



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

CANDIDACY MANUAL



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With authority given to the Christian Community and Leadership home area in consultation with the Office of the Secretary to make any necessary corrections for clarity and accuracy.

Cover: “Holy Trinity Icon” by Andrei Rublev (15th-century Russian)

Commentary on the icon of the Holy Trinity: Contemplation of the Holy Trinity as a relational, sending God is central to our faith and, therefore, guides the church in the discernment that is integral to the candidacy process. The church invites all who engage in any aspect of the candidacy process – applicants, candidates, candidacy committee members, seminary faculty, congregations, campus ministries and others – to center on God throughout the process and to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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An online summary of the candidacy process is available for applicants at www.elca.org/en/resources/candidacy

1 Candidacy in the ELCA

So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a, NRSV).

1.1 Introduction to Candidacy

As the Christian church participates in God's mission in the world, there is a renewed awareness that God is making all things new. As both the church and its contexts for ministry change, leadership needs in the church also change. New categories of leadership are emerging and likely will continue to emerge for the foreseeable future.

The ELCA recognizes the emergence of a renewed emphasis upon God's mission in the world in the 21st century. Christians enter into partnership with God's work in the world through baptism into the body of Christ. Every faith community is part of a mission field that requires a common understanding that every congregation is a mission center in which rostered ministers are called to equip through word, sacrament, and service every baptized Christian to be an ambassador for God's mission in the world.

The ELCA is committed to the intentional identification and support of those whom God has given the gift of missional imagination and the ability to provide leadership in the church. The grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ means that all the baptized, as members of a universal priesthood of believers, are called to a vocation of mission in their daily lives. Members of this priesthood are gifted, enabled, and called to active participation in God's mission, both in their faith communities and in the world. Each person pursues a path of discernment culminating in an awareness of a unique call. Such discernment often emerges through years of struggle and searching. The call comes in a variety of ways. For some, the call comes in the form of a dramatic moment of inspiration. For others, it comes in the normal course of a disciplined spiritual life. For still others, the call responds to the urging of church leaders.

The ELCA candidacy process is meant to be a welcoming and joyful time for people discerning how to serve through the church. It is a formalized – yet personally and relationally focused – journey that assists people in discernment for church leadership, whether they ultimately become rostered or serve in other lay roles within the church. Discernment is a life-long process, which continually assesses how God may be calling a person into a unique ministry. It is a means to determine who might serve as a rostered minister in a Word and Sacrament or Word and Service ministry, as well as who might serve in a variety of lay leadership roles in the church or in the world. The candidacy process will succeed when people graciously discover, through the nurturance of mentors, congregations, and others, how and where to serve according to the Spirit's leading.

Within the context of the universal priesthood of all the baptized, some people discern a call to various leadership roles in the church. In the Lutheran tradition, a person's call from God to rostered ministry is both internal and external. In the internal call an individual senses God's leading to consider and prepare for rostered ministry. In the external call the church accompanies an individual in discerning appropriateness and readiness for such service. At the conclusion of the candidacy process, the call is confirmed by a call to serve in a specific setting (First Call).

ELCA seminaries are important partners in the candidacy process. Some people enter the formal candidacy process prior to or alongside their enrollment in a seminary. Others may choose to attend

seminary as a means of discerning whether a church occupation feels right to them. Some people may even participate in theological education as a means of enriching their current roles as lay leaders in the church. All such explorations are appropriate and beneficial for the church and God's mission in the world.

Through a journey of discernment (Appendix A), some individuals consider whether they are called by God, through the church, to serve in one of its rostered ministries. Candidacy is a churchwide process of preparation and formation for those seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Candidacy involves an active partnership among candidates, congregations, synods, seminaries, people of specific culture communities, and the ELCA Christian Community and Leadership home area.

Accordingly, a mission-oriented leader can be defined as someone who:

1. is rooted in the gospel;
2. is knowledgeable, passionate, and able to articulate the faith and the confessional teachings of the ELCA; and
3. through the church, participates in God's mission of love, redemption, justice, and reconciliation.

1.2 Four Basic Principles for Mission

People who have discerned a call to rostered ministry will demonstrate and build upon the characteristics of a missional leader as understood through a Lutheran confessional lens.

Through formation in the candidacy process, such individuals will develop an understanding of four basic principles:

- 1. We are church**
- 2. We are Lutheran**
- 3. We are church together**
- 4. We are church for the sake of the world**

Related to the above principles, the ELCA seeks candidates for rostered ministry who demonstrate certain competencies. During a candidate's process of formation, the church expects candidacy committees to assess a candidate's orientation to mission in a progression from **missional awareness** at Entrance to **missional articulation** at Endorsement and finally to **missional actualization and practice** at Approval. Competencies listed (section 2.1.1) have been identified to assist committees in the assessment of a candidate's formation at each of the major steps in candidacy. These competencies provide a beginning point in understanding the role and forming the skills of a rostered minister.

Once newly approved candidates complete candidacy, they may be called to a ministry context in which people do not share an identical imagination for mission. In such situations, a rostered minister's adaptive leadership skills – learned either during the formation process (candidacy) or early in a first call – will help foster a positive relationship between a rostered minister and a ministry context. Adaptive leaders demonstrate an ability to appreciate and celebrate differing orientations toward mission and move together with others in a ministry context toward a common vision for mission. Such leaders are prepared to undertake ministry in any location and can assist the faith community in developing a common life that participates more fully in God's mission in the world.

1.3 Candidacy Is an Interdependent Process

Interdependence within the ELCA means that throughout the candidacy process, there is a sharing of responsibility and accountability among partners: candidates, congregations, candidacy committees, seminaries, and candidacy staff in the Christian Community and Leadership home area. Each partner in the process has a distinctive role but also consistently cooperates with the other partners.

They all work together and communicate openly to ensure that the ELCA prepares gifted people who are called by God to serve as rostered ministers in this church.

A consistent candidacy process is essential for preparing candidates for rostered ministry. Every candidate in the ELCA is a candidate for the whole church, not just the synod of candidacy, and is available for service according to the needs of the church. In partnership with synods and seminaries, the candidacy staff in the Christian Community and Leadership home area, in consultation with the secretary of the ELCA, presents to the Church Council any recommended changes to the candidacy process.

1.4 Expectations of Partners

1.4.1 Applicant/candidate

Personal faith, commitment to Christ, and a sense of call are at the heart of an applicant's decision to apply for candidacy. Prior to submitting a Candidacy Application form, a person has discerned a readiness for candidacy. At Entrance an applicant will share with a candidacy committee experiences and learning acquired during the discernment journey. The process of discernment (Appendix A) is a lifelong endeavor.

It precedes candidacy, continues throughout candidacy and the period of study at a seminary, and evolves into an expression of vocation for the remainder of a person's life. Discernment will be frequently and regularly assessed, not only by the candidate but also by the community of faith, the seminary, the candidacy committee, and others in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and openness to the spirit.

To begin the candidacy process, persons seeking to serve as rostered ministers contact the synod where they are active in an ELCA congregation, an ELCA worshiping community or a campus ministry. After completing a Candidacy Application form, an applicant is expected to exercise initiative in completing the pre-Entrance candidacy requirements outlined in this manual.

Growth and development are expected as candidates seek to become equipped for rostered ministry. A candidate must be a mature, healthy, and trustworthy partner in the process of preparation, formation, and evaluation for rostered ministry. A candidate provides requested information and a signed release to a candidacy committee so that the partners in the candidacy process may fully and openly communicate with each other and share relevant candidacy information.

Applicants or candidates are expected to be in regular communication with their candidacy committee. If, despite repeated efforts on the part of a candidacy committee, a period of one year passes without communication from an applicant or a candidate, the committee may act to terminate the application process or issue a denial of candidacy. When the application process is terminated, the applicant will be informed of such action and a copy will be sent to the Christian Community and Leadership home area. When an inactive candidate is issued a denial of candidacy, the candidate will be informed of such action and the decision will be reported to the Christian Community and Leadership home area by submitting a new decision form.

Upon completion of the candidacy process, candidates are expected to be willing to serve in response to the needs of the church. While the ELCA 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.

1.4.2 Congregation

Congregations identify and accompany people as they discern their vocations. For people who have discerned a call to rostered ministry, their congregation submits a Congregational Registration form, which identifies and affirms them for rostered ministry.

A congregation maintains a relationship with a candidate throughout the entire candidacy process. Even though registration by a congregation is an important part of the candidate's discernment of call to rostered ministry, the responsibility for assessing and approving candidates belongs to the candidacy committee.

Congregation responsibilities include:

1. Providing a community that encourages and nurtures the discernment of vocation.
2. Completing and submitting a Congregational Registration form, which includes a thoughtful and honest summary of an applicant's involvement in the life of the congregation and its participation in God's mission in the world, identifies characteristics that reflect an applicant's potential for ministry, and notes any concerns about an applicant's health, well-being, or spiritual life. If an applicant is actively involved in a Lutheran campus ministry or other ministry site, it is appropriate for the campus pastor or another rostered minister to add recommendations concerning the applicant as part of the congregation registration.
3. Providing support for a candidate throughout the candidacy process, including prayer, regular communication, and, when possible, financial support to assist with expenses for tuition and other costs related to candidacy. In the case of students enrolled in an ELCA seminary, such assistance is administered by the seminary.
4. Affirming a candidate's potential for ministry through invitations to teach, preach, and lead worship based on a candidate's availability.

1.4.3 Synod

On behalf of the whole ELCA, each synod establishes a candidacy committee to perform the important and highly sensitive task of making decisions about the fitness of those identified as potential candidates for rostered ministry. Synods provide adequate funding for their candidacy committees to carry out their responsibilities and meet with applicants and candidates. Synods identify people to serve on candidacy committees who bring gifts for welcoming, forming, evaluating, and building relationships with candidates. Synods make committee appointments in accordance with synodical bylaw S6.04.

Voting members on a candidacy committee include the synod bishop (or an appointee), appointed (or elected) committee members, and a seminary representative recommended by an ELCA seminary and appointed by the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area. As the ELCA seeks to welcome and nurture a wide diversity of candidates for rostered ministry, the need for cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness is critical. In cases where a candidacy committee does not have people serving on the committee who are part of the same cultural background as a candidate of color, it is strongly recommended that the candidacy committee identify a person from the same ethnic community who can serve as a mentor and welcoming presence for a candidate during the candidacy process. In many instances, such a person might be a mentor who has previously accompanied a candidate in preliminary discernment (Appendix A), a candidate's home pastor or campus minister, a seminary faculty person, or another suitable individual identified by the synod.

1.4.3.1 Synod Candidacy Committee Responsibilities

1. Acts on behalf of the congregations of the synod and the whole ELCA to assess the character and qualifications of applicants and candidates.
2. Schedules meetings, retreats, and other events for the candidacy process.
3. Works collegially to make important and sometimes difficult decisions.
4. Provides for appropriate pastoral care for candidates.
5. Evaluates and cares for candidates throughout the candidacy process.
6. Adheres to churchwide policies and procedures, honoring the process as outlined in this candidacy manual.
7. Participates in training and ongoing education.
8. Provides support, guidance, and resources to assist applicants and candidates in their ongoing discernment.
9. Oversees the application process.
 - a. Provides applicants with the necessary information and material.
 - b. Receives an applicant's Congregational Registration form.
 - c. Arranges for an initial interview (optional).
 - d. Arranges for a psychological evaluation and background check.
 - e. Offers financial assistance to candidates, when possible.
10. Conducts interviews at appropriate times throughout the candidacy process.
11. Makes requests to the candidacy staff in the Christian Community and Leadership home area for equivalencies or waivers from any essential standards or requirements of candidacy, including:
 - a. TEEM program entry,
 - b. educational requirements,
 - c. supervised clinical ministry requirements, and
 - d. exemptions to the Lutheran learning and formation requirement for students attending a non-ELCA seminary.
12. Maintains candidacy files according to procedures determined by the candidacy staff in the Christian Community and Leadership home area.
13. When an applicant is inactive and the committee acts to terminate the application, the synod must report this fact to the Christian Community and Leadership home area.
14. Conveys in a timely manner all requested information to the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

Having received a 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; maintain complete records; and report all decisions to the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

When deemed effective, some aspects of candidacy may be conducted through a multisynodical candidacy committee. In such situations, each synod maintains its own candidate records. Multisynodical committees may act on behalf of participating synods for Entrance, Endorsement, Approval, and other aspects of the candidacy process.

After granting Entrance, Endorsement, or Approval, a candidacy committee, in consultation with the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area, if it receives additional information about a candidate that might have resulted in a decision to postpone or deny, may rescind its prior action. Any decision to rescind a prior action shall be reported to a candidate, the seminary, and the director for candidacy. If a candidate is in the First Call Process, the synod bishop of candidacy and the synod bishop in any synod where the candidate is being considered for the first calls will be notified immediately. If a candidacy committee or synod staff person receives such additional information about an approved candidate after the candidate has received a call, the information shall immediately be communicated to the bishop of the synod where the call was issued.

Characteristics of Synod Candidacy Committee Members:

1. faith in the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit),
2. sense of hospitality and ability to build nurturing relationships,
3. an understanding of and sensitivity to diverse contexts,
4. patience,
5. willingness to receive training and attend/participate in committee meetings,
6. knowledge of the church and its missional focus,
7. integrity and trustworthiness,
8. commitment to evaluate candidates fairly, combined with an ability to speak the truth in love,
9. self-awareness, and
10. membership in a congregation of the synod.

1.4.4 ELCA Seminaries

ELCA seminaries, in consultation with other partners in the candidacy process, provide theological education for candidates, including academic certification, practical experience, and formation for ministry. Every candidacy committee includes an ELCA seminary faculty representative identified by the seminary dean and appointed by the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area. ELCA seminaries provide evaluative material and make recommendations to candidacy committees concerning the approval of every candidate for rostered ministry who earns a degree or is completing Lutheran requirements. Seminaries will communicate openly and fully with candidacy partners.

Theological education is a period of theological, spiritual, and vocational formation. Seminary faculties have a critically important and highly respected role in providing learning experiences that equip candidates for effective and faithful rostered ministry with a dual focus:

1. theological – instilling a critical capacity and an ability to articulate Christian faith from a Lutheran confessional perspective, and
2. practical – developing leadership skills for the context being served.

A candidate, seminary faculty, and a candidacy committee are interdependent partners in the preparation, ongoing discernment, and evaluation of candidates for rostered ministry. Throughout the candidacy process, free and honest sharing of information and perspectives is in the best interest of all partners. Additional communication beyond written reports is both valuable and necessary for a candidacy committee and a seminary as they collaborate on and cooperate in the care and guidance of candidates and make wise and faithful decisions.

Seminary responsibilities:

1. Make a decision concerning the admission of a person for study and report this action to the appropriate candidacy committee. Normally, admission to an ELCA/ELCIC seminary for study leading to rostered ministry in the ELCA is subsequent to a candidacy committee's granting Entrance.
2. Participate in candidacy committees through an ELCA seminary representative, who is normally an ELCA member appointed by the director for candidacy upon recommendation by the academic dean. When possible, seminary faculties are appointed to the synod where they are rostered or have congregational membership. The seminary faculty member participates in all candidacy committee activities with full voice and vote as a representative of the theological education network in the ELCA. Normally, the seminary provides travel allowances for its representatives, while the committee provides housing and meals.
3. Administer financial aid to students. Funds for this assistance come from a variety of sources: congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide units.

