

INFORMATION ABOUT ROSTERED MINISTRY  
IN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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# CALLED BY GOD



RESPONDING  
with a life  
of service



CALLED  
BY GOD



# Call To Ministry

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## A SENSE OF CALL

**F**rom the day of baptism God calls us into ministry. As baptized people of God we are called to respond with lives of witness and service to a world that is filled with hunger for good news.

A call is not a career or a profession. It is the vocation of our lives — the work that gives us meaning and purpose.

Discovering the voice of God's call among all the calls of our culture is a serious and sometimes anxious process. Listening for God, who knows what you need and what the world needs you to do, is your challenge and opportunity.

God calls — and you might respond by considering rostered ministry in the ELCA.

IN RESPONSE TO THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST, CHRISTIANS HAVE AN UNSURPASSABLE CALL TO SERVE OTHERS THROUGHOUT THEIR DAILY WALK.

— A SENSE OF VOCATION

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## GIFTS FOR MINISTRY

**A**ll God's people have gifts for ministry—the work of the faithful. The question to consider is 'which gifts do I have, and how will I use them?'

Rostered ministry leaders may be identified by the particular gifts that they bring to the church. Some of the following gifts seem to be especially important for our rostered leaders:

- > a love for Jesus Christ
- > grace-filled living
- > integrity
- > passion for justice
- > compassion for God's people
- > self awareness
- > leadership gifts
- > ability to learn and share the faith
- > capacity for critical reflection

## Varieties of Ministry

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### MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

*Ordained pastors serve with hearts filled with love and courage, to offer the hope of the sacraments and to lead the proclamation of the Gospel.*

Pastors of the ELCA carry out a Gospel ministry as they speak the truth. They are called to a ministry of servanthood and bring a witness of faith to the lives of God's people. Providing care and nurture of others and reaching out to a hurting world are essential expressions of this form of ministry. Pastors assist the church in transforming congregations as vibrant communities that reach out to serve the world and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Ordained ministers normally serve in congregations, sometimes in a team ministry with other ordained or lay rostered leaders.

Some pastors, after an initial congregational call of three years, will serve as chaplains, faculty at colleges and seminaries, leaders in social service agencies or in staff positions at synod or churchwide offices.



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## DIACONAL MINISTRY

*Diaconal Ministers are consecrated for service in ministries at the intersection of church and world.*

Diaconal Ministers work to seek wholeness in the world, and to help the people of God to live out the gospel. They are also committed to alerting the church to the needs of the world.

Diaconal Ministry is a ministry of Word and service, sharing the hope of Christ, helping where there is need, and equipping others for healing and justice in the world.

Diaconal Ministers serve through agencies, institutions, and traditional church programs as they build bridges between the church and the world.

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## DEACONESS COMMUNITY

*A deaconess is consecrated for service in the context of the church's mission to proclaim the Gospel, to relate the Gospel to human need in every situation, and to extend the ministry of the Gospel to all the world.*

The Deaconess Community of the ELCA has roots in 19th century Germany and has prepared and supported women who are committed to a life of service to church and society.

It is centered in a community of women for spiritual, personal, and ministry growth and support.

The skilled and theologically prepared women of this roster serve in a variety of ministries, including health care, parish work, education, church music, administration, chaplaincy, and social service.

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## ASSOCIATES IN MINISTRY

*Associates in Ministry are commissioned for ministry in the areas of education, service, music, and administration.*

The partnerships provided by those who serve on this lay roster are of deep value to the church. Associates in Ministry frequently share in a collegial staff ministry and focus in areas such as learning ministries, family ministries, youth, administration, volunteer ministry, music, ministry coordination or parish nursing.

Some Associates in Ministry serve in staff positions in congregations where the position includes more than one area of specialty. An Associate in Ministry may also be called by a synod to a non-congregational setting such as a social service agency or counseling center or synod staff.

Many congregations benefit from the life experiences and skills of faith-filled lay persons who serve as commissioned Associates in Ministry in the ELCA. They provide leadership and support for specific program ministries of the whole people of God in serving the mission and ministry needs of the church.

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## LEADERS FOR MISSION

God may be calling you to a ministry of empowerment, of community building, of equipping the baptized for ministry in daily life. We must respond to the changing roles of church leaders, the despair and brokenness of today's world, and a culture that becomes a frenzy of priorities and values. Healthy leaders are important as the Gospel is proclaimed.

Rostered leaders in the ELCA engage in a life of community — they are called to support a community of faith, to offer a word of grace, to be honest and open, to share their passion for Jesus. Our leaders offer care, a blessing, and often skill in conflict management or organization and planning.

Can you find courage for public ministry? Do you have a sensitivity to the Christian faith and conscience, and do you feel compelled to proclaim the faith? You will devote your life to this call, if it is discerned and affirmed in the candidacy process.



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## PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

*Preparation for any form of public or rostered Ministry involves an encounter between the Christian tradition and the cultural context in which we live.*

The journey begins with discernment — a process that involves prayer, conversation with people you trust, and reflection, all over a period of time. The book *What Shall I Say?* (Augsburg isbn 0-9636630-1-1) provides guidance and direction for individuals in this process. Should this initial discernment identify potential gifts and a call that might be to rostered ministry, the candidacy process begins.

