

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN AMERICA  
CANDIDACY  
MANUAL

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# Chapter 1 - Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Overview

Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the churchwide process of preparation and formation leading to approval for the public ministries of this church: commissioned associate in ministry, consecrated deaconess or diaconal minister, or ordained pastor. Candidacy invites an active partnership of candidate, congregation, synod, seminary, and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, which acts on behalf of the churchwide organization.

It is by Christ's gift that all baptized persons are called to ministry. Every baptized believer is given gifts and abilities for ministry. Every baptized believer is called to ministry in daily life. Some are given gifts and abilities that equip them to provide leadership in one of the four rostered ministries of this church. People become aware of their call and their gifts in a variety of ways: some in a dramatic moment of inspiration, some in the normal course of their disciplined church life, some at the urging of leaders in the church, some through years of struggle and doubt.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to the intentional identification and recruitment of those persons who are so gifted by God that they are able to provide leadership in the life of this church. Through a process of reflection and discernment, individuals are encouraged to consider whether they are called by God through the church to serve in one of the rostered ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Candidacy Process of the ELCA is guided by the following principles:

1. The process is grounded in a climate of hospitality and nurture.
2. All partners are accountable to one another for the integrity of the process.
3. The church determines who is appropriate for rostered leadership.
4. Those who provide leadership in candidacy are equipped and trained.
5. Evaluation of candidates is fair and thorough.

In the Lutheran tradition a person's call from God to public ministry is understood as both internal and external:

1. Through an internal, personal sense of call that God is leading a person to public Christian ministry.
2. Through other members of this church who encourage a person to enter public Christian ministry.
3. Through public confirmation that a person has the character, commitment, preparation, and ability to serve in a specific public ministry roster.

4. Through the receipt and acceptance of a letter of call to serve in a particular ministry setting.

## **An Interdependent Process**

Interdependence within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America means that there is a sharing of responsibility and accountability in the Candidacy Process. Each partner in the Candidacy Process has a discrete role, but always participates in cooperation with the other partners. Candidates, congregations, synod Candidacy Committees (which include bishops), seminaries, and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit all work together and communicate openly to assure that the ELCA prepares gifted men and women who are called by God to serve in the rostered ministries of this church.

A consistent Candidacy Process is essential to this church as it prepares candidates for ministry. Every candidate in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a candidate for the whole church. Candidates are considered for service in the ELCA according to churchwide needs, requirements, and standards. Churchwide policies and procedures are developed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in consultation with the synods and seminaries of the ELCA and are approved by the Church Council.

## **Expectations of Partners**

### **Candidate**

Personal faith and commitment to Christ are at the heart of one's decision to seek to serve in ordained ministry or in rostered lay ministry as an associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister. That decision often comes after uncertainty and a lengthy period of prayer and thought. It should involve others in a process of discernment and reflection about an individual's gifts and abilities for rostered ministry. The process of discernment and the utilization of *What Shall I Say? Discerning God's Call to Ministry* are key elements in beginning the Candidacy Process.

The decision to begin study for rostered ministry is one that will be tested, not only by the one seeking to serve but by the community of faith, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A decision to serve this church through rostered ministry is not made alone but includes conversations with and support from a congregation, representatives of a synod, and theological education partners.

A person seeking to serve this church contacts the office of the synod where congregational membership is held to begin the Candidacy Process. A candidate will need to exercise initiative in completing the steps of candidacy and demonstrate competence in the tasks of theological education and practical preparation for ministry.

Growth and development are expected as one seeks to become equipped for rostered ministry. A candidate is expected to be a mature, healthy, and trustworthy partner in the process of preparation, formation, and evaluation for rostered ministry. The candidate provides requested information. He or she also provides a signed release to the Candidacy Committee so that the partners in the Candidacy Process (and personal references) may fully and openly communicate.

Candidates approved by a Candidacy Committee are recognized and available for a first call to one of the four rosters of public ministry in the ELCA. It is the clear expectation that candidates are willing to serve in response to the needs of this church. While the church is committed to considering the unique circumstances of individual candidates and their families, restrictions that limit a candidate's ability to serve may delay or prevent the receipt of a call to service in the ELCA. Candidates are expected to make every effort to be able to respond to the leadership needs of this church. Assignment to synods is made on the basis of these assumptions and expectations.

### **Congregation**

Congregations shall identify and assist in the discernment of potential leaders for rostered ministry in the ELCA as part of their mission to develop vocational identity among all the baptized. Every person who seeks candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must be an active member of a congregation of this church for a minimum of one year and will have participated in the leadership and life of the congregation. The congregation submits forms for congregational registration and support with the synod.

Congregations maintain a relationship with the candidate through the years of preparation and, to the extent possible, provide financial assistance to the candidate. In the case of students enrolled in an ELCA seminary, this assistance is administered by the ELCA seminary. While registration by the congregation is an important part of the Candidacy Process, the responsibility for evaluation and approval of candidates is that of the Candidacy Committee.

### **Synod**

On behalf of the whole ELCA, each synod constitutes a Candidacy Committee that performs the exceedingly important and highly sensitive task of making decisions about the fitness for public ministry of those identified as potential candidates. Synods identify people to serve on Candidacy Committees who bring gifts for welcoming, forming, and evaluating candidates. Candidacy Committee members are called to assess the character and qualifications of applicants and candidates. Committees guide, encourage, and support candidates for public ministry in the ELCA, always providing hospitality that welcomes them and recognizes their holiness.

Having received the candidate's release form, Candidacy Committees communicate fully and openly with other partners in the Candidacy Process.

Candidacy Committees use churchwide standards, requirements, and expectations to assess a candidate's readiness at entrance, endorsement, and approval, maintaining complete records and reporting all decisions to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

A Candidacy Committee, in partnership with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, provides training of and support to its members. Candidacy Committee members are expected to participate in formal Interview Training. Candidacy Committees should evaluate their own effectiveness and style and reflect on their purpose, authority, and process of encouraging and supporting leadership development in the ELCA.

## **ELCA Seminary**

Seminaries of the ELCA serve in consultation with partners in the Candidacy Process to provide theological education for candidates, which includes academic certification, practical experience, and formation for ministry. Every Candidacy Committee includes an ELCA seminary faculty representative appointed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

ELCA (and ELCIC) seminaries provide evaluative material and make recommendation to Candidacy Committees concerning the approval of every candidate for ordained and diaconal ministry as well as any deaconess or associate in ministry candidates who are granted degrees. Seminaries will communicate openly and fully with Candidacy Process partners.

## **Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit**

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit develops and provides oversight of the Candidacy Process in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This oversight includes standards, procedures, and policies related to the recruitment, preparation, evaluation, and support of candidates for rostered ministry in this church. Staff of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit work directly with the Candidacy Committees of the ELCA to exemplify the interdependent partnership as well as the churchwide nature of the process. While the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit representative does not vote, he or she shall normally be present for all major decisions made by the Candidacy Committee. The Vocation and Education unit maintains (at the Lutheran Center) an electronic database of candidate records submitted by Candidacy Committees.

## **Responsibilities Of Partners**

### **Candidate**

Responsibilities of those persons engaged in the process of candidacy in the ELCA are many. Significant among these responsibilities are the following, which seek to assist the candidate in movement toward a lifestyle that attends to all dimensions of health and wellness and encourages life-long discernment of all:

1. Candidates have:
  - a. Love for Jesus Christ
  - b. Love for people
  - c. A desire to participate in the mission of the church
  - d. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confessions of Faith of this church
  - e. Integrity and trustworthiness
  - f. Passion for justice
  - g. Compassion
  - h. Self-awareness
  - i. Leadership gifts
  - j. Capacity for intellectual growth
  - k. Ability to share faith
  - l. Capacity for critical reflection
  - m. Faithfulness
  - n. Sense of call
  - o. Competence



2. Candidates are active members of an ELCA congregation for at least one year prior to their entrance interview.
3. Candidates demonstrate an understanding of and follow the guidelines for living a life appropriate to leadership among God's people as described in the document Vision and Expectations.
4. Candidates honor and fully participate in the established process of candidacy in the ELCA.
5. Candidates shall submit all required documents and information related to the Candidacy Process requested by the other partners within the agreed-upon time frame.
6. Candidates shall fully and openly communicate with all the partners in the process.
7. They shall be honest and forthright in all aspects of the process.
8. Candidates are accountable for all aspects of preparation.
9. Candidates engage in the on-going work of self-discovery, self-evaluation, reflection, and healthy lifestyle that enhance a leader's ability to fully and actively carry out the responsibilities of ministry as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel (See Appendix).

### **Congregation**

Every congregation in the ELCA has an opportunity to participate in the ministry of this church by lifting up members who demonstrate leadership gifts and a sense of call to public ministry. As a partner in the ELCA Candidacy Process, the congregation has several responsibilities. The congregation:

1. Provides a community where discernment of call is encouraged and nurtured.
2. Registers a congregation member to begin the process for entrance into candidacy.
3. Through the registration form, provides a thoughtful and honest summary of the person's involvement in congregational life and his or her personal characteristics that reflect potential for ministry, as well as any concerns about the person's health, well-being, or spiritual health. The congregation also provides a description of the process of discernment employed to assist in identification and evaluation of potential candidates.
4. Provides support for the member throughout the Candidacy Process. Support includes: prayer, regular communication, and, as much as possible, financial support. Financial support assists candidates in meeting the expenses for tuition and other costs related to the preparation process.
5. Affirms the member's potential for ministry through invitations to teach, preach, and participate in worship leadership as the candidate is available to do so during the period of preparation.

### **Synod**

As a partner in the process of identification and preparation of candidates for rostered ministry in the ELCA, synods have responsibilities to:

1. Constitute a Candidacy Committee that acts on behalf of the congregations of the synod and of the whole ELCA.
2. Include as voting members on the Candidacy Committee the synod bishop or her or his appointee, appointed (or elected) committee members, and a seminary representative recommended by an ELCA seminary related to that synod and appointed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

3. Appoint or elect members of the Candidacy Committee who possess these characteristics:
  - a. Faith in Jesus Christ
  - b. A sense of hospitality as an aspect of candidacy
  - c. Patience
4. Regard for the church
5. Integrity and trustworthiness
6. A commitment to capably evaluate candidates
7. Self-awareness
8. Sense of partnership and ability to function cooperatively
9. Membership in a congregation of the synod
10. Make up of the committee as to gender, lay/clergy, and people of color or primary language other than English is governed by synodical bylaw S6.04. To achieve the bylaw's expectation that at least 60% be lay people, it is recommended that 50% of the members be non-rostered lay people, 10% be rostered lay people (associates in ministry, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers), and 40% be clergy.
11. Encourage Candidacy Committee members to work collegially and develop a capacity to make important and sometimes difficult decisions for the sake of this church and of those seeking candidacy and to be responsible for the evaluation and care of the candidate through the Candidacy Process.
12. Through training and on-going education, in collaboration with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, ensure that members of the Candidacy Committee possess the necessary knowledge and competence to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
13. Provide adequate funding for the Candidacy Committee to meet with candidates and conduct its business.
14. When possible, offer financial assistance to candidates.
15. Provide support, guidance, and resources to assist in the applicant's discernment process.
16. Oversee the application process.
  - a. Provide the necessary information and materials to the person considering application.
  - b. Receive the applicant's congregational registration.
  - c. Arrange for the Initial Interview.
  - d. Arrange for the Psychological Evaluation and Background Check.
17. Conduct interviews at the appropriate times throughout the Candidacy Process for every candidate.
18. Maintain an individual's candidacy file according to the procedures determined by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.
19. Convey all requested information to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in a timely manner.

When deemed effective, some aspects of candidacy work may be conducted through a multi-synodical Candidacy Committee. Each synod maintains its own candidate records and makes the Entrance Decision for candidates from that synod. Multi-synodical committees may act on behalf of participating synods in the Endorsement and Approval Decisions and other aspects of the Candidacy Process.

## **Seminaries**

Seminaries of the ELCA (and ELCIC) have many responsibilities in the Candidacy Process of this church. The seminary:

1. Makes the decision concerning the admission of a person for study and reports this action to the Candidacy Committee. Normally, admission to an ELCA or ELCIC seminary for study leading to rostered ministry in the ELCA is subsequent to a positive entrance decision by a Candidacy Committee;
2. Participates in Candidacy Committees through a seminary representative, who is an ELCA or ELCIC member appointed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit upon recommendation by the Academic Dean. When possible, seminary faculty should be appointed to the synod where they are rostered or have congregational membership. In addition to representing theological education, the seminary faculty member participates in all Candidacy Committee activities with full voice and vote. Normally the seminary provides travel allowances for its representatives, while the committee provides housing and meals;
3. Administers financial aid to its students. The funds for this assistance come from a variety of sources: congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide units. Financial aid from these sources is to be administered by the seminary;
4. Participates in Theological Review Panels as requested by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;
5. Participates in the Endorsement Panel of candidates attending the seminary;
6. Directs and evaluates the student's practical preparation, such as internship and supervised clinical work, in consultation with the Candidacy Committee and provides the Internship and Supervised Clinical Ministry Reports to the Candidacy Committee;
7. Provides the Candidacy Committee with regular communication regarding the candidate's academic progress and provides updates on any developmental issues that emerge in the course of ministry preparation or personal growth and formation;
8. Determines the satisfactory completion by the candidate of the requirements of the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, or other first professional degrees;
9. In the case of students attending a seminary other than one of the ELCA or the ELCIC, participates in an affiliation relationship as outlined by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit; and
10. Provides a recommendation and evaluative statement to the Candidacy Committee to use in the process leading to the committee's Approval Decision and submits copies of the appropriate report form to the Candidacy Committee and to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for assignment.

## **Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit**

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit provides leadership to this church in the development of standards, procedures, and policies related to the rostered ministries of the church. To fulfill this responsibility in the Candidacy Process, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit:

1. Provides interpretation of the standards, procedures, and policies as well as consultation through the staff of the unit, both Chicago-based and deployed, who serve as resources to the other partners in the process;

2. Through its staff members, attends meetings and other events related to the Candidacy Process. Note: While the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit representative does not vote, he or she shall normally be present for all major decisions made by the Candidacy Committee;
3. Convenes and oversees Theological Review Panels;
4. Encourages full and open communication among all the partners in the Candidacy Process;
5. Collaborates with seminary administrations in providing orientation and training to faculty and students regarding the Candidacy Process of the ELCA;
6. Implements a churchwide candidacy training program, providing regular opportunities for interview training and orientation to candidacy for synod and seminary candidacy leaders;
7. Registers psychological consultants; and
8. Reviews and makes recommendations regarding waiver requests for candidates in the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program, Associate in Ministry track, Lutheran Year for affiliated students, and clinical pastoral education.

## **Privacy**

The integrity and trustworthiness of each Candidacy Committee member and all candidacy partners are critical to a fair and faithful ministry of identifying, evaluating, and approving candidates for rostered leadership. The collective wisdom, centered in the work of the Holy Spirit, enlivens, strengthens, and supports the decisions made by Candidacy Committees.

Some assumptions can be made regarding privacy in this church. The boundary of privacy requires good judgment, respect for others, and an ability to hold privileged information. Privacy in the church Candidacy Process is more a matter of concern for the interests and well-being of individuals (as well as this church) and not a legal concern. Privacy concerns should not hinder or restrict the free flow of information to and from the Candidacy Committee. The church has a constitutional right in the United States to decide who its rostered leaders will be. That constitutional right extends to our right to treat certain internal information as private and also to share or reveal that information among partners within this church as needed.

On behalf of the whole ELCA, Candidacy Committees may seek any necessary information regarding applicants or candidates. What is essential is that the committee and its members are very clear in WHY they are seeking that information. Committees have three primary functions:

1. To identify potential leaders, discern gifts for ministry, and assess qualifications
2. To be fair to an applicant or a candidate and to protect his or her future ministry; and
3. To protect this church and its members and to act on their behalf.

Candidacy is an internal church matter for the ELCA. This church should seek out whatever information is important and necessary to assess qualifications for public ministry. Religious institutions may make inquiries and enforce standards of character that apply to the private lives of those involved in ministry to a degree that is not legally permitted in secular occupations and professions.

Leaders of this church who are healthy, honest, and responsible are essential to its faithful witness to the world. It is not necessary for committee members to excuse themselves from any decision regarding an individual whom they know personally. In fact, such personal testimony can provide insight and awareness to the committee as a whole in making decisions. The nature of any personal relationship with a candidate must be shared with the committee. In the case of a family relationship with the candidate it is appropriate for a committee member to recuse himself or herself from the process.

Private information should be gathered with care, shared as necessary, and guarded carefully. Personal letters to a synod bishop or notes of conversations should be considered with great care and good judgment. Any and all information regarding a candidate's qualifications, history, or life patterns can be valuable in making candidacy decisions. Information and analysis from psychological reports and background checks should be used in an ethical and appropriate way. Committee members should be adequately trained in interpretation of these reports.

Some information may be received in confidence and should not be revealed to the candidate. But it is always essential to be fair to a candidate and to allow an individual, at appropriate times, to respond to negative information and to correct misinformation. The committee, in its collective commitment to encouraging faithful and grace-filled leaders, should take all steps necessary so it has confidence that it has dealt with any concerns or issues effectively and faithfully.

## **Management of Candidacy Files**

### **Synod Records**

It is essential for the synod to maintain complete and accurate records on every candidate for rostered ministry.

1. The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is to be notified of every Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval Decision whether the decision is to affirm, deny, or postpone.
2. Files on applicants/candidates are the property of the Candidacy Committee and should be maintained in a secure location and manner.
3. The Candidacy Committee in its discretion, may allow an applicant/candidate access to the committee's records concerning that applicant/candidate. The committee, in its discretion, may choose not to allow access to confidential communications, letters, or other information. The applicant/candidate may read the contents of the file at a location and under a procedure determined by the Candidacy Committee. When a candidate reviews the file, someone from synod staff or the committee should be present. Copies should be made only as authorized by the committee.
4. Committees should use care when duplicating file material in preparation for meetings. Duplicated file material should be sent as CONFIDENTIAL mail, and then such duplicates should be destroyed at the conclusion of the meeting. Special care must be used in any electronic distribution.
5. A candidacy file shall be maintained at the appropriate administrative office of the candidate's seminary in a secure location, available to the faculty advisor and synod Candidacy Committee members, as appropriate.

6. A candidacy file transferred from another synod requires a new congregation registration. (See “Guidelines for Transfer of Candidacy” p. 16f);
7. In the case of a candidate whose endorsement or approval is denied or postponed with no further action or a candidate who withdraws from the Candidacy Process, the file is to be retained by the synod for ten years and then may be destroyed.
8. In the case of a candidate who is approved, the synod file is retained for 50 years and then destroyed.
9. All relevant information on a candidate is shared with the synod of assignment. The original contents of the candidacy file remain with the Candidacy Committee and are not forwarded to the synod of assignment; the candidacy file is not intended for use as part of the call process.
10. When a candidacy process is for any reason transferred to another synod, all materials in the candidacy file will be copied and sent to the new synod of candidacy. The originating synod also retains these records.

### **Seminary Records**

Seminaries are to maintain a candidacy file in a secure manner.

### **Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit Deployed Staff Records**

Deployed staff of the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit should retain files on active candidates in a secure manner. The file may include all information in the Candidacy Committee file.

### **Churchwide Records**

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit tracks the candidacy of every candidate. Essential dates and decisions become part of the ELCA Rostered Leaders database. A separate procedure for Records Retention and Management is maintained by the churchwide office.

## **General Guidelines for the Candidacy Committee**

The Candidacy Committee functions on behalf of the entire ELCA to approve candidates for call as rostered leaders of this church. The Committee has a variety of functions. These include:

1. Evaluates candidates’ fitness for public ministry and makes decisions on behalf of this church, using the standards, policies and procedures of this church;
2. Schedules meetings, retreats, and other events that enhance the candidacy process.
3. Follows the policy and procedures for reinstatement to the roster;
4. Makes requests to the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit for waivers from any essential standards or requirements of candidacy including:
  - a. TEEM program entry
  - b. Associate in ministry education requirements
  - c. Supervised clinical ministry requirements and the Lutheran Year residency requirements for affiliated students;
5. Establishes a practice and procedure for regular support of and communication with every candidate;
6. Extends hospitality and provides a sense of community to candidates;

7. Summarizes interviews with candidates through clear and candid written comments on report forms;
8. Communicates openly and fully, as necessary, with all partners in the candidacy process;
9. Consults with the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit through deployed and Chicago-based staff to ensure a collaborative and consistent process;
10. Maintains an individual's candidacy file according to the procedures determined by the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit;
11. Receives the congregational registration and candidate application materials and arranges for the Initial Interview, the Psychological Evaluation, and the Background Check for each applicant;
12. Gives support and guidance in the applicant's discernment process and confirms use of resources including *What Shall I Say? Discerning God's Call to Ministry* and *Vision and Expectations*;
13. Gathers from all available sources relevant information to discern the applicant's readiness for pastoral ministry;
14. Conducts an Entrance Interview and makes an Entrance Decision, which affirms that an individual is ready to enter the Candidacy Process. The Entrance Decision is reported to the applicant, the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, and the seminary;
15. Arranges and participates in the Endorsement Interview, together with a seminary faculty representative, and makes an Endorsement Decision for a specific form of rostered ministry in the ELCA. The Endorsement Decision is reported to the candidate; the seminary, including the contextual education office; and the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit;
16. Provides ongoing support of candidates through regular contact between members of the committee and the candidates. This may include visits with the candidates on the seminary campus or gatherings on the synod territory. A relater or contact person may be available to maintain communication (see the Entrance section for the contact person's responsibilities). Committees are encouraged to provide intentional opportunity for conversation on the candidate's personal, spiritual, and academic growth;
17. Completes the final evaluation of the candidate and makes the Approval Decision. The decision is based on the complete candidacy file, including internship, field experience, supervised clinical ministry reports, and the faculty recommendation, as well as the Approval Essay and Approval Interview;
18. Reports the Approval Decision to the candidate, the seminary and the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit; and
19. If a candidacy committee receives additional information following a positive decision (entrance, endorsement or approval) that might lead to a different decision, the committee, in consultation with Congregational and Synodical Mission staff, may decide to review its prior action and may withdraw its positive decision. Any decision to review and the results of such review shall be reported to the candidate, the seminary, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, and, in the case of an approved candidate, to the synod of assignment. If the candidacy committee or staff of the candidacy synod receives additional information about an approved candidate after he or she has received a call, the information shall immediately be communicated to the bishop of the synod where the call was issued.

## **Guidelines for Handling a Candidate's Disagreement with a Decision**

Candidacy is a partnership involving candidates, congregations, synods, seminaries, and the churchwide organization. Entrance, endorsement, approval, and reinstatement decisions are the responsibility of synods through their Candidacy Committees and bishops, following churchwide policies and procedures. There is no appeals process and no individual or body has the authority to overrule a synodical Candidacy Committee's entrance, endorsement, or approval decision or a synodical bishop's decision whether or not to allow an applicant to begin candidacy for reinstatement. If an applicant or candidate disagrees with an entrance, endorsement, approval, or reinstatement decision, a request for reconsideration may be made to the Candidacy Committee or synod bishop, whichever made the decision.

If the candidate thinks that the procedures in this manual were not followed, he or she shall consult with the bishop of the synod. If that consultation does not lead to resolution of the concern, he or she may ask in writing that the process be reviewed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Supporting documentation shall accompany the request. The unit will request comment from the synod and may request additional information from any party. The unit will report its findings to the candidate, the synodical bishop, and the candidacy committee.

## **Guidelines for Transfer of Candidacy**

Although there are important reasons why continuity in candidacy serves both the candidate and this church, there may be circumstances in which it will best serve the candidate and this church to allow transfer from one synod to another. At the request of a candidate who has consulted with the bishop, a synod normally will release his or her candidacy to make possible transfer to another synod that consents to receive and continue the candidacy process. In the case of an application for reinstatement to a roster, in accordance with the bylaws of this church, in addition to the action of the synods, the secretary of the ELCA must also consent to the transfer.

A synod is not to treat a transfer request as though it were equivalent to one of the three decision points in the candidacy process—entrance, endorsement, approval. Nor will a synod deny or delay a transfer solely on the grounds that the candidate is or intends to be in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship. If a candidate's entrance, endorsement, or approval has been denied or postponed on other grounds or if such denial or postponement has been recommended by an interview team or theological review panel on other grounds and the committee has not considered the recommendation, the candidacy cannot be transferred at that time.

A person who left candidacy for any reason will apply for reentry to candidacy in the synod where he or she was a candidate. The application to reenter may be accompanied by a request from the candidate for transfer to another synod.



To assure full awareness and the sharing of relevant information, the bishops of both synods and the Candidacy Committee chairpersons of both synods will give written authorization for the transfer. As part of any transfer of candidacy, all records of that candidacy shall be copied and transmitted to the receiving synod. The sending bishop and Candidacy Committee shall attach summaries of their current assessment of the candidate. Note: Transfer of candidacy in the case of a request for reinstatement requires the concurrence of both committees and both bishops, as specified in the “Manual on the Management of the Rosters,” Those guidelines are quoted below. The relevant paragraph is section II.C on p. 21.

A new congregational registration is not required when candidacy is transferred to another synod. In the absence of a new registration, the receiving synod shall inquire of the original congregation whether there is additional information from the period since the registration.

**Guidelines for Implementing**  
**Actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly**  
**Related to the Rostered Ministry of People in Publicly Accountable,  
Lifelong, Monogamous, Same-Gender Relationships**

**Background**

The ELCA social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, which was adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, reflects this church’s continuing strong commitment, based on Scripture and theology, to support and strengthen marriage between a man and a woman. The statement acknowledges also that the former consensus no longer exists concerning how to regard same-gender sexual relationships. It recognizes that among the members of this church there is significant diversity of faith-based convictions and practices. The statement articulates that diversity by describing four positions. These range from a position that believes “same-gender sexual behavior is always sinful and contrary to biblical teaching” to a position that affirms publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships and that will “surround such couples and their lifelong commitments with prayer to live in ways that glorify God, find strength for the challenges that will be faced, and serve others” (p.20).

In seeking to offer guidance to this church and its members in the context of that diversity, the social statement identifies the criteria of public accountability and the promise of lifelong and monogamous commitment as standards applicable to same-gender relationships. The statement calls upon this church to seek responsible actions that serve others and to regard one another’s faith-based convictions with humility and mutual respect even though there may be significant differences of belief.

Recognizing the lack of consensus concerning same-gender relationships, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly also adopted resolutions related to the rostered service of people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships. The resolutions hold together several actions that are key for guiding ELCA candidacy policies. The resolutions:

1. Call for ELCA members to commit themselves to respect the bound consciences of those with whom they disagree on this matter. “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” footnote 26, p. 41, explains that respecting bound conscience means that concerning moral matters, “where salvation is not at stake, including human sexuality, [we will] ... bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), honor the conscience, and seek the well-being of the neighbor.”;
2. State “that this church, because of its intent to respect the bound consciences of all, declare[s] its intent to allow structured flexibility in decision-making regarding the approving or disapproving in candidacy and the extending or not extending of a call to rostered service of a person who is otherwise qualified and who is living or contemplates living in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship”;
3. Say that this church will “make provision in its policies to eliminate the prohibition of rostered service by members who are in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships”;
4. Say that this church will “make provision in its policies to recognize the conviction of members who believe that this church should not call or roster people in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship”;
5. Direct the development and approval of “appropriate guidelines for a process by which congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization could hold people publicly accountable in their relationships who are in or contemplate being in lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships and who seek to be on the rosters of this church”; and
6. Commit this church to “continue to trust its established processes and those to whom it has given the responsibility to discern who should and should not be rostered or called to public ministry in this church.”