4. Provide required safe church/boundary training for candidates.
5. Participate in Theological Review Panels (TRP) and Competency Assessment Panels (CAP) as requested by staff of the Christian Community and Leadership home area.
6. Participate in Endorsement panels for candidates attending the seminary.
7. In consultation with the candidacy committee, direct and evaluate a student's practical preparation, such as internship and supervised clinical work, and provide internship and supervised clinical ministry reports to the candidacy committee.
8. Regularly communicate with a candidacy committee regarding a candidate's academic progress and provide updates on any developmental issues (including personal growth and formation) that emerge in the course of candidacy.
9. Determine a candidate's satisfactory completion of the requirements for the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, other professional degrees, or certificates of theological education.
10. In the case of students attending a non-ELCA seminary, participate in an affiliation relationship with candidates (section 4.5.3).
11. Provide a recommendation and evaluative statement to a candidacy committee pertaining to Approval and submit copies of the appropriate report (form D) to both the candidacy committee and the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

1.4.5 Christian Community and Leadership home area

The director for candidacy, in collaboration with other candidacy staff, develops and provides oversight of the candidacy process in the ELCA. Oversight includes generating standards, procedures, and policies related to the recruitment, preparation, evaluation, and support of candidates for rostered ministry. Development includes monitoring the effectiveness of policies and procedures, identifying problems, and proposing revisions to the ELCA candidacy process as needed, registering psychological consultants, and granting all equivalencies and waivers requested for candidates. Other candidacy partners, notably ELCA seminary personnel working with candidacy and candidacy committees, are consulted at each step in the development and revision process. Candidacy staff of the Christian Community and Leadership home area works directly with candidacy committees to exemplify the interdependent partnership, as well as the churchwide nature of the process. While the Christian Community and Leadership home area staff representatives relating to synod candidacy committees do not vote, they are present for all major decisions of a candidacy committee, unless it is mutually agreed upon in advance that the representative will not be involved. The Christian Community and Leadership home area maintains (at the Lutheran Center) an electronic database of candidate records submitted by candidacy committees.

1.5 Privacy

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

Privacy requires honesty, good judgment, respect for others, and an ability to hold privileged information. It is primarily a concern for the interests and well-being of individuals (as well as the church), not a legal concern. Privacy should not hinder or restrict the free flow of information to and from the candidacy committee. In the United States the church has a constitutional right to decide who its rostered ministers will be, to treat certain internal information as private, and to share or reveal that information as needed among partners within the ELCA.

On behalf of the whole ELCA, candidacy committees may seek any necessary information regarding applicants or candidates to protect this church and its members, but also to protect all people from the

possibility of abuse by a rostered minister. What is essential is that the committee and its members are very clear about why they are seeking the information. Candidacy committees should seek whatever information is important and necessary to assess qualifications for rostered ministry. Religious institutions may make inquiries and enforce standards of character that apply to the private lives of those involved in rostered ministry to a degree that is not legally permitted in secular occupations and professions. Healthy, honest, and responsible rostered ministers are essential to the faithful witness of the ELCA in the world.

While it is not necessary for committee members to excuse themselves from decisions regarding an individual whom they know personally, committee members must share the nature of any such personal relationship with the candidacy committee. In fact, such personal knowledge can provide insight and awareness to the committee in making its decisions. In the case of a family or pastoral relationship with a candidate, committee members should recuse themselves from the interview.

Any information regarding a candidate's qualifications, history, or life patterns can be valuable in making candidacy decisions. Private information, including personal letters to a synod bishop or notes of conversations, should be gathered with great care, shared as necessary, and appropriately safeguarded. Information and analysis from psychological reports and background checks should be used in an ethical and responsible way. Committee members should be trained in interpreting these reports.

Although some information received in confidence should not be revealed to a candidate, it is always essential to be fair and allow an individual to respond to negative information and correct misinformation. The candidacy committee should take all steps necessary to ensure it has dealt effectively and faithfully with any concerns or issues.

1.6 Management of Candidacy Files

1.6.1 Synod Records

It is essential for synods to maintain complete and accurate records on every candidate for rostered ministry. The following guidelines provide specific criteria for the management of the materials in a candidate's file – all of which are confidential.

1. Files on applicants/candidates are the property of the candidacy committee and should be maintained in a secure location and manner.
2. At its discretion, a candidacy committee may allow applicants or candidates access to their candidacy file. The committee may choose not to allow access to confidential communications, letters, or other information. The applicant or candidate may read the contents of the file at a location and under a procedure determined by the candidacy committee. When a candidate or applicant reviews the file, someone from synod staff or the committee should be present. Copies should be made only as authorized by the committee.
3. Committees should use care when duplicating candidacy file material in preparation for meetings. Duplicated file material should be sent as CONFIDENTIAL mail and destroyed at the conclusion of the meeting. All electronic distribution of candidacy files must be password-protected and in compliance with ELCA policies on electronic data filing. Note: Copies of psychological evaluations and background checks should not be emailed to committee members unless access to the system is protected. Review of these documents may take place at a time prior to the Entrance interview.

4. A candidacy file shall be maintained at the appropriate administrative office of a candidate's seminary in a secure location and be available to the faculty adviser and candidacy committee members as appropriate.
5. A candidacy file transferred from another synod requires a new Congregational Registration form from a congregation in the receiving synod.
6. In the case of a candidate whose Endorsement or Approval has been denied or who has withdrawn from the candidacy process, the synod of candidacy will retain the candidate's file for 10 years, after which it may be destroyed.
7. In the case of a candidate who has been granted Approval, the synod will retain the file for 50 years, after which it may be destroyed.
8. All relevant information on a candidate – form D, form E and the First Call form – is shared with any regions or synods considering the candidate for a First Call.. Because the candidacy file is not intended for use as part of the call process, the contents of the candidacy file remain with the candidacy committee and are not forwarded to any synod or synods considering a candidate for First Call.
9. If for any reason a candidate is 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.
10. Maintaining printed paper files is recommended; however, synods may choose to maintain candidacy files electronically in up-to-date formats with suitable privacy protection. Note: Because technology changes rapidly, synods must update technology so that files are accessible for 50 years.

1.6.2 Seminary Records

Seminaries are to maintain candidacy files in a secure manner and location.

1.6.3 Christian Community and Leadership home area Deployed Staff Records

Deployed candidacy staff of the Christian Community and Leadership home area may retain files on active candidates in a secure manner. The file may include all information in the candidacy committee file.

1.6.4 Churchwide Organization Records

The Christian Community and Leadership home area tracks the progress of every candidate. Essential dates and decisions become part of the ELCA Constituent Information System.

1.7 Guidelines for Transfer of Candidacy

Continuity and consistency in candidacy serve both a candidate and this church. In a rapidly changing and mobile world, however, there may be circumstances when it will best serve a candidate and the church to transfer candidacy from one synod to another. At the request of a candidate who has consulted with the synodical bishop in the synod of origin and received consent for a transfer of candidacy, a synod may transfer candidacy to another synod, provided the receiving synod consents to the transfer.

A transfer request is not equivalent to one of the three decisions in the candidacy process – Entrance, Endorsement, or Approval. A candidacy committee may neither deny nor delay a transfer of candidacy solely on the grounds of a candidate's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Normally, a candidate remains with the candidacy committee where the process originated, especially in the following situations:

1. if a candidate's Entrance, Endorsement, or Approval has been denied or postponed

- on other grounds;
- 2. if denial or postponement has been recommended by an interview team or a Theological Review Panel on other grounds; or
- 3. if the candidacy committee has not considered the recommendation for transfer.

In all instances involving a transfer of candidacy, the committee chairpersons of both synods, after consultation with the candidacy committees of their respective synods, will give written authorization for the transfer and will copy the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area, who will forward the information to the appropriate staff person. Consultation with the candidacy committees may be done by email or other electronic means to avoid undue delay. To ensure full awareness and the sharing of relevant information, the sending synod shall copy all records pertaining to a candidate in question, including summaries of their current assessment of a candidate, and transmit them to the receiving synod. Whenever candidacy is transferred to another synod, a candidate must submit a new, updated Candidacy Application and a new Congregational Registration form from a congregation in the receiving synod. The receiving synod may also inquire of a candidate's previous congregation concerning additional relevant information made available since the original registration. If a candidate is already enrolled in or affiliated with an ELCA/ELCIC seminary, the candidacy committee of the receiving synod shall notify that seminary concerning a transfer between synods.

A person who withdraws from candidacy for any reason must reapply for candidacy in the synod where the candidate was originally from. A Candidacy Application form to reapply may be accompanied by a request from a candidate for transfer to another synod.

1.8 Guidelines for People in Same-Gender Relationships

1. All applicants and candidates shall be treated equitably.
2. When working with an applicant or candidate who is in a same-gender relationship, the candidacy committee will follow the same processes for discernment and evaluation as with all other candidates and will use the standards of this church, including *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.
3. When this church's diversity of faith-based opinions concerning these matters is present on a candidacy committee and/or in its context, some conversations and decisions will be complex and challenging. Integrity can be maintained best when committee members honor others with differing convictions and keep in mind the foundational responsibilities and purpose of the candidacy committee. Aspects of this integrity include:
 - a. treating each committee member, applicant, and candidate with respect;
 - b. inviting and expecting candor from all applicants and candidates about their relationships; and
 - c. being candid with one another and with applicants and candidates about whether committee members are able to support or not support the rostering of people in same-gender relationships.
4. In some instances, the transfer of candidacy to another synod will be a helpful tool for respecting the faith convictions of a candidate and of all members of a candidacy committee. A candidate may be encouraged to seek a transfer (section 1.7). In some circumstances, applicants may, after consultation with the bishop of their synod, be 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.
5. It is always appropriate in the candidacy process to invite further conversation about a candidate's responses on the Candidacy Application form. Such responses may open

the possibility for further helpful conversation with a candidate.

6. In this 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 rostered ministry. Accordingly, it is essential that the committee report to the synodical bishop and to the Christian Community and Leadership home area any relevant information, as well as 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.

1.9 Guidelines for Reinstatement to the Rosters of the ELCA

This section is guided by the “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, as adopted March 8, 2020.

1.9.1 Reinstatement Process

1. Reinstatement to the rosters of the ELCA is the responsibility of the candidacy committee of the synod where the applicant was last rostered.
2. If an applicant is seeking both reinstatement to a roster and a transfer to another synod, in accordance with *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, the secretary of the ELCA and the synods involved must consent to the transfer. A transfer of candidacy that includes reinstatement requires the concurrence of both candidacy committees and both bishops.
3. In the case of an applicant whose previous rostered ministry was 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.
4. In the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of one of the following:
 - a. the official disciplinary process of this church,
 - b. resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
 - c. application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.06, where the person was on leave from 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.

1.9.2 Application for Reinstatement

1. The applicant provides to the appropriate synod the completed Application for Reinstatement to the Roster of the ELCA, and the synod sends a copy to the Christian Community and Leadership home area for information. A Candidacy Application and a Rostered Minister Profile must be submitted online.
2. Upon receipt of the Application for Reinstatement, the synodical bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
3. 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 committee chairs (in consultation with members of the candidacy committee) and both synod bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
4. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered schedules an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant's eligibility to be a candidate in the synod. The bishop also determines whether the application is timely. (See section 1.9.1.3.c.)

5. 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. Before proceeding with reinstatement, the bishop also documents corrective actions that have occurred. The bishop should invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.
6. The candidacy committee considers an applicant for reinstatement when the synodical bishop forwards the application to the committee. The bishop may, in their sole discretion, decline to forward the application to the candidacy committee or may forward the application with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

1.9.3 Candidacy Committee

1. The candidacy committee will receive and review the Congregational Registration form from the congregation where the applicant is a member in good standing.
2. 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, with synod staff, or with the churchwide office.
3. The committee may request additional information from any source that it deems necessary to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement.
4. The applicant must prepare an Approval essay and submit it to the candidacy committee.
5. The committee may request a new psychological evaluation and background check when necessary. 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 a psychological evaluation. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
6. The candidacy committee follows the standards and procedures in this manual 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:
 - a. the circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
 - b. the applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement, with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
 - c. discussion of the applicant's understanding of the specific roster in the ELCA and the applicant's willingness to serve in response to the needs of this church; and
 - d. discussion of the applicant's commitment to live according to the standards of this church, including *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*.
7. The candidacy committee may request the Christian Community and Leadership home area to convene a Theological Review Panel to determine the applicant's theological readiness for Word and Sacrament or Word and Service ministry. The Theological Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

1.9.4 Decision

1. 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:
 - a. grant approval for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call,

- b. postpone approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement, or
 - c. deny approval for reinstatement.
2. 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. (section 1.9.2)
 3. If an applicant who was removed from the roster under the circumstances (section 1.9.1.3.c) 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 it 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 affirming the decision of the candidacy committee.

1.9.5 Approval

If approved, the candidate will complete the normal First Call paperwork and will participate in the First Call process.

If the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the Christian Community and Leadership home area, following consultation with the synodical bishop and the home area executive director, shall postpone the candidate's participation in the First Call process until all requirements are met.

1. 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 (section 1.9.4.b) is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
2. The process for renewal of Approval, as defined in this manual, is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.
3. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster.

1.10 Guidelines for Handling a Disagreement With a Decision

Candidacy is an interdependent partnership involving candidates, congregations, synods, seminaries, and the churchwide organization. Entrance, Endorsement, Approval, and reinstatement decisions are the responsibility of synods through candidacy committees and bishops following churchwide policies and procedures. No individual or body has authority to overrule a candidacy committee's Entrance, Endorsement, or Approval decisions, or a synodical bishop's decision on whether to allow an applicant to seek 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 a candidate believes proper candidacy procedures have not been followed, the candidate shall first consult with the bishop of the synod. If that consultation does not resolve the concern, or if the disagreement is with the synod bishop, the candidate may request in writing, with supporting documentation to verify the concern, a review of the process by the director for candidacy and candidacy staff team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area. The latter will request comment from the synod and may request additional information from any other partners. The director for candidacy will report their findings to the candidate, the synodical bishop, and the candidacy committee.

If a candidate is personally offended by a comment or question asked at a candidacy interview that focuses on race or gender issues, the candidate first consults with a pastor or mentor. If necessary, the pastor or mentor will help the candidate schedule a meeting with the synod bishop or appropriate synod staff person. The pastor or mentor may accompany the candidate to the meeting. This should be seen as a teaching and learning opportunity for all persons involved.

2 Standards for the Offices of Ministry

People who have discerned a call to rostered ministry will demonstrate a commitment to Christ and build upon the characteristics of a missional leader as understood through a Lutheran confessional lens.

2.1 Rostered Ministers

Through formation in the candidacy process, candidates will develop an understanding of four basic principles:

1. **We are church**
2. **We are Lutheran**
3. **We are church together**
4. **We are church for the sake of the world**

2.1.1 We Are Church

The ELCA is a church centered on worship of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The good news of Jesus Christ, conveyed through God's Word and the sacraments, liberates God's people and gives them the freedom and courage to wonder, discover, and boldly participate in God's mission in the world. In our life together, we gather around the presence of the crucified and risen Christ, and we respond to the leadership of the Holy Spirit by engaging in ministry in the world.