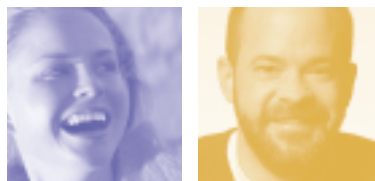


## Candidacy

**T**he ELCA candidacy process involves an extensive program of study and formation. The church places value on well-prepared and competent leaders who can accept the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel.

All forms of ministry include preparation in these areas:

- > Biblical studies
- > Christian theology
- > Lutheran confessions and heritage
- > Contextual Education and practical reflection
- > Spiritual direction and formation
- > Pastoral and personal identity development
- > Church and Culture



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## CANDIDACY PROCESS

Candidacy in the ELCA is the churchwide process of preparation and formation leading to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament, the consecrated ministry of diaconal minister or deaconess, or the commissioned ministry of associate in ministry. Candidacy involves a significant partnership that engages the candidate, congregation, synod, seminary and the Division for Ministry in guidance, evaluation, theological education and practical preparation. Interested individuals are encouraged to begin the process at least one year prior to planned study.

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## ENTRANCE

Active membership in an ELCA congregation for one year is required prior to application. After registration by the home congregation, the synod candidacy committee makes an entrance decision. The committee assesses the applicant's sense of call, potential for leadership and spiritual, psychological, and situational readiness to begin the process of preparation. In consultation with the candidacy committee, the applicant applies for admission to an ELCA seminary or plans another course of study.

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## ENDORSEMENT

In the endorsement decision, the synod Candidacy Committee evaluates and affirms the candidate's continued growth in preparation for, and in sense of call to, rostered ministry. A reflective essay and interview are included at this step as developmental goals are identified and personal, spiritual, and theological readiness are discussed. A positive endorsement enables a candidate to participate in an ELCA internship or supervised field experience.

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## APPROVAL

Approval occurs during the final year of study and reflects the church's confidence that the candidate is ready to begin service in one of the rostered ministries of the ELCA. The approval decision is made by the synod candidacy committee in consultation with an ELCA seminary faculty. Approved candidates are eligible to receive a Letter of Call for service in the church.



## Many Gifts / Many Ministries

*Many opportunities for ministry are available to faithful Christians who desire to prepare for roles of leadership in the ELCA. Some require particular training but not necessarily rostering in the ELCA.*

**Global Ministries** The Division for Global Mission assists overseas partners in identifying places for ministry support, both in program and in personnel. Both ordained and lay leaders are encouraged to serve in missionary settings around the world.

**Outreach Ministries** The Division for Outreach identifies sites for development in the United States and lifts up those leaders with skills to serve as pastor-developers in new mission starts or congregations being re-developed.

**Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Care, and Clinical Education** Many of our rostered leaders serve in places such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, congregations, counseling centers, military, and social service agencies. Rostered leaders may become endorsed for these specialized ministries.

The endorsement process prepares leaders to serve in a variety of special ministry settings with ELCA endorsement as well as credentials from accrediting bodies. The process is open to both lay and ordained leaders. Normally, ordained ministers serve three years in a congregation prior to being considered for call to a specialized position.

**Multicultural Ministry Leadership Development** The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America strives to be a multicultural church, serving its members within their own contexts. We seek to respond with effective and trained leadership to the specific spiritual needs of various ethnic groups within the church and the United States.

Congregations serving native or minority communities sometimes invite people of God from within that community to consider preparation for leadership. A commitment to empower and prepare strong, faithful, and competent ethnic leaders in our church continues to be a focus of the ELCA.

**Synodically Authorized Ministries** Some of the 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have established programs to train and license people of God for specific ministries in their synod. These ministries identify and affirm the gifts offered in service by lay members of congregations of the the synod who have an awareness of the mission needs of the church, an appreciation for the work of the church, and a willingness to serve in new and often challenging ministry settings where the need is great and rostered leaders are not available.

**Congregational Leadership** Using the gifts of the people of God to equip and nurture the baptized is a shared effort. Those who have particular gifts are encouraged to use and develop them through congregational activity and outreach.

THE CALL BY GOD TO ROSTERED MINISTRY COMES FROM A COMMUNITY OF CHRISTIANS WHO WANT YOU TO EXERCISE THE GIFT OF MINISTRY IN ITS MIDST AND ON ITS BEHALF.

— “WHAT SHALL I SAY? DISCERNING GOD'S CALL TO MINISTRY”

## Are You Being Called?

In your baptism, God calls you to serve. If you sense God calling you to serve in a public ministry, then you are encouraged to continue to examine yourself, to pray, to seek God's guidance, to talk with people you trust, to consider your gifts and your potential for preparation for and service in rostered leadership of the ELCA.

In the Lutheran tradition, an individual's discernment is only part of this process. An authentic call to ordained or rostered lay ministry involves the Church testing the sense of call and needed gifts for rostered ministry.

The Division for Ministry assists the synods and seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in developing and carrying out programs for the identification, preparation and evaluation of candidates for the consecrated, ordained, and commissioned ministries of this church.

For more information about candidacy in the ELCA contact your synod office or the Division for Ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at 800. 638. 3522, ext. 2870.

*[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)*

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## SEMINARIES OF THE ELCA

Luther Seminary  
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
*Chicago, Illinois*

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg  
*Gettysburg, Pennsylvania*

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia  
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary  
*Columbia, South Carolina*

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
*Berkeley, California*

Trinity Lutheran Seminary  
*Columbus, Ohio*

Wartburg Theological Seminary  
*Dubuque, Iowa*



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