

Dual Membership

Question: I've heard that it may be possible for our congregation to join another denomination while still belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Do the governing documents of the ELCA allow for such a possibility?

Response: No. There is no provision in the governing documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for dual rostering of congregations.

The one very limited exception to this rule regards the possibility of a federated full-communion congregation (9.90 in the Constitution of the ECA)—and the existence of this exception proves the rule that ELCA congregations cannot be “dual rostered.”

If a congregation joins the roster of some other denomination, it has violated the very fundamental tenets that make it an ELCA congregation under the ELCA Constitution 9.21.

This does not mean that congregations cannot belong to interest groups that are not denominations.

Question: May an ELCA pastor belong to the clergy roster of another Lutheran church body, while still retaining roster status in the ELCA?

Response: No. ELCA pastors cannot be on the clergy rosters of two different denominations.

The ELCA *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters* (2005) states:

An ordained minister of this church who enters the ordained ministry of another church body, or who joins a religious group or congregation of another church body (except as provided in 7.41.17.), or who serves a group schismatic from this church or from a congregation thereof, shall cease to be a member of this church. The ordained minister's name shall be removed from the roster of ordained ministers by the bishop of the synod, who shall report the action to the secretary of this church and to the next Synod Assembly. (Part One, p. 51)