



## Candidacy Working Group



Krista Anderson, Irma Banales, Jacqui Pagel, Phil Hirsch, Susan Candea, Tim Feiertag,  
Guy Erwin, Cherlyne Beck, Terri Elton, David Lenz, Sara Cutter



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

## **Agenda: Candidacy Hearings Candidacy Working Group**

**Opening Prayer & introduction of conversation partners**

**Introduction of format – sharing of information and then time for small group conversations**

**Information sharing: What we have learned from the ELCA**

**Comments and sharing from you**

**Closing prayer and thanks for those who need to leave at end of hour**

**For those who want to stay for additional conversation: What if?**

# Candidacy Working Group



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
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## The purpose of this team:

Recognizing that candidacy is a process of accompaniment and ongoing discernment that forms and prepares rostered ministers for public leadership:

The candidacy leadership development working group will adapt the candidacy process of the ELCA, to serve the needs of the current and future church.

## To guide our work, we have discerned these values:

- For the sake of the Gospel through a Lutheran lens for the sake of the world
- Self-sacrificing openness and humility within the boundaries of #1
- Relationships
- Mutual Accountability



# Candidacy Leadership Development



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

## Ongoing Work:

- Continue to define what our rostered ministers need to be, know, and do: challenges and opportunities
- Study governing documents and process for change
- Engage with other stakeholders
- Prototype formation process options

## Our vision:

is to recommend a process for candidacy that forms and supports rostered leaders for the current and future church.

Updates: [elca.org/formation](https://elca.org/formation)

# Gathering Data





**As you listen today, keep the following in mind:**

**Reflecting on the data**

- What resonates with you?
- What surprises you?
- What might you imagine moving forward?



**Candidacy Working Group**

**Know, Be, Do Survey**

Over 800 responses

## **An online survey gathered data on 5 open-ended questions:**

1. What do current and future leaders of the church need to know?
2. Who do current and future leaders of the church need to be?
3. What do current and future leaders of the church need to do?
4. What challenges do you see in forming leaders for the current and future needs of the church?
5. What opportunities and possibilities do you see for forming leaders for the current and future needs of the church?

The results on what leaders need to know, be, and do were affirming, insightful, and provocative.

### **Affirming**

in that respondents identified that current and future leaders need many of the competencies that have been core for rostered leaders for decades.

### **Insightful**

in that there are themes that integrate what leaders need to know, be, and do. This is encouraging and challenging for the formation process and candidacy because different parties are responsible for the knowing, being, and doing of ministry.

### **Provocative**

in that respondents recognized a need for new models of church, ministry, and leadership formation. These models must include: a) deep engagement with paradigm shifts, b) discovering what it means to be church in a secular age, c) engaging the community outside of the congregation, fostering cultural intelligence, and working on anti-racism, and d) equipping all of God's people to live their calling.



# CONTEXTUAL REALITIES

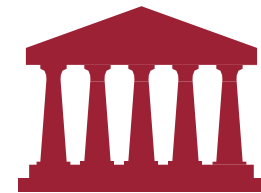


## End of Christendom



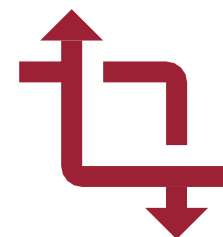
- De-centering of the Church
- Secular Age
- Generational gap

## Political Divide



- Polarized Society
- Theology and Politics
- Culture of Fear

## Navigating Meta-Shifts



- Several Paradigm Shifts
- Rapid Speed of Change

What does it mean for the church to live it's call not at the center of society?

**Leading in the midst of cultural tensions, particularly the divide created by political ideologies, is a huge barrier for congregations.**

**Leaders and congregations struggle to understand and make meaning in the midst of meta-paradigm shifts.**

How does the ELCA navigate the transition from what "was" to what "is emerging"?