On the basis of these actions and the consequently amended “Vision and Expectations” documents and the “Definition and Guidelines for Discipline” document, the following guidance is provided for Candidacy Committees and staff.

### **Guidelines**

1. With all candidates, the goal of the discernment and evaluation process is to help them discern their callings and to help this church bring forth and support the leaders it needs for the mission of Christ. The process is a partnership among congregations, synods, seminaries, and the churchwide organization.
2. People who represent the diversity of ELCA convictions on this matter are welcome to serve and will be supported in their service on the Candidacy Committees of this church. Candidacy Committee members and others working with candidates follow the policies and procedures of this church.
3. When working with an applicant or candidate who is in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship, the synodical Candidacy Committee will follow the same processes for discernment and evaluation as with all other candidates and will use the standards of this church and the “Vision and Expectations” document for the appropriate roster.

4. When this church's diversity of faith-based opinions concerning these matters is present on a committee and/or in its context, some candidacy conversations and decisions will be complex and challenging. Integrity can be sustained when committee members honor others with differing convictions and when all keep in mind the foundational responsibilities and purpose of the committee. Aspects of this integrity include:
  - a. Treating each committee member, applicant, and candidate with respect;
  - b. Inviting and expecting candor by all applicants and candidates about their relationships; and
  - c. Being candid with one another on the committee and with applicants and candidates about whether committee members are able to support or not to support the rostering of people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships;
5. In some instances, the transfer of candidacy to another synod will be a helpful tool for respecting the faith convictions of the candidate and of all members of the committee, and the candidate may be encouraged to seek a transfer. (See the "Guidelines for Transfer of Candidacy," on p. 16) Similarly, in some instances an applicant wishing to begin candidacy, after consultation with the bishop of his or her congregation's synod, may be well advised to apply for candidacy in a synod other than the one of congregational membership. In that case, the candidacy committee may depart from normal practice and accept registration from the congregation of membership, even though it is in another synod.
6. Insofar as it is possible heterosexual and homosexual applicants and candidates shall be treated equitably.
7. In working with a candidate who is in a same-gender relationship, as it does in working with a married heterosexual candidate, the committee will satisfy itself that there is sufficient evidence of public accountability, including a public commitment to a lifelong and monogamous relationship. For a person in a same-gender relationship, given the present legal and churchly options, useful indications may not be the same in every case. The following are among the appropriate signs to consider:
  - a. Evidence of compliance with state or local law recognizing such relationships, if available where a candidate resides.
  - b. Evidence that the couple's relationship has public recognition and support within their congregation.
  - c. Evidence of shared and public responsibilities, such as joint home ownership, joint adoption of children, insurance documents providing for mutual coverage, or legal documents such as powers of attorney or those pertaining to insurance or estate planning.
  - d. Statements in the candidate's congregational registration, internship reports, seminary faculty recommendation, and other references from those who know the person and his or her relationship.
  - e. Duration of the relationship.
  - f. Other evidence of the candidate's willingness to be held accountable in his or her same-gender relationship. An affidavit may be offered.

If there is no legal status recognition of marriage or civil union, the records of the committee should explain its reasons for concluding that the candidate is publicly accountable in her or his same-gender relationship.

8. Candidacy Committees already ask a candidate whether he or she has been divorced. The committee shall now also ask a candidate whether he or she has been in a prior same-gender relationship that was held out as publicly accountable, lifelong, and monogamous, but has ended. If such a relationship has ended, as with a divorce, the circumstances of and response to that ending are important matters for conversation with the candidate and will guide the committee in its decision making.
9. It is always appropriate in the candidacy process to invite further conversation about the candidate's responses on application and other forms. The "Application for Entrance Form" says, "In establishing and nurturing a relationship of trust between a candidate and a Candidacy Committee, as later between a rostered leader and a congregation, honesty and forthrightness are vital. To assist the synodical Candidacy Committee in its discernment with you, please write briefly about any plans or additional factors that may bear on your present or future response to these questions about relationships (for example: a marital or same-gender partner relationship experiencing difficulties, the possibility of entering a marriage, the possibility of entering a same-gender relationship)." Responses to this invitation may open the possibility for further helpful conversation with the candidate.
10. In this arena of responsibility as in others, this church continues to trust its Candidacy Committees and others to whom it has given the responsibility to discern who should and should not be rostered or called to public ministry in this church. In this arena as in others, it is essential that the committee report to the synodical bishop and to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit any learnings and any procedural or policy problems encountered so that the ELCA candidacy process can be enhanced for the sake of mission and the good of all concerned.

## **Guidelines for Reinstatement to the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

*From "Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the ELCA,"  
Adopted by action of the Church Council as policy of the ELCA, April 16, 1989, revised on November 14,  
1994, and further revised by the Church Council on April 12, 1999 [CC99.04.29], November 14, 2004  
[CC04.11.69c] and November 15, 2009 [CC09.11.80]*

### **I. Reinstatement Process**

- A. Reinstatement to the rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee of the synod where the applicant was last

rostered as an ordained minister, associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.<sup>1</sup>

- B. In the case of an applicant whose rostered ministry was last in one of the ELCA predecessor churches, the successor ELCA synod has the responsibility. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster or its successor.
- C. For a period of two years, from January 1, 2010, until December 31, 2011, Candidacy Committees may begin to consider, without waiting for five years to elapse, applications from those whose removal or resignation from the roster was solely the result of being in a lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship.
- D. Except as provided in paragraph I.C. above, in the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of either:
  - 1. The official disciplinary process of this church, or
  - 2. Resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
  - 3. Application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.16., where the person was on leave or without call after conduct or allegations that could lead to disciplinary charges, then a minimum of five consecutive years without call must elapse before an application for reinstatement may be considered. The passage of five years without call does not guarantee reconsideration.

## **II. Application**

- A. The applicant provides the completed “Application for Reinstatement” to the appropriate roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the synod, and the synod sends a copy to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for information.
- B. Upon receipt of the application, the synodical bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
- C. With the approval of the ELCA secretary, the reinstatement process may be transferred from the synod of previous roster to the synod of current residence, upon the written concurrence of both candidacy committees and both synodical bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
- D. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered arranges an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant’s eligibility to be a candidate in the synod for ministry. The bishop also determines whether the application is timely under paragraph I.C. or premature under paragraph I.D. above.
- E. In the case of an applicant where inappropriate conduct or allegations of misconduct led to resignation or removal from the roster, the synodical bishop examines the applicant for indications of repentance and amendment of life as well as indication of or attempts at reconciliation with those injured by the conduct, and documents the corrective actions that have occurred before proceeding with the reinstatement process. The bishop should

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<sup>1</sup> Any person removed from a lay roster that existed on December 31, 1987, who seeks to return to active lay roster status, must apply for acceptance to a roster of this church under the standards, criteria, policies, and procedures that apply to the roster of associates in ministry, as identified in ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.52.13. This requirement shall apply to those certified during the period of January 1, 1988, through September 1, 1993, as associates in ministry of this church.

invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.

- F. The applicant is considered for reinstatement by the Candidacy Committee when the application is forwarded to the committee by the bishop. The bishop may, in his or her sole discretion, decline to forward the application to the Candidacy Committee or may forward the application to the Candidacy Committee with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

### **III. Candidacy Committee**

- A. The synod Candidacy Committee will receive and review the registration by the pastor and Congregation Council of the congregation of which the applicant is a member in good standing. The registration attests that the applicant is an active member of an ELCA congregation.
- B. The committee shall determine that it has received all records and information concerning the applicant, including verification of synodical records concerning the reason for removal from the roster. If synodical records are incomplete, this verification may include conferring with the former bishop, synod staff, or with the churchwide office.
- C. The committee may request any additional information from any source that it deems necessary in order to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement to the roster.
- D. The applicant must prepare an approval essay and submit it to the Candidacy Committee.
- E. In the case of any applicant who has been off the roster or without call for more than five years, the Candidacy Committee will require the applicant to participate in the Psychological Evaluation and Career Consultation according to the policies of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
- F. The Candidacy Committee follows the Candidacy Manual standards and procedures for new applicants as its guide in considering a request for reinstatement. The Candidacy Committee interviews the applicant to explore all concerns related to reinstatement, including but not limited to:
  - 1. The circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
  - 2. The applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement to the roster with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
  - 3. Discussion of the applicant's understanding of ordained, commissioned, or consecrated ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the applicant's willingness to serve in response to the needs of this church; and
  - 4. Discussion of "Vision and Expectations," and the applicant's commitment to live according to the expectations of this church.
- G. The Candidacy Committee may request the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to convene a Review Panel to determine the applicant's theological readiness for ordained ministry. The Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

#### **IV. Decision**

- A. The Candidacy Committee will decide the applicant's suitability to serve as a rostered minister of this church. This decision is one of the following:
  - 1. Approval of the candidate for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call;
  - 2. Postponement of approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement; or
  - 3. Denial of approval for reinstatement.
- B. If the decision of the Candidacy Committee is to deny an applicant reinstatement, that decision is final. Any such applicant who desires reconsideration must begin the process again by applying under II.A. above.
- C. If an applicant who was removed from the roster under the circumstances described in paragraphs I.D. above is approved for reinstatement by the Candidacy Committee, such approval is not effective unless affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the total membership of the Executive Committee of the Synod Council. After the Candidacy Committee reports its approval and the reasons for that approval to the Executive Committee of the Synod Council, the Executive Committee may obtain whatever additional information or advice, including legal advice, it deems necessary before reviewing the decision of the Candidacy Committee.

#### **V. Approval**

- A. If approved, the candidate will complete the normal assignment paperwork and will participate in the churchwide assignment process through the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.
- B. If after consultation with the synodical bishop, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit shall postpone the candidate's participation in the assignment process until all requirements are met.
- C. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for a period of one year after approval by the synod. Any delay occasioned by a postponement under V.B. above is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
- D. The process for renewal of approval, as defined by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit ("Candidacy Manual"), is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.
- E. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster of this church.

## Chapter 2 – Candidacy for Ordained Ministry

### Introduction

Pastors are baptized persons whom the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) calls and ordains to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. On behalf of this church, pastors give leadership and vision to Christian communities of faith. Pastors are called to provide faithful preaching, teaching, and witness to the Scriptures and the doctrinal teaching of the ELCA. They work in close partnership with other rostered ministers, with lay leaders in congregations and synods, with synod and churchwide staff, and with ecumenical partners in common mission.

Supported by, called by, and accountable to this church, ordained pastors also extend the ministry of Word and Sacrament into specialized settings such as health care chaplaincy, spiritual directors, and pastoral counseling; in colleges and seminaries; camps and missionary fields; and synodical, regional, and churchwide offices.

In preparation for service, candidates for ordained ministry complete a Master of Divinity degree as well as a year of supervised internship and a unit of supervised clinical ministry. The M.Div. is normally completed at a seminary of the ELCA or the ELCIC. The Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program described on p. 31 is the other means for theological education in the ELCA.

A candidate for ordained ministry must be approved by a Candidacy Committee and is considered a candidate for service to this whole church.

### Steps in Candidacy

Persons seeking ordination as pastors in the ELCA are expected to participate fully in all steps of the Candidacy Process. The candidate has a responsibility to fulfill all the requirements and expectations of the Candidacy Process:

1. Entrance;
2. Endorsement; and
3. Approval.

**Entrance** begins a process of discernment that explores an individual's potential for rostered ministry and readiness to begin the process of seminary preparation and candidacy in the ELCA. One year of active membership in an ELCA congregation is required prior to entrance. The Entrance Process includes Candidacy Application and Entrance Information Form, Congregational Registration, Initial Interview, and Screening, including a Background Check and Psychological Evaluation through the synod Candidacy Committee. In consultation with the Candidacy Committee, application is made to the seminary. Normally, a synod Candidacy



Committee must make a positive Entrance Decision before an applicant is admitted to an ELCA or ELCIC seminary.

**Endorsement** encourages and affirms those who clearly demonstrate gifts and qualities for a specific form of ministry in the ELCA as well as identifies areas for growth and development. Candidates for ordained ministry participate in an Endorsement Panel composed of two Candidacy Committee members and the seminary faculty advisor at an ELCA seminary, normally in the fall of the second year of study. A recommendation is made to the synod Candidacy Committee for an Endorsement Decision.

A candidate attending a non-ELCA/non-ELCIC seminary must affiliate with an ELCA seminary prior to Endorsement. Affiliated candidates will participate in an Endorsement Interview with the Candidacy Committee. An appropriate faculty advisor may be consulted or invited to participate.

Once endorsed, candidates complete an approved ELCA internship under the supervision of an ELCA seminary. Only endorsed candidates may participate in an ELCA internship.

**Approval** occurs when the candidate articulates the call to ministry and demonstrates readiness to assume a leadership role as a rostered minister in the ELCA. Approval comes near completion of all academic and practical requirements. This final step includes preparation of the Approval Essay and participation in the Approval Interview. A positive decision must be made in order to be available for assignment, ordination, and first call for service to this whole church.

## **Standards (See Article 7 of the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws)**

Persons rostered as ordained ministers of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following:

1. Commitment to Christ;
2. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
3. Willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
4. Academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
5. Commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and in so doing to be
6. An example in faithful service and holy living;
7. Receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
8. Membership in a congregation of this church.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America understands the call to ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament to mean that:

1. Ordained ministers, called by God through this church, are accountable to the Word of God for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ;
2. Ordained ministers are called by God through this church and are not self-chosen or self-appointed and do not select a ministry context independent of this church;
3. Ordained ministers are called by God through the church for a ministry of servanthood and not for the exercise of domination or coercive power;

4. Ordained ministers encourage other persons to prepare for the public ministry of the gospel;
5. Ordained ministry is a privilege granted by God through the call of this church and is not a right of the individual; and
6. The call to serve in a public ministry on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is informed by the *Vision and Expectations* of this church.

All ordained ministers must be able to state a clear intention to live and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these expectations.

## **Academic and Practical Criteria for Ordination**

In preparation for ordination as a pastor of this church, a candidate is required to engage in a comprehensive program of preparation, which includes: 1) theological education, 2) formation for ministry, 3) a one-year internship supervised by an ELCA seminary, and 4) one unit of Supervised Clinical Ministry.

### **Theological Education**

Candidates must complete requirements for a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited theological school. The course of theological study is designed to prepare a pastor to express and reflect on this church's understanding of the gospel, the ministry of this church as expressed in the historic Lutheran Confessions, and the mission of Christ's church in today's world, as well as to explore the relationship of the individual to this total context.

Candidates for ministry in the ELCA are strongly encouraged to attend one of the eight seminaries which this church provides for the preparation of its leadership. The seminaries of the ELCA offer programs of preparation for ministry that are of the highest academic quality, that are faithful to the Lutheran tradition, and that are uniquely suited to meet the challenges facing this church today. A candidate not attending an ELCA seminary or seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada must affiliate with an ELCA seminary prior to endorsement and plan for one year of residency as well as a supervised internship.

### **Formation**

All candidates for ordained service are expected to follow a regular pattern of worship, prayer, Bible study, and disciplined faith practices that sustains and supports formal work in theological education and contextual learning. While such formation may follow a variety of patterns, a candidate is expected to engage in practices that are communal in scope, draw on the hearty traditions of the Christian life, and model an example of Christian living for others.

At the time of entrance into the Candidacy Process, a candidate will be asked to share a plan for how his or her faith life will be sustained and nurtured while in the Candidacy Process. Such a plan may include practices such as the use of a trained spiritual director, participation in a group discipleship experience, retreats, personal devotions and daily prayer, and regular participation in worship in a seminary setting and a congregation. Plans for offering service to others, personal stewardship, vocational discernment, and healthy self-care will also be discussed.

Throughout the Candidacy Process the Candidacy Committee will inquire about the candidate's ongoing practices and habits and will offer encouragement for lively engagement with such facets of Christian living.

### **Health and Wellness for Candidates**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America envisions a church in which those preparing for and serving in rostered leadership positions, ~~and~~ their spouses or same-gendered partners, and their families, will be encouraged, supported, and motivated to grow in their "faith hardiness," which reflects their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, financial and vocational health and well-being.

Healthy leaders enhance their own lives and the lives of others. To be prepared for the rigor of public ministry and mission, candidates need to demonstrate and continue to develop healthy leadership qualities. Leaders in this church who practice self-care and attend to the balance of all aspects of their health enhance the church's faithful witness in the world. Candidates are expected to address any health concerns with their Candidacy Committee. Intentional efforts to improve all aspects of wellness will be most effective when supported by families, congregations, synods, seminaries, and communities.

### **Supervised Internship**

Internship facilitates the integration of academic study and theological education with the practice of ministry. A positive Endorsement Decision from the Candidacy Committee is required prior to placement into an ELCA-approved internship setting. All ELCA seminaries serve on behalf of this church to provide this learning experience where a candidate has an opportunity to give attention to contextualization, reflection, integration, and evaluation (See below for Internship Guidelines).

### **Supervised Clinical Ministry**

The experience of supervised clinical ministry provides an opportunity to practice the art of pastoral care while converting experience into learning in direct, integrated ways. The ELCA requires all candidates for ordained ministry to complete a minimum of one unit of supervised clinical ministry as part of the educational requirement. The normative program to meet this requirement is a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (See Guidelines, p. 41).

### **Financial Aid**

All financial aid from the ELCA Educational Grant Program, the Fund for Leaders in Mission, and from synodical sources is administered through the eight ELCA seminaries. Lutheran candidates at non-ELCA seminaries apply for available scholarship funds through the financial aid office of the ELCA seminary with which they are affiliated. Funds may not be solicited by individual candidates through appeals to any institutions of this church.

## **Ordination and First Call**

An ordained ministry candidate is approved for ordination by the Candidacy Committee upon successful completion of all requirements. All candidates are assigned to regions and synods

according to the policies and procedures of this church, administered by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Ordination is authorized by the bishop of the synod of first call and conducted according to the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of this church. The service of ordination is scheduled and planned in consultation with the bishop.

## **Affiliation**

Although candidates for ordained ministry are strongly encouraged to earn the M. Div. degree at an ELCA or ELCIC seminary, candidates may elect to attend any seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. Those considering a non-ELCA/ELCIC seminary must follow the standard application and Entrance Process for candidacy.

All candidates must be recommended for ordination by the faculty of an ELCA or ELCIC seminary. To be considered for recommendation by a faculty, candidates enrolled at a non-ELCA/ELCIC seminary for the M.Div. degree enter a relationship with an ELCA seminary known as affiliation. Affiliation is part of the Candidacy Process intended to assist candidates in completing requirements for ordained ministry. Affiliation should be established as early in the seminary preparation process as possible, but must occur prior to Endorsement.

Each candidate chooses the seminary with which to affiliate in consultation with his or her Candidacy Committee. Candidates are then responsible for contacting the selected ELCA seminary. Candidates are responsible for insuring that they develop a plan with the affiliate seminary, in consultation with the Candidacy Committee, for completing all non-M.Div. requirements for ordination. The faculty at the affiliate seminary will advise the candidate throughout the process; arrange, if needed, for completion of the supervised clinical ministry requirement; supervise the internship year (see below); provide the year of resident theological study (see below); and submit a recommendation regarding approval for ordination to the candidate's Candidacy Committee.

There is a one-time affiliation fee that is due at the time of affiliation. The fee is applicable to every student enrolled in a course of study toward ordained ministry at a non-ELCA seminary who seeks to serve as an ordained minister of this church and has entered the Candidacy Process of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Affiliation with an ELCA seminary is not the same as admission to a degree program or any other program of study for academic credit at the seminary nor should it be viewed as a promise of admission.

Candidacy for Lutheran students at non-ELCA/ELCIC seminaries follows the normal Candidacy Process with the exception that the Endorsement Panel at an ELCA/ELCIC seminary is replaced by an Endorsement Interview with the Candidacy Committee. Recommendations in writing or in person from the faculties of both the non-ELCA seminary the student attends and the ELCA-affiliated seminary may be requested by the Candidacy Committee in order to make a fully informed decision on Endorsement.

Students who delay Entrance into the Candidacy Process or delay affiliation until after their first year of study at a non-ELCA/ELCIC seminary may encounter a longer time of preparation. At

least one year must elapse between the Endorsement and the Approval of a candidate by the Candidacy Committee.

### **Internship and Supervised Clinical Ministry**

The internship year must be scheduled through the seminary of affiliation in consultation with the Candidacy Committee. ELCA seminaries require that a candidate be endorsed before beginning the internship placement process. The timing of the internship is determined through the seminary of affiliation in consultation with the Candidacy Committee. Candidates should be encouraged to develop an affiliation plan that considers the timing of internship in the Candidacy Process.

400 hours of supervised clinical ministry is also a requirement for all candidates for ordained ministry. This requirement is typically fulfilled by completion of one unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE) accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, or the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education. Fulfillment of the supervised clinical ministry requirement can be arranged through either the candidate's non-ELCA seminary or the ELCA seminary of affiliation. When the candidate completes this requirement through a non-ELCA seminary, he or she must ensure through the seminary of affiliation that the program meets the ELCA ordination standard. Candidates should present an affiliation plan that includes the method and timing for completing this requirement.

### **Residency**

The year of residency may come at any point during a candidate's M.Div. program, or it may follow the completion of the M.Div. program at a non-ELCA seminary. The year of residency has the following purpose and objectives:

1. To provide the candidate with a solid grounding in Lutheran systematic theology and the Lutheran Confessions and to enable the candidate to articulate a Lutheran theological perspective. This happens not only in the study of theology, but in the study of church history, Bible, worship, preaching, education, pastoral care, and ethics; it occurs not only in the classroom but through the total teaching/learning environment and culture of the seminary;
2. To provide the candidate with a sound understanding of ministry in a Lutheran context, including the integrity and variety of Lutheran worship; an appreciation of the relationship between lay and ordained ministries; a familiarity with policy and practice associated with approval, call, and mobility; and the expectations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America of its ordained ministers; and
3. To enable the candidate to become a participant in the current theological conversation of the ELCA and to establish relationships with future colleagues in ministry that are marked by mutual support, accountability, and a strong sense of shared mission.

Candidates at non-ELCA/ELCIC seminaries should plan their M.Div. programs in regular consultation with their ELCA faculty advisors in order to make the best possible use of the resources of the non-ELCA seminary and to include in their affiliation plan a program design for the year of residency at an ELCA seminary that will accomplish the goals for which the year is intended. It may be possible for a candidate with an M. Div. degree from a non-ELCA/ELCIC

seminary to work toward or earn an advanced degree while fulfilling the objectives of the year of residency. A candidate who seeks to earn an advanced degree in the course of fulfilling the residency requirement must also complete any admission requirements for the advanced degree that the ELCA seminary might require.

ELCA seminaries, through the academic dean, will advise affiliated candidates about designing a course of study for the year of residency. The course of study should ensure that the objectives of the requirement can be met and that the needs and experience of the candidate are considered. Competencies that should guide the design in order to ensure the best possible preparation for those preparing to serve as ordained ministers include: Old Testament (senior level exegesis), Gospels and/or Paul (senior level exegesis), Reformation history, theology of Luther, Lutheran Confessions, Lutheranism in North America, global Lutheranism, systematic theology (particularly Christology/salvation), Lutheran ethics (including ELCA social statements), contemporary Lutheran theologians, Lutheran ecclesiology and polity, Lutheran worship, Lutheran preaching, Lutheran education/confirmation practices, evangelism, stewardship, missiology/congregational mission, and theology of ministry. Individual seminaries will address these competencies in the fullest possible way, employing this list as criteria for the selection of courses for a particular student.

Because the Lutheran Year provides *formation as well as education*, normally the year of residency should not be waived or reduced in length. In exceptional cases, the requirement for one year of residency at an ELCA/ELCIC seminary may be waived, in full or in part. The three objectives of the year of residency provide the criteria by which the requirement may be waived. The decision to waive or reduce the residency requirement is made by the Candidacy Committee at the request of the candidate and in consultation with the ELCA seminary and, if possible, with Lutheran advisors at the non-ELCA seminary. Any waiver request must be approved by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit after being submitted by the Candidacy Committee.

Any decision to waive the residency requirement is made at the point of Endorsement. It is still expected that every candidate will complete particular course requirements in Lutheran studies, demonstrate continued active participation in a Lutheran congregation, and have significant experiences of Lutheran church life and formation. Waiver of the residency requirement does not affect the requirements for an internship supervised through an ELCA seminary and a supervised clinical ministry experience.

Candidates for whom the residency requirement has been waived must receive the recommendation of the ELCA seminary of affiliation in order to be approved for ordination. In order that the ELCA faculty may make an informed recommendation, the candidate will arrange for and participate in an interview with a committee of the ELCA seminary faculty and provide samples of academic papers and other written documents that would demonstrate strong evidence of competence in learning and growth in ministry and familiarity with Lutheran contexts.

## **Theological Education for Emerging Ministries**

Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) – one of the means for theological education in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) – responds to the missional needs of the church. The program takes into consideration the leadership gifts, ministry skills, cultural learning styles/experiences and/or the age of a candidate when establishing expectations and requirements for preparation as an ordained minister in this church. TEEM puts into practice the intention described in several documents of the ELCA, including the ELCA constitution (7:31.14), the Study of Ministry (2003), the Study of Theological Education (1993; 1995), and the ELCA’s Plan for Mission (2003) adopted by the Churchwide Assembly. TEEM is designed for particular groups of candidates preparing for ordained ministry whose first call will be in a particular ministry setting. There are specific processes and requirements for eligibility listed below. (See also the TEEM section in the “Roster on the Management of the Rosters of the ELCA, part one, p. 49.)

Courses designed for TEEM are interdisciplinary, action/reflection learning modules that respect a candidate’s cultural learning style with the ministry site as a laboratory for learning.

Candidates being considered for admittance into TEEM have completed all of the steps for Entrance outlined in the Candidacy Manual, Ordained B-1, and have received a positive Entrance decision from their synodical Candidacy Committee.

Candidates normally apply to a particular seminary after receiving notification of admittance into the TEEM program from the Director for Missional Leadership and Candidacy in Congregational & Synodical Missions unit (CSM) and after meeting with their Competency Assessment Panel (CAP), formerly the Theological Review Panel (TRP).

A support network that includes congregation, synod Candidacy Committee, seminary, and churchwide staff is formed to accompany the candidate from Entrance to Approval and Assignment. Throughout the candidacy process frequent communication and sharing of information among the partners is important.

### **TEEM Criteria and Responsibilities**

#### **Emerging Ministries**

Emerging ministries are missional Word and Sacrament worshipping communities. Any of the following may qualify:

1. Ethnic-specific, multicultural, or recent immigrant ministries
2. Small membership rural or urban congregations where the bishop has difficulty identifying a candidate for call
3. New Mission Starts authorized through normal ELCA processes
4. Redevelopment ministries authorized through normal ELCA processes
5. Deaf ministry settings.

