



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

ELCA Rostered Minister Assignment Process Guide

The Assignment Process is another step along your journey of becoming a rostered minister. This guide is intended to offer candidates entering assignment an overview of the process, some guiding protocols and a summary of the forms they need to submit and that others need to submit on behalf of them.

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Welcome Letter

Dear Candidate,

Thanks be to God for you and for the gifts you will soon bring to rostered ministry in this church. The *Assignment Process* marks the completion of your candidacy process. We are here to help guide you through the preparatory steps toward a regional and synodical assignment. For many of you, this will lead to a first call. For others, you may be coming to this process having been rostered in other church bodies or returning to rostered ministry in the ELCA by way of reinstatement. For each of you, we give thanks.

In the midst of completing your candidacy process and your seminary class work, we also ask you to begin preparing for assignment to a region and synod for call. Admittedly, this is a demanding time. It is also an exciting time. Our hope is that you will see the assignment process as part of the ongoing discernment of your call to rostered ministry. The Churchwide Assignment Consultation is more than a draft. It is a prayerful process of discernment. We keep you in prayer during this time, and we ask for your prayers for all who participate in making these decisions. We trust the Holy Spirit is at work in each step.

We hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to consult with your regional Candidacy and Leadership Manager, your synod candidacy staff, your seminary and the assignments team in Chicago along the way. Each of us is here to support you, push you and challenge you as you listen to God's call.

Assignment is hopefully a time for you to reflect with thanksgiving for God's call and leading. May this be a blessed time of wonder, challenge and opportunity. Please do not hesitate to call me at (800) 638-3522 ext. 2988 or e-mail me at erin.daubert@elca.org if you have specific concerns or questions. For general questions or candidate form submission, please contact assignment@elca.org. We are here to guide you along the way.

Sincerely,



Erin Daubert
Program Director for Assignments
Domestic Mission Unit

Theological Foundations

The ELCA Constitution and related documents hold up a vision of gospel ministry for those who prepare to serve under call as rostered ministers in this church. In our “Statement of Purpose” (Chapter 4) the Church is defined as “a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.” As this church engages in God’s mission, we are committed to “carry out Christ’s Great Commission by reaching out to all people....” We do ministry “with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.”

To fulfill its mission of outreach, worship, service and advocacy for justice and nurture, this church calls and sends qualified people to serve as rostered ministers. Because our mission is global in its scope, with particular responsibility for ministry in the United States and Caribbean, this church calls and sends ministers where they are needed. As Abraham and Sarah were called to go forth to a distant new place, and as the followers of Jesus were commanded to “go and make disciples,” so this church’s rostered ministers often are called to familiar and unfamiliar places.

Completing Candidacy

The ELCA candidacy process serves as a path toward public confirmation of your personal call to rostered ministry. Completing the final steps of candidacy is critical to your participation in a Churchwide assignment process. Your synod candidacy committee meets with you during the final months of academic preparation to affirm your readiness to serve. The Approval Essay that you write for the interview provides written material (in addition to CPE and Internship Evaluations and a seminary faculty recommendation) for the assessment of theological competence, faith commitment, leadership abilities and personal integrity.

As a candidate, you are asked to indicate your commitment to meeting the vision and expectations of the ELCA for rostered ministers. Candidates participate in the Churchwide assignment process as part of preparation for call. The basic standards of this church must be met prior to accepting a letter of call from a congregation or another calling body of the ELCA. The timing of these processes is best planned well in advance. Assuring that qualified ministers serve on the rosters of the ELCA is essential for the people and congregations.

Preparing for the Assignment Process

The ELCA is committed to the effective, fair and appropriate deployment of rostered ministers for the ministry of this church. This is a complex matter involving the needs and mission of the whole church, the gifts and situations of candidates, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The process involves extensive preparation by candidates, seminaries, candidacy committees, synod offices and Churchwide staff. This process also involves the commitment of many families who make significant changes during a candidate's time of preparation.

While there are a multitude of practical matters that need attending to during this time, we encourage you to focus on the spiritual dimensions of discernment. Responding to God's call is fundamentally a matter of trust. For your personal and family devotions during these days, consider revisiting the biblical call stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Isaiah, Hosea, Mary and Joseph, Paul, and many others. We hope that you will enter this time considering it a continuation of your faith venture, confident that God will provide both surprises and blessings.

This church does expect its rostered ministers to be prepared to respond to God's call to go. Yet there is also a commitment to respond with understanding and compassion to the unique circumstances of individual people and their families. Those responsible for candidate assignment and call process seek balance between the needs and desires of candidates and the needs of this church to fulfill its mission. We ask you to do the same. As you prepare your paperwork for assignment, it is very important that you carefully discern the difference between preferences and restrictions. Making the distinction between these two is important in communicating your availability to serve as a rostered minister in this church. If your family is involved in this process, we expect that you will engage in this conversation together.