Competencies

The list of competencies provided below is a descriptive narrative, not a template or checklist. It attempts to describe the types of skills and characteristics the church seeks for all rostered ministers. Candidacy committees and seminary faculty should use these competency descriptions in a manner that is flexible, adaptive to context and candidate, and attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

1. **Rooted in the presence and activity of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** A rostered minister nurtures a vibrant faith and relationship with the triune God within a community of faith and leads other Christians to do likewise as they participate in God's mission. This competency can be assessed through a candidacy committee inquiry about a candidate's ability to:
 - a. engage in theological and spiritual discernment that manifests a faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
 - b. articulate and live out a clear Christian identity; and
 - c. interpret the Scriptures as the norm for understanding God's mission in the world.
2. **Actively participates in God's mission as a part of the church.** Some key aspects related to this competency are:
 - a. an ability to cultivate a compelling vision for ministry,
 - b. equipping people to share faith stories,
 - c. skills in hospitality that invite people to a life of discipleship, and
 - d. an awareness of the interconnectedness of the church beyond the local congregation.
3. **Cultivates vision and purpose.** This competency includes:
 - a. the use of spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, biblical and theological reflection, and spiritual direction),
 - b. knowledge of societal and cultural trends that can inform the church's vision and sense of purpose,
 - c. skills for leading congregations and other groups in discernment of God's mission in the world (including the incorporation of input from a diversity of sources and people), and
 - d. courage to lead God's people into that mission as discerned.
4. **Leadership skills.** Some important indicators of this competency are:

- a. demonstration of adaptive leadership skills that are sensitive to context,
- b. demonstration of skills for leading a community of faith through change while addressing conflicts that might emerge,
- c. capacity to engage people and lead them toward active participation in God’s mission in the world,
- d. facility for encouraging collegial decision-making processes,
- e. demonstration of personal holistic stewardship and skill in equipping others, and
- f. grasp of how administrative structures and procedures can serve mission in the life of the church.

2.1.2 We Are Lutheran

While not claiming to possess exclusive theological wisdom in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, Lutherans proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through a clear focus on God’s grace received through faith, along with discipleship and participation in God’s mission that is a lived response to that grace.

Competencies

1. **Engages the way of the cross.** Empowered by the resurrected Christ, a rostered minister shows people the crucified Christ through word and deed and enables them to envision what God is doing in the world and in their lives. Some indicators of this competency include:
 - a. willingness to confront and engage suffering in the lives of others and in one’s own life, especially among marginalized people;
 - b. exhibiting qualities of servant leadership;
 - c. willingness to serve, risk, and sacrifice for the sake of God’s mission, including an ability to identify and lead in exposing the principalities and powers operative in a given context; and
 - d. responding to life crises as opportunities for experiencing new life.
2. **Proclaims the faith.** Clear indicators for this competency are the candidate’s ability to:
 - a. understand the Word as law and gospel,
 - b. teach Scripture,
 - c. share the faith with others,
 - d. provide Christian education for all ages and cultures,
 - e. articulate theological wisdom, and
 - f. live a disciplined spiritual life.

2.1.3 We Are Church Together

The ELCA recognizes the interdependence of all expressions of the church – congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization – as well as a wider ecclesiastical ecology, which includes seminaries, social ministry agencies, campus ministries, church camps and conference centers, and other affiliated agencies. This church also values the ecumenical interdependence we share with our full communion partners both locally and globally.

Competencies

1. **Interprets mission.** This competency reflects the ability of a candidate to articulate and interpret in a compelling manner, both theologically and contextually, the wider mission of the ELCA through its interdependent partners and expressions. This competency includes commitment to the mission of the wider church, including synods and the churchwide organization, as well as related institutions and agencies of the ELCA, and facility in interpreting and motivating support for the ELCA beyond the local congregation.

2. **Cultivates Christian community, discipleship, leadership formation, and the practice of reconciliation of differences.** A rostered minister effectively forms and leads Christian communities that intentionally foster the growth of disciples of Jesus Christ and attend to the formation of leaders in the church. Some indicators of this competency are:
 - a. gifts for forming partnerships and networks,
 - b. the practice of reconciliation and mutual empowerment among diverse groups,
 - c. convening and empowering teams for mission, and
 - d. a sense of stewardship in cultivating gifts manifest in a community of believers as well as delegating and sharing tasks tailored to those gifts.
3. **Cares for people.** A ministry of care encompasses both congregational and community care. Some key aspects of this competency include:
 - a. visitation;
 - b. counseling;
 - c. equipping the baptized to provide ministries of care, both within the congregation and in the wider community;
 - d. knowledge of community resources for appropriate referrals and participation; and
 - e. sensitivity to people in major life and cultural transitions.
4. **Practices wellness in one's personal life** (section 4.1.2). Some factors to consider in this area:
 - a. a vibrant and resilient faith;
 - b. a balance of work, play, and self-care;
 - c. a maintenance of clear and healthy boundaries in all relationships;
 - d. an attention to diet, exercise, and mental/physical health; and
 - e. a nurturing of healthy family relationships.

2.1.4 We Are Church for the Sake of the World

As baptized people of God, we believe we are freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbor. This church, accordingly, is a catalyst, convener, and bridge builder that views the church and the world as interdependent in a way that fosters mutual learning and growth. We participate in partnerships for the sake of unity among Christians, collaboration and dialogue with other faith communities, and justice and peace locally and globally.

Competencies

1. **Evangelizes.** A rostered minister actively believes and carries out Christ's command to go out and share the gospel with neighbors. Some key factors related to this competency are:
 - a. passion and imagination for sharing the gospel,
 - b. sensitivity and skill for welcoming the stranger into community,
 - c. discovering and implementing creative ways to share the gospel with people outside the church,
 - d. listening to people's stories and assisting them to interpret their experience in light of the gospel,
 - e. valuing of Christian community as formative for faith, and
 - f. demonstrating a natural and authentic gift for engaging people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the depths of their lives.
2. **Relates theology with history, context, and culture.** A rostered minister understands and interprets context and culture through the lens of Christian faith and leads a community to opportunities where the gospel can be understood and shared by people in specific cultural contexts. Some important indicators of this competency include:

- a. an ability to engage culture and context theologically, critically, and creatively with a sensitivity to historical factors;
 - b. analysis of community demographics and trends;
 - c. engagement with complex social and religious issues as a practical theologian in context;
 - d. sensitivity to cross-cultural, intra-cultural, and countercultural dynamics; and
 - e. skill in addressing cultural differences.
3. **Equips and sends disciples into the world.** A rostered minister prepares disciples to discern the leading of the Spirit as they share the gospel with neighbors in word and deed. Some important considerations for this competency are:
- a. demonstrated capacity to mobilize people of faith with different gifts and perspectives who can enrich the church's witness in the world and lead to acts of mercy and justice,
 - b. personal embodiment of the Christian faith in one's daily life,
 - c. demonstrated capacity for cultivating communities of well-being and holistic stewardship as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel (section 4.1.2),
 - d. theological sensitivity to the presence and activity of God in the world,
 - e. recognition of the public vocation of the Christian community in the world, and
 - f. ability to interpret that vocation to people of faith.

Because this is a time of unprecedented change and increasing diversity, not all ministry contexts will have the same imagination for mission and ministry. The church, therefore, needs adaptive leaders with demonstrated abilities for appreciating and celebrating different orientations toward mission, fostering positive relationships within a context, and moving together with others toward a common vision for mission. Adaptive leaders are prepared to undertake ministry in a variety of locations and to assist a community in developing a common life that participates more fully in God's mission in the world. The church acknowledges that a rostered minister's adaptive leadership skills, reflecting the cited competencies, will not be fully formed during the candidacy process. A well-prepared missional candidate understands that the candidacy process is the beginning of a lifelong process of learning and formation for leadership.

2.2 Ministers of Word and Sacrament

2.2.1 Definition of Roster

A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be a person whose commitment to Christ, soundness in the faith, educational qualifications, and aptness to preach, teach, witness, and celebrate the sacraments have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the documents of this church; who has been properly called and ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church; who is diligent and faithful in the exercise of the ministry; and whose life and conduct are above reproach. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall comply with this church's *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (7.20).

2.2.2 Standards for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Persons admitted to the ministry of Word and Sacrament of this church shall satisfactorily demonstrate leadership abilities and an understanding of the four principles (We Are Church, We Are Lutheran, We Are Church Together, We Are Church for the Sake of the World), and the competencies (section 2.1). In addition, persons approved and rostered as ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church will satisfactorily meet and maintain the following as defined by this church's *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* in policies developed by the appropriate churchwide home area, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

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 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.

Consistent with the faith and practice of the *Constitutions, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (7.31.02), every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:

1. preach the word;
2. administer the sacraments;
3. conduct public worship;
4. provide pastoral care;
5. seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
6. impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
7. witness to the kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
8. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

Each minister of Word and Sacrament with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

1. offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
2. relate to all schools and organizations of the congregation;
3. install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
4. with the council, administer discipline;
5. endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and the synod; and
6. encourage adherence to covenantal relationships with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

2.2.3 Theological Preparation

Candidates preparing for the ministry of Word and Sacrament must engage in a comprehensive program of preparation that will help them develop the competencies for ministry outlined in section 2.1. Theological preparation includes:

1. theological education leading to a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary or a Certificate of Completion for TEEM,
2. theological and practical formation for ministry,
3. one unit of Supervised Clinical Ministry (section 4.5.1), and
4. internship consisting of 2,000 contact hours supervised by an ELCA seminary (Appendix F).

2.3 Ministers of Word and Service

2.3.1 Definition of Roster

Ministers of Word and Service provide a ministry exemplifying the life of Christ like service to all persons and creation: nurturing, healing, leading, advocating dignity and justice, and equipping the whole people of God for their life of witness and service within and beyond the congregation for the sake of God's mission in the world. A minister of Word and Service shall comply with this church's *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

2.3.2 Standards for Ministers of Word and Service

Persons admitted to and continuing in the ministry of Word and Service of this church shall

satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church's *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (7.61.01):

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 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.

Responsibilities of ministers of Word and Service consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will include:

1. be rooted in the word of God, for proclamation and service;
2. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
3. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;
4. equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
5. encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
6. practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
7. be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
8. share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel, and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
9. identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

In preparation to serve as an ELCA deacon, a candidate is required to engage in a comprehensive program of preparation, which includes theological education, training in an area of specialization, formation for ministry, and contextual education. 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.

2.3.3 Theological Preparation

The educational norm for the Word and Service roster will be a theological master's degree from an accredited seminary or equivalencies granted by a Competencies Assessment Panel for Word and Service Candidates (CAP), convened by a candidacy staff person in the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

Consideration may be given for prior experiences, education, or a master's degree in the field of specialization. The [Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates \(CAP\) form](#).

Candidates will be prepared to do the following:

1. articulate with a Lutheran ecumenical voice the word of God in and for a hurting world, using the fruits of biblical, historical, and theological study;
2. carry out a particular service on behalf of the church with credibility in the world;

3. equip the baptized for faithful ministry in the world and in the church;
4. participate in formation leading to the ability to articulate the history of the diaconate, theological and biblical foundations for the ministry of diakonia, and diaconal identity as integrated through the roles and responsibilities of a deacon;
5. successfully complete one unit of supervised clinical ministry (section 4.5.1);and
6. successfully complete an internship supervised by an ELCA seminary (AppendixF).

2.3.4 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 minister of Word and Service must focus on at least one area of specialization during the candidacy process.

The list below provides categories in which leaders may have strengths or have demonstrated competency. The list is not exhaustive but rather is descriptive of a variety of areas in which a minister of Word and Service might develop expertise or interest.

Administration	Ecumenical Ministry	Outdoor Ministry/Camping
Campus Ministry	Evangelism	Public Policy/Advocacy/Social Justice
Chaplaincy	Faith Formation	Ministry With Older Adults
Community Organizing	Global Ministry	Social Services
Cooperative Ministry	Health Ministry	Spiritual Formation/Direction
Counseling/Social Work	Intergenerational Ministry	Youth and Household
Education	Music and Worship	

Professional licensure or certification, whenever normative, is required.

2.3.5 Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates (CAP)

The Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates (CAP) may be used when a candidate enters the candidacy process with a master’s degree or experience in a field to assess what equivalencies the candidate brings to the process as well as what other classes or experiences the candidate may need in order to serve as a Minister of Word and Service. A member of the Christian Community and Leadership home area candidacy staff follows up a candidate’s Entrance decision to assure that a CAP is convened. Electronic technology may be used to convene a CAP. The primary responsibility of a CAP is to assess a candidate’s knowledge and leadership abilities in each of the competency areas. In conversation with a candidate, a CAP will identify the academic work or other training needed to strengthen the candidate’s ministry skills. The panel makes a recommendation for Endorsement or Approval but does not have authority to reverse a candidacy committee’s decision. If the panel’s recommendation is for immediate Approval, the panel will fill out form D. If additional work is needed, the panel will meet again and complete form D after the candidate completes the required work.

A CAP normally includes the following: the seminary faculty representative who may be a TEEM director, a candidacy committee member, a Christian Community and Leadership home area candidacy staff person, and a member from the appropriate ethnic community, if applicable.

3 Preparing for Entrance

3.1 Rostered Ministry Applicants

3.1.1 Discernment as Preparation for Candidacy

Prior to applying for and being granted Entrance, individuals should engage in intentional discernment about a sense of call and readiness for candidacy, including but not limited to participation in opportunities provided by congregations, campus ministries, synods, and seminaries. If such intentional discernment has not been the experience of an applicant prior to contacting a candidacy committee, it is appropriate for synod candidacy staff to recommend resources and possible discernment mentors to work with such an applicant in advance of an Entrance interview.

For those who choose to apply for candidacy as a result of their preliminary discernment, a written reflection on discernment is part of the Entrance essay submitted to a candidacy committee.

Applicants who have worked with mentors may invite them to share some written reflections with the candidacy committee and the applicant, including a letter of reference for Entrance, and to accompany the applicant to the Entrance interview with the candidacy committee. In addition, the applicant will complete the online [personal financial worksheet](#) and the [personal health assessment](#).

3.1.2 Formation

Formation for each particular roster begins as candidates discern a call to that roster. It may continue through coursework offered in a variety of ways. Formation may also take place through retreats that offer the opportunity for candidates from both rosters to learn more about the roster for which they are preparing as well as the roster that they will partner with in service to the wider church or in individual settings.

3.1.3 Psychological Evaluations

Individuals seeking to serve as rostered ministers in the ELCA shall complete a psychological evaluation. The Christian Community and Leadership home area has developed guidelines for use by both psychological consultants and candidacy committees (Appendix B). The primary purposes of a psychological evaluation are to provide a candidacy committee with insights regarding an applicant's psychological health and readiness for candidacy and to help individuals gain greater self-understanding and appreciation of their own emotional well-being. A psychological evaluation is part of a larger discernment process that relates to the ELCA candidacy process. A candidacy committee is responsible for keeping the purpose of a psychological evaluation in perspective. The desired outcome is an evaluation that candidly assesses an applicant's psychological health and readiness for candidacy and potential future rostered ministry. When appropriate, the psychological evaluation submitted for Entrance may be used by a candidacy committee for up to five years.

3.1.3.1 Responsibilities of the Christian Community and Leadership home area

The director for candidacy and the candidacy team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area have the following responsibilities:

1. establishing and maintaining churchwide policies and guidelines for assessing applicants,
2. registering and regularly reviewing the services of participating psychological consultants,
3. providing consultation and guidance regarding particular situations, such as for candidates of color and candidates with unusual circumstances.

3.1.3.2 Responsibilities of the Candidacy Committee

A candidacy committee is responsible for deciding whether an applicant is ready to begin candidacy. A psychological consultant's report is only one of the components used by a candidacy committee in making such a determination. A candidacy committee is responsible for the evaluation and care of a candidate throughout the candidacy process.