### **Initial Conversation with Bishop**

The person's discernment of call begins with an initial conversation with the synod bishop to explore whether ordained service is the appropriate roster for the applicant.

The applicant's discernment process continues with the Initial Assessment Panel and the synod Candidacy Committee.

### **Initial Assessment Panel**

A panel is convened by the synod bishop or his/her designee. The panel is responsible for interviewing the person and assessing the person's readiness for candidacy. The panel together with the bishop give careful consideration to the criteria established for TEEM before recommending that the synod Candidacy Committee consider TEEM as an option for the person.

Members of the Initial Assessment Panel are normally

1. The synod bishop or his/her designee
2. A Candidacy Committee member
3. Persons of color are normally accompanied by a member of their ethnic community
4. CSM-approved Mission Developers may be accompanied by their synod's Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM).

### **Criteria for Admittance into TEEM**

The following criteria are taken into consideration when recommending a candidate for TEEM:

1. Love for Jesus Christ, and love for neighbor
2. Membership in an ELCA congregation for a minimum of one year
3. Knowledge and passion for mission work in the ELCA
4. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church
5. Ability to share the faith
6. Passion for justice and a commitment to build sustainable communities, working to alleviate hunger and poverty
7. A ministry site identified by the synod bishop
8. Normally, age 40 or older

CSM approved Lay Mission Developers serving a ministry site for an extended period of time normally enter candidacy and must complete the steps identified in the Candidacy Process outlined in the Candidacy Manual (Ordained B-1) and must be accepted into TEEM by the Director for Missional Leadership & Candidacy in Congregational & Synodical Missional unit (CSM).

Candidates from LWF partner churches entranced into candidacy with prior theological education who are serving in a ministry setting identified by the synod bishop may fulfill the ELCA requirements for ordination through TEEM.

### **Steps in Candidacy**

Candidates receive a positive Entrance decision before the synod Candidacy Committee requests that CSM admit the candidate into TEEM.



**The Entrance Process requires completion of the following:**

1. Candidacy Application and Entrance Information Form
2. Congregational Registration
3. Initial Interview Panel meeting and recommendation
4. Background Check
5. Psychological Evaluation
6. An Entrance Essay

**Acceptance into TEEM by the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit**

Following a positive Entrance decision, by the synod Candidacy Committee, copies of the following documents are sent to the Director for Missional Leadership & Candidacy in CSM:

1. Application for Candidacy
2. Entrance essay
3. Entrance decision
4. Bishop's letter of recommendation identifying the ministry site where the candidate will be serving.

Written notification of acceptance into TEEM will be sent to the synod bishop with a copy to the Ministry Leadership Coordinator in the Region.

Candidates not accepted into TEEM may continue their candidacy process by registering in a Master of Divinity program at a seminary.

**Competency Assessment Panel (CAP)**

*Formerly known as the Theological Review Panel (TRP). The name has been changed to avoid confusion and differentiate the task of a Competency Assessment Panel (CAP) from the task of a Theological Review Panel (TRP) outlined on page XXX of this manual. A CAP's primary responsibility is to assess a candidate's knowledge and abilities in each of the competency areas identified. Together with the candidate, the members of the CAP identify the appropriate course work needed to strengthen the candidate's ministry skills. A Competency Assessment Panel does not have the authority to reverse a Candidacy Committee's decision.*

Following notification of the candidate's acceptance into TEEM, the Congregational and Synodical Mission Ministry Leadership Coordinator for that region or the Director for Missional Leadership and Candidacy will convene a Competency Assessment Panel (CAP). Meetings are normally held at an ELCA seminary. In exceptional cases where a CAP is convened in the synod, it is the synod's responsibility to cover the seminary faculty's travel costs.

CAP members are normally:

1. The seminary TEEM director and one seminary faculty appointed by the Dean;
2. The bishop or his/her designee;
3. A Candidacy Committee member; and
4. A CSM staff person.

Candidates of color will have a member from their ethnic community present, and CSM-approved lay mission developers are accompanied by the Director for Evangelical Mission in the synod.

The seminary TEEM director will normally serve as the candidate's advisor and will accompany the candidate from the initial TEEM Competency Assessment Panel meeting through Approval and Assignment.

### **Competencies**

A Competency Assessment Panel (CAP) assesses the candidate's understanding of Lutheran confessional identity and with the candidate will identify additional resources and course work that will be required to strengthen the candidate's ability to integrate this understanding in his or her mission work. The following competencies are assessed by a CAP:

1. **Bible** – Basic skills for understanding and interpreting Scripture for preaching and teaching in their context
2. **Theology and Ethics** – Ability to critically analyze the context for mission through theological and ethical lenses
3. **Lutheran Confessions** – Ability to teach within the context the foundational teachings of the Lutheran church
4. **Church History** – Basic understanding of the history of Christianity in the United States and how it relates to issues in their communities
5. **Worship** – Ability to develop liturgy for the gathered assembly in its unique cultural context and to function as the spiritual and liturgical leader in the community
6. **Teaching** – Skill and ability to teach others the faith
7. **Evangelical Mission and stewardship** – Skill and knowledge for developing mission work that is transforming and sustainable
8. **ELCA Structure and Polity** – An understanding of the inter-relationship among all the expressions of the church and how ELCA structure and polity reflect Biblical and Theological principles.
9. **Administration** – Basic church administration skills and denominational expectations.
10. **Service** – An understanding of the church's commitment to justice and the knowledge and skill needed to address hunger and poverty in their context and in the world

The number and frequency of a CAP's meetings with a candidate varies and depends on synod and seminary expectations. Normally the CAP will meet with the candidate at the beginning of the process and again prior to Approval. New communication technologies (conference calls, web meetings, and others) may be used to facilitate the CAP meetings.

### **Internship**

An internship-like experience provides the TEEM student with an opportunity to receive structured feedback from an experienced pastor who will serve as his or her supervisor. Seminary internship evaluations or other structured feedback forms are normally completed during the candidate's first year of service in the ministry site. Copies of the forms are sent to the candidate's Candidacy Committee and the seminary TEEM director

### **Supervised Clinical Ministry**

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is important for the development of pastoral care skills for mission and may be required of the candidate. Because pastoral care practices differ among cultures, the CPE program selected must be sensitive to and understand the candidate's culture and ministry responsibilities.

When the ministry being served would be negatively affected by the candidate's absence, the synod Candidacy Committee may recommend an alternative contextualized program that provides for the development of pastoral care skills.

### **Endorsement**

TEEM candidates will participate in an Endorsement Interview with the Candidacy Committee. An appropriate faculty advisor may be consulted or invited to participate. The TEEM candidate's Endorsement interview is normally scheduled halfway through the candidate's formation process. The interview provides the synod Candidacy Committee an opportunity to assess the candidate's progress and to continue their accompaniment of the candidate. Candidates may be asked to complete an Endorsement Essay.

### **Seminary Experience**

TEEM candidates benefit from programs designed by ELCA seminaries that provide experiences equivalent to the expectations outlined above in the residency requirement for ordained ministry preparation (see p. XX). TEEM programs provide:

1. A solid grounding in Lutheran theology and the Lutheran confessions to enable the candidate's to articulate a Lutheran theological perspective;
2. A sound understanding of ministry and mission in a Lutheran context, including the integrity and variety of Lutheran worship; an appreciation of the relationship between lay and ordained ministries; a familiarity with policy and practice associated with approval, call, and mobility, and the expectations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America of its ordained ministers; and
3. Opportunity for the candidate to become a participant in the current theological conversation of the ELCA and to establish relationships with future colleagues in ministry that are marked by mutual support, accountability, and a strong sense of shared mission.

### **Approval and Assignment**

Upon successful completion of the candidate's program of study, the Competency Assessment Panel acts on behalf of the seminary faculty in making an Approval recommendation to the synodical candidacy committee. The Candidacy Committee follows the regular approval process.

This final step includes preparation of the Approval Essay and participation in the Approval Interview. A positive decision must be made before ordination or acceptance into the ordained roster.

With the completion of the assignment forms, TEEM candidates participate in the Churchwide Assignment Consultation and are administratively assigned to the synod where the ministry site is located.

If a candidate who has completed the TEEM process reaches Approval and the ministry site is no longer available, the candidate will be assigned to a synod through the regular Churchwide Assignment Process.

**Guidelines and Policies for Admission to the Roster of Ordained Ministers of Persons Ordained in Another Lutheran Church or Another Christian Tradition**

*Sections I-VII below are from “Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Rosters of the ELCA,” originally adopted by the Church Council as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 16, 1989 [CC89.04.54], and adopted, as revised, by the Church Council, November 14, 1994 [CC94.11.86].*

Candidacy for those persons already ordained in another church requires attention to a variety of circumstances and issues. Candidacy Committees should honor the background of every individual who seeks to serve as a pastor in the ELCA and provide hospitality and appropriate orientation to the candidacy process. The Candidacy Process provides an opportunity to engage in mutual conversations of discernment and assessment through a supportive partnership.

The particular needs of this church are an important factor in determining who is approved for rostered ministry in the ELCA. The mission of the ELCA involves outreach, worship, service, advocacy for justice, and nurture. While the scope of its mission is global, its particular responsibility is for ministry in the United States and the Caribbean. It is essential to have leaders who thoroughly understand and are experienced with the cultural context of this diverse area. Candidates will be expected to appreciate and be familiar with the polity, liturgy, and traditions of the ELCA.

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)** - Ordained ministers of the ELCIC shall be received by transfer upon acceptance of a valid call from a congregation, Synod Council, or the Church Council following certification of their good standing on the roster of the ELCIC and with the approval of the bishop of the synod in which they are to serve. This process is not a Candidacy Committee matter.

**Full Communion Partners** - The availability of ordained ministers between the ELCA and church bodies with which it is in full communion is not a candidacy matter. Guidelines for such exchange can be found in the Orderly Exchange documents of this church.

When an ordained minister of a full communion partner church seeks to be rostered in the ELCA, the Candidacy Process must be followed, including all screening and review, according to the procedures outlined below. If the ordained minister has served in an ELCA congregation, that experience should be acknowledged in the Candidacy Process.

**Lutheran World Federation Partners** - Many ordained ministers of LWF churches serve in this church through short-term or temporary arrangements with ELCA congregations or synods.

Such exchanges are arranged under the same principles of availability as relationships of full communion and do not require rostering. Although such programs can benefit both Lutheran churches, these matters are not candidacy concerns.

Candidacy Committees may consider the application of an ordained minister of an LWF church who seeks to commit to long-term ordained service within the ELCA. Early consultation with the Global Mission unit is essential to an effective process. Any concerns related to agreements or implications for the churches involved can be identified and considered when communication among the partners is open.

The Candidacy Process must include a deep respect for the credentials and background of those who seek to be rostered in the ELCA. Yet those credentials must be examined in order to ensure that any candidate has good standing in his or her church, is theologically sound, and has good moral character. For those applicants who come from outside the USA, there are many factors to consider, such as length of time in the United States, familiarity with American culture, and prior service in the ELCA.

**Other Lutheran Church Partners** - Ordained ministers of other Lutheran churches are to be treated with dignity and respect. The perspective brought by an individual with such credentials can enrich the ELCA and broaden our understanding of mission. The primary functions of the Candidacy Process in such situations become evaluation for suitability, screening, and orientation to the ELCA. The procedures for the Candidacy Process are outlined below.

**Other Ordained Ministers** - Those who prepared for the ordained ministry and served through other Christian traditions may be admitted to the roster of the ELCA if they meet and maintain the standards of this church for ordained ministers and are committed to the Confession of Faith of this church. The procedures for candidacy are outlined below. The Candidacy Process provides an opportunity to engage in mutual conversations of discernment and assessment through a supportive partnership.

## **Policy And Procedures**

### **I. Basic Standards For Ordained Ministers**

- A. Persons admitted to and continued in the ordained ministry of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, according to churchwide bylaw 7.31.11.:
  1. Commitment to Christ;
  2. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
  3. Willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
  4. Academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
  5. Commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
  6. Receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
  7. Membership in a congregation of this church.
  
- B. Any person seeking admission to the ordained ministry of this church must be able to meet and maintain the above standards. In the case of a person previously ordained by

another Lutheran church body or another Christian tradition it is implicit that the applicant is familiar with the Confession of Faith of this church and is committed to it.

## **II. Initial Application**

- A. The applicant registers with the synod of residence. In the case of an applicant who does not reside in the United States registration may be made to a synod where there is a familial or mentor relationship, or a request may be made to the Conference of Bishops for a synod assignment. Synods should consult with the Global Mission unit regarding candidates from outside the United States (other than ELCIC).
- B. The applicant is to provide the synod with the following information:
  - 1. Application for Entrance to Candidacy form (including the signed release on the last page), the Entrance Information form, and the Application Form for Persons from Another Lutheran Church or Christian Tradition.
  - 2. Academic transcripts for all post-secondary education (degree or non-degree).
  - 3. Certificates of study (if any).
  - 4. Documentation of supervised field experience, i.e. internship, clinical education, etc.
  - 5. Statement or certificate of ordained status in another Lutheran church body or Christian tradition.
  - 6. Letter of reference from applicant's current or former ecclesiastical supervisor.
  - 7. INS documentation (for those seeking to immigrate to the United States).
  - 8. Completed Psychological Evaluation and Background Check.
  - 9. Copy of at least one recent sermon.
  - 10. A personal statement, including the theological rationale, on why the applicant seeks to serve on the ordained roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - 11. A recent photograph.
- C. Upon receipt of this information the synod bishop, in consultation with the Candidacy Committee of the synod, arranges an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant's readiness to enter the candidacy process of this church. Entrance into the candidacy process is based upon the adequacy of the information provided by the applicant and the applicant's statement of intention to serve in the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. If the applicant comes from a church overseas with which this church is related, the Global Mission unit will be consulted by the synod. The purpose of this consultation is to receive any additional information regarding the applicant that is available from the applicant's church body. After the completion of the interview and the receipt of the required information, the applicant is considered for endorsement by the Candidacy Committee.

## **III. Theological Review Panel/Endorsement**

- A. Following the Entrance of the candidate, the Candidacy Committee will request that the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit convene a review panel. This panel should include or consult with the Candidacy Committee seminary representative. The Theological Review Panel may be convened on the territory of the synod or at an ELCA seminary.
- B. The panel will then make a recommendation for the Candidacy Committee concerning endorsement. Recommendations that may be made include:

1. Immediate recommendation for an Approval interview with no additional requirements.
  2. Plan of preparation as outlined in the Theological Review Panel report, followed by an Approval interview.
  3. Plan or preparation as outlined in the report, with follow-up Theological Review Panel meeting prior to Approval interview.
  4. Recommendation that the Candidacy Committee consider denial of endorsement.
- C. The panel informs the Candidacy Committee and the Candidate in writing of its recommendation. The committee acts on the recommendation at its next regular meeting.

## **V. Approval**

Upon the successful completion of the required work and the recommendation of the panel, the candidate is considered for approval by the Candidacy Committee. A positive recommendation by the panel shall normally be necessary if the Candidacy Committee is to approve the candidate. In the case of a candidate who has been denied a positive recommendation by the panel, the Candidacy Committee must consult directly with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit will arrange for a member of the panel to be present at the Approval Interview and to participate in the committee's deliberations. The approval decision is reported in writing to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The candidate completes the churchwide assignment process forms and is assigned to a region and synod for consideration for a letter of call.

## **VI. Ordination or Reception of the Candidate**

- A. After receipt and acceptance of a letter of call by the candidate, the synodical bishop is to consult with the Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America concerning the reception of the candidate.
- B. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will receive ordained ministers from churches which believe, teach, and confess the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds.
- C. Those from other traditions will be ordained according to the Service of Ordination of this church. The determination of how this policy applies in the case of each candidate is made by the Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.<sup>1</sup>
- D. The basis for this policy is the recognition that, while ordination is into the Church catholic, it is always particularized in a specific tradition of the Church and never in the abstract. As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America determines its ecumenical vision and policy, it is necessary to avoid the impression that this church is taking unilateral action that implies the recognition or exchangeability of ordained ministers of another Christian tradition. At the same time it is important to give a clear witness to this church's willingness to affirm the ordination of those churches which believe, teach, and confess the ecumenical creeds.

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<sup>1</sup>The process of determining how this policy applies to any specific candidate is carried out, on behalf of the presiding bishop, by the secretary of this church.

## VII. Pastoral Care and Support

The beginning of service for those who come to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America from other churches is an important time. It is a time to establish significant relationships of support and growth. During the early years of service, it is recommended that the synod bishop offer the newly rostered pastor a mentor who would assist the bishop in providing this support and nurture.

### **Guidelines for Theological Review Panels**

A Theological Review Panel (TRP) is convened by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to assess a candidate's theological readiness to serve on a roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The partnership of the ELCA seminaries is highly valued at this time of evaluation and assessment. The Review Panel process is provided for those ordained in another Lutheran church or another Christian tradition, reinstatement and other situations. Note: A review panel with a different function is used with Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM). This panel was formerly referred to as a TRP but is now called a Competency Assessment Panel (CAP) to avoid confusion.

Review Panels may be held at regularly scheduled times throughout the year on an ELCA seminary campus. They also may be convened on the territory of a synod and include the Candidacy Committee's seminary faculty representative. The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit staff determines the participants on the panel, who may include:

1. Congregational and Synodical Mission unit staff
2. Faculty of an ELCA seminary
3. Candidacy Committee member(s)
4. Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit (for mission developers)
5. Ethnic or community representative (if appropriate)
6. Interpreter (if needed)

The Review Panel is scheduled after the Candidacy Committee makes a positive Entrance Decision. The complete file is provided to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit central or deployed staff person, who schedules and convenes the Review Panel.

All panel members should have copies of the candidate's file prior to the meeting. The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit staff person serves as convener, and a recorder is selected.

In preparation for the panel, the candidate should be familiar with the following documents:

1. *ELCA Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions*, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
2. *Luther's Small Catechism*
3. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and other ELCA worship resources
4. *The Book of Concord* (available in English, German, Scandinavian languages, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish)
5. *Vision and Expectations*



## 6. *Use of the Means of Grace*

The candidate should be prepared to be assessed in the following areas:

1. Understanding of the ELCA's mission and ministry
2. Familiarity with the life, history, and culture of American Lutheranism
3. Involvement in the life of an ELCA congregation (minimum one year) and understanding of practices related to worship, stewardship, and evangelism
4. Theological competence to interpret the doctrine of this church
5. Academic readiness, with careful attention given to competency in Lutheran Confessions and theology
6. Supervised ministry experience, including field work, internships, and clinical ministry
7. Indigenous experience that has prepared the candidate for public ministry

The panel should give attention to the following:

1. Membership in an ELCA congregation and active participation in its ministry is an essential component of candidacy;
2. Panel recommendations are to be clearly written, with measurable outcomes and expectations;
3. The panel may recommend coursework, reading, mentoring, internships, or other means of preparation and formation; and
4. A suggested timeline should be made for completion and any follow-up review or recommendations.

Following the interview with the candidate, the panel recommends an appropriate course of preparation. A panel report with clear expectations is written and distributed to all panel members, the candidate, the Candidacy Committee, the ELCA seminary of affiliation, and the lead candidacy staff person in the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

Recommended actions to the Candidacy Committee may be:

1. Immediate scheduling of the Approval Interview;
2. Plan of preparation to be completed with Approval Interview following completion;
3. Plan of preparation to be completed with follow-up meeting with Review Panel prior to Approval Interview; or
4. Denial of candidacy. (state reasons clearly)

If necessary, the Review Panel may be reconvened to make a final recommendation. When all expectations and outcomes have been met by the candidate, the panel provides a final report that clearly states to the candidate and Candidacy Committee that the preparation has been satisfactorily completed and includes the recommendation of the panel.

## **Guidelines for Supervised Clinical Ministry**

### **Introduction**

The ELCA requires that all candidates for ordained ministry complete one unit of Supervised Clinical Ministry. Candidates are encouraged to complete this unit before candidacy

Endorsement and are expected to meet this requirement prior to internship. A candidate must complete Supervised Clinical Ministry prior to the Approval Interview.

Supervised Clinical Ministry offers candidates the opportunity to convert experience into learning in direct, integrated ways while practicing the art of pastoral ministry. Among the benefits of this learning experience are growth in pastoral identity, theological reflection, and self-understanding. Interaction with peers and supervisor in an interpersonal learning group is a key dimension of the experience.

The normative program to meet this requirement is a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). Other recognized accrediting bodies include the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) and Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE).

Alternative programs and equivalencies should be evaluated and approved in advance by the seminary in consultation with the student's Candidacy Committee and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Candidates who opt for a non-accredited program should be mindful that they will not fulfill the appropriate unit of CPE required for admission to an ACPE residency. This may have important bearing for those considering future training leading to ecclesiastical endorsement and certification in specialized pastoral care ministry.

The seminary has primary responsibility for the management and administration of this educational requirement. Programmatic standards, criteria for evaluations, and guidelines for the approval of programs and supervision are to be maintained and provided by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

### **Standards**

The programmatic standards for an approved Supervised Clinical Ministry program shall include, but not be limited by, the following:

1. A specified time period of no less than 400 hours, including supervised clinical practice in ministry, structured group discussion, and individual study and reflection.
2. Active reporting and evaluation of one's practice of ministry, utilizing a small peer group and individual supervision.
3. Supervision by an individual who is appropriately trained, qualified, and credentialed.
4. An inductive, experiential model of learning that uses the clinical/case method and focuses on one's whole person in the practice of ministry.
5. Growth in learning the art of pastoral and spiritual care through conceptual models from theology, ethics, and the behavioral sciences.
6. A context of interpersonal ministry, which includes potential for involvement in pastoral care, social justice ministry, worship and music, preaching, program management, teaching, etc.
7. An individual contract for learning, developed collaboratively by the student and supervisor, that addresses:
  - a. Expression of a personal theology of pastoral ministry;
  - b. Enhanced self-understanding and self-integration: spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and relational;

- c. Ability to initiate helping relationships;
- d. Identification of personal strengths and weaknesses in pastoral functioning;
- e. Ability to use pastoral supervision for personal and professional growth and to Develop the capacity to evaluate oneself in ministry;
- f. Capacity to engage a peer group for consultation and receive support and challenge in ministry;
- g. Development of one's pastoral identity and authority while working collaboratively with interdisciplinary teams; and
- h. Formulation of clear and specific goals for continuing pastoral formation.

## Guidelines for Internship in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### **Introduction**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America requires candidates for ordination to complete satisfactorily an approved internship. Internship consists of a supervised contextual experience designed to contribute to the formation of pastoral identity and the development of the requisite skills for the public exercise of ministry. Internship is normally full time for one year as the third year of the seminary four-year degree program. A unit of approved supervised clinical ministry experience may be counted as part of the internship year with the approval of the seminary and Candidacy Committee. Normally congregations and supervisors approved by ELCA seminaries, in consultation with synodical bishops, provide the settings and guidance for internships. To facilitate the internship program, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit has established standards and guidelines for internship. Each seminary creates policies and procedures through which the standards are implemented. Responsibility for interpreting these standards and guidelines and considering requests for exceptions resides with the seminary in consultation with the appropriate synod and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

### **ELCA Seminaries**

#### **The seminaries shall:**

1. Provide adequate policies, procedures, resources, support, and faculty staffing to maintain an internship program consistent with the expectations of the ELCA;
2. Place eligible students on internship in accordance with the expectations of the ELCA and the policies and procedures of the respective seminaries;
3. Distribute the seminary's policies and procedures concerning internships;
4. Maintain effective communication with synodical bishops concerning settings and supervisors and with synodical Candidacy Committees about internship candidates prior to placement;
5. Provide common programs to orient and train every new supervisor and to further the development of experienced supervisors in partnership with the churchwide office;
6. Maintain effective processes for placement and orientation prior to internship, as well as provide reflection following internship;
7. Receive and review supervisor written reports on at least a quarterly basis;-

8. Confer with synodical Candidacy Committees as necessary and provide summary evaluations (Form D) at the conclusion of internships prior to the Approval Interviews of the candidates by the committees;
9. Provide guidance and support during the internship year in a variety of ways including site visits; and
10. When necessary, terminate an internship after appropriate consultation.

## **Synods**

### **The synodical bishop (or designate) shall:**

1. Identify and encourage potential congregations and pastors to consider applying to participate in the internship program;
2. Maintain effective communication with seminary field education offices relative to settings and pastors;
3. Provide opportunities for ELCA interns in the territory of the synod to participate in the programs and functions of the ELCA and the synod; and
4. Offer necessary support for the Horizon Internship program, including adequate synodical funding.

### **The synodical Candidacy Committee shall:**

1. Advise students from their synod at non-ELCA/ELCIC seminaries to affiliate with an ELCA seminary during the first year of their academic program in order to meet prerequisites for an eventual ELCA internship;
2. At time of Endorsement, convey any recommendations regarding internship, including international Horizon or specialized ministry sites, to candidates and the appropriate internship directors by means of the Endorsement Decision Form; and
3. Receive written evaluations regarding candidates' internship experiences prior to the approval interviews of the candidates by the Candidacy Committee.

## **Interns**

Interns are candidates who have a positive Endorsement from their synodical Candidacy Committee, are enrolled in or affiliated with an ELCA seminary, and are approved for internship placement by that seminary. Interns serve in a sustained supervised ministry experience.

Interns are placed in approved settings by the seminaries. To assist in that placement, candidates for internship are expected to consult with their Candidacy Committee and their internship director. Interns are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the policies of the ELCA.

## **Criteria and Standards for Candidates for Internship**

### **Candidates will:**

1. Apply for internship through the internship office of their seminary or, if attending a non-ELCA seminary, through the ELCA seminary with which they are affiliated;
2. Develop broad learning goals for the internship year in consultation with the synodical Candidacy Committee and seminary faculty to be used in considerations leading to placement;

3. Develop specific and agreed upon learning goals with the supervisor and internship committee once placement has been made;
4. Seek to develop and maintain sound and effective relationships with the supervisor, other staff members, the internship committee, and members of the congregation;
5. Maintain appropriate contacts with the synodical bishop, Candidacy Committee, and seminary. While on internship, interns are to submit reports and evaluations as requested in a timely manner;
6. Engage in personal prayer, study, and theological reflection and discussion on issues related to ministry and be accountable for these practices to either a Spiritual Director or the internship supervisor;
7. Attend internship cluster meetings, conference meetings, and synodical events and participate in appropriate community groups and activities;
8. Become conversant with the policy, programs, curriculum, official documents, and official statements of the ELCA; and
9. Inform the seminary internship director in a timely manner of any concerns or difficulties that develop in the course of the internship.

### **Supervisors**

A supervisor is normally an ordained Lutheran minister who has served a minimum of three years and in the setting for at least one year. Pastors who serve as supervisors are expected to be committed to internship as an educational component in the preparation of candidates for ordained ministry. The pastor must be approved as a supervisor by the seminary to which application is made in consultation with the synodical bishop and field education colleagues. Pastors serve as an effective model for and guide to the intern with regard to personal faith, spiritual discipline, personal habits, public ministry, and participation in the wider church. They provide supervised opportunities for the intern to participate in all dimensions of pastoral ministry. All supervisors must participate in supervisory training as provided by the seminaries for new and experienced supervisors.