Preferences vs. Restrictions

Stating a **preference** can mean a personal hope or desire to reside in and/or work in certain geographical contexts. Often these are due to specific personal or family needs that can best be met in the preferred areas. **Preferences will be noted and taken seriously during the assignment consultation. However, a preference is not understood to take precedence over a candidate's availability for call where this church has need.**

Requesting a restriction means that a candidate is available for first call **only** within a limited geographical area and/or with specific conditions. It also means that, given a limited number of call possibilities in any area, a candidate may wait for an indefinite period to have call opportunities. **Thus, in requesting a restriction, a candidate acknowledges that the restriction takes precedence over his/her availability for call to serve in the ELCA.**

To provide clarity between preferences and restrictions, the following are offered as illustrative:

1. Personal, spousal or children's educational needs are preferences in most circumstances, not restrictions. Most educational needs can be met well in several locations, given some diligent research and willingness to commute reasonable distances.
2. Proximity to extended family members is normally a preference. Candidates may experience some distress with a distant assignment, but many families discover new horizons and travel opportunities following a move to a new area.
3. Type of staff setting is normally a preference unless, for example, a candidacy committee has specifically indicated a team ministry for the purposes of mentoring.

Because of its significant investment in the preparation of candidates for ministry, the larger church considers itself a partner in the conversation about what constitutes a restriction. You are encouraged to consider how God may be at work in calls that stretch you beyond what you might envision for yourself.

Consider the following information as you contemplate requesting a restriction:

1. In the assignment process, seminary representatives (president, dean and/or contextual education director) provide valuable information. Be sure you discuss the nature of your restriction with the designated seminary representative who can offer information both to you and this church regarding how you might best serve.
2. If the region and/or synod you identify as your area of restriction cannot accept your assignment, or if your home synod or the seminary representative cannot support the restriction request, you will have the option to remove the restriction and re-submit your paperwork with preferences, or to withdraw and wait until a future assignment. Either decision should be made in writing to the Churchwide Assignment team by the posted deadline.
3. In some cases, a restriction may have a defined time limitation. For example, your spouse may be completing a degree program. If so, please be sure to share additional information about the time frame during which the restriction would be in effect.
4. Please be clear about the specific nature of your restriction. The following are examples: your spouse is a rostered clergy person under call in the ELCA or another denomination; your spouse's vocational or educational situation imposes a restriction; custody of children under a divorce decree cannot be modified; or critical health issues for a household member can only be treated in specific locations.

Guidelines for Appropriate Assignment Conduct

The ELCA Churchwide assignment process is the responsibility of the Domestic Mission Unit in consultation with the Conference of Bishops. Those who participate in the Churchwide Assignment Consultation engage in prayerful conversation as assignment decisions are made.

To help us all navigate our way, the Conference of Bishops has established guidelines describing appropriate conduct for candidates and synodical offices during the assignment process. The following are important protocols to honor:

- 2. Candidates are not to have conversations with pastors or congregations regarding availability for call prior to assignment.** While being sought after may feel good, it is unfair to the whole church, which has invested in your preparation over the past several years. In the event a congregation or pastor initiates contact, the candidate should refer the inquiry to that congregation's synodical bishop.
- 3. Candidates are encouraged to learn about the ministry opportunities in the various regions and synods of this church.** Several bishops will visit each of the eight ELCA seminaries during the fall to engage candidates in extended conversation. The Churchwide staff in each region as well as synod web sites are also a good source of basic information. For a complete list of synods, go to <http://www.elca.org/About/Synods>.
- 4. Synod bishops or their staff may initiate conversations with candidates to explore the suitability for service in their synod.** This is particularly necessary when a candidate requests restriction to a synod. During these conversations, bishops and their staff will not give specific advice on requests for preferences or restrictions nor will they make commitments to candidates prior to assignment.

Assignment Forms

Forms to be submitted by the Candidate

Please take care when submitting the required forms. These forms are reviewed by each synod and region leading up to assignment; the information you submit is one of the primary tools bishops use to look at whether you would be a good fit to fill a vacancy. Those candidates who submit thoughtfully completed forms are often prioritized in the assignment process, as the details reflect that the candidate has taken time and care with this portion of the process.

Candidate Assignment Paperwork Forms

Four forms are bundled together to make the Candidate Assignment Paperwork. This document includes forms A, B, R (if applicable) and the Candidate Commentary. These forms must be submitted to assignment@elca.org by the posted deadline for you to be considered for the assignment cycle.

These forms are available under the “forms” tab on the Assignment Process Resources page. Be sure to carefully follow the instructions on the first page of the Candidate Assignment Paperwork to make sure the form is saved correctly. We expect to receive all assignment forms electronically and do not accept paper copies. You will receive an auto-reply when your e-mail is received by the Assignment inbox. A personal confirmation e-mail will be sent to you once your email has been opened and your paperwork has been reviewed. There may be a delay in the personal confirmation should you submit your paperwork during a busy time.

- **Form A: Roster Information**

This form includes roster information, including general biographical information. It becomes part of the Roster Information System administered by the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA.

- **Form B: Roster Preferences**

This form includes information about your interests and preferences for call and appointment. This information is used to make decisions about placement location and setting. It also offers you an opportunity to describe your sense of call and gifts for ministry.