1. The candidacy committee gathers the required information for registering a psychological consultant and submits it to the director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area for approval and registration before a contract is finalized. Using the form "Registration of a Psychological Consultant With a Candidacy Committee," a candidacy committee provides the director for candidacy with information about the education, experience, professional affiliation, licensure, and liability coverage of the person who seeks registration as a consultant. In addition, the ELCA expects a commitment to the underlying intent of the evaluation process; namely, to provide insights regarding the applicant's psychological health and readiness for candidacy.

To be accepted for registration by the director for candidacy, a psychological consultant must:

- a. be licensed as a psychologist and competent to sign an evaluation report, or be licensed as a mental health professional (career counselor, social worker, psychotherapist, etc.) and consult with a licensed psychologist registered with the Christian Community and Leadership home area to supervise and oversee the evaluation process and co-sign the evaluation report;
 - b. demonstrate through professional education, experience, and affiliations both competence in providing psychological evaluations and an ongoing commitment to professional growth;
 - c. display interest in working with the ELCA and an understanding of the psychological concerns and ecclesiastical goals of the ELCA candidacy process; and
 - d. be familiar with the standards and criteria by which the ELCA assesses its candidates.
2. The candidacy committee contracts with a psychological consultant registered with the Christian Community and Leadership home area for psychological evaluation services. Any 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 a candidacy committee at least annually to review the clinician's approach to evaluation reports and to assist committee members in understanding and utilizing evaluation reports.
 3. The candidacy committee arranges for a psychological evaluation as part of the Entrance process. Following the initial interview (if used) and well in advance of an Entrance interview, a candidacy committee instructs an applicant to schedule a psychological evaluation. The synod pays the fee for a psychological evaluation. As deemed appropriate, an applicant may be assessed an "application fee" to cover a portion of the total costs related to candidacy. Each candidacy committee determines the amount of such fees.

A candidacy committee must receive a written psychological evaluation report prior to an Entrance interview. When there is serious concern about an applicant's psychological health or situational factors, the candidacy committee may confer with the psychological consultant.

If a psychological consultant recommends counseling, treatment, or other services, the candidacy committee will determine whether the recommended counseling/therapy should be completed prior to granting Entrance. If the candidacy committee decides to postpone Entrance for this reason, the committee may suggest at least three counselors – none of whom provided the applicant’s psychological evaluation – and ask the applicant to seek prior approval from the committee for counseling with a particular therapist. Normally, a candidacy committee will request written communication from the therapist chosen by an applicant for additional counseling.

4. The candidacy committee considers concerns and complaints about psychological consultants. The candidacy committee should periodically review the contract with a psychological consultant and may terminate the relationship if services provided are not satisfactory.

An applicant who is dissatisfied with a psychological evaluation may secure a second opinion from another professional registered with the Christian Community and Leadership home area. Applicants are financially responsible for such additional evaluation. When an applicant requests a second evaluation, both reports – the original and the second opinion – must be released to the candidacy committee in order for the applicant to be considered for Entrance into candidacy.

If there are any complaints about a psychological consultant, a candidacy committee will notify the director for candidacy. Such notification should include concerns regarding any pattern of complaints indicating a particular psychological consultant who is perceived as being insensitive or inappropriate toward people on the basis of gender, age, class, race, culture, etc. Such notification is also appropriate if the evaluations received by the committee do not reflect the intended completeness or usefulness of the reports for the candidacy process (section 3.1.3.2). Such notification is critical for the integrity of psychological evaluations and their continuing helpfulness to both applicants and candidacy committees.

3.2 Background Checks

Background checks are required of all applicants seeking Entrance into candidacy. Applicants are also required to submit on the Entrance Information form written answers to specific questions about personal history and conduct. Recent legislation and technological advances have made it easier to obtain personal information about applicants. Given the unique position of trust enjoyed by rostered ministers, denominations regularly make use of background checks as part of a comprehensive candidacy screening process.

Areas to be covered by a background check include:

1. criminal history database search,
2. county criminal record check,
3. Sex Offender Criminal Registry,
4. credit check report,
5. Social Security trace, and
6. motor vehicle check.

The background check should cover at least seven years. If a candidate has moved during the period in question, all relevant geographical areas should be included in the background check. These guidelines are intended to be the minimum focus for candidate background checks. Candidacy

committees may be flexible in determining when additional checks are needed or advisable. A committee does not have to use exactly the same list of checks for all candidates. Because different background check firms use varying terminology, candidacy committees should endeavor in good faith to match the required checks with those available through the chosen provider.

The Candidacy Application form contains a release in which an applicant agrees to authorize the ELCA synod or seminary to check references and background information and also permits third parties to release and provide personal information and opinions. A candidacy committee may ask applicants to complete additional background-check authorization forms as part of the application process.

3.2.1 Purpose

In the background check process, a candidacy committee seeks people most likely to do well in rostered ministry, as well as characteristics and behaviors that suggest a good fit with rostered ministry. A candidacy committee is obligated not to consider persons who might use their position as a rostered minister in damaging or illegal ways.

The principles that undergird screening in the ELCA candidacy process include fair and equitable application and interpretation of screening tools, which are to be applied consistently with all applicants. Each candidacy committee has the right to add specific checks to the basic minimum standards. Candidacy committees may explore a variety of options, since individual applicants may require different types of background checks. As with all screening tools utilized in the ELCA candidacy process, the results are normally shared with the applicant, especially if there is any negative information. Such practice provides the applicant with an opportunity to explain and verify the information.

A criminal-background check, or any other screening tool, is only a small portion of the entire candidacy process, which focuses on the evaluation and assessment of applicants. Candidacy committees should exercise care and good judgment in using information about an applicant so as not to damage the person's reputation or self-identity as a valued child of God. The candidacy process rightfully looks carefully at each individual and assesses and discerns that person's potential for ministry. Background checks are not a substitute for using other screening tools or risk-reduction techniques, nor are they infallible records of a person's previous conduct or misconduct. The absence of any reported misconduct is not a guarantee of future behavior. If an individual has never been arrested or convicted, a criminal-background check will not reveal anything. However, background checks must include all instances of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

Because of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and laws separating church and state, candidacy committees have greater freedom in asking applicants questions than employers do. Both the committee and the ELCA are protected by law; therefore, it is possible to ask whatever is necessary in assessing future church leaders.

3.2.2 Responsibilities of the Christian Community and Leadership home area

The Christian Community and Leadership home area is responsible for:

1. establishing churchwide policies, guidelines, and programs for evaluating applicants and candidates;
2. arranging for and regularly reviewing the services of participating firms that provide required background checks; and

3. periodically evaluating the approach used for background checks to meet changing needs.

3.2.3 Responsibilities of Firms Providing Background Checks

Any firm providing background checks for ELCA candidacy committees must:

1. implement background checks in ways that are consistent with the needs and goals of the ELCA candidacy process;
2. be sensitive to ways that race, language, gender, age, and ethnicity may play a role in the process;
3. provide the necessary forms and communications so the process can be conducted in a professional, consistent, and fair manner; and
4. assist both the candidacy committee and the applicant in understanding the rights of individuals and the significance of any results provided.

Types of checks to be provided:

1. **Criminal-background checks** should include any indication of sexual misconduct, child abuse, or other serious misconduct. Such checks can be done in a number of ways. Some synods may choose to work through local law enforcement agencies and online registries to check on criminal behavior. Other synods may use background check firms 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. Technological advances allow for faster, more comprehensive, and more accurate searches. Nevertheless, criminal-background searches are not a quick and easy process.

Currently, there is no nationwide up-to-date repository of criminal-history records available to employers or the general public. In reality, searches for criminal records must be conducted through various jurisdictions throughout the United States, wherever 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.

2. **Credit checks** assist in confirming the identity of an applicant. Since each applicant has a Social Security number, it is possible to verify identity information via a Social Security number trace through a credit bureau. Credit reports also disclose outstanding debts and payment history, as well as civil actions (e.g., judgments, liens, and bankruptcies). Credit reports provide a seven-year history of individual or joint financial information. Since rostered ministers will be in a position of handling money or other organizational assets and have check-writing or investment authority, a credit check is a reasonable risk-management procedure.
3. **Motor vehicle records** are available through 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, a rental car, or their own vehicle for business purposes, checking an applicant's driving records is a reasonable risk-management procedure.

3.2.4 Responsibilities of the Synod and Candidacy Committee

The candidacy committee is responsible for the evaluation and care of candidates throughout the candidacy process, all of which is part of an individual's formation as a Christian and a public servant in the church.

1. The candidacy committee obtains a background check covering the areas listed above. For this purpose, the synod contracts with a firm to provide required background checks. The synod staff person responsible for this process should consult with the synod's attorney regarding appropriate procedures and forms for authorizing a background check.
2. The synod arranges for an applicant to complete the necessary forms for a background check. The synod should designate a contact person who understands the process to handle requests, receive reports, and maintain an appropriate degree of privacy.
3. The synod arranges for payment of fees for background checks. Synods are responsible for the cost, but they may request an application fee from applicants to cover a portion of the total costs incurred in the candidacy process. In addition, synods may request a congregation registration fee to be paid at the time the congregation submits the registration form. This is a tangible gesture of support on the part of a congregation to both the applicant and the synod.
4. The candidacy committee receives/reviews the results of a background check prior to the Entrance interview and shares concerns or issues with the applicant and the applicant's seminary as deemed appropriate.

The candidacy committee will notify the Christian Community and Leadership home area if patterns of concern or complaints suggest that a firm providing a background check is being insensitive or inappropriate with applicants on the basis of gender, age, class, race, culture, etc., or if the results of a background check do not reflect the intention and guidelines of the Christian Community and Leadership home area for the candidacy process. Such notification is critical for the integrity of candidacy screening and for continuing helpfulness to applicants.

Using background check results

When reporting the results of a background check, a candidacy committee must have a procedure for evaluating the resulting information for each applicant and appropriately sharing pertinent information with the full committee. Guidelines for such procedures must address the types of information that are to be shared with the full candidacy committee, what offenses or other information will disqualify an applicant, and what other factors should be considered. Circumstances to consider 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.

Applicants should be denied Entrance when they have knowingly made a false statement of any material fact or have attempted deception or fraud in the application process.

4 Entrance

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (I Corinthians 12:4-7, NRSV).

4.1 Entrance Components

The Entrance process in candidacy is the first formal discernment by a candidacy committee and applicants of their readiness for candidacy. A decision to grant Entrance officially accepts an applicant into candidacy. Normally, a candidacy committee will grant Entrance prior to an applicant's beginning seminary studies. In unusual circumstances an applicant may begin seminary studies for a period of six months before an Entrance decision is granted. Entrance into candidacy begins a formal relationship in a community of discernment that includes the appropriate candidacy committee, the worshiping community of which the candidate is a part, the seminary of enrollment, and the candidacy team in the Christian Community and Leadership home area. As these relationships are formed and cultivated, candidates continue their discernment of call. A key aspect of the ongoing discernment being fostered through candidacy is attendance at a seminary and gaining experience in contextual settings. It is legitimate for candidates to pursue such a course without having total clarity about what God is inviting them to consider in living out their Christian vocation.

As part of the Entrance process, the synod establishes a file for each applicant. As an inquirer moves through application and into candidacy, the file serves as an applicant's official record of candidacy. At the time of the Entrance interview, the file should include:

1. Evidence of active membership in an ELCA congregation, ELCA worshiping community or campus ministry for a minimum of one year, during which an applicant has demonstrated appropriate leadership using the Congregational Registration Form (Communal Discernment).
2. Information provided by the applicant:
 - a. the Candidacy Application form;
 - b. an Entrance essay;
 - c. a [personal financial worksheet](#);
 - d. a [personal health assessment](#);
 - e. letters of reference from a person who is not a family member and from a member of the applicant's worshiping community;
 - f. transcripts, licenses, and certificates of completion for continuing education; and
 - g. when appropriate, evidence of payment of the application fee.
3. Information gathered by the candidacy committee:
 - a. Congregational Registration form (Communal Discernment),
 - b. screening reports completed by agencies and other professional assessors,
 - c. a psychological-evaluation report (Appendix B),
 - d. the required background check (section 3.2), and
 - e. a consent form to release student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), must be completed by the candidate at each step of the candidacy process and shared with the seminary. The form authorizes the seminary to share information with the candidacy committee.

Rarely — as in the case of an applicant currently rostered in another Christian tradition whose ongoing membership in that tradition is required to maintain job-related accreditation — an applicant may be exempt from formal congregational membership and may be an associate member of an ELCA

congregation. Active participation in an ELCA worshipping community is required. Because there is a significant and ongoing partnership in candidacy between the home congregation and the candidacy committee, there may be a benefit in inviting a home pastor or campus minister to accompany a candidate to the Entrance interview (and subsequent interviews with the candidacy committee) and to observe the actual interview process. The role of a home pastor or campus minister is not to advocate for the candidate but primarily to serve as an observer and caregiver for the candidate. Such a person can provide the committee with a helpful longitudinal perspective on the candidate and can also offer regular support and pastoral care to the candidate throughout the candidacy process.

4.1.1 The Initial Interview

The initial interview is an optional resource a candidacy committee may use in addition to the communal discernment information gathered in the expanded Congregational Registration form. While no longer a requirement for Entrance, the interview can provide a candidacy committee with additional information about the applicant. It offers the further advantage of providing the applicant with additional opportunity for discernment and self-reflection, both during and following the actual interview.

Normally, the initial interview occurs early in the candidacy process. Only someone who has been trained to conduct the interview should meet with the applicant for this purpose. The initial interview is most effective when done face to face in a private setting to ensure confidentiality.

When used, the report for the initial interview (Appendix C) is the property of the candidacy committee and becomes part of the applicant's file. A copy of the report may be shared with the applicant.

4.1.2 The Wholeness Wheel

The Wholeness Wheel, a guide for balancing all aspects of a person's health, depicts the interconnectedness of individual aspects of wellness. It visually portrays a process that is colorful, dynamic, vital, centered, and balanced.

One use of the Wholeness Wheel is as a tool and resource at the time of Entrance. It helps those in discernment and those accompanying them to understand better an applicant's giftedness and readiness for beginning candidacy. In preparation for the Entrance interview, applicants provide information, participate in evaluations, and answer questions — many of which touch upon various aspects included in the Wholeness Wheel.

Candidacy committees can also use the Wholeness Wheel as a guide for exploring an applicant's balance and well-being. Committees review information provided by applicants in the areas described below as they interview, discern, and make an Entrance decision.

THE WHOLENESS WHEEL



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4.1.2.1 Social and Interpersonal Well-Being

Candidacy is lived out in the context of various formative and trustworthy communities, including partners in the candidacy process. This is demonstrated in the following:

1. one letter of reference from a person who is not a family member who knows the applicant in social and non-work-related settings,
2. one letter of reference from a member of the ELCA worshipping community in which the applicant currently participates, and
3. a completed background check.

4.1.2.2 Emotional Well-Being

Being emotionally healthy is a necessary aspect of candidacy. Knowing who one is as a person and knowing where one's emotional strengths and challenges lie are significant understandings to bring to candidacy and to address frequently throughout the process. This is demonstrated in the completion of the required psychological evaluation.

4.1.2.3 Physical Well-Being

Because candidacy is a challenging and demanding process, for many candidates staying well will be a challenge. Understanding one's physical health and the ability to manage it is the candidate's responsibility. Throughout the candidacy process, A Candidacy Committee will expect that you complete this [personal health self-assessment](#), and as the committee and you discern your readiness for Entrance into candidacy that you will be able to share what you have learned about yourself.

