Dear candidate for rostered ministry:

The approval interview with your candidacy committee is the final step in the process of candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The decision to approve a candidate who will provide leadership as a public minister is among the most significant this church makes as we seek to carry out God’s mission in the world. Approval confirms the call that has led you in your spiritual formation and theological preparation. Assuring that qualified leaders serve on the rosters of the ELCA is essential for the people and congregations of our church.

Your approval interview provides the ELCA with an opportunity to review and inquire thoroughly into your readiness for rostered ministry. Your candidacy committee will consider your approval essay as an indication of your competence in certain vital areas of ministry and as a tangible expression of your faith and theology as they have developed throughout the candidacy process.

All approved candidates participate in the ELCA churchwide assignment process. Please remember that our rostered ministers serve this whole church; the needs are many for varieties of places and forms of ministry. More information on the churchwide assignment can be found in the Assignment Process Guide, available from your seminary or candidacy committee. This guide, as well as your forms for the churchwide assignment, can also be accessed at ELCA.org/Resources/Assignment-Process.

On behalf of the Domestic Mission unit, we send blessings and appreciation to you for your faithful participation in the candidacy process. We hope that your preparation and formation have been challenging and fulfilling. May God’s spirit be strong in your heart and mind as you prepare this essay, participate in the interview, and offer yourself in the service of this church for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Cherlyne Beck, Director for Leadership and Candidacy
Ms. Sandra Mejia-Vega, Program Director for Multicultural Candidacy and Leadership,
Latino Lay School
Your partners in the Domestic Mission unit
Propelled by a commitment to Lutheran traditions and to being a community of faith that is always forming and being renewed, the ELCA’s presiding bishop, Church Council, and Conference of Bishops initiated “Called Forward Together in Christ” in late 2015. The initiative sought to engage the ELCA in conversation about future directions so that the Church Council might reach decisions that help this church journey together faithfully and effectively in the years ahead.

“ELCA Future Directions 2025” is the outcome of that process. Participants in “Called Forward Together in Christ”—congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and a wide range of ELCA ministries—resondingly lifted up similar hopes, concerns, and ideas about what should be given importance. “Future Directions 2025” is a framework that will help leaders across the ELCA realize common aspirations and better face the challenges of this church. (For more information about “Future Directions 2025,” see ELCA.org/Future-Directions.)

In this strategic framework, the most important ministries of this church have been identified as:

**Worship, word, and sacraments:** Rooted in evangelical proclamation and sacramental celebration, we are a church gathered around worship experiences that are meaningful, authentic, and responsive to community contexts.

**Faith formation and discipleship:** Grounded in the Lutheran Confessions, we are a church that inspires biblical and theological literacy, gospel fluency, and daily vocation and ministry through shared experience and lifelong learning.

**Leadership development:** We are a church strongly committed to formation, education, and continuing development and care of lay leaders and rostered ministers.

**Children, youth, and young adults:** We are a church dedicated to engaging and affirming children, youth, and young adults as an integral part of this church, now and for the future.

**Ministries addressing human suffering and injustice:** In communities and around the world, we are an informed church, actively utilizing our many gifts in witness and service to respond to human needs in our communities, our countries, and the world.
INSTRUCTIONS

The approval essay asks candidates to demonstrate that they are equipped and ready to carry out these foundational ministries of the ELCA. The candidacy committee asks candidates to demonstrate in this essay the ministerial competencies named in the Candidacy Manual, including the ability to name and utilize the distinctive gifts Lutheranism brings to the world.

Most importantly, the committee desires to see candidates integrate their academic, theological learning with their practical ministry experiences. Committee members wish to see evidence that candidates know, for example, what the theology of the cross is. They want to hear candidates articulate Lutheran principles in contemporary language, and they want to see examples of how candidates have embodied these principles in ministry.

In short, candidacy committees want to experience through the essay and the sermon the kind of minister you would be for this church and for God’s world.