### **Criteria and Standards for Supervisors**

#### **The supervisor will:**

1. Share with and involve the intern in all aspects of ministry as appropriate, assisting and sharing accountability with the intern to achieve mutually agreed upon learning goals. A collaborative model of ministry is encouraged;
2. Reflect on the pastoral ministry and the intern's work and well-being in weekly supervisory sessions;
3. Guide the intern in developing responsible and effective partnership in ministry with laity;
4. Know and support the polity, policies, and positions of this church, including those matters relating to leadership in sacramental practices;
5. Participate in the life of the synod and provide opportunities for the intern to experience and participate in synodical programs and events, as well as in appropriate local ecumenical, interfaith, and community organizations and activities;
6. Participate in continuing education;
7. Support the internship committee and facilitate its functioning;
8. Attend internship cluster meetings regularly with the intern;

9. Cooperate with the seminary regarding policies and practices contained in each seminary's internship manual;
10. Provide written reports and evaluations to the seminary at least quarterly, discerning growth and progress as well as any concerns; and
11. Participate in the placement process as requested by the seminary.

### **Settings**

Settings provide opportunities for the intern to be broadly and appropriately engaged in the practices of ministry, including occasions unique to the setting. Such opportunities are an expression of the setting's commitment to internship as an educational component in the candidate's preparation. All internship sites, including Horizon internship sites, are to meet the following ELCA expectations related to settings.

### **Criteria and Standards for Internship Settings**

#### **Settings:**

1. Normally are expected to be open to any Endorsed candidate of the ELCA.
2. Are chosen (and periodically evaluated) by the seminary after consultation with the bishop of the synod related to each setting.
3. Normally are congregationally based.
4. Are expected to have a written policy for sexual ethics, sick leave, and lifelong learning.
5. Are expected to apply to only one seminary.
6. Are expected to insure that the necessary resources (e.g. financial, supervisory, etc.) are provided.
7. Will be committed to internship as an educational component in the preparation of candidates for the ordained ministry.
8. Will provide opportunities for the intern to be broadly and appropriately engaged in ministerial activities.
9. Will provide adequate support to the intern (and family), including forming a committee of lay members to provide to the intern and the supervisor with feedback and evaluation.
10. In keeping with the policies of the ELCA, interns will not preside at Baptism, except in the case of emergency, or Eucharist without the authorization of the synodical bishop and then only in extraordinary circumstances.
11. Will model awareness of and connectedness to the ELCA as a whole with ongoing supportive relationships not limited to, but including, financial benevolence.

## Chapter 3 - Candidacy for Associates in Ministry

### Introduction

Associates in Ministry are called to provide leadership and support for the ministries of the whole people of God. Associates in Ministry are lay people who serve on an officially recognized Word and service roster in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Associates in Ministry work in partnership with laity, pastors, bishops, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses to serve the mission and ministry needs of this church as they carry out responsibilities in congregations, agencies, or institutions of or related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Through this service Associates in Ministry provide care and nurture of the people of God, equipping them in the Christian faith.

Associates in Ministry are prepared for service through a course of study that includes theological education and are guided by the synod or multi-synodical Candidacy Committee according to the procedures established by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Once approved, Associates in Ministry are eligible for a call and serve under a letter of call issued by an expression of this church: congregation, synod council, or ELCA Church Council. Having accepted the first call, Associates in Ministry are commissioned and received onto the roster of the ELCA through a Service of Commissioning. An approved and commissioned Associate in Ministry has met all standards for service as established by the ELCA and enters into a relationship of mutual accountability with the calling body and the synodical and churchwide expressions of this church as set forth in the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. (ELCA 7.50 ff)

### Steps in Candidacy

Persons seeking commissioning as Associates in Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are expected to participate fully in all steps of the Candidacy Process: Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval. The candidate has a responsibility to fulfill all of the requirements and expectations of the Candidacy Committee.

**Entrance** begins a process of discernment that explores an individual's potential for rostered ministry and readiness to begin the process of theological study and candidacy in the ELCA. One year of active membership in an ELCA congregation is required prior to Entrance. The Entrance Process includes Candidacy Application and Entrance Information Form, ELCA Congregational Registration, Initial Interview, Screening, including a Psychological Evaluation, a Background Check, and an Entrance Interview. A positive Entrance Decision must be received before an applicant continues in the process of preparation and formation.

**Endorsement** encourages and affirms those who clearly demonstrate gifts and qualities for a specific form of ministry in the ELCA as well as identifies areas for growth and development. The candidate prepares an Endorsement Essay and participates in an Endorsement Interview

conducted by the Candidacy Committee. The Candidacy Committee will identify the appropriate time for Endorsement in consultation with the candidate. Typical timing would be at the mid-point of the Candidacy Process. For candidates attending an ELCA seminary, the faculty advisor is included in the Endorsement Interview.

Because candidates not attending an ELCA seminary may not have the same awareness of time lines, the Candidacy Committee should seek to give these candidates direct notification about the posting of the assignment and the deadline for submitting the essay.

Candidates who have already completed the majority of the educational requirements prior to application and who receive a strong Entrance Decision may be exempt from the Endorsement step by decision of the Candidacy Committee.

**Approval** occurs when the candidate articulates the call to ministry and demonstrates readiness to assume a leadership role as a rostered minister in the ELCA. The Approval Interview is scheduled near completion of all academic and practical criteria as affirmation of a call to public ministry. If the candidate is a student at an ELCA seminary, a faculty recommendation is to be provided. An Approval Essay is prepared by the candidate, who participates in the Approval Interview with the Candidacy Committee. Committees are responsible for distribution of the essay questions to the candidate. A positive decision by the committee is necessary for the candidate to participate in the churchwide assignment process and to be available for commissioning and first call.

## **Standards**

Persons approved, commissioned, and rostered as associates in ministry of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following Basic Standards established in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (ELCA 7.52.11):

1. Commitment to Christ;
2. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
3. Willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
4. Academic and practical qualification for the position, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
5. Commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
6. Receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
7. Membership in a congregation of this church

The ELCA expects that associate in ministry candidates will demonstrate the following:

1. Knowledge of the Bible, church history, the history and doctrinal teachings of the Lutheran church, and the organization and operating principles of the ELCA;
2. Ability to articulate one's sense of calling as a baptized Christian and as an associate in ministry;
3. Willingness to share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry and to assist in leading in the church's mission to proclaim God's love through word and deed;



4. Encouragement to identify other persons who will prepare for the ministry of the gospel;
5. Ability to work in partnership to serve the mission and ministry needs of this church;
6. A healthy self-awareness and willingness to engage in regular habits for physical fitness;
7. Commitment to living in accordance with the *Vision and Expectations for Word and Service Rosters in the ELCA*;
8. Competence in the area of one's field of specialization; and
9. At least one year of satisfactory relationship with the appropriate Candidacy Committee.

## **Academic and Practical Criteria for Commissioning**

In preparation for commissioning as an associate in ministry, a candidate is required to engage in a comprehensive program of preparation, which includes a bachelor's degree, foundational theological education, field experience, and spiritual formation.

### **Degree Requirement**

A bachelor's degree or a graduate degree in a field appropriate to the designated field of specialization is required. If the degree is in an unrelated field of study, significant work or competency in the field of specialization must be demonstrated. In some special cases a person not holding a bachelor's degree may be considered for candidacy under the provisions described in "Waiver of Academic Requirement."

### **Theological Education**

Basic foundational coursework in theological education shall include a minimum of 20 semester credit hours (or an equivalent), including at least one course in each of the following areas:

1. Biblical Studies – Old Testament
2. Biblical Studies – New Testament
3. Lutheran Theology and Confessional Writings
4. Introductory Systematic Theology
5. Lutheran Church History (including North American context)

Additional courses may include Practical Theology appropriate to the specialization, e.g., religious education, pastoral care and counseling, youth ministry, worship, hymnody, etc., but should not replace foundational courses.

All theological education must be completed through courses taken at an accredited college or seminary approved by the Candidacy Committee or through a course of study approved by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit including courses through an ELCA program such as Fisher's Net/SELECT (see p. 52) The basic theological education requirement shall not be met by equivalency or through continuing education courses.

### **Spiritual and Vocational Formation**

All candidates for commissioned service are expected to follow a regular pattern of worship, prayer, Bible study, and disciplined faith practices that sustains and supports formal work in theological education and contextual learning. While such formation may follow a variety of patterns, a candidate is expected to engage in practices that are communal in scope, draw on the hearty traditions of the Christian life, and model an example of Christian living for others.

At the time of entrance into the Candidacy Process, a candidate will be asked to share a plan for how his or her faith life will be sustained and nurtured while in the Candidacy Process. Such a plan may include practices such as the use of a trained spiritual director, participation in a group discipleship experience, retreats, personal devotions and daily prayer, and regular participation in worship in a seminary setting and a congregation. Plans for offering service to others, personal stewardship, vocational discernment, and healthy self-care will also be discussed.

Throughout the Candidacy Process the Candidacy Committee will inquire about the candidate's ongoing practices and habits and will offer encouragement for lively engagement with such facets of Christian living.

### **Health and Wellness**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America envisions a church in which those preparing for and serving in rostered leadership positions, as well as their spouses and families, will be encouraged, supported, and motivated to grow in their faith hardiness, which reflects their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, financial and vocational health and well-being.

Healthy leaders enhance their own lives and the lives of others. To be prepared for the rigor of public ministry and mission, candidates need to demonstrate and continue to develop healthy leadership qualities. Leaders in this church who practice self-care and attend to the balance of all aspects of their health enhance the church's faithful witness in the world. Candidates are expected to address any health concerns with their Candidacy Committee. Intentional efforts to improve all aspects of wellness will be most effective when supported by families, congregations, synod, seminary, and community.

### **Specialization**

The ELCA has identified a need to provide for a variety of ministries in congregations and other settings where theologically trained leaders serve. While the forms of ministry might be different, there are common areas of specialization, focus, and need throughout this church. A call might include many varied responsibilities, but a rostered lay leader is expected to focus on at least one area of specialization in the candidacy process.

Associates in Ministry are expected to have demonstrated ability and experience within one or more areas of specialization. The list below provides categories in which leaders may have strength or demonstrated competency. The list is not exhaustive but rather descriptive of a variety of areas in which an Associate in Ministry might develop expertise or interest.

Administration	Music and Worship
Campus Ministry	Outdoor Ministry/Camping
Chaplaincy	Parish Nurse/Health
Christian Education	Public Policy/Advocacy
Community Organizing	Senior Ministries
Counseling/Social Work	Spiritual Formation/Direction
Early Childhood Administration	Teaching

Evangelism/Mission  
Interim Ministry  
Ministry in Daily Life

Volunteer Coordination  
Worship Leadership/Preaching  
Youth and Family

Leaders are to be certified, trained, or otherwise demonstrate competence in a specific profession with the appropriate and necessary education and practical preparation. Expertise in a specialization will be demonstrated through the following:

1. Undergraduate degree in field of specialization, or a major/concentration with a particular focus, or equivalent academic credentials, or
2. Professional licensure or certification, whenever normative or required, or, in some cases, significant recognized work experience.

A candidate declares the area of specialization by the time of candidacy Endorsement, which must be reviewed and confirmed by the Candidacy Committee.

For those seeking professional certification in ministries of chaplaincy, counseling, and clinical education, ecclesiastical specialized pastoral care endorsement is normative and expected. This ecclesiastical endorsement is pursued through the churchwide office near the time of assignment and call.

It is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee to evaluate a candidate's readiness to serve as an Associate in Ministry. While a minimum of one area of specialization is expected, a candidate may be called to serve in a position with a broad position description. The committee must consider formation in theological education, spirituality, contextual education, and overall readiness that will provide the church with competent leaders for mission.

### **Supervised Field Experience**

A satisfactorily completed supervised field experience with specialization may be done through an internship, practicum, employment, or other setting. The normal duration of the supervised field experience is one year with a minimum of 600 supervised hours. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) may be included as appropriate. (See Guidelines for Field Experience.)

## **Commissioning and First Call**

A candidate is approved for call by the Candidacy Committee upon successful completion of all requirements and agreement with the *Vision and Expectations* of this church. Associate in Ministry candidates participate in the churchwide assignment process. The service of commissioning is arranged and conducted under the direction and oversight of the bishop of the synod where the first call is received.

## **Reinstatement**

The process for reinstatement to the rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is explained in Chapter 1 pp. 20-23.

## **Fisher's Net/Select Courses for Associate in Ministry Candidates**

The Fisher's Net/Select program offers theological education delivered via video and printed material. With approval of the Candidacy Committee, a candidate preparing for service as an associate in ministry in the ELCA who is unable to attend a seminary or college may complete some of the theological education requirements through Fisher's Net/Select. Normally the courses are arranged and scheduled locally and involve a small group of people who take the course together.

The courses are produced under the direction of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and have been approved for use by associate in ministry candidates. While they are not accepted for academic credit at a college or seminary, these courses fulfill the requirements for commissioning in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Fisher's Net/Select will issue a Certificate of Completion to those who successfully complete a course.

The process for receiving a certificate of completion through Fisher's Net/Select is as follows:

1. The candidate arranges to take the course with other students (these may be other associates in ministry or candidates, pastors, lay persons, etc).
2. At the conclusion of the course, the candidate prepares a reflection paper of 10 to 12 pages in length. Suggestions for writing the paper are given in the Fisher's Net/Select catalog.
3. The paper will be evaluated in one of the following ways:
  - a. The synod Candidacy Committee may designate a person to read and approve the paper. This reader need not be a member of the committee but should be qualified to provide theological and biblical critique. When the essay has been approved, the reader should notify the Fisher's Net/Select office indicating that the candidate has successfully completed the course and request that a certificate of successful completion be issued, or,
  - b. The paper may be sent directly to the Director of Fisher's Net/Select, who will read the paper. If the essay is approved, a certificate of completion will be sent. Fisher's Net/Select charges a nominal fee for reading each paper.

The synod Candidacy Committee, in conversation with the candidate, is fully responsible for determining how many courses and which courses a candidate may use to satisfy the theological education requirement for approval as an associate in ministry.

To explore Fisher's Net/Select options: [www.elca.org/select](http://www.elca.org/select)

## **Waiver of Academic Requirements**

Persons interested in serving as an associate in ministry who have not completed the necessary academic requirement of a bachelor's degree may in some cases request a waiver from this requirement. This exception is reserved for those persons who for reasons of prior experience and/or personal circumstances may not find it appropriate or possible to complete the bachelor's degree requirement. Such persons may apply for consideration upon evaluation of gifts for ministry, the needs of this church, and the demonstrated abilities of the individual. Prior

experience in the specialization is a primary criteria for consideration in all cases. Age is not the primary criteria for consideration under this provision. A minimum of an associate degree or significant post-secondary education is expected for consideration of a waiver.

A positive Entrance Decision is required prior to a request for waiver. All requests for a waiver will be reviewed and evaluated by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, with a recommendation made to the synod Candidacy Committee. The evaluation is based on experience in non-degree studies, in demonstrated work performance comparable to that expected of a person holding a bachelor's degree, and other information included in the request. This provision for equivalency applies only to the bachelor's degree requirement and is not applicable to the theological education requirements.

The procedure to be followed by those seeking consideration for waiver is as follows:

- I. Complete all Entrance requirements and receive a positive Entrance Decision from the synod Candidacy Committee.
- II. Submit a written request and rationale to the synod Candidacy Committee for review. Based upon this request and all materials submitted, the Candidacy Committee reviews the request for content and clarity and determines whether the candidate should proceed under this provision.
- III. The Candidacy Committee requests a review and recommendation by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. This request includes the following material:
  - A. A letter from the Candidacy Committee that includes the action of the Committee to forward this request, rationale for their request, and confirmation of a positive Entrance Decision.
  - B. A copy of the Application for Candidacy, including the Entrance Essay.
  - C. A copy of a written rationale from the candidate that clearly states reasons for the equivalency request, based on experience, training, and competency;
  - D. A detailed listing of the candidate's work experience:
    1. Employing organization, city, position, and years in the position;
    2. Description of the range of responsibilities in each position;
    3. On-the-job training, seminars, and continuing education taken to build and contribute to competencies, including the type and length of training;
  - E. Supervisory and project management roles carried out in each position including the number of persons and the range of tasks for those supervised;
  - F. Description of independent or team work experiences.
  - G. A description of relevant volunteer experience and training. Adult volunteer experience can demonstrate equivalency skills, interpersonal skills, and organizational skills. Include a description of the organization, responsibilities, the numbers and types of relationships with those reported to and those coordinated, and the length of time served.
    1. Describe the purpose of this effort, the number of persons involved, and your role. Provide appropriate detail of the effort's development over the period of time in which you were involved.
    2. Describe any training and guidance provided to volunteers that also may be relevant here.
    3. Serving as a mentor for another can demonstrate factors relevant to equivalency. Describe any mentoring role, results, and outcomes.

- H. A detailed listing of all education completed including related continuing education. All available transcripts or certificates should be submitted, including:
    - 1. College, community college, business or trade school, apprenticeships;
    - 2. Military training and service, including the scope of responsibilities and time periods for this service;
    - 3. On-the-job training, significant work-related seminars, and courses, particularly those that led to increased responsibilities and/or a new position.
  - I. A current position description, if in the employment of a church or church-related institution;
  - J. Three letters of recommendation from those well acquainted with the candidate's background and work. Letters of recommendation should be more than character references and should include knowledge and illustration of the person's demonstrated ability. References should include the candidate's pastor, a congregational leader familiar with the applicant's demonstrated leadership ability and gifts for ministry, and a person with competence and knowledge consistent with the candidate's area of specialization. No relatives should provide a reference.
- IV. The request is reviewed and a recommendation from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is sent to the Candidacy Committee and copied to the candidate.
- V. The final decision regarding equivalency or alternative study is made by the Candidacy Committee. Following a decision regarding equivalency or alternative study eligibility, the Candidacy Committee oversees the designated course of study to complete equivalency and appropriate supervised field experience.

## Guidelines for Field Experience

Experience and involvement in a context for ministry is essential to preparation for service as an associate in ministry. Experiential learning in the action-reflection model whereby one's practice of ministry is combined with supervised reflection and evaluation of that ministry is essential to formation for ministry. Supervised field experience seeks to facilitate the integration of academic study in the area of specialization and theological education with the practice of ministry. It is also designed to encourage the development of a ministerial identity of one who will serve in the public ministry of this church in an interdependent relationship with clergy and laity.

Supervised field experience may begin after the candidate has been granted a positive Endorsement Decision. Planning a field experience proposal can begin prior to Endorsement in consultation with the Candidacy Committee and the academic study or following the completion of all academic work. The synodical Candidacy Committee will work with the candidate in arranging and overseeing the field experience for candidates who have completed their academic work and for those already in service.

### **1. Objectives**

- a. To provide actual experience in the candidate's area of specialization, thereby enabling the candidate to develop increasing competence as a leader in the public ministry of this church.

- b. To offer an opportunity for self-evaluation and spiritual nurture under the guidance of a mentor.
- c. To offer an opportunity for evaluation by others, including the mentor, the onsite field supervisor, and an advisory committee from the congregation or group being served.
- d. To provide a learning context that allows the candidate to experience many aspects of congregational, institutional, or agency life, including participation in the governing and programmatic structures such as council, board of directors, committees, and staff meetings.
- e. To provide opportunity for the candidate to participate in at least one project in an area of specialization or focus from beginning to completion, including planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- f. To assist the candidate in developing regular habits and patterns for theological reflection, spiritual formation, and healthy self-care.
- g. To provide to the synod Candidacy Committee an assessment regarding the candidate's growth, professional development, and skills in the area of ministry specialization.

## **2. Tracks/Options for Field Experience**

Associates in ministry candidates enter the Candidacy Process from a variety of contexts. Some are undergraduates, some graduate students enrolled in seminary, and some are persons already in service in a ministry setting who may or may not have completed their academic requirements. Some have many years of service in this church either as volunteers or paid staff, while others have no work experience.

In recognition of this diversity, Candidacy Committees, colleges, and seminaries will need to exercise creativity and flexibility in approving or arranging field experiences appropriate for the particular needs of the individual. The normal length of a field experience shall be one year, which may be interpreted as 6-12 months with a minimum of 600 contracted supervised hours. Three basic tracks or options have been identified.

### **A. Candidates Who are Enrolled in Academic Degree Programs**

Academic institutions may provide field experience such as:

- 1. a full-time internship for 6-12 months;
- 2. a combination CPE and field experience arrangement;
- 3. a part-time position (10-20 hours per week) during the academic year completed concurrently over a one-or two-year period;
- 4. part-time work or practicum during the school year combined with full-time summer position; or
- 5. an approved student-teaching assignment for Christian Day School teachers.

The determination of how the field experience is structured will be based on such factors as age, previous work experience, academic setting, graduate or undergraduate status, etc. Work may be stipend. When stipend, the remuneration should be similar to that granted M.Div interns. A stipend is strongly encouraged for work over 15 hours per week.

Where structured field experience is part of the academic preparation arranged by a college or seminary, it is necessary for the candidate to arrange to have evaluation reports sent to the synodical Candidacy Committee. A common report form is provided by the Vocation and Education unit through the Candidacy Committees.

### **B. Candidates Who Have Completed Academic Work**

The Candidacy Committee will consult with a candidate to arrange for field experience and receive evaluations.

If not already employed in a church-related setting, the candidate will work with the Candidacy Committee in arranging an appropriate field experience. Arrangements should include an appropriate stipend whenever possible. Consultation with the bishop is encouraged in identifying a location where ministry and supervision needs might be met.

If already employed in a church-related setting, the candidate may, with the approval of the Candidacy Committee, arrange to carry out the supervised field experience in the place of employment. This second option requires that attention be given to assisting the candidate and the congregation or agency as they process the changing role of an established leader becoming a called and commissioned associate in ministry and the implications of this change for both parties.

### **C. Candidates with Three or More Consecutive Years Experience in a Church-Related Work Position**

Waiver or partial waiver of the Supervised Field Experience may be considered by the Candidacy Committee for candidates who have been in service in church-related employment three consecutive years or longer.

The candidates shall provide a written request and rationale for this equivalency or waiver and document how the goals and objectives for supervised field experience have already been met. The candidate shall also provide three letters of recommendation from those well acquainted with the candidate's work. In a congregational setting, these persons should be the pastor, a congregational leader either elected or with leadership responsibility related to the area of specialty, and a person with competence and knowledge consistent with the candidate's area of ministry.

The Candidacy Committee will review this material and in consultation with the candidate and Congregational and Synodical Mission unit staff, determine whether additional contextual learning goals need to be addressed. It is the decision of the Candidacy Committee to grant or deny the request.

In all cases, the candidate shall be required to work with his or her congregational leadership support committee, if currently in a position, or with the synod Candidacy Committee, if seeking a position, in reflecting together on issues of changing ministry



identify as he or she moves from the role of established leader to that of a called commissioned associate in ministry.

### **3. Components of the Field Experience**

#### **A. Context**

The context will be a setting that represents the anticipated focus of a candidate's future ministry: parish work, parish education, youth ministry, music, etc. If an administrative or teaching position, then a Lutheran elementary, high school or early childhood education center will be the context. If counseling or specialized pastoral care, it will be in an appropriate agency or institution and will include at least one unit of CPE. Highly specialized settings are only approved when a candidate demonstrates significant experience in a general ministry setting.

#### **B. Supervising/Mentoring/Advising**

A quality field experience for associate in ministry candidates requires over-all supervision on-site, mentoring, training specific to the area of specialty, support, and nurture.

Associates in ministry in the ELCA typically serve in multiple-staff ministries and normally work with a supervisor. Most often the person who supervises the over all ministry is theologically trained, with responsibility for oversight in the local situation. It is important, then, that the supervised field experience provide training and attention to team-ministry development as well as the development of individual leadership gifts and skills.

Three equally important roles and functions have been identified in order to facilitate the goals and objectives for supervised field experience. Normally this means the involvement of three parties in addition to the candidate. In some situations the role/function of field supervisor and that of mentor can be combined and carried out by one person.

- 1. The On-Site Field Supervisor** will provide administrative structure to the over all experience including a written description of responsibilities, consultation for mutual reflection of supervisory issues, and periodic review and evaluation. The on-site field supervisor must be a rostered leader of the ECA. When responsibility is given to an associate in ministry or diaconal minister, it is that person's responsibility to include the pastor in the process.

- 2. The Mentor** is a person from the same area of specialization or focus as the candidate. The mentor shall have at least three years of experience in the candidate's area of specialization. If not available onsite, the mentor will be identified by the Candidacy Committee or academic institution in consultation with the candidate and must be available for at least monthly meetings with the candidate.

The mentor is responsible for working with the candidate in identifying learning goals, objectives, and activities specific to the area of specialty. The mentor will reflect with the candidate on issues related to effective ministry as well as patterns for spiritual formation and healthy self-care. It is hoped that the mentor can model a relationship that would be sought out by the candidate once commissioned and in service.

**3. An Advisory Committee** shall be appointed in all settings. This committee should include persons who will have regular exposure to and familiarity with the candidate's work, including leaders and participants in programs. In situations where the candidate is already in service, this function may be provided by the Leadership Support or Mutual Ministry Committee.

### **C. Learning Agreement**

The field experience is a time when gifts, aptitudes, and skills for ministry can be developed and tested under supervision and within a helpful and supportive setting. Each field experience needs to have a focus and specific learning goals. An acknowledged focus and written learning agreement contribute to the value of the total experience and build a partnership among the candidate, the supervisors, the congregation, the college or seminary, and the synod. Candidates in academic programs are encouraged to work initially with the faculty advisors in developing learning goals. Those who are not in an academic program should consult with the Candidacy Committee. These goals are presented to the committee and supervisor for final development and approval.

Each area of ministry specialization requires goals and activities specific to the area of focus. It is also important that each associate in ministry sees the specialty area within the context of the overall mission and ministry of the congregation or agency. Candidates should gain experience in working with individuals and with groups, with opportunities to develop the specific skills required, such as teaching, counseling, program development, leadership training, musical performance, visitation, administration or committee work. It is desirable and encouraged that as one preparing for public ministry, the associate in ministry gain experience in worship leadership by serving as an assisting minister in the liturgy, whatever the area of focus.

A critical area of development for all associates in ministry is developing team-ministry skills to work effectively with councils, committees, and staff teams. It is recommended that whenever possible the candidate participate in retreats with staff, council, or committees and take advantage of workshops offered in building team ministry. It is also desirable and recommended that the candidate have opportunities and receive financial assistance to participate in synodical and regional events such as leadership conferences and synod assemblies.

### **D. Evaluation**

The candidate writes a self-evaluation and the supervision partners each write an evaluation of the candidate at the mid-way point and at the conclusion of the field experience. (The chairperson of the Advisory Committee represents the committee.) The evaluation provides information (which is used in assessing successful completion of the requirement) to the academic institution when the candidate is a student and to the Candidacy Committee. A record that describes all experience and involvements can be used in reflection and evaluation sessions with the supervisor/mentor.