4.1.2.4 Financial Well-Being

Financial wellness is essential for a successful candidacy experience and for long-term faithful service as a rostered minister. These are demonstrated in:

1. a completed background check, and
2. a completed [personal financial worksheet](#).

4.1.2.5 Vocational Well-Being

Work experiences contribute to an applicant's readiness for candidacy. This is demonstrated in the report of all previous and current employment (included in the Candidacy Application form).

4.1.2.6 Intellectual Well-Being

Candidates are expected to exhibit intellectual ability, curiosity, and analytical and communication skills. These are demonstrated in:

1. copies of transcripts of all postsecondary education (completed degrees and noncompleted degrees), and
2. copies of certificates of completion for all continuing education and other professional and academic work.

4.1.2.7 Spiritual Well-Being

Through word and sacrament, every candidate participates in the life of a worshiping community. The latter is an important partner in the candidacy process because it identifies, nurtures, and supports potential leaders. This is demonstrated in the completed Congregational Registration form, which is neither a decision regarding candidacy nor a determination for service as a rostered minister. Instead, it is an important statement concerning an applicant's readiness to begin the candidacy process and potential to serve in rostered ministry from the perspective of a community of faith. Information provided by a campus minister, when applicable, can be a helpful addition or attachment to the Congregational Registration form.

4.1.3 Entrance Interview

As candidacy committees prepare for an Entrance interview, they will focus on many characteristics, including a candidate's potential for rostered ministry. At Entrance the candidacy committee focuses on a candidate's awareness of missional leadership characteristics and God's mission in the world.

When a candidacy committee evaluates an applicant at Entrance, the following aspects of readiness deserve careful consideration:

1. faith in the triune God, spiritual maturity, passion for justice, and compassion for God's people;
2. demonstration of a healthy lifestyle;
3. awareness of both missional leadership characteristics and what it means for the church to participate in God's mission in the world;
4. understanding of both theological and practical perspectives on the nature of Christian ministry, the various forms of rostered ministry in the ELCA, and the call to rostered ministry;
5. familiarity with Lutheran congregational life, including a minimum of one year's active participation in an ELCA worshiping community;
6. academic readiness, including:
 - a. appropriate undergraduate preparation,
 - b. oral and written language skills, and
 - c. foundational knowledge of the Scriptures and Lutheran theology; and

7. a realistic assessment of one's potential for rostered ministry, including one's gifts, abilities, and pertinent situational factors.

The Entrance interview may not be held until all components of the candidacy application process are complete. The applicant, the candidacy committee, and the seminary of enrollment can utilize various Entrance components to identify growth and developmental issues for applicants and to assist them in their formation and growth.

4.1.4 Guide for the Entrance Interview

This interview guide describes the flow of a thorough interview process. Each candidacy committee may adapt the structure to its own style and needs, while keeping in mind the important components set forth in this manual. These guidelines assume that interview panel members will have read and become familiar with the following:

1. *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*,
2. Guidelines for Discernment (Appendix A),
3. The Entrance section (Section 3) of the Candidacy Manual, and
4. An applicant's file, including all Entrance components

The Entrance interview may involve the entire candidacy committee or a panel with no less than three committee members. Since the purpose of the interview is to build relationships with applicants and to comprehensively review any submitted materials, the committee must allow sufficient time for the interview and committee deliberation.

4.1.4.1 Introduction

Extending hospitality to an applicant is critical to the effectiveness of both the interview itself and the candidacy process. Hospitality conveys encouragement and a sense of community. All members of the panel or candidacy committee will introduce themselves to applicants. Many applicants and candidacy committees value the opportunity to begin an interview with prayer.

4.1.4.2 Interview With an Applicant

The following is a suggested order for the flow of conversation during an Entrance interview.

Discernment Process

1. Describe your personal discernment process.
2. In what ways has your sense of call been identified and affirmed by your community of faith?
3. How do you understand the particular roster to which you feel called?
4. What do you consider to be the most pressing needs of the church?

Readiness for Candidacy

More than ever, the church today is seeking leaders with a deep faith in Jesus Christ and an understanding of mission. This means having an ability to analyze context critically, evaluate needed changes, identify new approaches to ministry, and lead people in mission — often beyond their comfort zone. The questions below are suggested to encourage applicants to tell their own faith story and give the committee a means of evaluating their missional awareness.

1. What rostered ministers have influenced your view of mission and ministry?
2. Where do you see God active in your life? In the world?
3. Describe your relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
4. Describe an instance when you shared your faith/God's love with another person.

5. Describe a community or group in which you have held a leadership role (formal or informal). What was difficult for you? What did you learn?
6. How will your pursuit of candidacy and rostered ministry affect your family life?
7. Are you open to serve the church wherever there is a need?

In the course of the interview, the committee will also review and discuss the psychological evaluation report. The following questions can facilitate helpful discussion of this component.

1. What was your response to the psychological evaluation?
2. What insights from it have been useful in your discernment process?

Note: Interviewers should be attentive to any concerns regarding health-related issues (physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual).

4.1.4.3 Required Entrance Questions

Because ELCA rostered ministers accept responsibility for protecting both this church and its members, they are called to live in the world as faithful examples of the Christian life. For that reason, candidacy committees must ask those considering rostered ministry about their personal conduct. An applicant may or may not have self-knowledge and self-awareness that can assist the committee in assessing readiness for candidacy. Some situational factors must also be addressed to invite awareness and openness regarding potential for healthy leadership in the ELCA. Some factors will disqualify applicants, including a history of sexual attraction to minors or sexually deviant behavior with children or minors. Careful attention should be given to an applicant's answers on the Candidacy Application form and the ways issues have been addressed or resolved. The candidacy committee should inquire specifically about issues that could indicate significant obstacles to readiness.

As part of the Entrance interview, the committee invites applicants to offer reflections and/or clarifications related to their responses to the required Entrance questions. The committee may also raise additional questions generated by an applicant's responses. If the committee identifies concerns related to an applicant's fitness for candidacy, it should make further inquiry and consultation pertaining to such concerns before making a decision. At the time of the interview, both the applicant and a member of the candidacy committee will sign a copy of the Candidacy Application form and the Entrance Information form. The signed copies, along with any written analysis or review by the candidacy committee, should become part of the candidacy file.

During the Entrance interview, usually near the conclusion of it, the candidacy committee, out of care for the church, asks every applicant the questions listed below that are also asked on the Candidacy Application form.

Prior to the questions, the Entrance Information form begins with the following words, which may be read out loud by the applicant:

4.1.4.4 Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation has both individual and corporate dimensions. An applicant must be a member in good standing of an ELCA worshipping community for a minimum of one year. The candidacy committee will ask about applicants' involvement in the life of their worshipping community.

It is important for the committee to explore an applicant's ability to articulate and be formed by faith experiences. Here are some possible lines of inquiry that could be incorporated into an Entrance interview.

1. What Bible stories are especially meaningful for you and inform your spiritual journey?
2. How will you sustain your faith during candidacy? (Applicants might propose a plan for their faith life that includes such practices as the use of a trained spiritual director, participation in a group discipleship experience, retreats, personal devotions and daily prayer, and regular participation in corporate worship.)
3. In what ways are you currently practicing holistic stewardship of life?
4. How do you intend to engage in ongoing vocational discernment during candidacy?
5. What kinds of healthy habits for self-care are you developing for yourself?

4.1.4.5 The Recommendation

At the conclusion of the Entrance interview, the applicant is excused from the room while the panel or committee comes to a decision and prepares a written statement regarding the applicant. In the case of a panel recommendation, the actual Entrance decision is made by the full candidacy committee.

4.1.5 The Entrance Decision

Using all available information, a candidacy committee makes an Entrance decision. In the case of a multisynodical candidacy committee, primary responsibility for the applicant resides with the synod of candidacy. All Entrance decisions should be clearly communicated on the Entrance decision form to the applicant, the ELCA seminary of choice, and the Christian Community and Leadership home area. The Entrance decision is one of the following:

1. **Entrance granted.** A decision to grant Entrance indicates the committee's confidence in the applicant's potential and readiness for candidacy. The decision means the applicant demonstrates gifts, abilities, and potential for rostered ministry.
2. **Entrance postponed.** If the applicant demonstrates gifts and abilities but lacks sufficient readiness (physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual), the committee recommends postponement. In doing so, the committee will identify developmental or situational issues that need to be addressed and/or conditions that must be met before the applicant can be reconsidered for Entrance.

Factors that might indicate postponement include:

- a. emotional and psychological factors that could improve with therapy or other interventions;
- b. indications of current substance abuse;
- c. current or very recent marital distress, separation, or divorce;
- d. a family situation that will be highly stressed by geographic relocation;
- e. financial stress with a heavy debt load;
- f. limited familiarity with Lutheran congregational life;
- g. lack of basic biblical and catechetical knowledge;
- h. substantial health problems; or
- i. 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 Entrance is postponed, the committee must clearly state on the Entrance decision form the reasons for the decision. The committee will also ask the applicant to submit a written plan for addressing the identified issues, concerns, or difficulties. The applicant and the committee together will determine how progress will be monitored, when reconsideration may be scheduled, and what procedure will be followed for reconsideration.

3. **Entrance denied.** The committee states specific reasons why an applicant is not an appropriate candidate for rostered ministry. The rationale for such a decision may include issues related to discernment, health, readiness, or other situational factors. If an applicant clearly lacks the gifts and abilities needed for rostered ministry, then the candidacy committee will consider denying Entrance. In the event of denial, the committee should provide appropriate pastoral care at the time the committee shares its discernment with the applicant. The candidacy committee should also assist applicants in further discernment as to where their particular gifts might be more appropriately used in this church or in other areas of service. The candidacy committee has an important contribution to make in relation to the applicant's understanding of vocation and may need to devote extra time to discern with the applicant other possible avenues for living out a vocation. An applicant whose Entrance has been denied may reapply for Entrance after one year. The candidacy committee will, at its own discretion, determine whether to act on such reapplications.

4.1.5.1 Reporting Entrance Decisions

The decision of the candidacy committee will be reported to the applicant, the Christian Community and Leadership home area, and the ELCA seminary of choice, using the Entrance decision form. All reports and decisions of the candidacy committee, including denials, shall be maintained in an applicant's file. Such files shall be maintained according to the Candidacy Records Management Policy (section 1.1.6).

4.1.5.2 Withdrawal of Entrance

Entrance does not guarantee the committee's final approval of a candidate. If warranted by new information or by information that was previously withheld or not disclosed, including allegations of actions that may be harmful to the church, a candidacy committee has the responsibility to withdraw Entrance prior to Endorsement. When considering withdrawal, a candidacy committee will normally communicate with the candidate prior to making such a decision. To withdraw Entrance is a significant action that amounts to a denial of candidacy. An updated decision form must be submitted through the candidacy portal.

4.1.5.3 Reapplication After Entrance Denial

Reapplication must be made to the original synod of application unless there are extenuating circumstances (section 1.7). If the candidacy committee decides to act on a reapplication, it will retrieve, activate, and appropriately update an applicant's stored file. The candidacy committee reports any new Entrance decisions to the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

4.2 Contact Person/Relator

Because personal contact with a candidate throughout the candidacy process is essential for the candidate's formation, growth, and personal development, a candidacy committee must appoint a

committee member to serve as contact person/relator for each candidate granted Entrance. The contact person/relator serves throughout candidacy as a liaison between the committee and a candidate to share mutual joys and concerns. The guidelines below apply to the role of a contact person/relator:

1. Be present for all interviews with assigned candidates.
2. Exchange contact and other personal information with assigned candidates early in the relationship.
3. Be prepared to update the current status of assigned candidates prior to any committee meetings or decisions.
4. Pray for assigned candidates.
5. Maintain contact with assigned candidates through letters, email, telephone calls, visits, retreats, birthday cards, etc.
6. Encourage assigned candidates to share significant news or concerns and to provide updates on academic and practical progress.
7. Assist assigned candidates in ongoing discernment of call, identifying and monitoring areas of growth, developing a Candidate Plan (Appendix D), and sharing experiences of grace.

Because the role of the contact person/relator is critical for continuity and healthy communication throughout the candidacy process, candidacy committees must be attentive to the activities of these persons and the frequency and quality of their contact with assigned candidates. When a candidacy committee member leaves the committee, the synod will, in a timely manner, identify a replacement contact person/relator for all candidates who were relating to the departing committee member. The committee should be sensitive to how the departure of members affects candidates and should seek the input of candidates concerning a suitable replacement for the former contact person/relator.

4.3 Seminary Admission

In consultation with the candidacy committee, individuals normally apply to an ELCA seminary and follow the seminary's admissions process. Those who consider study at a theological school or seminary other than an ELCA seminary must affiliate with an ELCA seminary before completing the Candidate Plan (section 4.4) and, at the latest, prior to Endorsement. Except in unusual circumstances, ELCA seminaries will not extend an offer of admission to an ELCA applicant until receiving notification of Entrance granted by a candidacy committee. An applicant who has begun but not yet completed Entrance into candidacy may receive a six-month provisional offer of admission by the seminary. Such a provisional offer will be withdrawn unless the candidacy committee grants Entrance by the 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.

4.4 Guidelines for Students Attending Non-ELCA Seminaries

All candidates preparing for rostered ministry are expected to demonstrate and build upon the characteristics of an ELCA missional leader listed under each of the four basic principles (section 2.1). To develop and strengthen these characteristics, candidates are strongly encouraged to earn the appropriate degree at an ELCA seminary (Master of Divinity for Word and Sacrament candidates; Master of Arts for Word and Service candidates). Some candidates may elect to attend an accredited non-ELCA seminary. These candidates follow all the candidacy steps outlined in this manual.

Because developing a Lutheran confessional understanding is essential for ministry in the ELCA, candidates are required to participate in structured Lutheran learning and formation through affiliation with an ELCA seminary. Every candidate attending a non-ELCA seminary is charged an affiliation fee collected by the seminary of affiliation. Failure to affiliate early in the candidacy process will delay Endorsement, Approval, Assignment and first call.

Normally one year elapses between Endorsement and Approval.

4.4.1 ELCA Seminary Affiliation

Affiliation assists a candidate in understanding the variety of ways ELCA seminaries, in collaboration with synods, have developed to fulfill the Lutheran learning and formation requirements. Affiliation assists candidates with:

1. identifying an appropriate CPE program,
2. identifying and receiving oversight of the required internship,
3. selecting approved Lutheran learning and formation opportunities offered at an ELCA/ELCIC seminary or at the non-ELCA seminary where a candidate is registered, and
4. facilitating the process for ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty recommendation required at Approval (form D).

After being granted Entrance by a candidacy committee and being admitted to an accredited non-ELCA seminary, the candidate works with a candidacy committee representative in consultation with the academic dean of the ELCA seminary of affiliation to complete the Candidate Plan and identify how the Lutheran learning and formation requirements will be met (Appendix D). A representative from the non-ELCA seminary may also be invited to participate in the development of the Candidate Plan.

The candidacy committee may request that the candidacy leadership manager work with the candidate and appropriate seminary representatives to develop the plan, which can help the candidacy committee, seminary, and candidate to identify approximate timing for CPE, Endorsement, Internship and Approval. The completed plan becomes part of the candidate's file. The synod will send copies of the plan to the ELCA seminary of affiliation. A synod that already has a system in place for gathering the information requested on the Candidate Plan may continue to use it.

For candidates enrolled at non-ELCA seminaries, the ELCA seminary of affiliation, in consultation with the non-ELCA seminary and the appropriate candidacy committee, arranges the CPE experience and determines the timing of the internship year (Appendix F).