# Need **NEW MODELS**

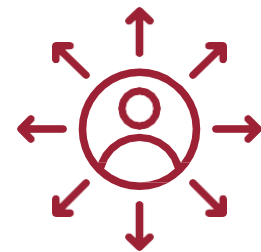


## Congregations



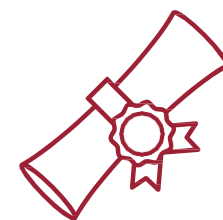
- Current Models are not Sufficient
- Diversity of Calls
- In, but not of the world

## Leadership



- Expand view of Leadership
- Capacities for Leading
- Support and Development

## Theological Education



- Theological Core
- Theology and Praxis
- Ministry Competencies

Societal realities call for new models of congregational life and ministry that are design for a living faith in a secular, digital, multicultural age.

**Looking to the future, leadership needs to be reimagined with an eye toward diverse callings and contexts across the ELCA ecology and lifespan.**

**Theological education needs to remain grounded in a rich Lutheran theological core that seeks to make meaning within paradigm shifts that translates into ministry practices.**



# What are CHALLENGES ?

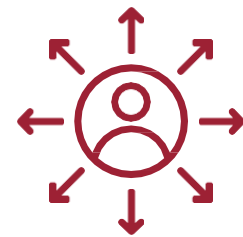


## ELCA Systems



- ELCA' Current Structures
- Candidacy
- Seminary/Theological Education

## Leadership



- Candidates
- Calls
- Leadership Formation

## Resources/Finances



- Seminary
- Salaries
- Resources

**ELCA structures were designed for different realities in church and society.**

Candidacy is part of the ELCA ecology with many interrelated systems, so changes must be done in conversation with the whole ELCA ecology.

**Theological education must become detangled from seminary education/degree programs.**

How do we best attend to the formation of the leader in this time?

**Calls are changing.**  
**Is our current model/paradigm of leadership sufficient for the future?**

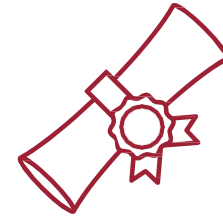
**Our current operating paradigm of church relies heavily on resources.**



# What are OPPORTUNITIES?

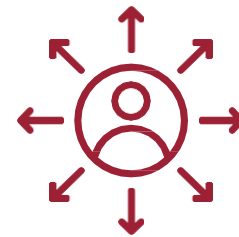


## Theological Education



- Continue reimagining M.Div. programs
- Expand Theological Education
- Draw on Theology

## Leadership Development



- In Conversation with Contextual Realities
- Particular Competencies are Needed.
- For Various Callings

## Candidacy



- Formation
- Candidacy Process
- ELCA Structure

**The formation process needs to expand to include various callings.**

The structure of the ELCA needs to be more accessible, flexible, and collaborative.

**We need to develop leaders for what is emerging - leaders who can "midwife" new models of ministry.**

New models of ministry are needed that fit contextual realities and expand access.

**Theological education remains critical for the ELCA and leadership formation.**

Contextualize theological education; integrate it into congregational life/ministry and see it as a lifelong endeavor.

# What do current and future leaders need to **KNOW** ?



## Theology



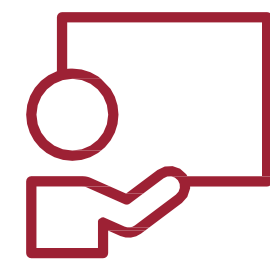
- Bible
- Church History
- Reformation/Lutheran History
- Lutheran Theology/Confessions
- Systematic Theology
- Ecclesiology
- Other Faiths

## Ministry Practices



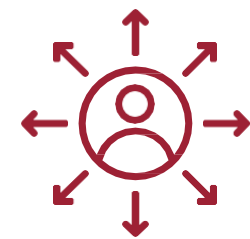
- Preaching
- Worship
- Teaching
- Discipleship
- Evangelism
- Pastoral Care/Relational Ministry

## Theory



- Family Systems
- Cultural Awareness
- How to read contexts
- Psychology/Sociology
- Social Justice/Anti-racism
- Community Organizing

## Leadership Practices



- Administration
- Adaptive Leadership
- Conflict Management
- Strategic Planning
- Stewardship

Solid understanding of the Theology of the Cross and practices that embody this theology.