#### 4. Field Experience Responsibilities

A. The **Candidate** has responsibility to:

1. work cooperatively with the academic institution (college or seminary) and/or the Candidacy Committee in arranging for an appropriate field experience;
2. establish an effective working relationship with all members of the supervisory team;
3. participate in writing the learning agreement;
4. reflect theologically upon experiences gained;
5. cultivate a personal devotional life and self-care; and
6. engage in the evaluative process of field experience and prepare the required written reports.

B. The **Academic Institution and the Candidacy Committee** (when the candidate is not a student) as the responsibility to;

1. work cooperatively with the candidate in arranging an appropriate field experience, including the identification and approval of a supervisor and a mentor;
2. participate in preparing the learning agreement;
3. negotiate a stipend when appropriate;
4. assist in determining whether the field experience should continue in the event of any change or conflict in the supervisory relationship; and
5. receive evaluation reports and determine the successful completion of the requirement.

C. The **Supervisor/Mentor/Advisory Committee** has the responsibility to:

1. participate in writing the learning agreement;
2. provide regularly scheduled opportunities to discuss and reflect on the candidate's growth and development in light of the learning goals established;
3. listen to the candidate's concerns as well as achievements and provide support as well as constructive suggestions for growth and learning; and
4. provide written evaluation reports to the candidate, the academic institution, and the Candidacy Committee.

## Chapter 4 - Candidacy for the Deaconess Community of the ELCA

### Introduction

The modern deacon/deaconess movement around the world is an outgrowth of the revival of the New Testament diaconate that began in Germany during the 19th century. The movement came to America in that century and had an impact on many of the ELCA's predecessor church bodies. The ELCA Deaconess Community is one of two Lutheran deaconess communities in North America coming from this heritage who continue to actively serve today. The other is the independent Lutheran Deaconess Association (LDA), headquartered in Valparaiso, Indiana; women of the LDA may be rostered in the ELCA as Associates in Ministry or as Diaconal Ministers.

“The Deaconess Community has been formed in order that skilled and committed women acting in community may complement the ministry of Word and Sacrament as well as the ministry of the whole people of God. This ministry is exercised within 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.” (Bylaws of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, 3.1)

The Deaconess Community's Mission statement is: “Compelled by the love of Christ, and sustained by community, we devote our lives to proclaiming the Gospel through ministries of mercy and servant leadership.”

The Deaconess Community vision: “Empowered by the Holy Spirit for public ministry, we passionately seek to: embody our mission, be a Christ-centered community of women, and witness to the Church and the world.”

Deaconesses are approved through the ELCA synod Candidacy Process in partnership with the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA. They are consecrated for service upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call.

The Deaconess Community holds its organization through the ELCA, and it also serves the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Its predecessor body in the Lutheran Church in America was one organization serving both countries. A deaconess serves under a call from a congregation, synod, or churchwide agency (ELCA or ELCIC); she may serve in a non-church agency or a non-stipendiary position if issued a call to do so by a congregation or her synod under the guidelines of the ELCA or the ELCIC.

## Steps in Candidacy

Candidacy for women seeking to serve in the Deaconess Community includes full participation in her Synodical Candidacy Process and in the candidacy process of the Deaconess Community. The synodical steps, in order of completion, begin with Entrance, continue through Endorsement, and culminate with Approval. The Deaconess Community process parallels this but uses Investiture as the intermediate step. Traditionally, investiture was the point at which the candidate was entitled to wear the optional garb of the Deaconess Community. It is now the point at which a candidate becomes a full member of the Community with all its rights and responsibilities.

**Entrance** includes Discernment, Candidacy Application, Congregational Registration, Initial Interview, and Screening, including a Psychological Evaluation and a Background Check through the synod Candidacy Committee. Deaconess candidates must also complete the application packet provided by the Deaconess Community and participate in an interview with the Deaconess Community Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission.

The synod Candidacy Committee must receive a positive recommendation from the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission of the Deaconess Community prior to giving a positive Entrance Decision to a deaconess candidate. The synod Candidacy Committee may not give Entrance as a deaconess candidate to anyone denied by the Community. The synodical Candidacy Committee may, however, choose to postpone or deny a woman recommended by the Community. A positive Entrance Decision qualifies a deaconess candidate to begin theological study.

**Endorsement/Investiture:** A candidate is encouraged to go through **Endorsement** with her synod Candidacy Committee. The Deaconess Community makes the decision to **invest** her, which parallels synodical endorsement. Approval for investiture is a decision made by the Board of the Deaconess Community upon recommendation of its Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission. The two Candidacy Committees work in an atmosphere of mutual respect out of a desire to support the call to diaconia and concern for the candidate.

At this time the candidate publicly participates in the service of mutual affirmation known as Investiture, which admits her to the privileges and responsibilities of the Deaconess Community, ELCA.

Investiture is normally required prior to a deaconess' internship. Internship is supervised by an onsite supervisor and local committee, supported by the Deaconess Community's Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission. All internship reports and CPE reports will be copied to both Candidacy Committees by the candidate.

**Approval for Consecration and First Call:** This step is scheduled upon completion of all academic requirements and practical experience requirements (see below). The Approval Essay assignment distributed by the ELCA will be completed by the candidate prior to meeting with

both committees. Copies of the essay are to be sent to both the synod and the Deaconess Community by the candidate.

Neither the synod Candidacy Committee nor the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission of the Deaconess Community may grant approval for consecration and first call to a candidate who has been denied by the other. Both may postpone or deny a candidate approved by the other.

When the Committees come to differing decisions, they must enter into a consultative process until unanimity is reached. The synod Candidacy Committee makes its decision for Approval; the Board of Directors of the Deaconess Community upon recommendation from the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission makes its decision for Approval.

## **Standards for Members of The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

A deaconess must meet the Basic Standards for all rostered ministries as found in ELCA *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* Chapter 7. In addition the Deaconess Community maintains the following standards for admission and continuance in the Community.

A deaconess is a woman who:

1. Is an active communing member of a congregation of the ELCA or the ELCIC
2. Affirms that she is called by God to ministry in the diaconate through the Deaconess Community and has sought and received confirmation of that call by this church;
3. Is academically and professionally prepared to function within her chosen occupation;
4. Is prepared theologically to express and reflect upon this church's understanding of:
  - a. The Gospel
  - b. The ministry of the church as expressed in the historic Lutheran Confessions
  - c. The mission, purpose and uniqueness of the diaconal call;
5. Who has been examined for such theological competence in her vocation, occupation and personal life; and who participates periodically in a formal period of reflection upon these themes;
6. Is committed to the continual strengthening of her relationship to and theological understanding of the Triune God through such means as prayer, study of the Holy Scriptures, personal devotional life, and the corporate celebration of Word and Sacrament;
7. Is unashamedly willing to relate and witness to the mission and message of Christ, not only in her occupation but in her total life;
8. Pledges to meet the established standards for Deaconess Community membership spiritually, personally, corporately, financially, and in matters of time;
9. Participates in continuing education and periodic evaluation in accordance with the highest recognized standards of her profession and/or occupation; and
10. Has a healthy self awareness and seeks to maintain a balanced life and spiritual,
11. Vocational, interpersonal, intellectual, physical, and emotional wellness.

## **Academic and Practical Criteria for Consecration**

### **Basic Education Requirements**

A candidate for the Deaconess Community is required to meet certain educational requirements as established by the ELCA Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit in consultation with the Deaconess Community:

1. She must be prepared to meet the academic and professional standards for her chosen vocation or specialization, e.g. nurse, social worker, chaplain, parish deaconess, etc. and any licensing or certification requirements for the state or province in which she will serve. Candidates usually will earn a bachelor's degree, or its equivalent related to her field of service.
2. She must complete a course of theological studies as detailed in section 2 below which will prepare her to express and reflect on this church's understanding of the Gospel, the ministry of the church as expressed in the historic Lutheran Confessions, the mission, purpose, and uniqueness of the Deaconess Community as one of the ecumenical diaconal organizations, and her own responsibility within and in relation to this total context.
3. A unit of Clinical Pastoral Education or other supervised pastoral education is required for all deaconess candidates.
4. An internship, usually of one year, is required.

### **Theological Education Requirements**

1. Deaconess candidates preparing to serve in a congregation of the ELCA must earn a master's degree in theological studies (M.A.R., M.R.E., M.A., M.T.S., etc.) and may include a major or specialization in her field of ministry. Such candidates shall confer with the Deaconess Community regarding the selection of an appropriate seminary and the curriculum requirements of the Community (see b. below).
2. The deaconess candidate preparing for ministry in which a seminary degree is not required will complete a course of theological studies planned in consultation with the community's Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission. This may include courses in the following areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Ethics, Lutheran Confessions, Pastoral Care and Counseling, Systematic Theology, Worship & Liturgy, Field Education. The Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission of the Deaconess Community is responsible for monitoring this course of study and will report successful completion to the synodical Candidacy Committee.

### **Specialization**

The ELCA has identified a need to provide for a variety of ministries in congregations and other settings where theologically trained leaders serve. While the forms of ministry might be different, there are common areas of specialization, focus, and need throughout this church. A call might include many varied responsibilities, but a rostered leader is expected to focus on at least one area of specialization in the Candidacy Process.

Deaconesses are expected to have demonstrated ability and experience within one or more areas of specialization. The list below provides categories in which leaders may have strength or demonstrated competency. The list is not exhaustive but rather descriptive of a variety of areas in which a deaconess might develop expertise or interest.

Administration	Music and Worship
Campus Ministry	Outdoor Ministry/Camping
Chaplaincy	Parish Nurse/Health
Christian Education	Public Policy/Advocacy
Community Organizing	Senior Ministries
Counseling/Social Work	Spiritual Formation/Direction
Early Childhood Administration	Teaching
Evangelism/mission	Volunteer Coordination
Interim ministry	Worship Leadership/Preaching
Ministry in Daily Life	Youth and Family

Leaders are to be certified, trained, or otherwise competent in a specific profession with the appropriate and necessary education and practical preparation. Expertise in a specialization will be demonstrated through the following:

1. Undergraduate degree in field of specialization, or a major/concentration with a particular focus, or equivalent academic credentials, or
2. Professional licensure or certification, whenever normative or required, or, in some cases, significant recognized work experience.

A candidate declares the area of specialization (which must be reviewed and confirmed by the Committee of Congregational and Synodical Mission) by the time of Investiture.

For those seeking professional certification in ministries of chaplaincy, counseling, and clinical education, ecclesiastical specialized pastoral care endorsement is normative and expected. This ecclesiastical endorsement is pursued through the churchwide office near the time of assignment and call.

It is the responsibility of the Committee of Congregational and Synodical Mission together with the synod Candidacy Committee to evaluate a candidate's readiness to serve as a deaconess. While a minimum of one area of specialization is expected, a candidate may be called to serve in a position with a broad position description. The committees must consider formation in theological education, spirituality, contextual education, and overall readiness so that the church is provided with competent leaders for mission.

### **Deaconess Candidate Formation**

The purpose of the Deaconess Candidate Formation is to enable the candidate to grow in the understanding of her call into diaconia and into the Deaconess Community. The candidate is required to participate in formational events with the following objectives:

1. Discern, through her experience, through interactions, through prayer and confirmation that her call is *diaconal*, and is also to life within the Deaconess Community;



2. Deepen her relationship with God through prayer, theological preparation, spiritual direction, and community life;
3. Understand the history of the diaconate from biblical times to the present; and
4. interpret *diaconia* to others.

The Deaconess Community offers a variety of opportunities for candidates to explore both the Community and herself, from a variety of viewpoints. Retreats, attendance at annual Deaconess Community assemblies, mentoring, and other integrative events are opportunities for each woman to grow in relationship with the Community and her call.

### **Health and Wellness**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America envisions a church in which those preparing for and serving in rostered leadership positions and their spouses and families will be encouraged, supported, and motivated to grow in their faith hardiness, which reflects their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, and vocational health and well-being.

Healthy leaders enhance their lives and the lives of others. To be prepared for the rigor of public ministry and mission, candidates need to demonstrate and continue to develop healthy leadership qualities. Leaders in this church who practice self-care and attend to the balance of all aspects of their health enhance the church's faithful witness in the world. Candidates are expected to address any health concerns with their Candidacy Committees. Intentional efforts to improve all aspects of wellness will be most effective when supported by families, congregations, synod, seminary, and Community.

### **Spiritual and Vocational Formation**

All candidates for consecrated service are expected to follow a regular pattern of worship, prayer, Bible study, and disciplined faith practices that sustains and supports formal work in theological education and contextual learning. While such formation may follow a variety of patterns, a candidate is expected to engage in practices that are communal in scope, draw on the hearty traditions of the Christian life, and model an example of Christian living for others.

At the time of entrance into the Candidacy Process, a candidate will be asked to share a plan for how her faith life will be sustained and nurtured while in the Candidacy Process. Such a plan may include practices such as the use of a trained spiritual director, participation in a group discipleship experience, retreats, personal devotions and daily prayer, and regular participation in worship in a communal setting or a congregation. Plans for offering service to others, personal stewardship, vocational discernment, and healthy self-care will also be discussed. Throughout the Candidacy Process the Candidacy Committees will inquire about the candidate's ongoing practices and habits and will offer encouragement for lively engagement with such facets of Christian living.

### **Investiture**

Upon completion of preparatory requirements and endorsement by the Board of Directors of the Deaconess Community, each entranced candidate publicly participates in a service of mutual affirmation known as Investiture, which during the remainder of her candidacy admits her to the privileges and responsibilities of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA. A decision for

Investiture by the Board of the Directors of the Deaconess Community shall be reported to the synodical Candidacy Committee.

### **Internship**

1. Having completed her theological education requirements and following Investiture, the deaconess candidate normally participates in a one-year internship, which has a two-fold purpose:
  - a. To use and improve professional skills; and
  - b. To begin to function in her role as a deaconess.
2. The deaconess candidate participates in her own internship placement, which is developed through consultation with the Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission of the Deaconess Community, bishops whose synods are seeking internship placements, and seminary faculty or contextual education staff, if she is attending seminary. The candidate submits to the Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission, for the approval of the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission, a written plan for the internship, prior to its implementation.
3. In preparation for internship the deaconess candidate is provided with a copy of the current Internship Manual for the Deaconess Community. Within two weeks of beginning the internship, she prepares, in consultation with the Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission and the on-site supervisor an internship contract/covenant, to be approved by the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission.
4. The Director of Congregational and Synodical Mission reviews the internship evaluations and monthly reports. Final internship reports shall be sent to the synod Candidacy Committee and the Committee on Congregational and Synodical Mission.

### **Consecration and First Call**

A deaconess candidate is approved for consecration on successful completion of all requirements, agreement with the *Vision and Expectations* of this church, and a positive Approval Decision by the synod Candidacy Committee and the Board of Directors of the Deaconess Community.

Deaconess candidates may participate in the Churchwide Assignment Consultation scheduled two times each year; however, usually deaconess candidates are assigned to a synod through administrative assignment.

The bishop of first call and the deaconess candidate will inform the directing deaconess of the receipt and acceptance of a letter of call. The Directing Deaconess will relay this information to the Board of Directors of the Deaconess Community and will assist the bishop in arranging and conducting a service of consecration that includes the Directing Deaconess or her appointee.

## **Reinstatement**

The process for reinstatement to the rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is explained in Chapter 1 above, pp. 20-23.

# Chapter 5 - Candidacy for Diaconal Ministry

## Introduction

Diaconal Ministry is a form of rostered leadership ministry that helps enable the ELCA to effectively fulfill its mission of service in the world. Diaconal Ministers are called by this church to positions that exemplify the servant life and seek to equip and motivate others to live it. Diaconal ministers shall seek in a variety of ways to empower, equip, and support the baptized people of God in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the mission of God in the world. Diaconal ministers are marked by these characteristics and shall:

**1. Be Rooted in the Word of God**

Diaconal ministers are committed to Christ, and called to be spokespersons for the gospel, the apostolic faith, and the theological emphasis of this church to God's world.

**2. Be Trained to Carry Out a Particular Service**

Diaconal ministers carry out a public ministry of service and witness. With demonstrated competence and expertise in a particular discipline, diaconal ministers may serve both within and outside of congregational settings, in each case bearing responsibility for making the linkages between church and world. Programmatic ministries within congregational settings should be marked by extension of the witness and service of the Church into the wider community.

**3. Be Committed and Prepared to Equip the Baptized for Ministry in the World and in the Church**

Diaconal ministers along with other rostered leaders are called to lead and equip the baptized for ministry. Diaconal ministers support the ministry of the baptized through appropriate programmatic ministries and by working with the laity in discerning and encouraging their gifts for ministry.

**4. Give Particular Attention to Ministries at the Boundaries Between the Church and World**

Diaconal ministers carry public responsibility to speak for the needs of God's world to the church as well as taking God's saving gospel to the world through the actions of God's people both individually and collectively.

**5. Exemplify the Life of Christ-like Service Addressing All Forms of Human Need**

The call to diaconal ministry is a lifelong commitment that supports and complements the ministry of Word and Sacrament, focusing on ministry to the whole person. This "diaconal bias" provides the lens and vision for developing the diaconal mission of the church carried out among and through its members.

## 6. Be Grounded in Community

Diaconal ministers need the support and shared vision of a community of leaders committed to a common calling. This grounding in a diaconal community serves as the reminder to seek to build community in all ministry settings.

## Steps in Candidacy

Persons seeking consecration as diaconal ministers in the ELCA are expected to participate fully in all steps of the Candidacy Process: Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval. The candidate has a responsibility to fulfill all of the expectations and requirements of the Candidacy Process.

**Entrance** begins a process of discernment that explores an individual's potential for rostered ministry and readiness to begin preparation through theological study and candidacy in the ELCA. One year as an active member in an ELCA congregation is required prior to entrance. The Entrance Process includes Candidacy Application, Congregational Registration, Initial Interview, and Screening, including a Psychological Evaluation. The synod Candidacy Committee must make a positive Entrance Decision before an applicant continues in the process of formation and preparation. A positive Entrance Decision is required to attend the Diaconal Ministry Formation Event and to begin field experience. A Background Check is to be completed prior to any field placement.

In consultation with the Candidacy Committee, application is made to a seminary. Affiliation with an ELCA seminary is required for any candidate who is not attending an ELCA seminary as part of the Candidacy Entrance Process. The candidate receives consultation and guidance regarding the requirements for diaconal ministry (see Theological Education section).

**Endorsement** encourages and affirms those who clearly demonstrate gifts and qualities for a specific form of ministry in the ELCA as well as identifies areas for growth and development. Endorsement for a diaconal ministry candidate is considered at an appropriate time during the Candidacy Process. At least one full semester/quarter of graduate theological study and the completion of the formation event are required before Endorsement. The candidate submits the Endorsement Essay to the synod Candidacy Committee and the seminary. The Candidacy Committee arranges for the Endorsement Interview and makes a decision. Once endorsed, the candidate may begin the diaconal ministry field experience requirement. A proposal for the project component should be submitted at the time of Endorsement.

**Approval** occurs when the candidate articulates the call to ministry and demonstrates readiness to assume a leadership role as a rostered minister in the ELCA. The Approval Interview comes near the satisfactory completion of all academic and practical requirements as affirmation of a call to public ministry. An Approval Essay, available from the seminary or the synod, is prepared and submitted to the Candidacy Committee. A faculty recommendation is submitted. The Candidacy Committee arranges for the Approval Interview. A positive Approval Decision by the committee must be made in order for the candidate to be available for assignment, consecration, and first call.

## **Standards**

Persons approved, consecrated, and rostered as diaconal ministers of this church shall satisfactorily meet and maintain the following Basic Standards established in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA 7.52.11.)*:

1. Commitment to Christ;
2. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
3. Willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
4. Academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities
5. And competence in interpersonal relationships;
6. Commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and in so doing to be
7. An example in faithful service and holy living;
8. Receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
9. Membership in a congregation of this church.

Diaconal ministers must be fully prepared to meet the following criteria:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the Word of God;
2. A Lutheran understanding of the gospel;
3. Knowledge and understanding of the Lutheran Confessions;
4. Theological reflection on issues of faith and life;
5. Personal spiritual formation and ministry identity;
6. Communication and planning skills necessary for effective witness, both verbally and in action;
7. Specific training and skill in an identified area of service;
8. Willingness to share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry and assist in leading the church's mission to proclaim God's love through word and deed;
9. Encouragement to identify other persons who will prepare for the ministry of the gospel; and
10. Ability to work in partnership and serve the mission and ministry needs of this church.

## **Academic and Practical Criteria for Consecration**

In preparation for consecration as a diaconal minister of this church, a candidate is required to engage in a comprehensive program of preparation, which includes theological education, training in area of specialization, formation for ministry, and field experience, including a diaconal ministry project.

### **I. Theological Education**

Candidates must complete a theological degree at the master's level. All ELCA seminaries can provide such a degree as well as the basic Lutheran studies required for diaconal ministry service. Each seminary will advise its own students regarding core curriculum and field education requirements. The core curriculum for diaconal ministry includes:

- A. Old Testament Foundation
- B. New Testament Foundation
- C. Church History Foundation

- D. Church Doctrine Foundation/Systematic Theology
- E. Ethics
- F. Lutheran Confessions
- G. Church in Society

Candidates not attending ELCA seminaries must affiliate with one of four ELCA seminaries: Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Wartburg Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, or Luther Seminary to receive consultation and guidance regarding core curriculum recommendations, Lutheran studies requirements, and supervision and coordination of field experience and project proposals.

The seminary also provides a faculty recommendation near the time of approval. An affiliation fee is paid to the ELCA seminary for these services. Application for admission is made only if academic courses are required.

## **II. Spiritual and Vocational Formation**

All candidates for consecrated service are expected to follow a regular pattern of worship, prayer, Bible study, and disciplined faith practices that sustains and supports formal work in theological education and contextual learning. While such formation may follow a variety of patterns, a candidate is expected to engage in practices that are communal in scope, draw on the hearty traditions of the Christian life, and model an example of Christian living for others.

At the time of entrance into the Candidacy Process, a candidate will be asked to share a plan for how his or her faith life will be sustained and nurtured while in the Candidacy Process. Such a plan may include practices such as the use of a trained spiritual director, participation in a group discipleship experience, retreats, personal devotions and daily prayer, and regular participation in worship in a seminary setting and a congregation. Plans for offering service to others, personal stewardship, vocational discernment, and healthy self-care will also be discussed.

Throughout the Candidacy Process the Candidacy Committee will inquire about the candidate's ongoing practices and habits and will offer encouragement for lively engagement with such facets of Christian living.

### **A. Diaconal Ministry Formation Event**

A positive Entrance Decision from the synod Candidacy Committee is required prior to participation in the Formation Event. Candidates must participate in the Formation Event before they can be considered for Endorsement.

**Purpose:** Normally the Formation Event precedes seminary study and provides a diaconal perspective for shaping a course of study and field experience Candidates will:

1. Study and explore the biblical, theological, historical, and ecumenical roots and expressions of diaconal ministry;
2. Examine current diaconal approaches and models for ministry in a variety of settings through study and field trips;

3. Gain deeper understandings of Lutheran theology as it relates to all forms of ministry, call, and ecclesiology;
4. Develop spiritual insights and disciplines for active ministry through worship, prayer, and group processes designed for spiritual formation, development of community, and mutual vision for diaconal ministry;
5. Explore areas for specialization and become oriented to standards, requirements, and procedures for ecclesiastical endorsements and professional certifications or licensure.

**Requirements:** All applicants to the Diaconal Ministry Formation Event must:

1. Complete the Candidacy Application Process;
2. Receive a positive Entrance Decision;
3. Submit Formation Event Application and essay;
4. Submit registration fee;
5. Complete all assigned readings prior to formation event;
6. Be in residence throughout the entire formation event; and
7. Have a completed background check on file.

Academic credit may be requested by the student prior to or at the time of registration and will be awarded upon successful completion of the Formation Event and other requirements established by the seminary.

#### **B. Spiritual Direction**

Candidates are expected to seek to develop, in a relationship of spiritual direction, regular habits and patterns for spiritual nurture, spiritual discipline, and healthy self-care.

Candidates must arrange for 40 hours of supervised spiritual direction, of which 10 hours must be contact hours. The candidate submits a report form to the Candidacy Committee when the 40 hours are completed.

### **III. Health and Wellness**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America envisions a church in which those preparing for and serving in rostered leadership positions and their spouses and families will be encouraged, supported, and motivated to grow in their faith hardiness, which reflects their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, financial and vocational health and well-being.

Healthy leaders enhance their own lives and the lives of others. To be prepared for the rigor of public ministry and mission, candidates need to demonstrate and continue to develop healthy leadership qualities. Leaders in this church who practice self-care and attend to the balance of all aspects of their health enhance this church's faithful witness in the world. Candidates are expected to address any health concerns with their Candidacy Committee. Intentional efforts to improve all aspects of wellness will be most effective when supported by families, congregations, synod, seminary, and community.



#### IV. Specialization

The ELCA has identified a need to provide for a variety of ministries in congregations and other settings where theologically trained leaders serve. While the forms of ministry might be different, there are common areas of specialization, focus, and need throughout this church. A call might include many varied responsibilities, but a rostered lay leader is expected to focus on at least one area of specialization in the Candidacy Process.

Diaconal ministers are expected to have demonstrated ability and experience within one or more areas of specialization. The list below provides categories in which leaders may have strength or demonstrated competency. The list is not exhaustive but rather descriptive of a variety of areas in which a diaconal minister might develop expertise or interest.

Administration	Music and Worship
Campus Ministry	Outdoor Ministry/Camping
Chaplaincy	Parish Nurse/Health
Christian Education	Public Policy/Advocacy
Community Organizing	Senior Ministries
Counseling/Social Work	Spiritual Formation/Direction
Early Childhood Administration	Teaching
Interim Ministry	Volunteer Coordination
Lay Evangelism/Mission	Worship Leadership/Preaching
Ministry in Daily Life	Youth and Family

Leaders are to be certified, trained, or otherwise competent in a specific profession with the appropriate and necessary education and practical preparation. Expertise in a specialization will be demonstrated through one or more of the following:

1. Undergraduate or graduate degree in field of specialization, or a major/concentration with a particular focus, or equivalent academic credentials, or
2. Professional licensure or certification, whenever normative or required, or, in some cases, significant recognized work experience.

A candidate declares the area of specialization by the time of Candidacy Endorsement. A written explanation of the particular diaconal focus of this specialization is also submitted to the Candidacy Committee, which reviews and confirms the specialization.

For those seeking professional certification in ministries of chaplaincy, counseling, and clinical education, ecclesiastical specialized pastoral care endorsement is normative and expected. This ecclesiastical endorsement is pursued through the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit near the time of assignment and call.

It is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee to evaluate a candidate's readiness to serve as a diaconal minister. While a minimum of one area of specialization is expected, a candidate may be called to serve in a position with a broad position description. The committee must consider formation in theological education, spirituality, contextual education, and overall readiness that will provide this church with competent leaders for mission.

## **V. Field Experience**

Field work plays a vital role in the preparation and formation of diaconal ministry candidates. Diaconal ministry takes place at the boundaries where church and society interface.

Regardless of the particular ministry setting in which they serve, diaconal ministers will be expected to understand the dynamic relationships within and between congregational and societal systems and to provide leadership in connecting these systems. The placements for field work will reflect the range of diaconal purpose and should be appropriate and specific to its unique characteristics as a ministry of Word and service.