4.4.2 Outcomes for Lutheran Learning and Formation

The expectations and outcomes established for Lutheran learning and formation are:

1. a solid grounding in the ELCA hermeneutical understanding of the Scriptures, Lutheran systematic theology, and the Lutheran Confessions;
2. the articulation of a Lutheran theological perspective through the study of theology, church history, Bible, worship, preaching, Christian education, pastoral care, and ethics;
3. a holistic understanding of ministry through a Lutheran lens, including the integrity and varieties of Lutheran worship,
4. familiarity with policies and practices associated with ELCA polity, call, and mobility; and
5. participation in current theological conversations within the ELCA, including establishing relationships with future colleagues that are characterized by mutual support and consolation, accountability, and a clear sense of shared mission.

Such learning opportunities may include online courses and cohort groups offered by one of the ELCA seminaries.

The Lutheran learning and formation guided by an ELCA seminary is a constitutional requirement of the ELCA and will normally not be waived *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (7.31.03.d)*.

Candidates who choose to pursue their Lutheran learning and formation requirements at an ELCA seminary need to complete admission requirements at the ELCA seminary of affiliation.

4.4.3 Waiver of Affiliation With an ELCA Seminary

In the event that a candidate desires to explore the possibility of a Waiver of Affiliation, the candidate will provide to the candidacy committee academic papers and other written documents indicating that the Lutheran learning and formation outcomes listed in the section 4.4.2 have been or will be fulfilled. The candidacy committee may seek advice from a Theological Review Panel (section 5.2.3) convened to assist the panel and candidacy committee in making an informed recommendation. If a waiver is recommended by the panel and the candidacy committee affirms the recommendation, a written request for waiver is sent by the candidacy committee to the director for candidacy. The waiver request from the candidacy committee is vetted by a team of Christian Community and Leadership home area candidacy staff, and a decision will be reached and communicated in writing to the candidacy committee. A request for a Waiver of Affiliation must be made prior to Endorsement and does not alter the requirements for an internship and a supervised clinical ministry experience.

4.5 Candidate Plan

The increasing diversity of seminary leadership-formation programs and related curricula make it necessary for candidacy committees to develop a process for gathering candidate information to better accompany candidates. A candidacy committee needs access to such information when determining the appropriate timing for a candidate's Endorsement and Approval interviews. Many committees already have a good system for gathering the information used to schedule interviews and may decide to continue their present practice.

The primary intent of the Candidate Plan is to strengthen the partnership among candidacy committees, candidates, and ELCA seminaries. The model presented below is an option for candidacy committees to consider.

1. Following the decision to grant Entrance, the candidate, in consultation with the candidacy committee and the seminary of enrollment, will assume responsibility for gathering the necessary information to complete the Candidate Plan (Appendix D)
2. When necessary, a candidacy committee may request the candidacy leadership manager to assume responsibility for facilitating the conversation among partners to complete the Candidate Plan. This practice may be helpful when a candidate will be attending a non-ELCA seminary.
3. The purpose of the Candidate Plan is to develop a tentative timetable for the candidacy process. Factors to consider are the timing of Endorsement, the candidate's circumstances, and the seminary program in which the candidate is enrolled.
4. Participants may use long-distance conferencing media to reduce time and expense.

Copies of a completed plan for each candidate will be kept by the candidacy committee, the seminary of enrollment, and the candidate.

4.6 Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

4.6.1 Introduction

The ELCA requires all candidates for rostered ministry to complete one unit of supervised clinical ministry. Candidates normally complete this unit before Endorsement and prior to Internship and Approval. The preferred way for meeting 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 the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE).

Supervised clinical ministry offers candidates an opportunity to experience learning in direct, integrated ways while practicing the art of pastoral ministry. Among the benefits of such a learning experience are growths in ministerial identity, self-understanding, and theological reflection. A key feature of the experience is interaction with peers and a supervisor in an interpersonal learning group.

The candidacy committee, in consultation with the Christian Community and Leadership home area, evaluates and approves alternative programs and equivalencies in advance. Candidates who opt for a nonaccredited program should be mindful that it will not fulfill the unit of CPE required for admission to an ACPE residency. This fact may have important implications for candidates who are considering future education in pursuit of ecclesiastical endorsement or certification in specialized pastoral care ministry.

The seminary has primary responsibility for the management and administration of this educational requirement.

4.6.2 Standards

The standards for an approved supervised clinical ministry program include but are not limited to:

1. a specified time period of no less than 400 hours;
2. active reporting and evaluation of one's practice of ministry, utilizing a small peer group and individual supervision;
3. a supervisor who is 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. learning the art of pastoral and spiritual care;
6. an individual contract for learning, developed collaboratively by the student and supervisor, that includes
 - a. a theology of pastoral ministry,
 - b. self-understanding and self-integration as demonstrated in the Wholeness Wheel,
 - c. identification of personal strengths and weaknesses in pastoral care,
 - d. participation in a peer group to give and receive supportive and challenging feedback,
 - e. collaborative work with interdisciplinary teams to develop ministerial identity and authority, and
 - f. clear and specific goals for continuing ministerial formation.

4.7 ELCA Rostered Ministers Seeking a Change of Roster

Current ELCA rostered ministers who seek a change of roster will complete all requirements (section 4.1) except for the Entrance essay. They will submit the current Endorsement essay and enter the candidacy process at Endorsement. The candidacy committee thereafter follows the same procedures outlined in this manual for the remainder of the candidacy process. The candidacy committee may also request a Theological Review Panel to guide their candidacy.

5 Admission Under Other Circumstances

5.1 Theological Education for Emerging Ministries

Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) is a leadership formation process in the ELCA designed for those who meet the established criteria. Authorized in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (7.31.04) and described in the Study of Ministry (2003), the Study of Theological Education (1993; 1995), and the ELCA's Plan for Mission adopted at the 2003 Churchwide Assembly, the TEEM process responds to ministry needs of the ELCA.

TEEM candidates do not self-identify. Consideration for admittance into the TEEM process begins with the granting of Entrance by a candidacy committee, followed by a recommendation from a synod bishop (section 5.1.3). The director for candidacy in the Christian Community and Leadership home area then grants acceptance of a candidate into the TEEM process, when the criteria for acceptance listed below are met.

5.1.1 Criteria for Acceptance into TEEM

A person seeking to complete all the academic and practical requirements for Word and Sacrament ministry through the TEEM process will demonstrate the identified characteristics (section 2.1). Every candidate participating in the TEEM process must be serving in an emerging ministry site identified by a synod bishop.

5.1.2 Emerging Ministries

Emerging ministries of Word and Sacrament communities such as the ones listed below:

1. ethnic-specific, multicultural, or recent immigrant ministries;
2. small membership rural or urban congregations where a synod bishop has had difficulty identifying and placing a candidate for call;
3. new mission starts authorized through normal ELCA processes;
4. congregational renewal ministries authorized through normal ELCA processes; and
5. ministries with people who are differently abled.

5.1.3 The TEEM Process

TEEM candidates will complete all the steps in the candidacy process outlined in this manual. A candidate's admittance into TEEM will occur only after the steps listed below have been completed.

1. A synod bishop provides a letter recommending a candidate for admission into the TEEM process. The bishop's letter of recommendation must identify a specific ministry site where the candidate will serve. The same ministry site will serve as both the candidate's teaching parish experience and the location of a supervised internship.
2. The director for candidacy acts to accept the candidate into the TEEM process following the granting of Entrance.

After TEEM candidates complete the academic and practical ministry requirements and are granted Approval by a candidacy committee, they will normally serve their first call in the ministry site originally identified by the synodical bishop. Following first call, the opportunities for mobility will be the same as for all ELCA rostered ministers.

5.1.4 Steps in Candidacy for TEEM

Candidates for the TEEM process must be granted Entrance by a candidacy committee. In preparation for an Entrance interview, the following are required:

1. Candidacy Application form, Entrance essay, and Entrance Information form;
2. Congregational Registration Form (Communal Discernment);
3. background check (section 3.2);
4. psychological evaluation (Appendix B);
5. [personal financial worksheet](#);
6. [personal health assessment](#);
7. transcripts, licenses, and certificates;
8. when appropriate, evidence of payment of the application fee; and
9. A consent form to release student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) must be completed by the candidate, at each step of the candidacy process, and shared with the seminary. The form authorizes the seminary to share information with the candidacy committee.

Following the granting of Entrance, a candidacy committee will send the following documentation to the director for candidacy:

1. the Entrance decision form,
2. the Entrance essay, and
3. a bishop's letter of recommendation identifying the ministry site where a candidate will be serving.

After review of the documentation, the director for candidacy will send the synodical bishop and the candidacy committee a written notification of acceptance or rejection into TEEM with copies to the candidacy leadership manager. Candidates not accepted into TEEM may continue the candidacy process by applying for admission into a Master of Divinity program at an accredited seminary.

5.1.4.1 TEEM Competency Assessment Panel (CAP)

Following notification of a candidate's acceptance into the TEEM process, a member of the **Christian Community and Leadership home area** candidacy staff will normally convene a Competency Assessment Panel (CAP) with faculty from a seminary that offers a TEEM curriculum. When a CAP is convened in a synod, the synod will be responsible for travel costs for seminary faculty asked to serve on the panel. A synod may request the candidacy leadership manager to convene a CAP using electronic technology. The primary responsibility of a CAP is to assess the candidate's knowledge and leadership abilities in each of the competency areas (section 5.1.6). In conversation with a candidate, a CAP will identify the academic work or other training needed to strengthen the candidate's ministry skills and make a recommendation to the candidacy committee. The panel does not have authority to reverse a candidacy committee's Entrance decision. A CAP normally includes:

1. the seminary TEEM director and, when possible, an additional seminary faculty person;
2. a synodical bishop or designee;
3. a member of the candidacy committee;
4. a Christian Community and Leadership home area candidacy staff person;
5. a member of the appropriate ethnic community; and,
6. when the candidate is an approved lay-mission developer, the synod's director forevangelical mission.

The seminary TEEM director will normally serve as the candidate's faculty adviser, accompanying the candidate through completion of the candidacy process.

The number of CAP meetings with a candidate will vary depending on synod and seminary expectations. Normally, a CAP will meet with the candidate at the beginning of the process, at

Endorsement, and again prior to Approval. Communication technologies, such as conference calls and online meetings, may be used to facilitate CAP meetings.

5.1.4.2 Competencies

A Competency Assessment Panel (CAP) assesses the candidate's understanding of Lutheran confessional theology and identifies additional resources and coursework that will strengthen the candidate's ability to integrate Lutheran theological understandings with the praxis of ministry. A CAP assesses the following:

1. Bible — skills for understanding and interpreting Scripture through a Lutheran hermeneutic.
2. Theology and ethics — an ability to reflect critically through Lutheran theological and ethical lenses.
3. Lutheran Confessions — an ability to articulate and integrate into ministry the foundational teachings of the Lutheran church.
4. Church history — a basic understanding of the history of Lutheranism in the United States.
5. Worship — an ability to lead worship, preach, and serve as a spiritual leader.
6. Teaching — an ability to teach the Christian faith to others.
7. Evangelical mission and stewardship — skills and knowledge for leading and developing communities of faith in responding to God's mission through outreach and the practice of holistic stewardship.
8. ELCA structure and polity — an understanding of the interrelationship among all expressions of the church.
9. Administration — basic church administrative skills.
10. Service — a commitment to justice and skills for addressing hunger and poverty.
11. Pastoral care — knowledge, skill, and experience in providing basic pastoral care to people in various life circumstances, as well as the ability to lead and prepare others to provide appropriate ministries of care.

5.1.4.3 Endorsement

At the approximate midpoint of the process, the TEEM candidate will participate in an Endorsement interview with a CAP, which serves as an Endorsement panel and makes a recommendation concerning Endorsement to the candidacy committee. Prior to the interview, a candidate will complete an Endorsement essay. The TEEM director, or in some cases the faculty adviser, will participate in the panel. Endorsement is an important point in the candidacy process because it provides the candidacy committee with an opportunity to assess the candidate's progress and readiness to complete candidacy. Based on a CAP recommendation, the candidacy committee will make an Endorsement decision.

5.1.4.4 Approval

When a candidate has successfully completed a program of study, a CAP will act on behalf of the seminary faculty and complete the Approval recommendation (form D). The candidacy committee will then follow the regular process for Approval, including an Approval essay and interview. The granting of Approval by a candidacy committee is required for completion of the TEEM process.

5.1.4.5 First Call

After being granted Approval and completing the necessary candidate First Call form and the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP), TEEM candidates will participate in the First Call process, which completes candidacy and marks in the churchwide records that the candidate is ready to be called to the ministry site at which they are serving. If a TEEM candidate is granted an Approval, but the ministry site where the candidate is serving is no longer able to extend a call, the candidate may enter the regular First Call process to seek a first call in another ministry site.

5.1.5 Seminary Experience

Seminary TEEM programs will provide:

1. a solid grounding in Lutheran theology and the Lutheran Confessions to enable a candidate to articulate a Lutheran theological perspective;
2. a firm understanding of ministry and mission in a Lutheran context, including the integrity and variety of Lutheran worship;
3. the opportunity for a candidate to participate in current theological conversations and establish relationships with future colleagues in ministry; and
4. participation in the seminary's boundary and safe-church workshops, or the equivalent offered by a synod.

5.1.6 Internship

Following Entrance and in the first year of ministry, TEEM candidates will receive supervision mutually agreed upon by the candidacy committee and the seminary in the site where they are presently serving. Supervision provides a TEEM candidate with an opportunity to receive structured feedback from an experienced pastor. The seminary internship evaluations or other structured feedback forms are normally completed during a candidate's second year of service in a ministry site and sent to the appropriate candidacy committee and the seminary TEEM director.

5.1.7 Supervised Clinical Ministry

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is important for the development of pastoral care skills. The CPE program must be selected with sensitivity to and understanding of a candidate's culture and ministry responsibilities. When a ministry setting would be negatively affected by a candidate's prolonged absence, or when a regular CPE program is not available, a candidacy committee may recommend an alternative contextualized CPE program in consultation with a CAP.

5.2 Admission of Applicants in an Ordained Word and Sacrament Ministry in Another Lutheran Church or in Another Christian Church Body

Sections below "Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," as adopted, March 8, 2020.

For those in ordained Word and Sacrament ministry in another Lutheran church body or in another Christian tradition, the candidacy committee will honor the background of every candidate who seeks to serve as a rostered minister in the ELCA and provides hospitality during and orientation to the candidacy process. The latter provides an opportunity to engage in mutual conversations with a focus on discernment and assessment. The particular needs of this church are important in determining who will be approved. The mission of the ELCA involves worship, nurturing, outreach, service, and advocacy for justice. While the scope of this mission is global, its particular focus is on ministry in the United States and the Caribbean. It is essential to have leaders who are familiar with and have experience in the cultural context of the ELCA. Candidates should appreciate and be familiar with ELCA teachings, polity, liturgy, and traditions.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). Following certification of good standing on the roster of the ELCIC and with the approval of the bishop of the ELCA synod in which a pastor will serve, Word and Sacrament ministers of the ELCIC are received by transfer, upon acceptance of a valid call from an ELCA congregation, a synod council, or the Church Council of the ELCA. This process is not a candidacy committee responsibility.

Full communion partners. The availability of Word and Sacrament ministers from church bodies that are in full communion with the ELCA is not a candidacy matter. Guidelines for such exchange can be found in the Orderly Exchange documents of this church. When a Word and Sacrament minister of a full-communion partner church seeks to be rostered in the ELCA, a candidacy committee will follow the candidacy process according to the procedures outlined below. If such a Word and Sacrament minister has already served in an ELCA congregation, such experience should be acknowledged.