- **Form R: Restriction Request**

This is an optional form that includes information about a request for restriction. If you choose to submit this form, you should have already discussed the request with the regional Candidacy and Leadership Manager and know whether the request will likely be approved or denied.

Following submission, the regional Candidacy and Leadership Manager will follow up on your request for restriction and will notify you of the approval or denial.

Should your restriction request be denied, the options listed on page 5, #2 are available to you. It is highly suggested that you work with your Candidacy and Leadership Manager before making a final decision following a restriction denial. **Please note that posted deadlines are still applicable and your decision must be communicated, and any additional paperwork submitted, by the date listed.**

- **Candidate Commentary**

This form is for you to share more about yourself than what you have shared on the first three forms. Remember that bishops will review your paperwork to decide if there is a call opportunity that would be a good fit for you, so your elaboration here can often assist them with getting to know you better.

Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)

The Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) is required to be completed and submitted by all candidates entering assignment. The RMP is an online form that all ordained and consecrated ministers on the Word and Sacrament and Word and Service rosters have on file, and your assignment process is typically the point at which yours is first created. Once completed and submitted, the information on the RMP will be stored in the churchwide database – the Mobility Database System. More information on the RMP is available [here](#).

You will need to have an ELCA Community account to access your RMP. If you have not yet created an ELCA Community account, you will need to create one by visiting: <https://community.elca.org/login>. Once your account has been created it will take up to two business days for that account to be linked to our system so that your RMP will be visible on your account page.

Forms to be Submitted by Others

In addition to the forms you submit, some of those involved throughout your candidacy process also have some required forms to submit on behalf of you.

Form D: Report of the Seminary Faculty and Internship

This report is completed by seminary personnel and sent electronically, as a PDF attachment sent to assignment@elca.org. Each form should be submitted individually, with the last name of the student followed by the first name of the student in both the subject line and as the title of the attachment. In this form, the faculty provides summary statements about your suitability for ministry and recommendations to the candidacy committee for your evaluation and approval decision. The form also includes summary comments from the internship supervisor, internship committee and intern.

Form E: Approval Report of the Candidacy Committee

This report is completed by the Candidacy Committee and is filed electronically through the ELCA Candidacy Portal. This report contains the official recommendation for commissioning, consecration or ordination. The Candidacy Committee also makes summary statements about the candidate's suitability for ministry and recommendations for continuing growth and First Call Theological Education.

Form R: Restriction Approval or Denial

Should you elect to submit an R Form to request a restriction, your Candidacy and Leadership Manager will be notified. In partnership with your synod bishop of candidacy and the synod bishop of your requested synod, the form will be approved or denied and re-submitted electronically to assignment@elca.org.

Assignment Checklist

	Develop a devotional plan that will attend to the spiritual dimensions of assignment decision.
	Engage your spouse, significant other and/or family in prayer and conversation about this process.
	Write and submit the Approval Essay to the Candidacy Committee and Seminary.
	Check with your seminary, synod and Candidacy and Leadership Manager to identify if there are meetings or assistance available to assist you through the assignment process.
	Schedule your Faculty Approval Interview.
	Schedule your Candidate Approval Interview after verifying that the synod has received all required paperwork.
	Fill out the Rostered Ministers Profile (RMP) through the Mobility Database System before the deadline. Be sure to complete it entirely and to submit it electronically as instructed.
	Fill out the Candidate Assignment Paperwork (forms A, B, R (if applicable) and Candidate Commentary). Email the forms as an attachment to assignment@elca.org before the deadline. Be sure to save a copy for your records.

Request for Re-assignment

Occasionally circumstances change in either the synod of assignment or the candidate's life situation. When opportunities to find a suitable placement have been exhausted in the synod of assignment, the candidate and the synod bishop should discuss options. There are several factors that help indicate that re-assignment is necessary. Re-assignment will normally be considered only after a minimum of 90 days has elapsed after assignment to a synod and when no possible call opportunities are imminent. Re-assignment means that a candidate's name is re-entered in the next available Churchwide assignment consultation.

A request for re-assignment must be submitted according to the posted deadlines. The candidate must secure a written release from the bishop of the assigned synod. This is sent to assignment@elca.org and initiates the process. The candidate also sends a written request to assignment@elca.org asking to be released from the initial assignment and briefly stating the reasons for this request. The candidate should review the previously submitted Forms A, B, R, and the Rostered Minister Profile, and make appropriate revisions. This paperwork must be submitted in accordance with the deadlines for the assignment paperwork and e-mailed to assignment@elca.org.

Prayer for the Journey

Confidence in the surprises and faithfulness of God can provide sustenance and comfort for this assignment process, addressing the natural human anxieties that come with any venture into the unknown. Repeatedly rostered ministers report that their horizons were expanded and they were richly blessed by trusting the process and allowing the Spirit to work. Everyone works to find good matches where both candidates and communities of faith can thrive in a partnership of ministry. This is truly a faith venture that includes the candidate and this whole church. We continue to keep you in prayer.

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Evening Prayer, *Lutheran Book of Worship*