Candidates for each roster will answer every question. Please follow all directions carefully:

1. Keep your audience in mind as you prepare your essay. It will be read by laity, rostered leaders, and faculty representatives on candidacy committees. While it is important to provide evidence of academic study, it is also important that the essay be clear and interesting.

2. Use concrete examples from your academic studies and practical experience. Candidacy committees want to learn not just what you do but why, theologically, you do it.

3. Prepare the essay for legible copying by using double-spaced, 12-point type on white paper.

4. The total length of the paper should be approximately 20 pages.

5. Type your name at the top-right corner of each page and number each page sequentially.

6. For each section, type the question that you are answering.

7. Send a copy of the completed essay to your candidacy committee no later than the date requested. Candidates who attend or are affiliated with an ELCA seminary should send a copy to the seminary of affiliation.

8. Please bring a copy of the essay to the approval interview.

9. The contents of the essay must be your own. Include a bibliography and footnotes as appropriate.
ESSAY QUESTIONS

Candidates for Word and Sacrament Ministry

*Remember to address theology and practice.*

1. (three pages) How have you demonstrated that, as a rostered minister, you will provide worship experiences that are meaningful, authentic, and responsive to community contexts?

2. (three pages) How have you demonstrated that, as a rostered minister, you will inspire biblical and theological fluency, gospel awareness, and daily vocation and ministry through shared experience and lifelong learning?

3. (three pages) How have you demonstrated that, as a rostered minister, you will be committed to formation, education, and continuing development and care of lay leaders and rostered ministers?

4. (three pages) How have you demonstrated that, as a rostered minister, you will be dedicated to ministries that engage and affirm children, youth, and young adults as an integral part of this church?

5. (three pages) How have you demonstrated that, as a rostered minister, you will utilize your gifts and the gifts of this church in witness and service to respond to human needs in your community, country, and world?

*Don’t forget to continue with next page PROCLAMATION AND CONTEXT*

Candidates for Word and Service Ministry:

*Remember to address theology and practice.*

1. (12-15 pages) In light of the definition of a minister of Word and Service found in the constitution and Candidacy Manual, answer as many of the questions above that fit with your area(s) of specialization.

*Don’t forget to continue with next page PROCLAMATION AND CONTEXT*
PROCLAMATION AND CONTEXT

Candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry should respond to A (seven to nine pages total, including the sermon manuscript and reflection on the sermon).

Candidates for Word and Service ministry may respond to either A or B (seven to nine pages total).

A. Submit a sermon you preached during this past year; you may also include a video/audio.
   • Include a brief description of the context in which the sermon was preached and how this directly affected your crafting of the sermon.
   • Describe the core biblical claims in the text, the approach you used in exegesis of the text, and the theological convictions in your chosen context that informed the sermon.
   • Summarize the good news proclaimed in the sermon. Discuss the role and relationship of law and gospel in the sermon.
   • In light of your exegetical engagement with the biblical text(s), what did you hope would happen to your listeners as a result of having heard this sermon? In what ways did the feedback you received match your hopes? In retrospect, how might you change the sermon, and why?
   • Include a description of the triune God’s active role in the text as well as in the preparation and preaching of this sermon.

OR

B. Provide an example of a teaching or service project during this past year.
   • Include a brief description of the context in which this teaching or service project was carried out and how it directly affected the crafting of the teaching or project.
   • Describe the core biblical claims undergirding the teaching or project and the theological convictions in this setting that informed the project.
   • Include a description of the triune God’s active, missional role in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the teaching or project.
   • In light of your exegetical engagement with the biblical text(s) that grounded this project, what did you hope would happen to the participants as a result of being involved in this teaching or project? In what ways did the feedback you received match your hopes?
   • In retrospect, how might you change the teaching or project, and why?
   • How do you envision your role in equipping listeners to live out their faith in daily life? Include specific ways you would carry out this role and ways the project assisted in this process.