

ELCA bishop quits over sexual affair: Leader of Phoenix-based synod resigns

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The bishop for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations in Arizona and southern Nevada has resigned from his post and the ministry after admitting to sexual misconduct with a woman.

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson announced from ELCA headquarters in Chicago on January 26 that Michael J. Neils, bishop of the 100-church Grand Canyon Synod, resigned after reporting his misconduct two days earlier and apologizing to the church.

In his letter Neils said his marriage of 35 years is ending and that he and his wife are to be divorced. "Part of the reason for the divorce is my own conduct unbecoming the office of an ordained minister of this church," Neils wrote. "I am guilty of sexual misconduct with an adult woman."

Neils, 56, had served the Phoenix-based synod, which has about 75,000 baptized members, since 2001.