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) partners. Many Word and Sacrament ministers of LWF churches serve in the ELCA through short-term, long-term or temporary arrangements with ELCA congregations or synods. Although such programs can benefit both Lutheran churches involved, these matters are not candidacy concerns.

A candidacy committee may consider the application of a Word and Sacrament minister of an LWF church seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Early consultation with the Service and Justice home area is essential in such cases. Any concerns related to agreements or implications for the churches involved can be identified and considered when there is open communication among the partners.

The candidacy process should always include a deep respect for the credentials and background of those seeking to be rostered in the ELCA. Credentials need to be examined to ensure that an applicant has good standing in the partner church and possesses good moral character. For applicants who come from outside the United States, there are additional factors to consider, such as length of time in the United States, familiarity with U.S. culture, and prior service in the ELCA.

Other Lutheran church partners. Word and Sacrament ministers of other Lutheran churches should be treated with dignity and respect. The perspective of an individual with such credentials can enrich the ELCA and broaden an understanding of mission. The primary foci of the candidacy process in such situations are evaluation for suitability, screening (5.2.2), and orientation to the ELCA. The procedures to be followed by candidacy committees are outlined below.

Other Christian traditions. Word and Sacrament ministers who serve in other Christian traditions may be admitted to the roster of the ELCA if they meet and maintain standards for Word and Sacrament ministers and are committed to the confession of faith of this church. The appropriate candidacy procedures appear below.

5.2.1 Policy and Procedures

According to ELCA bylaw 7.31.01, individuals admitted to the ELCA roster of Word and Sacrament ministers shall satisfactorily meet and maintain these standards:

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 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.

5.2.2 Initial Application

Application for candidacy should occur in the candidate's synod of residence. In the case of someone who does not reside in the United States, application 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 synodical assignment. Synods must consult with the Service and Justice home area regarding candidates from outside the United States (other than the ELCIC).

The applicant will provide the candidacy committee with the following information:

1. the Candidacy Application form, the appropriate essay as identified by the synod candidacy staff person, the Entrance Information form, and the Application Form for Persons From Another Lutheran Church or Christian Tradition;
2. academic transcripts for all postsecondary education (degree or nondegree);
3. certificates of study (if any);
4. documentation of supervised field experience (i.e. internship, clinical education, etc.);
5. a statement or certificate of Word and Sacrament status in another Lutheran church body or Christian tradition;
6. a letter of reference from an applicant's current or former ecclesiastical supervisor;
7. any documentation required if the candidate seeks to immigrate to the United States;
8. a completed psychological evaluation and background check;
9. [personal financial worksheet](#);
10. [personal health assessment](#);
11. a recent sermon;
12. a personal statement, including the theological rationale for why the applicant seeks to serve on the Word and Sacrament roster of the ELCA; and
13. a recent photograph.

Upon receipt of the foregoing information, a synod bishop, in consultation with the candidacy committee, will arrange an interview with the applicant. The purpose of the interview is to determine the applicant's readiness to enter the ELCA candidacy process. Entrance into candidacy is based upon the adequacy of the information provided and the applicant's intention to serve as a Word and Sacrament minister of the ELCA. If the applicant comes from an overseas church with formal relations with the ELCA, the candidacy committee will consult with the Service and Justice home area to obtain any additional information about the applicant that is available from the appropriate church body. After completing the interview and receiving the required information, the candidacy committee will consider an applicant for Entrance.

5.2.3 Theological Review Panel/Endorsement

After granting Entrance to a candidate, a candidacy committee will request that the Christian Community and Leadership home area candidacy staff convene a Theological Review Panel (TRP). Such a panel normally includes the seminary representative serving on the candidacy committee, another seminary faculty person, representatives from the candidacy committee, an ethnic or community representative (if appropriate), an interpreter (if needed), and the candidacy leadership manager, who may serve as a convener. The TRP may be convened electronically on the territory of the synod or at an ELCA seminary. The candidacy leadership manager will submit the TRP report electronically and share it with the candidacy committee.

The TRP, following an interview with the candidate, will make a recommendation to the candidacy committee concerning Endorsement as well as academic and practical requirements for completing candidacy. Recommendations from the panel may include:

1. immediate recommendation for an Approval interview with no additional requirements;
2. a plan of preparation, to be followed by an Approval interview;

3. a plan of preparation and, prior to the Approval interview, a follow-up interview with the TRP, or
4. a recommendation for postponement or denial of Endorsement.

In some cases, the TRP may waive the requirement for an ELCA seminary affiliation.

The panel will inform the candidacy committee and the candidate of its recommendations in writing. The candidacy committee will then act on the recommendations at its next regular meeting.

5.2.4 Approval

When a candidate successfully completes the recommendations of the TRP, the candidacy committee will consider a candidate for Approval. A candidacy committee will report an Approval decision in writing to the Christian Community and Leadership home area. The candidate will complete the First Call forms to indicate that they are interested in being considered for a first call, and so that churchwide can review candidacy records and confirm that the candidate is ready to be called to a ministry site and rostered.

5.2.5 Ordination or Reception of a Candidate

After a candidate has received and accepted a letter of call, the bishop of the synod of call will consult with the Office of the Secretary to determine if ordination is necessary. The ELCA receives as ordained many ministers of Word and Sacrament ordained in other traditions. Those from churches not confessing the faith of the historic ecumenical creeds or those whose authority for ordination is from a single congregation will be ordained according to the ELCA Service of Ordination. The Office of the Secretary will determine how this policy applies in the case of each candidate.

5.2.6 Pastoral Care and Support

For those who come to the ELCA from other Christian traditions, the beginning of service as an ELCA rostered minister is a time to establish significant relationships for support and growth. During the rostered minister's early years of service, the synod bishop may provide a mentor who supports and nurtures the minister.

6 Endorsement

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:1-2, NRSV).

6.1 The Endorsement Process

Endorsement is the official action of a candidacy committee recognizing and affirming a candidate's readiness to complete the candidacy process, and a candidate's demonstration of appropriate gifts and characteristics for a specific roster.

Endorsement is the second major point of discernment in the candidacy process, normally occurring after a candidate has completed a minimum of one-third of the academic work required or its equivalent. Whereas Entrance focuses on discernment of readiness for candidacy, at Endorsement a candidacy committee and its seminary partners affirm:

- a. a candidate's continued discernment of a call to, and gifts and skills for, a specific rostered ministry, and
- b. mutual discernment among the candidacy committee, seminary faculty, and candidate of readiness to complete candidacy successfully.

At Endorsement the candidacy committee will act on behalf of the whole church in affirming a candidate's call and gifts for rostered ministry. Both the candidacy committee and seminary faculty will express support for and affirmation of a candidate's continued progress in candidacy leading toward Approval.

By the time of Endorsement, the candidate, the committee, and seminary faculty will know each other well enough and have sufficient information to determine whether it is desirable to proceed further. Some practices candidacy committees have found useful for building relationships between the committee and candidates include:

1. regular contacts between the candidate and the relator or contact person,
2. developmental interviews with the committee between Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval,
3. retreats that include candidates and members of the candidacy committee,
4. conversations with a seminary faculty adviser, and
5. annual updates from candidates to the committee.

The time between Entrance and Endorsement will vary in length due to the variety of curricular approaches and timelines used by different seminaries and the candidate's own rate of progress. This is normally an opportunity for theological study, ongoing spiritual formation, personal growth, and continuing discernment and clarification of call. Topics that will be addressed during this period include:

1. the candidate's articulation of God's mission in the world and missional leadership,
2. the candidate's understanding of a call to a specific roster or to some other form of service,
3. personal spiritual growth and faith commitment,
4. educational and theological wisdom, and
5. personal and interpersonal skills.

If denial or postponement is being considered, Endorsement is the most appropriate time for determining that the candidate is not a good fit for service as a rostered minister. Such a decision may be made by the candidate as a result of the candidate's ongoing discernment, by the candidacy committee, or by both parties. In instances when the candidate does not seem well-suited for rostered

ministry, making such discernment at Endorsement relieves the candidate of further expenditures of time, money, and emotional energy. Honest feedback and clarity of discernment by the candidacy committee can be an expression of deep caring and love for both the candidate and the church. It is appropriate for the candidate and discernment partners to reach mutual agreement that the candidate's gifts and sense of call are better suited for some type of service other than rostered ministry. To arrive at such a decision is not a failure on the part of the candidate, the seminary or the candidacy committee. Rather, it indicates a faithful openness to how God is speaking to the candidate and the church.

6.2 Some Indicators of Readiness for Endorsement

The following questions can help candidates, candidacy committees, and seminary faculty determine when a candidate might be ready for an Endorsement interview:

1. Has the candidate successfully completed CPE?
2. Has the candidate achieved competence in core areas of theological study, such as Bible, theology, and the Lutheran Confessions?
3. Has the candidate demonstrated competency and leadership in practical areas of the roster for which the candidate is preparing?
4. Has the candidate gained understanding of the larger church?
5. Has the candidate cultivated collegial relationships and accountability?

In preparation for Endorsement, affiliate students (those receiving a degree from a non-ELCA seminary but completing an internship and core Lutheran courses through an ELCA seminary) will complete the Candidate Plan (Appendix D) if they have not already done so and will submit it to the candidacy committee along with the Endorsement essay.

Candidates' Change of Roster

Candidates may change their declared roster in consultation with their candidacy committee. The Candidacy Application must be updated to acknowledge this change in roster preference. If the change occurs at or during Approval, a candidate will begin the candidacy process again at Endorsement.

6.3 Endorsement Interview Panel

The timing of Endorsement will be included in the Candidate Plan (Appendix D). An Endorsement interview panel will include representatives from the candidacy committee (e.g., at least the candidate's contact person and another committee member) and faculty from the candidate's seminary (e.g., faculty adviser, dean of students, or others who know and work with the candidate). Prior to the Endorsement interview, the Christian Community and Leadership home area staff is consulted and may participate in Endorsement panels.

A member of the candidacy committee may convene and chair the Endorsement interview panel at a time and location arranged with the seminary. The panel may meet electronically or on the seminary campus face to face.

During the Endorsement process, the candidacy committee and seminary faculty will collaboratively monitor and assess the candidate's progress in formation for rostered ministry and will review issues already identified at Entrance. The panel will make its recommendation to the full candidacy committee, and the latter will make the official decision regarding Endorsement. For candidates attending a non-ELCA seminary, faculty from that seminary will be invited to participate in the Endorsement panel convened by the candidacy committee and the seminary of affiliation.

6.4 Endorsement Components

A consent form to release student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) must be completed by the candidate at each step of the candidacy process and shared with the seminary. The form authorizes the seminary to share information with the candidacy committee.

Well in advance of the Endorsement panel interview, the candidacy committee will distribute to each panel member the following confidential items:

1. the Entrance decision form with areas for growth noted;
2. a copy of the Endorsement essay;
3. the CPE report;
4. academic transcripts;
5. information on a candidate's participation in seminary community life, including Boundary/Safe Church workshops; and
6. evidence of a candidate's demonstrated competencies (section 2.1)

6.5 Guidelines for an Endorsement Panel Interview

This guide, for use by Endorsement interview panels and candidacy committees, describes the flow of an Endorsement interview. Each synodical or multisynodical candidacy committee may adapt the basic elements of this guide to fit its own style and situational needs, though each candidacy committee should adhere to a consistent pattern in its approach.

6.5.1 Pre-Interview Briefing

Prior to the interview panel, members review a candidate's file with particular attention to issues identified at Entrance, discuss the candidate's Endorsement essay and other relevant materials, and share their knowledge of the candidate. The panel identifies in advance primary topics for discussion and may formulate lead questions for each topic.

6.5.2 The Endorsement Interview

The panel will establish a conversational tone and invite the candidate to engage in dialogue in a spirit of mutual interest, trust, and exploration. This is a time for mutual assessment of a candidate's strengths and growth areas in discerning readiness for completing candidacy.

Following are some possible questions for an Endorsement interview.

Competencies

- 1. A rostered minister is rooted in the presence and activity of the triune God.**
 - a. In what ways have you experienced grace in your life? How have you shared that experience with others?
 - b. Describe your relationship with the triune God.
- 2. A rostered minister actively participates in God's mission through the church.**
 - a. What is your theology of mission?
- 3. A rostered minister cultivates vision and purpose.**
 - a. What spiritual practices do you regularly use?
- 4. A rostered minister demonstrates leadership skills.**
 - a. How do you engage people and lead them toward active participation in God's mission?
- 5. A rostered minister engages the way of the cross.**
 - a. How do you understand the relationship between suffering and faith?
 - b. How do you talk with people about the theology of the cross?
 - c. In what ways are you grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
- 6. A rostered minister proclaims the faith.**

- a. What is your understanding of law and gospel and the distinction between them?
- 7. A rostered minister leads worship.**
 - a. In what ways do you experience a sense of the Holy Spirit while leading worship?
- 8. A rostered minister interprets mission.**
 - a. What is the wider mission of the ELCA through its interdependent partners and expressions?
 - b. What is your personal commitment to the wider church?
- 9. A rostered minister cultivates Christian community, discipleship, leadership formation, and the practice of reconciliation of differences.**
 - a. In what ways have you participated and engaged in the seminary community?
 - b. How central is an understanding of baptismal vocation for Christian community?
 - c. How do you identify and encourage the gifts of others?
- 10. A rostered minister cares for people.**
 - a. What indicators have you received from others that you have sensitivity to the needs of people?
- 11. A rostered minister practices wellness in one's personal life.**
 - a. Choose an area of well-being on the Wholeness Wheel and describe how you are embodying this in your life.
- 12. A rostered minister evangelizes.**
 - a. What experiences have you had sharing your faith with an unchurched person?
 - b. How do you engage in conversation with people of different or no faith?
- 13. A rostered minister relates theology to history, context, and culture.**
 - a. Describe how you have adapted to different contexts where you have lived. Which adjustments were most difficult for you?
 - b. How have you shared your faith with people of a different culture?
- 14. A rostered minister equips disciples and sends them into the world.**
 - a. What are some ways you live out your Christian faith?
 - b. What do you understand to be the mission of God in the world?
 - c. How do you empower others for discipleship?
- 15. A rostered minister is held accountable in speech and behavior as set forward in *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline.***

6.5.3 Panel Reflection and Consultation

The Endorsement panel discusses the candidate's readiness for Endorsement and prepares its recommendation for the candidacy committee. When the recommendation is to postpone Endorsement, the panel will identify specific areas needing further development. When the recommendation is to deny Endorsement, the panel will explain the reasons for its decisions and arrange for appropriate pastoral care.

6.5.4 Panel Recommendation

The Endorsement panel will meet with the candidate and **make** a recommendation **to the candidacy committee.** The panel will clarify that the final decision concerning Endorsement is the responsibility of the candidacy committee, which will communicate its decision to the candidate in a timely manner.

6.5.5 Report Preparation

The panel will prepare and submit to the candidacy committee a written report with its Endorsement recommendation. Both the seminary of affiliation and the candidacy committee should

share a common understanding of how the candidate intends to meet both academic and candidacy requirements. The Candidate Plan likely will need to be adjusted to reflect a new timeline.

6.6 The Endorsement Decision

Based upon the recommendation from an Endorsement panel and other relevant information, the full candidacy committee may make three possible decisions: Endorsement granted, Endorsement postponed, or Endorsement denied.

When the decision of the candidacy committee differs from the recommendation of the Endorsement panel, the committee will inform faculty members who served on the Endorsement panel of its decision. In all cases, the final responsibility for Endorsement rests with the candidacy committee.