### **A. Standards for Field Experience**

1. 700 hours of supervised training at the church-societal interface. (Particular areas of specialization may require additional supervised clinical training in accredited programs.) A minimum of 200 hours must be a diaconal ministry project in a field experience congregation.
2. Ability to articulate and demonstrate a vision and understanding of a particular ministry of Word and service as rooted in the Word of God and as a witness to the gospel.
3. Demonstrated skills in analyzing systemic relationships within and between congregations, societal structures, and institutions, and developing strategies or providing ministry at the interface of church and world.
4. Demonstrated competence in planning and implementation of a diaconal ministry project designed to engage with a congregation regarding its ministry in the world. This project will demonstrate an understanding of Lutheran theology and Christian vocation.

### **B. Field Experience Placement**

The field experience requirements should be planned to give the candidate supervised experience in three integral areas of preparation for diaconal ministry: understanding and working with a congregation in relationship to the larger community, gaining expertise in an area of specialization, and reflecting theologically and spiritually on the relationship between these two areas. Various work and field experiences may be arranged sequentially and cumulatively to achieve the required 700 hours. A minimum of 200 hours will be devoted to the diaconal ministry project in a congregation. Candidates completing the project concurrent with seminary study may wish to explore the possibility of an independent study in relationship to their project.

Candidates work with the seminary's office of contextual education so that appropriate field experiences can be arranged. The ELCA seminary granting a candidate's degree is responsible for supervision of the field experience. Supervision of the field experience for students at non-ELCA seminaries is provided through the ELCA seminary of affiliation.

### **C. Candidates Who Are Enrolled in Academic Degree Programs**

Seminaries may structure the diaconal ministry field experience in a variety of ways and include more than one setting. The determination of how the field work is structured will be based on such factors as age, previous work experience, the field work/teaching

parish/ministry in context opportunities of the particular seminary, etc. For example, the field work component may include:

1. A full-time (30-40 hours per week) field experience in a congregation or other setting (4-6 months);
2. A part-time position (10-20 hours per week) during the academic year completed over a one- to two-year period;
3. Part-time work during the school year combined with full-time summer position; or
4. A combination CPE and field work arrangement (a unit of CPE may count for up to 300 hours).

#### **D. Candidates Who Have Completed Their Academic Degree Program**

The candidate seeks the guidance of the ELCA Center for Diaconal Ministry Preparation at the Lutheran School of Theology at Gettysburg, in consultation with the candidate's Candidacy Committee, to arrange an appropriate field experience.

If already employed in a diaconal ministry setting, the candidate may, with the guidance of the ELCA Center for Diaconal Ministry Preparation, in consultation with the candidate's Candidacy Committee, arrange to complete supervised field work in that place, once a positive Endorsement Decision has been made.

Candidates who hold a degree from an ELCA seminary may seek the guidance of that seminary's contextual education office for field education placement and supervision, in consultation with the ELCA Center for Diaconal Ministry Preparation and the Candidacy Committee.

#### **E. The Diaconal Ministry Project**

The purpose of the project is to provide the candidate an opportunity to develop a vision for engaging the field experience congregation in ministry at the interface of societal need and Christian service. Through the planning, execution, and evaluation of the project, the candidate will demonstrate competency in the areas of:

1. The candidate's specialization;
2. An understanding of Lutheran theology and Christian vocation; and
3. The ability to translate these by engaging the field experience congregation in a particular ministry of the baptized in the world.

The project is to take place in consultation with the project director (appointed by the seminary) and a supervisor. Included in the 200 hours will be direct supervision, reflection, meetings with the Congregational liaison committee, and planning and execution of the project.

#### **F. Guided Reflection and Supervision**

Several important roles and functions facilitate the goals for specialized field experiences. Specialized field experiences are those where the candidate is working in the area of specialization and concurrently assigned to work with a congregation.

1. **Project Director.** The project director, who is assigned by the seminary, will participate in the development of the field work learning agreement and project proposal. The project director will provide guided theological reflection on the candidate's field work experience. The project director will provide a written evaluation for the candidate, which is to be submitted to the seminary field education office and the synod Candidacy Committee. At the time of the candidate's approval, the project director's evaluation will be incorporated in the Seminary Recommendation Form (*Form D*).
2. **Supervisor at the specialized site/place of employment.** The on-site supervisor, who is assigned by the seminary, will provide administrative structure to the overall experience, including a written description of responsibilities, consultation for mutual reflection of supervisory issues, and periodic review and written final evaluation of the candidate's competence in the designated area of specialization. It is the candidate's responsibility to see that a copy of this evaluation is submitted to the seminary field education office and to the synod Candidacy Committee. In some cases, the on-site supervisor may serve as the project director.
3. **Congregational Component.** While field experience may take place in a variety of settings, the diaconal ministry project must include a congregational component. A pastor of the congregation designates a congregational liaison committee to assist the candidate in planning and implementing the diaconal ministry project. The committee is composed of three to five persons, including a rostered staff member and lay members with a particular interest in diaconal ministry and in the candidate's area of specialization.

The committee will serve as a resource to the candidate for understanding the congregational system and its societal context. The committee will also provide assistance in identifying an appropriate project and participate with the candidate in reflection on and evaluation of the project.

Before beginning a project, the candidate will submit a one-page project proposal to the pastor and congregational liaison committee for consideration and discussion. When the project itself has been carried out and the candidate has written his or her project paper, the liaison committee will review the project paper and prepare an evaluative commentary to be attached to the project director's evaluation.

4. **The Project Paper.** Upon completion of the project, a written paper is to be prepared, which includes the following:
  - a. Description/analysis of the assigned congregation context
  - b. Description/analysis of the project's purpose and goals
  - c. Reflection on the theological, biblical, historical, and mission underpinnings of the project's goals
  - d. Detailed description of the project and plans for implementation
  - e. Description of how the candidate guided the congregation's implementation of the project

- f. Evaluation of the project and its implementation, including strengths and weaknesses
- g. Reflection on the relationship of the project to the candidate's spiritual development

Following a written evaluation and response to the paper by the project director, the project paper is to be submitted to the appropriate field education office. A copy of the paper should be sent to the Center for Diaconal Ministry Preparation at Gettysburg and to the synod Candidacy Committee.

## **Consecration and First Call**

A diaconal ministry candidate is approved for consecration by the Candidacy Committee upon successful completion of all requirements, and agreement with *Vision and Expectations*. All candidates participate in the Churchwide Assignment Consultation. The order of service for consecration is arranged and conducted under the direction and oversight of the bishop of the synod where the first call is received and accepted ([www.elca.org/dcm/worship/liturgies](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/liturgies)).

## **Reinstatement**

The process for reinstatement to the rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is explained in Chapter 1 above, pp. 20-23.

## **Chapter 6 - Entrance into Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

### **Entrance Process**

Entrance is a process that identifies an individual's potential for rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Entrance Decision is the first official action of a Candidacy Committee. Individuals begin the Candidacy Process by establishing contact with a synod Candidacy Committee. The synod will provide the individual with resources such as printed material, retreats, mentors and other opportunities for discernment. The key components considered in the Entrance Decision are discernment and readiness.

Once the synod Candidacy Committee has received the completed application, the committee will request the Congregational Registration and arrange the Initial Interview, the Psychological Evaluation, and the Background Check. When all Entrance steps have been completed, the applicant will participate in an interview with members of the Candidacy Committee leading to the Entrance Decision.

### **Discernment and Readiness**

The process of discernment is a time for an individual to explore ministry as a baptized child of God and to reflect on his or her potential for service in public ministry as an associate in ministry, deaconess, diaconal minister, or pastor. *What Shall I Say? Discerning God's Call to Ministry*, a book provided to all applicants, is a helpful resource in the discernment process and describes various forms of public ministry in the ELCA. It also provides a means of engaging in the important work of assessing one's own gifts for mission and ministry. The resource is intended to be used with a mentor. Conversations with pastors, rostered lay persons, spiritual guides, and other trusted persons are encouraged during an extended time of discernment prior to beginning the Candidacy Process.

This time of discernment may result in a clear sense of call for some individuals. For others the call to public ministry may be still uncertain and undefined. Such seekers should not be discouraged from continuing in the process but rather encouraged to engage in further discernment. For some who show clear potential for rostered ministry, the next logical step is to begin theological study while continuing in a process of discernment. Others would benefit from spending additional time exploring the various options in rostered ministry. At the time of the Entrance Decision, a potential candidate need not have made a final decision regarding which form of rostered ministry to pursue. Entrance determines ecclesial readiness to begin study and preparation for one of this church's rostered ministries. Endorsement as a candidate is for a particular form of ministry: pastor, diaconal minister, deaconess, or associate in ministry.

For those considering a role of leadership in this church, the Entrance Process provides an opportunity to assess readiness to engage in a disciplined program of preparation and formation. The primary characteristics include faith in Jesus Christ, vocational focus, and a basic understanding of the nature of ministry. An individual should possess intellectual ability for critical and reflective thinking and a healthy self-awareness. A basic acquaintance with the Scriptures and the catechism are assumed as part of a minimum one-year active membership in an ELCA congregation. It is also valuable to have a broad background in the liberal arts, including English, history, modern languages, philosophy, and the social sciences.

The welcome diversity among applicants results in challenges for formation and academic readiness. Candidacy Committees and seminaries of the ELCA will provide opportunities designed to bring candidates of varying backgrounds to the appropriate level of readiness during the process of preparation.

## **Entrance Components**

Several steps must be completed prior to the Entrance Interview. An individual begins the Candidacy Process by establishing contact with a synod Candidacy Committee. This contact may be made well before one is ready to begin actual preparation. The synod provides the individual with discernment resources and names of potential discernment guides or mentors. Information may also be provided about retreats and discernment events. The applicant's file should reflect information about the following components:

1. Use of discernment resources (including *What Shall I Say?*)
2. Minimum one-year active membership in an ELCA congregation
3. Application, including Autobiographical Essay and application fee
4. Congregational Registration
5. Initial Interview
6. Candidate screening reports completed and received by synod (Psychological Evaluation, required Background Checks, and Entrance Information Form)
7. Entrance Interview
8. Familiarity with and stated intention to live in accord with *Vision and Expectations*
9. Entrance Decision made by full synod Candidacy Committee

Once an application is received, including the Autobiographical Essay and any application fee established by the synod, the following components are to be completed:

### **Congregational Registration**

Every candidate for rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shares in the life of a congregation through its Word and Sacrament ministry and the community of God's people. The congregation is an important partner in the Candidacy Process as it identifies potential leaders for the public ministries of this church. The registration is not a decision about service as a rostered leader but rather a statement of potential to serve in public ministry.

An applicant must be an active member of an ELCA congregation for a minimum of one year prior to entrance into candidacy. The pastor, any other staff, and lay leaders of the applicant's home congregation provide a description of the person's involvement in the life of the

congregation as well as reflection on the person's sense of call and gifts for ministry. The congregational registration can also point out concerns and areas for growth. Congregations are also expected to provide support to all candidates who are members, through prayer, communication, and financial assistance, if possible.

### **Initial Interview**

The primary purpose of the Initial Interview is to provide the Candidacy Committee with a reliable, thorough, and consistent base of information about the applicant. In addition, this interview provides the applicant with an opportunity to engage in further discernment and self-reflection. The interview also assists the applicant in understanding the process for entering into candidacy in the ELCA.

The Initial Interview should be scheduled as early as possible in the Candidacy Process, following receipt of the Candidate Application and Congregational Registration. The interview is conducted only by someone who has received initial interview training through the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. All Candidacy Committee members, as well as any other interviewers designated by the synod, should receive this training at the beginning of their service. All interviews are to be done in a face-to-face meeting in a private setting, according to standards of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

The Initial Interview is a carefully structured yet free-flowing conversation that gathers information regarding the person's personal and family background, work history, academic and vocational interests, faith and church relationships, and areas for growth and development. The report is to be submitted to the synod office and becomes part of the candidacy file. (See Initial Interview Form.)

The person conducting the initial interview should also make every effort to be present for the Entrance Interview of the applicant.

### **Candidate Screening**

Every Candidacy Committee is to conduct sufficient screening to assure that candidates for rostered ministry are fit to serve. Attention to all aspects of a person's health is essential to this church's faithful witness in the world. Gathering appropriate information about dimensions of health that impact ministry is an important component of candidacy. Extensive screening is required by the ELCA to ensure as much as possible that candidates will be prepared for the challenges of public leadership. Careful attention to how such information is used and interpreted is essential so that a person's reputation is protected.

### **Psychological Evaluation**

The purpose of the Psychological Evaluation is to provide a professional assessment of an applicant's psychological readiness to engage in the process of candidacy in the ELCA. The evaluation will assist an individual in gaining self-understanding of abilities and potential for public ministry.

The evaluation is scheduled after the Initial Interview but prior to the Entrance Interview. The Psychological Evaluation Report must be provided to the Candidacy Committee prior to the



Entrance Interview. Psychological consultants who conduct evaluations must be registered with the ELCA through the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. A synod Candidacy Committee arranges for the consultant to provide services and normally pays any related fees. The guidelines for Psychological Evaluations and Assessment Inventories approved for use are outlined in “Guidelines for Psychological Evaluation,” found later in this section.

### **Background Checks**

Investigations of a person's past as well as an assessment of his or her suitability and potential fitness for public church leadership are tasks of ELCA Candidacy Committees. Background Checks are a component of this process, as this church does everything possible to screen out people who might use their position as a pastor or lay rostered leader in damaging or illegal ways. A Background Check is to be conducted on all applicants for candidacy in the ELCA.

The Candidacy Committee obtains verification of all personal information which becomes part of the candidate's file. Each Candidacy Committee may add specific checks or screening in addition to the basic standards set forth in this Manual. The Background Check is to be completed prior to the Entrance Interview. The guidelines for conducting Background Checks are outlined in “Guidelines for Background Checks,” found at the end of this chapter.

### **References**

For applicants with significant work or ministry experience, it may be advisable to inquire about that history. A reference check provides an opportunity to verify information that has been submitted by an applicant and to solicit information about past performance, which is a key indicator of future effectiveness. Professional or personal/character references may be requested if appropriate or desired by the Candidacy Committee. Employment verification may also be valuable for some situations. Applicants may be asked to provide a written list of references for this purpose. The reference checks may be done in any of three formats: telephone, written, or e-mail. A written record of those checks is to be part of the candidate record.

## **Entrance Interview**

As the Candidacy Committee evaluates an applicant at the time of Entrance, the following characteristics of readiness are carefully considered:

1. Faith in Jesus Christ, spiritual maturity, passion for justice and compassion for God's people;
2. Demonstration of healthy lifestyle and leadership characteristics;
3. Understanding of the nature of Christian ministry from both theological and practical perspectives, an understanding of the variety of forms of ministry in the ELCA, and an understanding of "call";
4. Familiarity with Lutheran congregational life with a minimum of one year's active membership in a congregation of the ELCA;
5. Academic readiness, including:
  - a. Appropriate undergraduate preparation
  - b. Language skills—oral and written
  - c. Basic acquaintance with the Scriptures and Luther's *Small Catechism*;

6. A realistic assessment of one's potential for service; awareness of gifts and abilities as well as situational factors.

The Entrance Interview may not be held until all components of the application process are complete. The Candidate Screening may reflect concerns or issues critical to the conversation in the interview. Growth and development issues outlined in the various entrance components can be utilized by the candidate, Candidacy Committee, and seminary when assisting the candidate in formation and growth in specific areas.

## Guidelines for Entrance Interview

This interview guide is intended to describe the flow of a thorough Interview Process. Each synod Candidacy Committee may adapt the structure to its own style and needs, keeping in mind the important components set forth in this Manual. Extending hospitality to an applicant reflects encouragement and a sense of community. The Entrance Interview Guide assumes that Interview Panel members will have read and become familiar with the following:

1. *What Shall I Say? Discerning God's Call to Ministry* (The discernment resource);
2. *Vision and Expectations: Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses, and Diaconal Ministers*;
3. The "Entrance" section of the Candidacy Manual; and
4. The file for the applicant, including the Application and Entrance Essay (autobiography), Psychological Report, Background Check Report, Entrance Information Form, Initial Interview form, Congregational Registration and Congregational Report Form.

The Entrance Interview may be conducted by the entire committee or by a panel of at least three committee members. The panel should take as much time as is needed but typically a panel interview will last approximately 1 to 1 1/4 hours.

### **I. Introduction (5 minutes)**

An applicant is presented to the panel or committee by the committee chair or initial interviewer. All members of the panel or committee will introduce themselves to the applicant. Many applicants and Candidacy Committees value the opportunity to begin with prayer.

### **II. Interview with Applicant (40-50 minutes)**

The following order for conversation is suggested:

#### **A. Discernment Process**

1. Describe your personal discernment process. What was the depth and extent of the process? In the process of discernment, what did you discover, both positive and negative?
2. Lutherans understand a corporate dimension to discernment. Where in this church have you sought or found a sense of call identified or affirmed? Who else has recognized your sense of call? What do you perceive as the most pressing need of this church today? How do you perceive your prospective vocational role as addressing that need (i.e., how can you as a pastor/diaconal minister/deaconess/associate in ministry, support and advance the mission of Christ in the ELCA)? How do you

understand or perceive the ministry to which you feel called? (a call to a specific roster may not yet be discerned).

## **B. Health and Readiness for Ministry**

Candidacy Committees may use the Wholeness Wheel (see Appendix) as an aid for evaluating the applicant's readiness to prepare for public ministry. Using the wheel may be helpful in gathering appropriate supportive information about dimensions of health that impact ministry. Aspects of health include physical, emotional, social/inter-personal, vocational, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. What is the applicant's readiness or fitness for public ministry, based on a picture of balanced health and wholeness?

1. Trinitarian faith, spiritual maturity, passion for justice and compassion for all God's people – spiritual and social health.
2. Demonstration of healthy leadership characteristics – emotional and vocational health.
3. Understanding of the nature of Christian ministry, and an understanding of call – vocational and spiritual health.
4. Academic readiness – intellectual health.
5. A realistic assessment of one's potential for service – physical, emotional, intellectual, social, vocational and spiritual health.

Discuss the Initial Interview and the Psychological Evaluation. What was the applicant's reaction? Did these conversations result in any insights that have been useful in the discernment process? Interviewers should raise any concerns they have regarding any health-related issues. It may be helpful in this segment of the interview to inquire as to how the pursuit of this vocation will affect the applicant's family. Have mobility issues been considered? Ask this for all rosters.

## **C. Required Entrance Information Questions**

Rostered leaders in the ELCA hold positions with responsibility for protecting both this church and its members and are called to live as examples of the Christian life in the world. It is necessary to ask those considering rostered leadership roles about their personal conduct. An applicant may or may not have the self-knowledge that will assist the committee in assessing readiness for candidacy. Some situational factors must be addressed to invite awareness and openness regarding potential for healthy leadership in the ELCA. The Candidacy Committee should inquire specifically about issues that could indicate significant obstacles to readiness.

Some factors will disqualify applicants, including a history of sexual attraction to minors or sexual deviant behavior with children or minors. Careful attention should be given to the answers on the form and the ways any issues may have been addressed or resolved. The Entrance Information Form must be submitted by the applicant prior to the Entrance Interview. The replies on the applicant's signed form, any analysis or review by the Candidacy Committee, and the conversation at the interview should all be part of the candidacy file. The committee should invite the applicant to offer any reflections on his or her responses to the questions at the interview and to raise any additional questions

generated by the responses. If the committee has concerns, further consultation should be made regarding the applicant's fitness for ministry. The answers to the following questions are to be submitted in writing by the applicant prior to the Entrance Interview. A copy of the form is to be signed by the applicant and a member of the committee at the time of the interview. In the later part of the Entrance Interview, these questions are discussed with every applicant, with the following introduction:

**“Out of care for this church we ask you and every applicant the questions on the Entrance Information Form. Now we invite you to discuss your written answers and share other information that you feel would be helpful to the committee.”**

1. Are you familiar with the document *Vision and Expectations*? Do you intend to live in accord with its standards of conduct as a candidate and as a rostered leader in the ELCA? If no, please explain in detail.
2. Do you have or have you had any health conditions (physical or psychological) that might interfere with your ability to serve as a rostered leader in the ELCA? If yes, please explain in detail.
3. Are there issues in your family situation or personal life that could adversely affect your ability to serve as a rostered leader in the ELCA? If yes, please explain in detail.
4. Is your personal debt, excluding mortgage, greater than \$25,000?
5. Have you ever defaulted on a loan or declared bankruptcy?
6. Do you now engage or have you ever engaged in any addictive behavior, including drug or alcohol abuse or sexual or pornographic addictions? If yes, please explain in detail and describe any treatment or therapy for addictive behavior.
7. Have you ever been terminated or resigned from any employment due to accusations of misconduct, whether financial, sexual, ethical, or other improper behavior? If yes, please explain in detail.
8. Have you ever engaged in, been accused of, charged with, or convicted of a crime or illegal conduct, including conduct resulting in suspension or revocation of your driver's license? If yes, please explain in detail.
9. Have you ever engaged in, been accused of, sued, or charged with sexual molestation, sexual harassment, child abuse, spousal neglect or abuse, or financial improprieties? If yes, please explain in detail.
10. Do you have any sexual attraction toward children or minors, or any history of sexually deviant behavior, including behavior with children or minors?
11. Have you engaged in any behavior or been involved in any situations that, if they became known by the church, might seriously damage your ability to continue in candidacy for pastoral ministry? If yes, please explain in detail.
12. Are you prepared to accept a call from this church that might require service in a location different from where you now live?
13. Is there additional information that would assist the Candidacy Committee in considering your candidacy or that you believe the committee should know? If yes, please explain.

#### **D. The Spiritual Journey**

Spiritual formation includes both individual and corporate dimensions. What has been the applicant's recent involvement in the life of his/her congregation? Has there been a year of active involvement? Is the applicant a member in good standing of a congregation?

The committee should explore the applicant's ability to articulate and be formed by faith experiences. This may be asked in ways such as:

1. Can you describe your sense of God's presence in your life right now?
2. How do you intentionally seek to draw near to God in your life these days?
3. Can you describe a Bible story or share a scripture passage that is especially meaningful to you now or that represents your spiritual journey?
4. What spiritual practices do you find meaningful for growth in formation?
5. Share a plan for how your faith life will be sustained and nurtured while in the candidacy process. Such a plan may include practices such as the use of a trained spiritual director, participation in a group discipleship experience, retreats, personal devotions and daily prayer, and regular participation in worship in a seminary setting and a congregation. Plans for offering service to others, personal stewardship, vocational discernment, and healthy self care should also be discussed.

#### **E. Other questions deemed appropriate by the committee**

### **III. The Panel Recommendation**

As in other interviews, the applicant should be excused from the room while the panel or committee comes to a decision and writes a statement regarding the applicant. Remember that theological sophistication is not expected at this point. However, positive life experiences and confidence in potential for service in the public ministry rosters of this church are essential. (In the case of an Entrance panel, the recommendation may be shared with the applicant. Note that final action comes from the synod Candidacy Committee.)

### **IV. Committee Decision**

The committee may choose to share the decision with the applicant in person. If there are reasons for the committee to consider other information or resources before sharing its decision, then the applicant may be informed of the decision at a later time. The applicant will be notified by the committee of the Entrance Decision, which will also be forwarded to the ELCA seminary of choice, if the admission process has been started.

## **Entrance Decision**

The Entrance Decision is made by the full synod Candidacy Committee using all information available. In the case of multi-synodical Candidacy Committees, it is the synod committee that makes the Entrance Decision. All Entrance Decisions should be clearly communicated in writing to the applicant and to the ELCA seminary of choice, if the admission process has been started. The Entrance Decision is reported to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit office. The decision is one of the following:

**Positive Entrance** A positive Entrance Decision indicates the committee's confidence in the applicant's potential and readiness for theological study and formation. This decision means that the applicant demonstrates gifts and abilities that indicate potential for rostered ministry either as a pastor, an associate in ministry, a diaconal minister, or deaconess. This decision further means that the individual has no significant discernment, health, readiness, or situational factors that would impair his or her ability to engage in theological study and formation for ministry.

**Entrance Denied** This decision states that there are specific reasons why the applicant is not an appropriate candidate for rostered ministry in this church. This may include issues related to discernment, health, readiness, or some situational factors. If, in addition to readiness factors that may be situational and able to be improved or changed, the applicant clearly lacks the gifts and abilities needed for service in a leadership role in the church, then a decision to deny must be considered. In the case of denial the committee will want to take the necessary steps to insure that appropriate pastoral care is provided when the decision is communicated and that support and follow-up care are available. The Candidacy Committee can provide assistance to the person in identifying and affirming where his or her particular gifts for ministry might be appropriately used in this church and in the community and can encourage further career counseling.

**Entrance Postponed** If the applicant demonstrates gifts and abilities but lacks sufficient spiritual, discernment, health, or situational readiness, the committee recommends postponement. A postponement indicates that there are developmental or situational issues that must be addressed or conditions that must be met before the applicant would be reconsidered.

Factors that may indicate postponement include the following: emotional and psychological factors that may improve with therapy or other intervention; indication of current substance abuse; current or very recent marital distress, separation, or divorce; family situation that will be highly stressed by geographic relocation; financial stress with heavy debt load; limited familiarity with Lutheran congregational life; lack of basic biblical and catechetical knowledge; substantial health problems; recent life crises without adequate time for healing. Other factors relating to academic readiness, including poor writing skills or inadequate undergraduate preparation, will be determined by the seminary admissions process. If the committee has academic concerns, consultation with the appropriate seminary admissions director is advised.

When postponement is recommended, the committee must prepare a written report that clearly communicates the reasons for the decision. The applicant will be asked to develop a plan for addressing the identified issues or difficulties. The applicant and the committee will then determine how progress will be monitored, when reconsideration may be scheduled, and what procedure will be followed for reconsideration. An applicant can be encouraged to provide a written response stating an understanding of how concerns are to be addressed.

**Reporting Entrance Decisions** The decision of the synod Candidacy Committee is to be reported to the applicant, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit office, and the seminary (if appropriate), using the Entrance Decision Form. A copy may be sent to the congregation as well, if desired.

All reports and decisions of the Candidacy Committee, including denials, shall be maintained in the candidate's file. Such files shall be maintained according to Candidacy Records Management Policy (see pp. 13-14).

### **Contact Person, Relater, or Mentor**

Personal contact with a candidate throughout the Candidacy Process is essential, as preparation and formation bring development and new understanding. Candidacy Committees are encouraged to match a committee member with each candidate granted Entrance. This person serves as a liaison between the committee and the candidate to communicate mutual concerns throughout candidacy. A committee member should have no more than five candidates for whom he or she is responsible. The following guidelines are suggested:

1. Be present at all interviews for candidate. Be prepared to provide current status of candidate prior to any meetings or action;
2. Report any news or information to the Candidacy Committee as it is received;
3. Pray for the candidate;
4. Maintain contact through letters, e-mail, visits, retreats, birthday cards, etc.;
5. Encourage candidate to initiate contact with any significant news or concerns and provide updates on academic and practical progress in the process; and
6. Assist the candidate in discernment of call, areas of growth, experiences of grace.