**Reliable Action-Reflective Praxis questions**

**Deep understanding of scripture and theology are essential but not enough. Our leaders need tools for understanding cultures that allow them to make the core teachings come alive in particular places and times.**

They need a rich understanding of what it means to be "the church" - from empowering believers in their daily vocations to new models of congregational life and engagement to the institutions of the church that extend impact.

# What do current and future leaders need to **DO** ?



## Personal and Interpersonal Competencies

- Listen
- Cultivate community
- Nurture relationships
- Foster trust
- Conflict resolution
- Collaborate
- Empower others
- Discover others gifts/call
- Emotional Intelligence/Boundaries
- Good communicator
- Engage in Spiritual Practices

## Community Engagement

- Contextualize
- Engage people outside congregation
- Cultural awareness/engagement
- Community organizing
- Work for justice and reconciliation
- Work with other partners
- Engage other faith traditions

## Ministry Competencies

- Preaching
- Worship
- Teaching
- Discipleship
- Evangelism
- Pastoral Care

## Leadership Competencies

- Lead theologically
- Communication
- Administration
- Adaptive Leadership/lead change
- Discerning God's Movement
- Shared Leadership
- Learner (Coach, Peer Group)

**Pay attention to the conditions of the wider context to discern how the gifts of the people serve the community around them.**

Be able to equip the people in their community to engage scripture and witness within daily life.

**Provide administrative leadership.**

Lead worship and preach in a way that honors the tradition and is responsive to the context. Serve the needs of the broader community as well as the congregation.

Proclaim the good news of Jesus in words and actions, facilitate faith formation, equip God's people to lead and serve with joy and generosity of spirit.

**Be entrepreneurs while thinking theologically.**

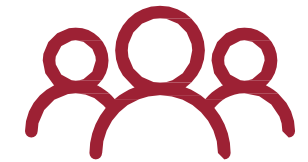
**Lead collaboratively and courageously.**



# What do current and future leaders need to **BE** ?



## Emotional and Relational Intelligence



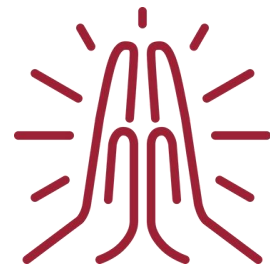
- Non-anxious presence
- Self-differentiated
- Self-aware/Self-reflective
- Boundaries
- Self-disciplined
- Emotional maturity
- Resilient
- Vulnerable
- Approachable
- Empathetic Listener
- Love for people
- Connectedness
- Relates with diverse people
- Engages conflict

## Outward Focused



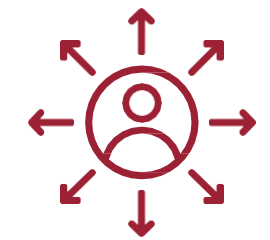
- Aware of bias
- Oriented to the world/neighbor
- Open to new ways of thinking/being
- Evangelical
- Missional - missionaries
- Justice-oriented

## Spiritual Intelligence



- Grounded in faith
- Passionate follower of Jesus
- Confident in the grace of God
- Engaged in spiritual practices (Spiritual Direction)
- Hopeful
- Discerning Spirit's leading

## Leadership Capacities



- Awareness of gifts/weakness
- Call (inward/outward)
- Humble Servant
- Visionary
- Strategic/problem solver
- Passion for ministry
- Risk-taker/Entrepreneur
- Agile/flexible

## Academic/Lifelong Learner



- Curious
- Asks questions
- Creative
- Growth mindset/Becoming nature
- Learns from and with others
- Knowledgeable about Bible, theology, ministry
- Can communicate ideas to everyday people

