



APPROVAL ESSAY

MAY 2018



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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 an opportunity to review and inquire in depth into your readiness for rostered ministry. Your Candidacy Committee will use your Approval Essay as an indication of your competence in certain vital areas of ministry and as a tangible expression of your faith as it has developed throughout the candidacy process.

All approved candidates participate in the ELCA churchwide assignment process. Please remember that our rostered ministers serve the 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](https://www.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. It is our 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 the church for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Greg Villalon – Director for Candidacy
Ms. Sandra Mejia-Vega – Program Director for Multi-Cultural Candidacy, Latino Lay School
and your partners in the Domestic Mission Unit

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Called Forward Together in Christ, ELCA Future Directions 2025

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 process sought to engage the ELCA in conversation about future directions so that the Church Council might reach decisions that help this church journey faithfully and effectively together in the years ahead.

ELCA Future Directions 2025 is the outcome of that process. Participants in Called Forward Together in Christ – from congregations, synods, the churchwide organization and a wide range of ELCA ministries – resoundingly lifted up similar hopes, concerns and ideas about what should be given importance. Future Directions 2025 is a framework that will serve shared leadership across the ELCA to realize common aspirations and better face this church's challenges. (For more information about Future Directions 2025, see [ELCA.org/Future-Directions.](https://www.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: Honoring our rich traditions, we are a church grounded in the Lutheran confessions inspiring biblical and theological literacy, gospel fluency and daily vocation and ministry through shared experience and life-long 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 ministries that engage and affirm 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 in response to human needs in our communities, countries and the world.

INSTRUCTIONS

This approval essay asks candidates to demonstrate that they are equipped and ready to carry out these foundational ministries of the ELCA. Answer all the questions from a Lutheran perspective.

1. Candidates for each roster will answer every question. Please follow all directions carefully.
2. Keep your audience in mind as you prepare your essay. It will be read by lay people, rostered leaders and faculty representatives on candidacy committees. While it is important to provide evidence of your academic study, it is also important that your essay be clear and interesting.
3. Prepare the essay for legible copying by using double-spaced, 12-point type and 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. Type the question that you are answering in each section.
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 your 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 ministries

1. (3 pages) Using concrete examples from your academic studies and practical experience, describe how you have demonstrated that you will be a rostered minister who provides worship experiences that are meaningful, authentic and responsive to community contexts.
2. (3 pages) Using concrete examples from your academic studies and practical experience, describe how you have demonstrated that you will be a rostered minister who inspires biblical and theological fluency, gospel fluency, and daily vocation and ministry through shared experience and life-long learning.
3. (3 pages) Using concrete examples from your academic studies and practical experience, describe how you have demonstrated that you will be a rostered minister who is committed to formation, education, and continuing development and care of lay leaders and rostered ministers.
4. (3 pages) Using concrete examples from your academic studies and practical experience, describe how you have demonstrated that you will be a rostered minister who is dedicated to ministries that engage and affirm children, youth, and young adults as an integral part of this church.

5. (3 pages) Using concrete examples from your academic studies and practical experience, describe how you have demonstrated that you will be a rostered minister who utilizes your gifts and the gifts of this church in witness and service in response to human needs in the community, country and world.

Candidates for word and service ministries:

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.

PROCLAMATION AND CONTEXT

Candidates for word and sacrament ministries should respond to A (7-9 pages total including the sermon manuscript and reflection on the sermon).

Candidates for word and service ministries may respond to either A or B (7-9 pages total).

- A. Select and 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 that had a direct effect on the crafting of this 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.
 - In light of your exegetical engagement with the biblical text(s), what did you hope would happen to the hearers as a result of hearing this sermon? In what ways did the feedback you solicited and received match your hopes? How might you amend the sermon to equip the hearers' missional role?
 - Include a description of the triune God's active role 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 project was carried out that had a direct effect on 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), 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 solicited and received match your hopes?
 - How might you amend the teaching or project to equip the hearers' living out their faith in daily life? What do you envision your role to be in that process? Include specific ways you would carry out this role.