### **Seminary Admission**

In consultation with the Candidacy Committee, individuals may apply to a seminary of this church and follow the seminary's admissions process. All candidates may apply to any ELCA or ELCIC seminary and need not be geographically restricted. Those who consider study at a theological school or seminary other than an ELCA or ELCIC seminary should discuss their plans for study and ELCA seminary affiliation. A program of preparation for candidates for one of the rostered lay ministries that does not include study at an ELCA or ELCIC seminary will need to be determined in consultation with the Candidacy Committee prior to the beginning of such study.

ELCA and ELCIC seminaries will normally not extend an offer of admission to an ELCA applicant seeking rostered ministry until receiving notification of a positive Entrance Decision by a Candidacy Committee. An applicant who has begun, but not yet completed, the Entrance step in candidacy may receive a provisional offer of admission by the seminary. Such a provisional offer will be withdrawn unless a positive Entrance Decision is made by the Candidacy Committee by end of the first term or semester of study.

A positive Entrance Decision does not guarantee seminary admission. A seminary may deny admission for academic or other reasons.

### **Rostered Candidates**

Rostered leaders who apply for candidacy on a different roster are normally not required to have an Initial Interview and Psychological Evaluation. While the Candidacy Committee can assume and affirm gifts for ministry as they explore the possibility of a change in the form of ministry for a currently rostered person of the ELCA, it is important to follow the same procedures as for

any candidate in the remainder of the Candidacy Process. Under some circumstances, the entrance and endorsement decisions may be made by the committee at the same time.

### **Reapplication**

A minimum of one year must pass before a person who was denied Entrance may again apply for entrance into candidacy. At that point in time, the stored file will be retrieved and activated. The new Entrance Decision is reported to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

## **Guidelines for Psychological Evaluation**

1. Persons seeking to serve in rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall complete a Psychological Evaluation. These guidelines have been developed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for use by psychological consultants and Candidacy Committees.
2. God's people have been given a variety of gifts for ministry. Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is based on a biblical understanding of this diversity of gifts. These gifts may be expressed in a variety of ways, including ministry in daily life, ministry of Word and Sacrament, or ministry as an associate in ministry, diaconal minister, or deaconess. Each of these ministries is integral to the life and mission of this church. The process of discernment and reflection in the Entrance Process should assist each candidate in gaining a better understanding of the gifts and abilities needed for these forms of public ministry.
3. Candidacy in the ELCA begins with the use of the discernment resource (*What Shall I Say? Discerning God's Call to Ministry*) and includes completion of the application, registration by the applicant's home congregation, an Initial Interview, and candidate screening including Background Checks and Psychological Evaluation. An individual officially becomes a candidate after an Entrance Interview with the committee and a positive Entrance Decision by the Candidacy Committee.
4. The primary purpose of the Psychological Evaluation is to provide the Candidacy Committee with insight regarding the applicant's psychological health and readiness for candidacy. It is also intended to help individuals gain greater self-understanding and appreciation of their own emotional well-being. The Psychological Evaluation is part of a larger discernment process that is the ongoing concern of the Candidacy Committee. It is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee to keep the purpose of the Psychological Evaluation clearly in focus and perspective. The ELCA expects an evaluation that is an honest and candid assessment of the applicant's psychological state.

### **Responsibilities of the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit**

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is responsible for:

1. Establishing and maintaining churchwide policies and guidelines for screening of applicants for candidacy;
2. Registering and regularly reviewing the services of participating psychological consultants; and
3. Providing consultation and guidance regarding particular situations, such as for candidates of color and candidates with unusual circumstances.



## **Responsibilities of Psychological Consultants**

1. Expectations - The psychological consultant is expected to:
  - a. Be accepted as a registered psychological consultant by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit;
  - b. Conduct a Psychological Evaluation that is consistent with the theological purposes and goals of the ELCA for the Candidacy Process;
  - c. Be sensitive to issues of race, language, gender, age, and ethnicity and provide appropriate tools for evaluation;
  - d. Provide the Candidacy Committee with recommendations regarding the applicant's current psychological state and specific issues for further attention or conversation;
  - e. Provide the applicant an assessment of personal strengths and areas for growth, including candid evaluation of psychological health; and
  - f. Use at a minimum the assessment instruments determined by the ELCA Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.
  
2. The Interview and Assessment

The psychological consultant conducts a comprehensive assessment with the applicant, including testing instruments and a personal interview. This evaluation shall be conducted in keeping with accepted standards for the administration of psychological evaluations.

Every assessment should evaluate the applicant's ego strength, self-awareness, self-concept, physical health, health of the family, relational systems issues, interpersonal skills, personal and professional priorities/values, emotional maturity, psychological health, personal qualities (including potential for leadership), as well as any perceived deficiencies that might disqualify or impede a person from beginning preparation for rostered ministry. To supplement the interview, psychological consultants must use the following instruments with the understanding that consultants may add other instruments if needed or requested by the Candidacy Committee:

- a. Personality Instruments
  - 1) Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2)
  - 2) Another personality measure of the consultant's choice, such as the California Personality Inventory (revised) Profiles in Ministry, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Ministry by Design, or any other valid and commonly used instrument
- b. Vocational Inventories such as the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (or another valid and commonly used vocational inventory)
- c. IQ and Cognitive Functioning such as Shipley-Hartford Institute of Living Scale, Concept Mastery Test (Terman), or Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R should be administered only if the psychological consultant doubts the applicant's intellectual capacity for graduate-level work.)
- d. Culturally-sensitive and/or alternative language instruments and professional resources as may be appropriate, e.g., Spanish language version of the MBTI, and consultation with a culturally-sensitive psychologist. Where major language or

cultural barriers exist, the Candidacy Committee may contact the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit for further guidance.

Clinicians are invited to recommend to the synods other psychological and/or vocational instruments that may be especially well suited for the ELCA evaluation process.

Because this evaluation is so important to the applicant and this church, the applicant should not feel rushed through the process. As noted earlier, it is especially important that the psychological consultant explain fully the evaluation results that will be summarized for the Candidacy Committee. Special attention should be given to the areas that are in need of development.

The psychological consultant shall provide the applicant with oral feedback and a written summary of the evaluation and shall secure an informed written release of information to the Candidacy Committee and to the ELCA seminary where the applicant has applied for admission, after the results have been shared with the applicant. The summary report will be sent to the Candidacy Committee for its use in the Entrance Decision.

A copy of the summary is also sent to the ELCA seminary named on the release of information. The report is added to the confidential candidacy file maintained by the seminary. An additional written release of information from the applicant should be obtained if the summary is requested for review beyond the Candidacy Committee and the seminary's confidential file.

The psychological consultant may make recommendations for counseling, treatment, or other services, and these recommendations should be thoroughly and sensitively discussed with the applicant during the evaluation feedback session. It is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee to decide whether or not the recommended counseling/therapy should be completed prior to a positive Entrance Decision. If the Candidacy Committee recommends counseling, it should not be with the professional who provided the evaluation.

### 3. Reporting to the Candidacy Committee

In the summary report that the consultant will provide to the applicant and the Candidacy Committee, the following information is helpful:

- a. Personal identity/level of self-awareness and self-concept
- b. Quality of past and present family relationships
- c. Sense of vision/imaginative ability
- d. Intellectual capacity
- e. Integrity
- f. Emotional maturity/coping ability and durability
- g. Motivation for religious service
- h. Empathy and affective expression
- i. Interpersonal relationship skills
- j. Any history of misconduct related to employment
- k. Any history of deviant and pathological maladaptation
- l. Any history of medical and psychiatric illness

- m. Any history of substance abuse or addictions
- n. Flexibility
- o. Leadership style
- p. Assets and liabilities relating to leadership roles in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as described in the documents of this church provided to the professional consultant
- q. Personal and professional values/priorities

It is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee to decide whether the applicant is psychologically and situationally ready to begin theological study and preparation for rostered ministry. The psychological consultant's report is to be only one of the components used by the committee in making that determination. The report should be descriptive and interpretive of the individual in the categories listed above.

### **Responsibilities of the Synod and the Candidacy Committee**

The synod Candidacy Committee is responsible for the evaluation and care of the candidate throughout the Candidacy Process. Regarding the Psychological Evaluation, the Candidacy Committee is responsible for the following:

1. Gathering required information for registration of any psychological consultant used by the Candidacy Committee and submitting it to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. All psychological consultants must be accepted for registration by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit before a contract is arranged. The form "Registration of Psychological Consultant with Candidacy Committee" is to be submitted to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit giving the education, experience, professional affiliation, licensure, and liability coverage of the professional who seeks registration as a consultant. In addition to appropriate education, training, and credentials, the ELCA also expects a commitment to the underlying intent of the evaluation process, which is to provide insight regarding the applicant's psychological health and readiness for candidacy.

Specifically, to be accepted by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the professional must

- a. Be licensed as a psychologist and competent to sign the evaluation report, or be licensed as a mental health professional (career counselor, counselor, social worker, psychotherapist, etc.) and consult with a psychologist registered with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit to supervise and oversee the evaluation process and co-sign the evaluation report;
- b. Demonstrate through professional education, experience, and affiliations both professional competence in providing psychological evaluations and an ongoing commitment to professional growth;
- c. Display interest in working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and an understanding of the psychological concerns and ecclesiastical goals of the Candidacy Process; and
- d. Be familiar with the standards and criteria by which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America determines its rostered leaders.

2. Contracting with a psychological consultant registered with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The synod should arrange a contract with the psychological consultant for Psychological Evaluation services. This contract should include clear expectations regarding instruments used, fees, etc. Forms or guidelines for reporting should be provided, including a written release-of-information form. It is desirable for the consultant to meet with the Candidacy Committee at least annually to review the clinician's approach to evaluation reports and to provide assistance to the committee members in utilizing the evaluation reports.
3. Arranging for the Psychological Evaluation as part of the Entrance Process.  
An applicant should be directed by the synod to schedule the Psychological Evaluation after the Initial Interview. The fee for the Psychological Evaluation is to be paid by the synod. It is suggested that, as deemed appropriate, an applicant be assessed an "application fee" to cover a portion of all costs related to candidacy. The amount can be determined by each synod Candidacy Committee.

The written Psychological Evaluation report must be received prior to the Entrance Interview. The Entrance Decision is that of the Candidacy Committee. When there is serious concern about an individual's psychological health or situational factors, the synod may contact the psychological consultant for additional consultation.

If the psychological consultant makes recommendations for counseling, treatment or other services, it is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee to decide whether or not the recommended counseling/therapy should be completed prior to a positive Entrance Decision and the beginning of theological study. If Entrance is postponed for this reason, the Candidacy Committee may suggest the names of at least three counselors and may request that the candidate seek prior approval of the committee for anticipated counseling with a particular therapist. It should not be the professional who provided the evaluation. A written report should be requested.

4. Concerns and complaints about psychological consultants:  
The synod should from time to time review the contract with the psychological consultant and may end the relationship with the consultant if services are not satisfactory.

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the Psychological Evaluation report may secure a second opinion from another professional registered with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Applicants will be financially responsible for this additional evaluation. When a second evaluation is requested by the applicant, it should be made clear that both reports must be released to the Candidacy Committee in order for the applicant to be considered for candidacy in the ELCA.

The churchwide staff person overseeing candidacy in the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is to be notified by a Candidacy Committee if there are any complaints about a psychological consultant. This should include concern regarding any pattern of complaints that suggests that a particular psychological consultant is perceived as being insensitive or inappropriate to persons on the basis of gender, age, class, race, culture,

etc., or if the evaluations received by the committee do not reflect the intention of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit as to their completeness or usefulness in the Candidacy Process. This notification is critical to the integrity of the evaluation program and its continuing helpfulness to applicants.

## **Guidelines for Background Checks**

Enabling legislation and advances in technology have made it much easier to obtain personal information about an individual. Given the unique position of trust held by rostered leaders, it is now becoming common practice for religious denominations to make greater use of this background information as part of a comprehensive candidate screening process.

Background Checks are required for all applicants seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. In addition, all applicants for candidacy in the ECLA are required to submit, on a form available with the Application Form, written answers to specific questions about personal history and conduct (Entrance Information Form).

The areas that are to be covered by a background check include:

1. Criminal history database search;
2. County record criminal check;
3. Sex Offender Criminal Registry;
4. Credit report check;
5. Social security trace; and
6. Motor vehicle check.

It is recommended that the Background Check cover at least seven years, or a greater period, if provided by the background search provider. If the candidate has moved during this time period, different geographical area checks should be done.

These guidelines are intended to be the minimum required screening. A Candidacy Committee may add other types of checks and is not bound to use exactly the same checks for all candidates. Candidacy Committees may choose to be flexible in determining when additional checks are advisable. It is understood that different background check firms use different terminology, and synods should try in good faith to match the required checks with those offered by the background check firm chosen.

### **Purpose**

The Candidacy Process of this church seeks to maintain a good balance and complementarity between hospitality and relationship building on the one hand and the tasks of discernment, formation, evaluation and screening on the other. Gathering information to assure thorough and careful judgment of an applicant's character and past behavior is a necessary part of the assessment of a person's readiness to begin preparation for public ministry.

A criminal background check, or any other screening tool, must be placed in the context of the entire Candidacy Process, which gives primary focus to evaluation and assessment of candidates. To accomplish the goals of candidacy, this church needs to know the types of people who are

most likely to do well in ministry and the typical characteristics and behaviors that might suggest a good fit with this church's rostered leadership. This church must do everything possible in order to screen out people who might use their position as a pastor or lay rostered leader in damaging or illegal ways.

This church must use care and good judgment to use any and all information about an applicant or a candidate in ways that are not damaging to that person's reputation or sense of self as a valued child of God. The Candidacy Process needs to look carefully at each individual and to assess and discern that person's potential for ministry through use of all the components of the Entrance Process.

It is crucial to remember that background checks are not a substitute for using other screening tools or risk reduction techniques. Background checks are not infallible records of a person's previous conduct or misconduct. The absence of any reported misconduct is not a guarantee of future actions. If an individual has never been arrested or convicted, nothing will be revealed in a criminal background check. But any background check must include indication of any sexual misconduct or child abuse.

It is important to keep in mind that the principles on which screening is based in the ELCA include fair and equitable implementation of screening measures. The screening process is to be applied consistently to all applicants for candidacy. Each Candidacy Committee has the right to add specific checks in addition to the basic standards of the ELCA, if there is reason to do so. Candidacy Committees should feel free to explore different options, and different applicants may well require different types of background checks.

As with all screening tools, it is recommended that the results are shared with the applicant if there is any negative information discovered. Doing so provides the applicant with the opportunity to explain the situation and also confirms that the information is correct.

Because of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and laws that separate church and state, Candidacy Committees have much greater freedom in asking questions of applicants for rostered ministry. The committee and this church are protected by law and are able to ask whatever is necessary to determine who this church's leaders will be.

### **Responsibilities of the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit**

The Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is responsible for:

1. Establishing churchwide policies, guidelines, and programs for evaluating candidates;
2. Arranging for and regularly reviewing the services of participating companies that provide the required background checks; and
3. Periodically evaluating the program to meet changing needs.

### **Responsibilities of Companies Providing Background Checks**

1. Any company that provides background checks for ELCA synod Candidacy Committees is expected to:
  - a. Implement the program in ways that are consistent with the needs and goals of the ELCA Candidacy Process;

- b. Be sensitive to the ways that race, language, gender, age, and ethnicity may play a role in the Candidacy Process;
- c. Provide the necessary forms and communication so that the process is carried out in a professional, consistent, and fair manner;
- d. Assist the Candidacy Committee and the applicant in understanding the rights of individuals and the meaning of any results that are provided.

2. Types of checks to be provided:

a. **Criminal Background Checks** should include any indication of sexual misconduct, child abuse, or other serious misconduct. Background checks can be done in a number of different ways:

- 1). Some synods may choose to work through local law enforcement agencies and on-line registries to check on criminal behavior.
- 2). Other synods may use background check companies that provide a comprehensive service to synods seeking information on criminal and other records.

Federal, state, and county authorities have increased the availability of criminal background information. There have been significant technological advances that allow for faster, more widespread, and more accurate searches. However, criminal background searches are still far from a quick and easy process. There currently is no nationwide up-to-date repository of criminal history records available to most employers or the general public.

In reality, searches for criminal history records must be conducted at the various jurisdictions that exist throughout the United States where arrest and conviction records are initiated and/or compiled. Information may be available through federal, district, and statewide searches, specialized registries, child abuse registries, and sex offender registries. The ELCA expects a search to include seven years of records.

- b. **Credit Checks** assist in supporting the identity of the applicant. Since each applicant has his or her own social security number, it is possible to verify the identity information via a “social security number trace” through a credit bureau. Credit reports reveal outstanding debts and payment history, as well as civil actions such as judgments, liens, and bankruptcies. Credit reports provide a seven-year history of individual or joint financial information. Since rostered leaders will be in a position of handling money or other organizational assets and have check-writing or investment authority, a credit bureau records check is a reasonable risk-management procedure.
- c. **Motor Vehicle Records (MVRs)** are maintained by the Department of Motor Vehicles in all 50 states and most countries. Depending on the state, violations are provided for the last three to five years. Since most church leaders will be required to operate a company or church vehicle, rental car, or their own vehicle for business purposes, checking their driving records may be a reasonable risk-management procedure.

### **Responsibilities of the Candidacy Committee**

The Candidacy Committee is responsible for the evaluation and care of candidates throughout the Candidacy Process, all of which can be understood as part of the individual's formation as a Christian and a public servant of the church. The synod is responsible for the following:

1. Obtaining a background check covering areas listed above. The Candidacy Committee may contract with a company to provide the required Background Checks. The synod staff person responsible for this process should consult with the synod attorney to develop appropriate procedures and forms for authorizing the Background Check.
2. Arranging for the applicant to complete the necessary forms for this requirement to be met. It is best for the synod to name one staff contact person who can process the requests, understand the process, receive back reports, and maintain the appropriate degree of privacy.
3. Arranging for the payment of fees for the Background Checks. The cost of the Background Checks is to be paid by the synod. It is appropriate for the synod to request an application fee from the applicant to cover a portion of the costs related to the Candidacy Process. It is also appropriate to suggest a congregation registration fee be paid at the time the congregation submits the registration form, as a gesture of support to the applicant and the synod.
4. Receiving the results of the Background Check prior to the Entrance Interview and as appropriate sharing concerns or issues with the applicant, including sharing results with the applicant's seminary.
5. Synod is to notify the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit if there is any pattern of concern  
or complaints that suggest that a company providing the services is being insensitive or inappropriate to persons on the basis of gender, age, class, race, culture, etc, or if the results of the Background Checks do not reflect the intention of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit as to their completeness or usefulness in the  
Candidacy Process. This notification is critical to the integrity of candidate screening and its continuing helpfulness to applicants.

### **Using Background Check Results**

When the results of the Background Check are reported, the information must be evaluated in relation to each applicant and appropriately shared with the committee. Guidelines may be established stating which types of information are relevant, what offenses or information will disqualify an applicant, and what other factors will be considered. Circumstances that may be considered when evaluating an offense include:

1. The nature and seriousness of the offense;
2. The circumstances under which the offense occurred;



3. The age of the person at the time of the offense, and how much time has passed since the offense occurred;
4. Societal conditions that may have contributed to the nature of the offense;
5. The probability that the person will repeat the offense; and
6. The person's commitment to rehabilitation, restitution, and reconciliation.

An applicant should be denied entrance to candidacy when he or she has made a knowingly false statement of any material fact or attempted any deception or fraud in the application process.

**Releases.** The candidacy application contains a release, in which the applicant agrees to authorize the ELCA synod or seminary to check references and background information and permits third parties to release and provide personal information and opinions. There may be additional background check authorization forms to be completed as part of the application process.

# Chapter 7 - Endorsement for Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## **Endorsement Process**

Endorsement is the official action of a Candidacy Committee by which candidacy for a specific form of ministry is conferred upon a person seeking to serve in a rostered ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The time from Entrance to Endorsement is understood to be a time of theological study, spiritual formation, and personal growth as well as ongoing discernment and clarification of call. Endorsement serves to encourage and affirm those who clearly demonstrate the gifts and qualities for a specific ministry in this church. The areas of development that will be addressed are:

1. Understanding of call to ministry;
2. Spiritual growth and faith commitment;
3. Educational and theological wisdom; and
4. Personal and interpersonal skills.

The Endorsement Process provides a time during which an individual's progress in formation for ministry may be assessed and issues identified earlier in the Entrance Process may be reviewed. A candidate attending a non-ELCA seminary must affiliate with an ELCA seminary prior to Endorsement.

Endorsement may also be a time to determine that an individual is not suitable for service in one of the rostered ministries of this church. Such a decision may be made by either the individual or the Candidacy Committee. Once an individual receives a positive Endorsement Decision by a Candidacy Committee, the candidate may participate in an ELCA internship or field experience.

## **Endorsement Essay**

The current Endorsement Essay assignment is available on the ELCA Web site ([www.elca.org/candidacy](http://www.elca.org/candidacy)). The essay will normally be submitted to the Candidacy Committee towards the end of the first year of study, typically by September 1. The essay asks the candidate to reflect on what they have discerned during the first year of study, their understanding of ministry and sense of call to a particular form of ministry, and the ways developmental issues identified during Entrance have been addressed. The candidate addresses particular issues stated in the essay, including baptismal call, gifts for ministry, this church's leadership needs, the Lutheran confessional witness, functions of ministry, personal development, and *Vision and Expectations*.

## **Endorsement Components**

Prior to the interview, each member of the panel should receive the following items from the candidate's file. These are private and are not to be shared beyond the Endorsement Panel and Candidacy Committee:

1. Entrance decision report and other file materials as appropriate;
2. Endorsement Essay;
3. CPE report (if completed prior to endorsement); and
4. Academic reports for all completed study

## **Endorsement Panel**

### **Procedure**

The decision concerning Endorsement for candidacy is made by the synodical or multi-synodical Candidacy Committee. Endorsement Panel members may choose to share with the candidate the recommendations they will make to the full Candidacy Committee. Those seeking Endorsement should be aware that no final decisions are made by the Endorsement Panel.

The Endorsement Panel is composed of one faculty member of the ELCA seminary where the candidate is enrolled (normally the candidate's advisor) and two Candidacy Committee members. At least one of the two Candidacy Committee members should be from the candidate's synod. In the case where a Candidacy Committee has only one candidate at a given seminary, a request may be made for another Candidacy Committee to participate in the place of the candidate's own committee. This is to be understood as an exception to the normal process. Congregational and Synodical Mission unit staff may also be asked to participate in Endorsement Panels.

For candidates enrolled at ELCA seminaries, the Endorsement Panel is convened and chaired by a member of the Candidacy Committee during a time arranged through the seminary. Normally, this will be in the fall, and the panel is held at the seminary. The timing and panel composition may vary for candidates for diaconal ministry, deaconess, and associate in ministry.

The partnership is strengthened through the interaction of committee members and the faculty member in the Endorsement Process. The candidate is given a clear expression of the interest and support of his or her synod through committee participation in the panel.

Candidates attending non-ELCA seminaries and candidates preparing to serve as commissioned associates in ministry not enrolled in seminary will meet with the Candidacy Committee at a time and place determined by the committee for an Endorsement Interview. An appropriate faculty advisor may be consulted or invited to participate. The recommendation of the Endorsement Panel is recorded on the Endorsement Decision Form.

## **Guidelines for an Endorsement Interview**

This interview guide is to be used by Endorsement Panels. It is not meant to be narrowly prescriptive but to describe the flow of a thorough interview process. Each synodical or multi-synodical committee may adapt the basic elements of the guide to meet its own style and needs. However, there should be a fundamentally consistent pattern followed in conducting the Endorsement Panel so that candidates perceive correctly that there is an equitable and fair approach being followed by the various Candidacy Committees of the ELCA. The interview should be scheduled for a period of 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

### **Pre-interview Panel Briefing (15 minutes)**

Prior to the Endorsement Panel Interview, the two Candidacy Committee members and one ELCA seminary faculty member will introduce themselves to one another and review the candidate's file material. This material includes application materials, current seminary transcripts, the Entrance Decision report, and the Endorsement Essay. Panel members should discuss their responses to the Endorsement Essay and other relevant material or knowledge of the candidate. The interview provides an opportunity to affirm gifts and reflect on aspects of health and wellness as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel (see Appendix). The panel can identify primary topics and formulate lead questions for each of the areas covered by the Endorsement Essay: personal and interpersonal skills (emotional and social health), theological wisdom (intellectual health), spiritual growth and faith commitment (spiritual health), understanding of the specific ministry (vocational health) they wish to enter, and goals for growth.

### **The Endorsement Interview (30-45 minutes)**

The panel is convened by a member of the Candidacy Committee. Many panels and candidates value the opportunity to begin with prayer; this practice is encouraged.

The panel introduces the process to the candidate, establishes a conversational tone, and invites the candidate to engage in dialogue based on a relationship of mutual interest, trust, and exploration. It is helpful to remind the candidate that this is a time to assess *with* him or her strengths and growth areas as he or she prepares for ministry in this church. By listening carefully, by being fully prepared for the interview, and by demonstrating empathy and concern, the panel members will enable the candidate to receive the greatest benefit from this experience. In the event of unusual circumstances or special needs, particularly if the candidate was previously postponed for Endorsement, the panel may schedule a longer time segment to permit more extensive discussion. The Endorsement Essay asks the candidate to reflect on his or her understanding of the *Vision and Expectations* that this church has of its leaders. The panel should ask the candidate to state if he or she is living and intends to continue to live and conduct his or her life as a candidate in a manner consistent with the expectations expressed in *Vision and Expectations*. At the conclusion of the interview, the panel will invite the candidate to leave the room and return later for the recommendation of the panel.

### **Panel Reflection and Consultation**

During this time the panel will consult together and discuss the candidate's appropriateness for Endorsement. The panel may begin to prepare a preliminary draft of the Endorsement Panel report. This will identify the candidate's specific strengths and areas for growth and make suggestions and comments to present to the committee. The panel will determine what its recommendation will be to the Candidacy Committee. In the case of a postponement, extra care

should be taken to identify the areas that need to be developed and the persons responsible for relating to the candidate for accountability and follow up. In a situation where the panel believes a recommendation to deny Endorsement is in order, it is critical to determine pastoral care responsibilities for the candidate.

### **Panel Recommendation**

The panel and candidate come back together. The panel will share with the candidate the results of its reflection and consultation, including the recommendation that will be made to the committee, and allow the candidate to respond. The candidate should be reminded that this is a recommendation and that the final decision is made by the full Candidacy Committee. That decision will be communicated by the committee in a timely manner following the Candidacy Committee meeting. When the recommendation is postponement, it is important that the panel engage the candidate in the establishment of an agreement on the developmental goals and to identify clearly any specific requirements that must be met before the candidate will be considered again. A time for follow up and review should also be established at this time.

### **Report Preparation**

Panel members will make final preparation of the report to be submitted to the Candidacy Committee. All members of the panel should sign the report. The report is not to be changed once it is written, but additional information may be submitted to the Candidacy Committee at any time.