Personally: self-aware, spiritually fed, well-balanced, and capable of establishing and maintaining boundaries

**Professionally: teachers, preachers, worship planners, social workers, advocates, and empathetic listeners**

**Flexible, adaptable, forward thinking, emotionally tempered, caring, loving and self-differentiated from the system.**

Servant leaders, spiritually grounded, emotional maturity, open to change, with listening and communication skills

**Model faithful trust in God while also realizing their own humanity and brokenness. Air of humility.**

**Candidacy Working Group**

**Feedback from Conference of Bishops, Seminary Presidents, 800 listening session responses**

## **Process - What's Working**



**Organized, Intentional, and Flexible**

**Committees working together** lay people, rostered leaders, bishops, seminary representatives, and CaLM all come together for candidates.

**Three touch points** entrance (sense of call), endorsement (ready to try), approval (ready to lead). Helpful to have a time of discernment before entrance.

**Relators** who can accompany candidates on individual basis

**Partnership** between churchwide, synods, and seminaries

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# Process Pain Points: Candidacy Committees



## Inconsistency across synods

creates anxiety for candidates.  
Variety of expectations, inconsistent interactions with candidates, what is acceptable in one synod is not in another, inconsistency in psyche assessment

## Dual Roles

discernment partner and evaluator - power dynamics

## Gatekeepers

personal agendas - no grace, only gatekeeping

## Need accountability

no churchwide office for candidates to reach out to if synod is unsafe

## Underrepresented populations

treated "disdainfully"

## Need more training

particularly in Word and service and DEI, with an eye toward consistency across the ELCA. Training is nationwide,

## Diversity of Candidacy Committee Members

some committee lack diversity

## Candidacy Working Group

Summary from General Survey, CoB & Seminary Presidents, Historically Excluded Populations Survey, CW Candidacy Team

# General Process Pain Points

## Part 1



**Too many Steps**      too complicated - too many interviews

**"isms" baked into process**      Racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia

**Hoops**

**Lack of space for Authenticity**      Little concern for integrity or truthfulness (candidates say the right things instead of what's true)

**Balancing nimble and flexible with careful evaluation**

## Candidacy Working Group

Summary from General Survey, CoB & Seminary Presidents, Historically Excluded Populations Survey, CW Candidacy Team

# General Process Pain Points

## Part 2



**Forms** number of them, different platforms, etc.

**Technology (IT)** forms don't work right, database is restrictive, problems w/Community Portal, ECIS, and community not talking to each other

**Candidacy (First Call)** takes a lot of time for synod staff who is stretched too thin (cultivating internships, learning different processes, following up with candidates, etc., and things fall through the cracks)



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Summary from General Survey, CoB & Seminary Presidents, Historically Excluded Populations Survey, CW Candidacy Team

# General Process Pain Points

## Part 3



- Lack of Clarity** causes triangulation, differing agendas, mismatch timelines and general confusion (for all parties). Particular: Form D and Partner agendas projected on candidates
- Competencies** Lack of core competencies and competencies are not clearly defined/measurable
- Redundance of TEEM Process** feels like hoops for candidates - CAPs and interviews
- Renewal/Reapproval Process** why do we renew candidates that have already been approved - not their fault, especially BIPOC and LGBTQIA+

# Process Adjacent Themes



## Intentional Discernment/Recruitment



- Need for adequate discernment/inquiry process
- Be clear about what rostered minister's face wit those discerning
- Intentionally recruit candidates with high leadership capabilities
- Improve recruitment across the board (especially for young people and people without degrees)
- SAM as pathway for recruitment - financially support them through candidacy process
- Lack of consistent formalized discernment process prior to candidacy



