed in the addendum to this policy. After approval by the Congregation Council (if needed), the Pastor & Executive Director will ensure notice is given to staff and members of the congregation. The President will organize coverage of the Pastor & Executive Director’s phone at 518.253.9978 by members of the Congregation Council.

2. For an *unplanned* temporary absence, the Pastor & Executive Director, if able, shall ensure the President is notified of the absence and the possible length of time of the absence. Any suggested changes to the delegated leaders listed in the addendum to this policy will be discussed and approved by the Congregation Council. If the Executive Director has not notified the President, staff or members of the congregation with knowledge of the Pastor & Executive Director's absence or the inability of staff to reach the Pastor & Executive Director, shall notify the President immediately. The President will then designate the senior staff member and congregation member(s) who are authorized to act (if necessary) in the absence of the Pastor & Executive Director with approval by the Congregation Council IF DIFFERENT than the leaders listed in the addendum to this policy. After approval by the Congregation Council (if needed), the President will ensure notice is given to staff and members of the congregation. The President will organize coverage of the Pastor & Executive Director's phone at 518.253.9978 by members of the Congregation Council.

### **Addendum: Standing Resolution on Lines of Authority**

Unless modified by vote of the Congregation Council as outlined above, the following individuals shall exercise areas of authority during a temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director. Each area of authority listed below reflects a section of the Pastor & Executive Director's Position Description. All areas of authority not outlined below shall fall to the President in conversation with the Congregation Council.

#### **1. Preach the Word**

The Pastor & Executive Director shall ensure coverage of all services is organized before leaving on a planned temporary absence. In case of an unplanned temporary absence, coverage of all services shall be organized by the Worship & Music Committee Chair.

#### **2. Administer the Sacraments**

The Pastor & Executive Director shall ensure coverage of all services is organized before leaving on a planned temporary absence. In case of an unplanned temporary absence, coverage of all services shall be organized by the Worship & Music Committee Chair.

#### **3. Conduct Public Worship**

The Pastor & Executive Director shall ensure coverage of all services is organized before leaving on a planned temporary absence. In case of an unplanned temporary absence, coverage of all services shall be organized by the Worship & Music Committee Chair.

#### **4. Provide Pastoral Care**

The Pastor & Executive Director shall ensure pastoral care coverage before leaving on a planned temporary absence. The number of the rostered leader covering for pastoral care emergencies shall be shared with members of the Congregation Council who will be covering the pastor's phone. In case of an unplanned temporary absence, pastoral care shall be organized by the President with support from the Care & Concern Committee.

#### **5. Seek Out and Encourage Qualified Persons to Prepare for the Ministry of the Gospel**

The Pastor & Executive Director shall ensure pastoral care coverage before leaving on a planned temporary absence. The number of the rostered leader covering for pastoral care emergencies shall be shared with members of the Congregation Council who will be covering the pastor's phone. In case of an unplanned temporary absence, pastoral care shall be organized by the President with support from the Care & Concern Committee.

#### **6. Impart Knowledge of this Church and its Wider Ministry through Available Channels of Effective Communication**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the Parish Administrator shall conduct all communications regarding the Worship Center and the Community Center Director shall conduct all communications regarding the Community Center. The President and the Communications Committee shall provide oversight and support.

**7. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the Parish Administrator shall conduct all communications regarding the Worship Center and the Community Center Director shall conduct all communications regarding the Community Center. The President and the Communications Committee shall provide oversight and support.

**8. Offer Instruction, Confirm, Marry, Visit the Sick and Distressed and Bury the Dead**

The Pastor & Executive Director shall ensure pastoral care coverage before leaving on a planned temporary absence. The number of the rostered leader covering for pastoral care emergencies shall be shared with members of the Congregation Council who will be covering the pastor's phone. In case of an unplanned temporary absence, pastoral care shall be organized by the President with support from the Care & Concern Committee.

**9. Relate to All Schools and Organizations of the Congregation**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the Parish Administrator shall relate to all congregation committees and community partner organizations regarding the Worship Center and the Community Center Director shall relate to all congregation committees and community partner organizations regarding the Community Center. The President and the Communications Committee shall provide oversight and support.

**10. Install Regularly Elected Members of the Congregation Council**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the President shall have the authority to install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council.

**11. With the Council, Administer Discipline**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the President shall administer discipline of members of the congregation in line with chapter fifteen of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions* of this congregation. The Personnel Committee Chair, as acting Head of Staff, shall administer discipline of staff of the congregation in line with chapter fifteen of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions* of this congregation.

**12. Endeavor to Increase Support for the Congregation and Its Ministries Through Time, Talent and Treasure**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the Financial Secretary and Mission Support Committee Chair shall have authority to conduct all development activities related to the Worship Center. The Community Center Director shall have authority to conduct all development activities related to the Community Center.

**13. Encourage Adherence to the Covenantal Relationship with This Church as Expressed in the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, the President shall have authority to conduct all necessary activities in this area with support of the Congregation Council.

#### **14. Leadership of the Accessibility Campaign**

In the case of either a planned or unplanned temporary absence of the Pastor & Executive Director, authority in various areas related to the “A Place at the Table for Everyone” Accessibility Campaign are as follows:

- Financial Matters: President, Capital Improvement Task Force Chair, Budget & Finance Chair, Treasurer
- Construction Matters: Members of the Capital Improvement Task Force
- Décor Matters: Individuals Appointed by the Capital Improvement Task Force
- Communications: Parish Administrator, Communications Intern & Accessibility Ambassador and Communications Committee Chair
- Mechanical Matters: Property & Grounds Committee Chair