## **Endorsement Decision**

Three possible decisions may be made: *Endorsement; Denial of Endorsement; or Postponement of Endorsement*. The Endorsement Decision is made by the full Candidacy Committee using all information available. The recommendation of the panel is an important factor in this decision. Normally, the recommendation of the panel and the decision of the committee should be no more than one level of decision apart, i.e. a positive or a negative recommendation by the panel would result in a committee decision that is in agreement with the recommendation or the postponement, but not a diametrically opposite decision. In other words, if a panel recommends Endorsement, a committee may Endorse or postpone but not deny Endorsement until consultation with the faculty member of the panel. Similarly, a panel recommendation to deny Endorsement may lead to a committee decision to deny or postpone Endorsement but not to a decision to Endorse until consultation with the faculty member of the panel. Faculty members of the panel should be informed when the Candidacy Committee decision is different from the panel's recommendation. This process honors the partnership between seminary and committee while retaining the final responsibility in the Candidacy Committee.

**Positive Endorsement** reflects the committee's confidence in the candidate's formation and growth and indicates that unless there are unforeseen difficulties, there is every reason to believe the person will continue to grow in readiness to serve in one of this church's rostered ministries. Recommendations for continued growth and formation may be made at this time.

**Endorsement Denied** indicates that there are specific reasons why the person is not an appropriate candidate for rostered ministry in this church. Reasons must be clearly identified. The committee should be certain that the Candidacy Process has been faithfully followed and document the decision. The committee should ensure that appropriate pastoral care is given when the decision is communicated and that follow-up care is provided. Included in this care should be providing assistance to the person in identifying and affirming where his or her particular gifts for ministry might be appropriately used in this church and the community.

**Endorsement Postponed** means that while the committee sees potential for the individual to serve in rostered ministry, there are developmental needs or issues which must be addressed and reevaluated or conditions that must be met before the candidate can be Endorsed or participate in an ELCA internship. The report should clearly identify the developmental needs and indicate conditions that are to be met prior to reconsideration. The committee should designate who will monitor the recommendations and indicate when reconsideration will be scheduled and what procedure will be followed. A candidate should be encouraged to provide a written response stating an understanding of how concerns are to be addressed.

### **Reporting Endorsement Decisions**

The decision of the Candidacy Committee is to be reported to the candidate, the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, and the seminary using the Endorsement Decision Form. The seminary will communicate any recommendations from the panel or Candidacy Committee regarding internship to the field education office.

### **Withdrawal of Endorsement**

Endorsement, though a strong word of confidence, does not guarantee the committee's final approval of the candidate. If warranted by events or new information, Endorsement may be withdrawn by the Candidacy Committee. A decision to withdraw Endorsement is made on the basis of a determination that the individual is not qualified to serve in rostered ministry and ends candidacy. Such an action may be taken by a Candidacy Committee at any time.

### **Reapplication**

A minimum of one year must pass before a person who was denied Endorsement or whose Endorsement was withdrawn may once again apply for candidacy. Consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is required to determine the appropriate point of reentry into the Candidacy Process.

### **From Endorsement to Approval**

Endorsement continues to the time of approval. While there is no annual renewal of the Endorsement Decision, committees will continue to provide regular contact with candidates, through a relater or contact person, as well as through synod retreats or gatherings on campus.

The responsibility for monitoring continued theological and pastoral growth of the candidate is shared by the committee and seminary. The Endorsement Panel or Candidacy Committee may provide suggestions for an appropriate internship setting or other specific recommendations concerning preparation. The seminary will provide regular reports to the committee on course

work, supervised clinical ministry, contextual education, internship, and any other pertinent information regarding the candidate that could assist the committee in making a decision.

# Chapter 8 - Approval for Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Approval Process

In the Lutheran tradition a person's call from God to public ministry is understood as both internal and external:

1. Through an internal, personal sense of call that God is leading a person to public Christian ministry;
2. Through public confirmation that the person has the character, commitment, preparation, and ability to serve in a specific public ministry roster; and
3. Through the receipt and acceptance of a letter of call to serve in a particular ministry setting.

The responsibility for the Approval of candidates for rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is that of the Candidacy Committee. The Approval process is based upon the procedures and guidelines provided by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

The decision to Approve a candidate for rostered ministry is of major significance not only for the individual candidate but for the ministry settings served by the candidate during his or her years of ministry. A decision to Approve is confirmation by the Candidacy Committee on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that this person is qualified and suitable to serve under call in a designated rostered ministry of this church.

The two documents of this church that directly speak to the individual candidate's qualifications for rostered ministry are the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and *Vision and Expectations*. The first document defines the Basic Standards that candidates must meet for the roster for which they are being approved. The second document sets forth what this church expects of those who serve in positions of trust and responsibility, and states a vision for what rostered ministry can be in the life of the ELCA. Candidates shall be asked and must be able to state a clear intention to live and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with *Vision and Expectations*.

## Approval Essay

The Approval Essay assignment is prepared each year by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit and is available to candidates, Candidacy Committees, and seminaries of the ELCA on the ELCA Web site. This essay assignment is developed by a writing team appointed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, which includes both Candidacy Committee members and seminary faculty. Because candidates not attending ELCA seminaries may not have the same awareness of time lines and announcements, the Candidacy Committee should



seek to give these candidates direct notification about the posting of the assignment and the deadline for submitting the essay.

The essay questions provide an opportunity for a candidate to demonstrate readiness for rostered ministry through the exercise of theological wisdom related to practical situations and tasks of ministry. Candidates prepare a sermon or project, respond to a question on the Confessions, address a practical ministry situation, and reflect on questions of ministry, leadership, healthy living, and personal and ecclesial accountability. It is the responsibility of a candidate to send the completed essay to his or her Candidacy Committee by the required date.

## **Approval Components**

The candidate's complete file is available and should be reviewed and studied by the Candidacy Committee members interviewing the candidate. In addition, the following material is of importance for the Approval decision:

1. The Approval Essay;
2. The Report of the ELCA (or ELCIC) Seminary Faculty Recommendation;
3. The Report of Internship (or Supervised Field Experience);
4. Academic Report;
5. Report on CPE or other supervised clinical ministry, especially if completed after endorsement date; and
6. Approval Information Form.

The committee should request and review any other materials it deems relevant to discern the candidate's readiness for ministry.

## **The Approval Interview**

The Approval Interview is the setting for the Candidacy Committee's final evaluation meeting with the candidate. The members of the committee read the Approval Essay in preparation for this interview, as well as any other pertinent material from the candidate's file. The purpose of the Approval Interview is to review and inquire in depth into the candidate's readiness for rostered ministry.

The categories of readiness which should be reviewed during the interview are:

**Theological wisdom:** In this category the interview will focus on the candidate's understanding of and commitment to the Christian message and the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Is the candidate able to tell the story? Is the candidate equipped theologically and academically to be a leader in this church? Can the candidate articulate the mission of this church?

**Spirituality and faith commitment:** The focus is on the candidate's personal faith in Jesus Christ and the spiritual maturity that reflects that faith among the people of God. Can the candidate give expression to a faith that is vibrant and alive? Can the candidate witness to the presence of the Triune God in his or her life?

**Personal integrity, trustworthiness and leadership abilities:** The issues to be addressed are personal integrity, the ability to care for and be respectful of others, and the commitment to live one's life faithfully among the people of God. Is the candidate able and willing to serve in the public ministry of this church in a manner that is honest, responsible, and caring? Can this person assume a position of servant leadership in this church? Is the person living in accord with *Vision and Expectations*?

**Call to ministry and ministry gifts:** The committee seeks to be able to confirm—publicly that this candidate has the gifts, character, commitment, preparation, and ability to be called to service to this whole church.

## **Guidelines for an Approval Interview**

This interview guide is to be used by Candidacy Committees. It is offered as a model that describes the flow of a thorough interview process and a reminder of components to be included.

### **Preparation for the Interview (15 minutes)**

Prior to the interview, members of the Candidacy Committee, or a panel appointed by the Candidacy Committee, should review the entire file of the candidate. The primary focus for the interview is the Approval Essay. In addition, the committee reviews the internship evaluations, CPE reports, and other relevant material. It is helpful to prepare notes on topics that need to be covered. The interview team should discuss their responses to the Approval Essay and other relevant material or knowledge of the student. The candidate's relator or assigned liaison should be a member of the interview team. Out of this discussion the interviewers can identify topics to cover during the interview and identify persons who will ask lead questions. Preferably, the candidate's relator or contact person will serve as convener for the interview.

### **The Approval Interview (50-60 minutes)**

#### **1. Introductions and welcome**

A candidate should be introduced briefly to each person on the committee or panel. There is understandably considerable anxiety for candidates in anticipation of this interview. It is useful to make certain that a candidate understands the purpose of this interview in the Approval Process. A member of the Candidacy Committee can offer a prayer as the interview begins.

#### **2. Conversation and questions related to the Approval Essay**

Each of the sections of the Approval Essay should be referred to and used in the interview process. The goal is to provide the opportunity to discuss all areas of the essay. However, in some cases there may be concerns in one area that require more detailed questioning. Strengths revealed in the essay should be affirmed. If the committee anticipates a difficult decision regarding the Approval of the candidate, it is important that adequate time be allowed for deliberation and discussion.

**3. Questions related to internship, CPE, and other topics of interest specific to this candidate**

Genuine interest in the preparation and formation of the candidate and his or her experiences is important. Hopes for future ministry settings might also be discussed.

**4. Questions related to *Vision and Expectations***

The document *Vision and Expectations* reflects this church's vision for ordained ministry and rostered lay ministries and its expectations for those who serve, or who seek to serve, in those ministries. It is the latter purpose that is to be included in this interview.

As the Approval panel deals with the document, it would be useful to ask of each candidate his or her understanding of the call to rostered ministry; faithfulness to this church's Confession of Faith; the pastor, associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister as person and example; and faithful witness.

In order to assist both the committee and the candidate in clarifying the candidate's knowledge of and commitment to the expectations of the ELCA, the following questions may be asked:

- a. What does it mean to be properly called and ordained? (ordination candidates only) or What does it mean to be called and commissioned or consecrated? (rostered lay ministry candidates)
- b. What is your understanding of the Confession of Faith of the ELCA? (Chapter Two of ELCA Constitution)
- c. Do you have any questions or reservations concerning that Confession of Faith?
- d. What is your understanding of the expectation of the ELCA for rostered ministers to be an example in faithful service and holy living and in faithful witness?
- e. Are you living and do you intend to continue to live and conduct your life as a rostered leader in a manner consistent with the expectations expressed in *Vision and Expectations*?

The discussion of the document should keep in mind that *Vision and Expectations* is not a juridical document but one that is intended to identify important aspects of rostered ministry. A candidate may want to discuss aspects of the document. What is important is that the candidate be able to affirm his or her current compliance and intention to continue to seek to comply with these expectations (as implied in the responses in the rites of Ordination, Consecration, or Commissioning by the statement "I will, and I ask God to help me").

**5. Approval Information Form**

Out of care for this church we have asked you to answer the questions on the Approval Information Form. Now we invite you to discuss your written answers and share other information that you feel would be helpful to the committee.

- No  Yes 1. Do you now engage or have you ever engaged in any addictive behavior, including drug or alcohol abuse or sexual or pornographic addictions?

- No  Yes    2. Have you ever been terminated or resigned from any employment or volunteer activities due to accusations of misconduct, whether financial, sexual, ethical, or other improper behavior?
- No  Yes    3. Have you ever been engaged in, accused of, charged with, or convicted of a crime or illegal conduct, including conduct resulting in suspension or revocation of your driver's license?
- No  Yes    4. Have you ever been engaged in, accused of, sued, or charged with sexual molestation, sexual harassment, child neglect or abuse, spousal neglect or abuse, or financial improprieties?
- No  Yes    5. Do you have any sexual attraction toward children or minors, or any history of sexually deviant behavior, including behavior with children or minors?
- No  Yes    6. Have you engaged in any behavior or been involved in any situations that, if they became known by the church, might seriously damage your ability to be a rostered minister?
- No  Yes    7. Do you have or have you had any health conditions (physical or psychological) that might interfere with your ability to serve as a rostered leader in the ELCA?
- No  Yes    8. Are there issues in your family situation or personal life that could adversely affect your ability to serve as a rostered leader in the ELCA?
- No  Yes    9. Is your personal debt, excluding mortgages, greater than \$25,000?
- No  Yes    10. Have you ever defaulted on a loan or declared bankruptcy?
- No  Yes    11. Are you familiar with the document *Vision and Expectations*?
- No  Yes    12. Do you intend to live in accord with its standards of conduct as a candidate and as a rostered leader in the ELCA?

Following the discussion, the form is to be signed by the candidate and at least one member of the Candidacy Committee.

## 6. Wrap up and Closure

Appreciation for the partnership in this time of preparation and evaluation can be affirmed and the committee informs the candidate that the Approval Decision is made by the entire Candidacy Committee in plenary. The candidate should be informed about when and how he or she can expect to be advised of the decision.

## **Recommendation of Candidates by ELCA or ELCIC Seminaries**

### **The Schedule of Approval and Assignment**

During the final year of candidacy, every candidate studying at or affiliated with an ELCA seminary or studying at an ELCIC seminary must receive a recommendation from the faculty of that seminary. For candidates on a typical schedule, this recommendation is made by November 15. Candidacy Committees act on approval by January 15. Primary assignment to regions and synods occurs in late February at the Churchwide Assignment Consultation arranged by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. A second Churchwide Assignment Consultation is scheduled in the fall.

### **The Role of the Faculty**

Theological education is a period of intellectual, spiritual, and vocational exploration. The faculty has the special role in the process of providing theological education that equips candidates for effective and faithful leadership in ministry. This includes both fostering critical capacity as well as the ability to articulate Christian beliefs from a Lutheran confessional perspective. At the point of recommendation for Approval it is important that an assessment be made by the faculty whether a candidate is both intellectually and personally ready to serve in the rostered ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The recommendation of the ELCA or ELCIC seminary faculty is a key component in enabling the Candidacy Committee to make its final assessment and decision.

The candidate, the seminary faculty, and the Candidacy Committee are interdependent partners in the preparation and evaluation of candidates for ministry. All partners are best served by free and open sharing of perspectives and information. Additional communication beyond written reports may be necessary and helpful for synod and seminary to cooperate in the care and guidance of candidates throughout the Candidacy Process and in arriving at wise decisions regarding approval.

### **The Faculty Interview**

In preparation for the faculty action to recommend candidates for ordained ministry and consecrated diaconal ministry, some members of the faculty should have occasion to meet personally with each candidate in order to review his or her program of study and to assess each candidate's readiness for ministry. These reviews may be arranged in a variety of ways. Usually the advisor will be involved. At some seminaries a single interview will serve both as an internship debriefing and a recommendation interview. The interview group or a member of it may be responsible for drafting the written evaluation of the candidate for the faculty, Candidacy Committee, and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The faculty interview focuses on the candidate's personal, spiritual, vocational, theological, intellectual, and professional development during the seminary years. Based on the interview, members of the interview team should be prepared to state to the faculty whether or not the candidate meets the basic constitutional standards for ordained or rostered lay ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America including:

1. Commitment to Christ;
2. Acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
3. Willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;

4. Academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships; and
5. Commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living.

The faculty interview does not replace or duplicate the formal Approval Interview conducted by the Candidacy Committee. The faculty interview reflects on the candidate's seminary experience. The Approval Interview by the Candidacy Committee focuses on the Approval Essay and readiness to serve.

### **The Faculty Recommendation**

The full faculty will make one of three recommendations:

1. Approval;
2. Denial of approval; or
3. Postponement of approval.

Individual faculty members may abstain in cases where they are not well acquainted with the candidate. The decision should normally be by a two-thirds majority; when it is less than two-thirds but still by a majority, this fact should be noted in the report to the Candidacy Committee.

A positive recommendation by the faculty of a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada shall normally be necessary in order for the Candidacy Committee to approve a candidate for ordination. The faculty and the Candidacy Committee, however, may sometimes come to divergent judgments regarding the approval of candidates. In such cases, the Candidacy Committee may, after careful deliberation including further consultation with the seminary through the dean, finally deny approval to a candidate who has been recommended by a faculty of a seminary of this church.

When a seminary faculty recommends denial of approval, the seminary will inform not only the Candidacy Committee but also the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit of the decision. A recommendation for denial of approval will be regarded with the utmost seriousness by the Candidacy Committee.

When the Candidacy Committee receives a recommendation to postpone or deny approval of a candidate, it will consult directly with representatives of the faculty before the Approval Interview in order to understand the factors that informed the faculty decision. The Candidacy Committee may invite a member of the faculty to be present at the Approval Interview and participate in the committee's deliberations.

Expense for the participation of the faculty member will be the responsibility of the seminary. A representative of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit must also be present at the Candidacy Committee meeting when candidates who have been denied faculty recommendation are to be considered for Approval for ordination.

Where there has not been adequate or conclusive consultation between the faculty, the Candidacy Committee, and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, the committee is

encouraged to postpone Approval until the consultation can be completed and any misunderstandings resolved. When the partners have been carefully heard, it is the Candidacy Committee that makes the decision regarding Approval.

### **The Evaluative Report (Form D)**

A written evaluation of the candidate is prepared by the faculty and available for review and amendment by the academic dean, advisor, and other members of the faculty. The Report of Internship is compiled by the seminary staff responsible for internship on the basis of the evaluations submitted by the intern, internship supervisor, lay committee, and the faculty debriefing. Both reports and the formal recommendation are recorded on the evaluative report.

The faculty recommendation (Form D) is sent both to the Candidacy Committee and to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The faculty may wish to attach additional comments for use by the Candidacy Committee to assist them in their decision concerning Approval. The faculty is encouraged to be as explicit and concrete as possible in its evaluations. For example, the faculty might address areas of continuing education and formation that should be specifically identified by the Candidacy Committee as items the candidate should address during the first years of his or her ministry.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America depends on the wisdom and discernment of the Candidacy Committee in determining who will serve as rostered leaders. Such a responsibility is one that must be taken with the utmost seriousness and humility, relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If any new information emerges after Form D is completed that might alter or affect the recommendation, the seminary will communicate with the candidacy committee as well as the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

## **Candidates at Seminaries Other Than Those of the ELCA or ELCIC**

Candidates for ordination who have attended non-ELCA/ELCIC seminaries are not exempt from the requirement that they receive a recommendation from an ELCA/ELCIC faculty. Since these candidates are required to be affiliated with an ELCA seminary and normally spend one year at an ELCA seminary, most candidates will be known well enough by an ELCA faculty for them to make an informed recommendation. Where such a relationship has not been established or where the candidate is not on the campus of the ELCA seminary for the final year of preparation, it is the responsibility of the candidate to meet with the ELCA faculty and provide whatever information needed for them to make a meaningful recommendation. Candidates from non-ELCA/ELCIC seminaries may provide the ELCA faculty and their Candidacy Committees with additional references from the faculty of the seminary they attended. Candidates for consecration as diaconal ministers who attended non-ELCA seminaries receive a recommendation from the ELCA seminary with which they are affiliated.

## **The Approval Decision**

The Candidacy Committee acts on the Approval of the candidate following the Approval Interview. Before an Approval Decision can be made, all required material must be received by the Candidacy Committee, including the faculty recommendation, CPE report, and final internship or field experience report. In the case of fourth-year internships, it is recommended that the internship be completed prior to Approval. This normally means that fourth-year interns participate in the assignment of candidates for first call later in the final year. In some cases, the final internship report may be prepared after a minimum of nine months of internship, following consultation and agreement by seminary and Candidacy Committee. Three possible decisions may be made:

**Approval** confirms readiness for public ministry. The committee affirms the candidate's character, commitment, preparation, and ability to serve as a called leader in this church.

**Denial of Approval** means that the candidacy is ended. Reasons for this decision are clearly stated to the candidate in writing. The committee should be certain that the Candidacy Process has been faithfully followed. Appropriate pastoral care should be arranged.

**Approval Postponed** indicates there are issues or conditions that must be resolved prior to the candidate's being considered again for approval. The committee provides clear directions to the candidate to work on specific developmental goals and return to the committee at a later date. The candidate should be encouraged to provide a written response stating an understanding of how concerns are to be addressed.

### **Reporting Approval Decisions (Form E)**

The Candidacy Committee reports its decision to the candidate, the candidate's ELCA or ELCIC seminary and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit on Form E. In the case of candidates denied approval, the Candidacy Committee reports the action and the reasons for this action in writing to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit staff person overseeing Candidacy.

The reporting of the Approval Decision is made according to the annual schedule prepared by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

### **Withdrawal of Approval**

A candidate's Approved status may be withdrawn by action of the Candidacy Committee that made the Approval Decision at any time prior to the candidate's receipt and acceptance of a letter of call. This action may be taken when the committee believes that the candidate no longer is qualified to serve in rostered ministry. Such reason may be related to conduct that is inappropriate to the standards and expectations of this church or to a change in the candidate's personal life that would disqualify or postpone the candidate from accepting a letter of call.

Action to withdraw Approval should be taken by a Candidacy Committee only after consultation with the bishop of the synod of assignment of the candidate. Such action is reported to that



bishop and the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. The seminary of the candidate should also be informed. This ends the candidacy.

### **Reapplication**

A minimum of one year must pass before a person who was denied Approval or had Approval withdrawn may once again apply for candidacy. Consultation with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit is required to determine the appropriate point of reentry into the process.

### **Assignment**

This church calls and sends leaders where they are needed for the mission of this church. The ELCA is committed to the effective, fair, and appropriate deployment of rostered leaders for the ministry of this church. This is a complex matter involving the needs and mission of this whole church, the gifts and situations of candidates, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Churchwide Assignment Consultation is scheduled at various times each year for approved candidates to be assigned to a region and synod in order to facilitate the interview process for first call. Assignment dates and relevant deadlines are available at [www.elca.org/candidacy](http://www.elca.org/candidacy). Candidate résumés are circulated to all bishops, who then indicate their requests. Bishops base requests for first-call candidates on the number of congregations that are considered “first-call sites.” Candidates have an opportunity to express their preference and any restrictions or limitations on their availability to serve.

Forms A, B, D, E, and R must be on file with the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit by the published date for a candidate to be included in the assignment process. Forms are to be submitted electronically in a timely manner.

Some situations warrant a more immediate response to the needs of this church and an approved candidate than the scheduled assignment times provides. An administrative assignment may be made when authorized and approved through a procedure established by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

Those who participate in the Churchwide Assignment Consultation engage in prayerful conversation as assignment decisions are made. All information about assignments is published on the ELCA Web site in “A Guide to the ELCA Assignment Process.” A candidate remains under the care and guidance of the synod Candidacy Committee until the time when a call is extended. Ongoing support and attention is important in this time of transition.

### **Renewal and Re-approval**

#### **Renewal (three years)**

A candidate who has been approved and assigned to a region and synod of this church is approved for a period of one year. If the candidate has not received and accepted a letter of call within one year, the Candidacy Committee must determine whether it will **renew** the approval decision for that candidate. An interview is not required for such a decision but may be requested by the committee if needed. The renewal decision, like the original approval decision,

is effective for one year and may be made twice. A request for renewal should be made in writing by the Approved candidate. The decision should be communicated to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Unless reassigned, a candidate remains assigned to the synod of original assignment.

### **Re-approval**

If three years have elapsed without the receipt and acceptance of a letter of call by the candidate, the candidate must make a request to be considered for **re-approval**. The re-approval process is one that normally includes the following components:

1. The preparation of the current Approval Essay;
2. A Review Panel recommendation (required if more than five years have elapsed since the original approval). The Theological Review Panel is appointed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit, normally at the ELCA seminary where the candidate studied; and
3. An Approval Interview.

The Candidacy Committee should require a Psychological Evaluation of the candidate, according to the criteria of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Re-approval is valid for one year and can be renewed twice. The candidate is to provide the information required by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit according to the schedule for assignment. Entering the re-approval process also includes participating in the regional and synodical churchwide assignment process, if re-approval is granted.

# Chapter 9 - Candidacy and Assignment Forms

## **Introduction to Forms**

Candidacy forms have been created for the use of all partners in candidacy as a means of supporting a system of reliable and accessible information available to candidacy partners (candidate, congregation, synod, seminary, and Congregational and Synodical Mission unit). All candidacy forms are available for use at the ELCA Website <http://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Candidacy>. Since forms are updated from time to time, all users should access the most current version at this Web site.

Formatta Filler is required to open and view Candidacy forms. Formatta Filler makes it possible to complete, save, print, submit and/or e-mail forms with a computer. Once Formatta Filler is installed on a computer (the download is available from the ELCA Web site) the links on the Web site will provide access to the desired forms. Technical support is available by calling 800-638-3522, ext 2870.

## **Electronic Filing of Candidacy Forms**

All aspects of Candidacy are enhanced by a more efficient, accessible and reliable system for sharing candidacy information among candidates, synods, congregations, seminaries and churchwide staff. Electronic filing of candidacy information standardizes communication of committee decisions and other information that is collected. This method of filing also increases reliability of data contained in the roster database of the ELCA.

Synod Candidacy Committees are to submit all decision forms via electronic filing at the ELCA Web Applications page ([www.elca.org/ScriptLib](http://www.elca.org/ScriptLib)). Instructions and passwords to access the Candidacy Portal and submit forms via electronic filing are available from the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit at 800-638-3522, extension 2870. The Formatta Forms are encrypted prior to submission, which provides a secure method of transmission across the internet.

Only those synod staff specifically responsible for communicating Candidacy Committee decisions to the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit should be authorized to submit candidacy e-forms via the Candidacy Portal. After submission to the Web site, the e-form information is reviewed by the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit prior to import into the roster database. Any partner in Candidacy whose responsibilities in the Candidacy Process require access to candidate information is authorized to view candidacy e-forms. These would include Candidacy Committee chairpersons, synod bishops and their designated synod staff, some seminary staff, and churchwide staff who are responsible for candidacy tracking and maintenance of the roster database system.

## **Candidacy and Assignment Forms**

<http://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Candidacy>

# **10. Appendix**

### **Useful Links for Candidates and Candidacy Committees**

General candidacy information – <http://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Candidacy>

“Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the ELCA” and “Vision and Expectations: Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses, Diaconal Ministers in the ELCA” -

<http://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Candidacy>

The Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA -

<http://www.elca.org/Resources/Office-of-the-Secretary>

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Chapters 2, 4 and 7, “Confession of Faith,” “Statement of Purpose,” and “Ministry” are especially relevant to the candidacy process.

## **The Wholeness Wheel**

Healthy leaders enhance lives. Candidacy Committees may use the Wholeness Wheel as a tool for evaluating a candidate's readiness for public ministry. Using the wheel may be helpful in gathering appropriate supportive information about dimensions of health that impact ministry. The wheel may also provide a picture of balance for helping candidates intentionally prepare for public ministry.



The Wholeness Wheel starts in the center with the individual as a new creation through baptism and a member of the body of Christ. Around the center are the interrelated aspects of wellness—physical, emotional, social/interpersonal, vocational, and intellectual. To be whole means to keep in balance by intentionally nurturing and attending to each aspect. Surrounding everything is spiritual health that contains and supports us through faith and our relationship with God.

To be successful in public ministry and help the church carry out its mission in challenging times, candidates should demonstrate self-care and pay attention to the balance reflected on the Wholeness Wheel. The church needs healthy leaders to lead our congregations and other ministries so that we can reach out to all people with the Gospel.

For more information about the ELCA Wholeness Wheel, developed in 1997 by the Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness, go to [www.elca.org/health](http://www.elca.org/health).