## Mentoring

- Formal mentoring throughout candidacy and first call



## Continuing Education

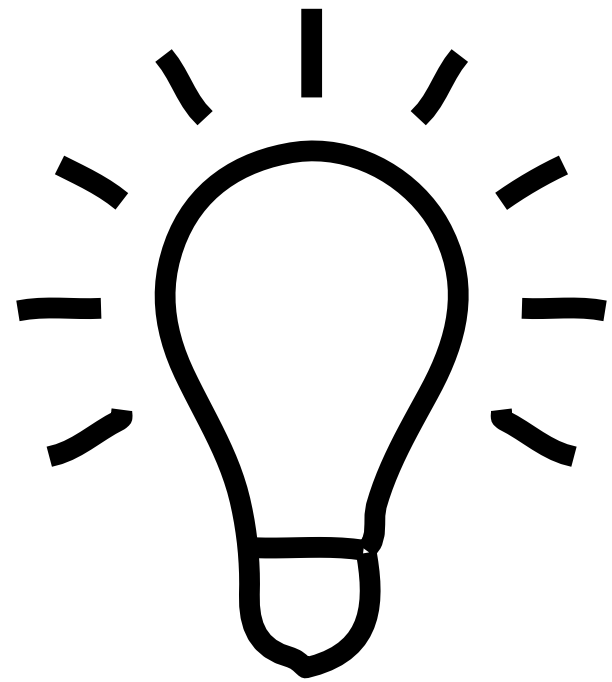
- Need for required ongoing continuing education



## Your Turn: Small group conversations

### Reflecting on the data

- What resonated with you?
- What surprised you?
- What might you imagine moving forward?

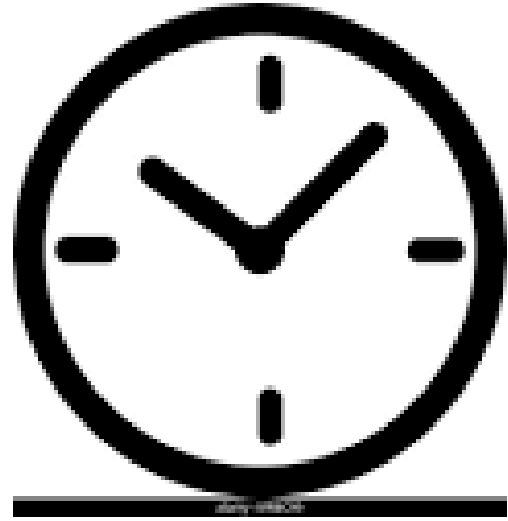


## Further wonderings...Your Turn

### What if....

- Internship was integrated into first call.
  - What are the pros and cons?
- There was a shared set of competencies for "licensed lay ministers."
  - How could that serve the church's current and future needs?
- Assessment was built into the process
  - How does this impact process?

# Candidacy Working Group



## **Working Timeline to enhance our ability to share the gospel.**

### **September 26, 2023 – Conference of Bishops Fall Meeting for their review**

First draft of the “process” which would include our consensus about: Purpose of Candidacy Process , Importance of Discernment, Core Competencies, Paths for Ministry

### **November 2023 – Church Council Meeting**

Following feedback from Conference of Bishops, have 2nd draft ready for church council review, seminary presidents

### **March 27, 2024 - Conference of Bishops Meeting for review**

2nd draft of “process” based on feedback on above, ready to submit to Church council

### **Spring 2024 – Church Council**

Share 2nd draft of “process” as well as possible constitutional changes

### **Fall 2024 – Conference of Bishops Meeting**

Draft of candidacy manual for their review

### **Fall 2024 – Church Council meeting**

Draft of candidacy manual for their review

Suggested constitutional changes to be recommended to churchwide assembly

### **Spring 2025 – Conference of Bishops Meeting**

Final draft of candidacy manual

### **Spring 2025 – Church Council**

Final draft of candidacy manual (approval based upon adoption of constitutional amendments)

### **August 2025 – Churchwide Assembly**

Approval of any needed constitutional amendments





**Candidacy impacts all of us  
Stay in touch at [elca.org/formation](http://elca.org/formation)**

**Thank you...**

- for your time
- for your care
- for your prayers