1. **Endorsement granted** reflects the candidacy committee's confidence in the candidate's formation and growth. Barring unforeseen difficulties, there is every reason to believe the candidate will complete candidacy. The committee may make recommendations for continued growth and formation and include them in the Endorsement decision form.
2. **Endorsement postponed** indicates that certain developmental issues must be addressed and/or specific conditions met before the candidate can be endorsed. The Endorsement decision form should clearly specify any developmental issues and/or conditions that must be met before Endorsement is reconsidered. The committee will designate the appropriate person to monitor its recommendations, to determine when reconsideration may be scheduled, and to delineate the procedures to be followed.
3. **Endorsement denied** is a discernment that there are specific reasons why the candidate is not suitable for rostered ministry. The candidacy committee must clearly identify its reasons for denial. In properly documenting its decision and reasons for it, the candidacy committee will ensure that the candidacy process has been faithfully followed. The committee will offer appropriate pastoral care when communicating its decision to the candidate and will arrange for follow-up care, including assistance in identifying and affirming where the candidate's particular gifts for ministry might be a good fit in the church and/or the community. An applicant whose Endorsement has been denied may reapply for Entrance after one year. The candidacy committee will determine at its own discretion whether to act on such reapplications.

6.6.1 Reporting Endorsement Decisions

Using the Endorsement decision form, the candidacy committee will report its decision to the candidate, the Christian Community and Leadership home area, and the appropriate seminary.

6.6.2 Withdrawal of Endorsement

Although Endorsement is a strong expression of confidence, it does not guarantee the committee's final Approval of a candidate. The candidacy committee has the responsibility, after prayerful deliberation, to withdraw its Endorsement prior to Approval if such action is warranted by allegations of actions on the candidate's part that may be harmful to the church. When withdrawal of Endorsement is being considered, the candidacy committee will normally communicate with the candidate prior to making a decision. To withdraw Endorsement is a significant action that amounts to a denial of candidacy. An updated decision form must be submitted through the candidacy portal. If the allegations prove false, the committee may reverse its decision to withdraw and may reinstate the candidate in the candidacy process at the point where candidacy was terminated.

6.6.3 Reapplication

A minimum of one year must pass before a person whose Endorsement was denied or withdrawn may reapply for candidacy. The candidacy committee must consult with the Christian Community and Leadership home area to determine the appropriate point of re-entry into candidacy.

6.6.4 From Endorsement to Approval

Endorsement remains in effect until Approval. There is no annual renewal of Endorsement, but candidacy committees will maintain regular contact with endorsed candidates. The candidacy committees and the seminary of enrollment (or the seminary of affiliation, in the case of candidates studying at non-ELCA seminaries) share responsibility for monitoring the candidate's continued growth. Accordingly, the candidacy committee may provide suggestions to the seminary concerning an appropriate internship setting for the candidate, as well as other recommendations concerning the candidate's ongoing formation and preparation for rostered minister. The seminary in turn will provide regular reports to the candidacy committee on the candidate's coursework, supervised clinical ministry, contextual education, and internship, as well as any other pertinent information that might assist the committee. Normally one year elapses between Endorsement and Approval.

6.6.5 Internships

The ELCA requires any candidate to complete satisfactorily an approved internship, which consists of supervision in a context designed to contribute to the formation of pastoral identity and the development of competencies for rostered ministry. Because new and diverse seminary models now permit internships to occur at different points in a candidate's formation process, Appendix F offers detailed guidelines for internships that will meet the expectations of the ELCA.

7 Approval

Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, NRSV).

7.1 Approval Process

The final step in the ELCA candidacy process is Approval — a significant milestone in a candidate's lifelong journey of discernment. At this stage the candidacy committee, the seminary of enrollment (or affiliation), and the candidate are discerning the candidate's readiness to serve as a rostered minister after successful completion of all academic and candidacy requirements. Such discernment is the culmination of an extensive process that began prior to Entrance as a period of preliminary discernment, continued at Entrance with a mutual discernment of readiness for candidacy, became more focused at Endorsement with a discernment of readiness to complete candidacy, and now reaches a point of mutual affirmation and celebration of readiness for service as a rostered minister. Barring unexpected complications, the climate for Approval should normally be confirmation of earlier discernment.

Absent new or previously withheld information, Approval is not a point at which candidates should typically be directed away from rostered ministry. In an effective and faithful candidacy process, such a determination would normally occur much earlier, preferably at Endorsement. Even at Approval, however, the discernment partners — the candidate, candidacy committee, seminary faculty, and others — may appropriately reach mutual agreement that the candidate's gifts and sense of call are better suited for some type of service other than as a rostered minister, and the candidacy committee has a continuing obligation to deny Approval to candidates who are likely to engage in misconduct or otherwise harm the church or its members. To arrive at such a decision is not a failure on the part of the candidate, the seminary, or the candidacy committee. Rather, it indicates a faithful openness to how God is speaking to a candidate and to the church.

Responsibility for Approval of candidates for rostered ministry rests with the candidacy committee. The process described in this chapter reflects procedures and guidelines developed by the Christian Community and Leadership home area in regular consultation with candidacy partners.

Granting Approval is significant, not only for the candidate but also for ministry settings in which the candidate will serve as a rostered minister. In granting Approval, the candidacy committee acknowledges on behalf of the ELCA that the candidate is qualified and suited to serve under call as a rostered minister. This final step in candidacy is a threshold in the sense that, when candidates receive and accept a letter of call, there will be further public acknowledgment of their qualifications for rostered ministry.

Two ELCA documents speak directly to a candidate's qualifications for rostered ministry: *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*. *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* defines the basic standards that candidates must meet for a specific roster. *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* describes the grounds for which rostered ministers may be subject to discipline according to the practice of this church. At the Approval interview, candidates must state a clear intention to live and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the standards of this church.

7.1.1 Approval Components

Candidacy committee members interviewing a candidate for Approval must have the candidate's complete file available for review and study. In addition, the material listed below is necessary for Approval.

1. The Approval essay.
 - a. The Approval essay guidelines, prepared by the Christian Community and Leadership home area with the assistance of an appointed writing team, are available to candidates, candidacy committees, and ELCA seminaries on the ELCA website. Because candidates attending non-ELCA seminaries may not have the same awareness of timelines and access to announcements, the candidacy committee should notify them directly about the essay topic and guidelines and the deadline for submission.
 - b. The Approval essay provides an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate readiness for rostered ministry by exercising theological wisdom related to practical situations and ministry tasks. Candidates will also prepare a personal reflection on rostered ministry and submit a sermon or project. The candidate is responsible for sending the completed Approval essay to the candidacy committee by the required date.
2. The ELCA seminary Faculty Recommendation (form D).
3. An internship evaluation.
 - a. In the case of fourth-year internships, the candidate should complete the internship prior to the Approval interview. This normally means that fourth-year interns will participate in the First Call process later in the final year of candidacy. In some cases, the final internship evaluation may be prepared after a minimum of nine months, following consultation and agreement between the ELCA seminary of enrollment or affiliation and the candidacy committee.
4. Academic transcripts.
5. A final report on CPE or other supervised clinical ministry, especially if completed after Endorsement.
6. The Approval Information form.
7. A consent form to release student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This must be completed by the candidate at each step of the candidacy process and shared with the seminary. The form authorizes the seminary to share information with the candidacy committee.

The candidacy committee may request and review any other materials it deems relevant for discerning a candidate's readiness for rostered ministry.

7.1.2 Recommendation of Candidates by ELCA Seminaries

During the final year of candidacy, the ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty will assess whether the candidate is ready to serve as a rostered minister in the ELCA, and will complete form D.

7.1.2.1 The Faculty Interview

In preparing an ELCA/ELCIC seminary Faculty Recommendation (form D), some members of the faculty will meet personally with the candidate to review the candidate's program of study and assess the candidate's readiness for rostered ministry. Usually the candidate's faculty adviser participates in the review. At some seminaries a single interview serves as both an internship debriefing and an Approval recommendation. The interview will focus on the candidate's spiritual, vocational, theological, intellectual, professional, and personal development. Following the interview, the faculty panel will state to the entire faculty whether the candidate meets the basic constitutional standards for rostered ministry in the ELCA, including:

1. commitment to Christ;
2. acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
3. willingness and ability to respond to the needs of this church; including public support for its wider ministries;
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 an example in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living.

After review and action by the entire faculty, the faculty interview panel or one member of it will prepare a written evaluation of the candidate (form D), gain faculty approval for it, and submit it to the seminary, the appropriate candidacy committee, and the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

The faculty recommendation should not replace or duplicate the candidate's Approval interview with the candidacy committee. Instead, it should offer a critical and essential perspective grounded in a comprehensive engagement with the candidate over a lengthy period of time. The faculty recommendation reflects primarily on a candidate's seminary experience — both academic and practical — while the Approval interview should focus on the candidate's Approval essay and readiness for rostered ministry.

7.1.2.2 The Faculty Recommendation

The full faculty of an ELCA/ELCIC seminary will make one of three recommendations concerning a candidate to the candidacy committee:

1. Approval granted
2. Approval postponed
3. Approval denied

Faculty members who are not well-acquainted with the candidate may abstain. The decision should normally be rendered by a two-thirds majority. When the vote is less than two-thirds but still a majority, the outcome should be noted in the faculty's report to the candidacy committee.

An ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty and the candidacy committee may sometimes come to different conclusions regarding Approval of a candidate. In such cases, the candidacy committee, after careful deliberation and further consultation with the seminary through the dean, may deny Approval to a candidate who has been recommended by an ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty.

When an ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty recommends that Approval be denied, the seminary will inform the candidacy committee and the Christian Community and Leadership home area. The candidacy committee will regard with the utmost seriousness a faculty recommendation to deny Approval.

When the candidacy committee receives a recommendation from an ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty to postpone or deny Approval, it will consult directly with representatives of the appropriate seminary faculty before the Approval interview to understand the factors informing the faculty recommendation. The candidacy committee may also invite a member of the faculty to attend the Approval interview and participate in the committee's deliberations. Expenses for the participation of the faculty member will be the responsibility of the seminary. A representative of the Christian Community and Leadership home area must also be present at a candidacy committee meeting when a candidate who has been denied a positive faculty recommendation is being considered for Approval.

In instances when there has not been adequate or conclusive consultation between an ELCA/ELCIC seminary faculty, the candidacy committee, and the Christian Community and Leadership home area, the candidacy committee will normally postpone Approval until such consultation can occur and any misunderstandings are resolved. After all partners have been included in the discussion of the candidate, the candidacy committee will make the final decision regarding Approval.

In completing the Faculty Recommendation for Approval (form D), an ELCA/ELCIC seminary will prepare two sections:

1. A written evaluation of the candidate that must be reviewed (and may be amended) by the academic dean, the candidate's faculty adviser, and other members of the faculty but that must be approved by the whole faculty.
2. An internship evaluation, compiled by seminary staff responsible for internship and based on evaluations submitted by the candidate, the internship supervisor, the internship committee, and the debriefing faculty.

Both reports and the formal recommendation concerning Approval are part of the completed report (form D).

The seminary sends the Faculty Recommendation (form D) to both the candidacy committee and the Christian Community and Leadership home area. The faculty may attach additional explanatory comments to assist the candidacy committee in the Approval decision. In such commentary, the faculty should be as explicit and concrete as possible. The faculty, for example, might address specific areas of continuing education and formation that should be focal points for First Call Theological Education. If any new information emerges after the completion of form D that might alter or affect the faculty recommendation, the seminary will share such information with both the candidacy committee and the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

7.1.3 The Approval Interview Context

Approval is a threshold for rostered ministry in the ELCA, not the conclusion of a process. Discernment and formation for rostered ministry are lifelong processes that encompass candidacy, First Call Theological Education, and lifelong learning.

The Approval interview is the candidacy committee's final meeting with a candidate. In preparation for it, members of the candidacy committee read the Approval essay, as well as other pertinent material from the candidate's file (section 7.1.1), previous decisions of the candidacy committee, and form D. The purpose of the Approval interview is to review in depth a candidate's readiness for rostered ministry.

In preparing for the interview, members of the candidacy committee should be mindful of the competencies expected of a rostered minister, who

1. **Is rooted in the presence and activity of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** A rostered ministry nurtures a vibrant faith and relationship with the triune God within a community of faith and leads other Christians to do likewise as they participate in God's mission. In assessing this competency, the candidacy committee looks for a candidate's ability to:
 - a. engage in theological and spiritual discernment that manifests a faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 - b. articulate and live out a clear Christian identity, and
 - c. interpret the Scriptures as the norm for understanding God's mission in the world.

2. **Actively participates in God's mission through the church.** Some key traits related to this competency are:
 - a. ability to cultivate a compelling vision for ministry,
 - b. ability to equip people to share faith stories,
 - c. skills in hospitality that invite people to a life of discipleship, and
 - d. awareness of the interconnectedness of the church beyond the local congregation.
3. **Cultivates vision and purpose.** This competency includes:
 - a. use of spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, biblical and theological reflection, and spiritual direction),
 - b. knowledge of societal and cultural trends that can inform a congregation's vision and sense of purpose,
 - c. skills for leading congregations and other groups in discernment of God's mission in the world (including the incorporation of input from a diversity of sources and people), and
 - d. courage to lead God's people into mission.
4. **Possesses leadership skills.** Some important indicators of this competency are:
 - a. demonstration of adaptive leadership skills that are sensitive to context,
 - b. skills for leading a community of faith through change while addressing conflicts that might emerge,
 - c. capacity to engage people and lead them toward active participation in God's mission in the world,
 - d. facility for encouraging collegial decision-making processes in a congregation,
 - e. demonstration of personal holistic stewardship and skill in equipping others, and
 - f. understanding of how administrative structures and procedures can serve mission in congregational life.
5. **Engages the way of the cross.** Empowered by the resurrected Christ, a rostered minister shows people the crucified Christ through word and deed and enables them to envision what God is doing in the world and in their lives. Some indicators of this competency include:
 - a. willingness to confront and engage suffering in one's own life and the lives of others, especially marginalized people;
 - b. qualities of servant leadership;
 - c. willingness to serve, risk, and sacrifice for the sake of God's mission, including an ability to identify and lead in exposing the principalities and powers operative in a given context; and
 - d. willingness to treat life crises as opportunities for experiencing new life.
6. **Proclaims the faith.** Clear indicators for this competency are the candidate's ability to:
 - a. preach the word as law and Gospel,
 - b. teach Scripture,
 - c. share the faith with others,
 - d. provide Christian education for all ages and cultures,
 - e. articulate theological wisdom, and
 - f. live a disciplined spiritual life.
7. **Interprets mission.** This competency reflects the candidate's ability to articulate and interpret in a compelling manner, both theologically and contextually, the wider mission of the ELCA through its interdependent partners and expressions. This competency also includes a commitment to the mission of the wider church, including synods and the churchwide organization, as well as related institutions and agencies of the ELCA, and facility in interpreting and motivating support for the ELCA beyond the local congregation.
8. **Cultivates Christian community, discipleship, leadership formation, and the practice of reconciliation of differences.** A rostered minister effectively forms and leads Christian communities that intentionally foster the growth of disciples of Jesus Christ and

- attend to the formation of leaders in the church. Some indicators of this competency are:
- a. ability to form partnerships and networks,
 - b. commitment to the reconciliation and mutual empowerment of dissimilar groups,
 - c. skill at convening and empowering teams for mission, and
 - d. a sense of stewardship in cultivating gifts manifest in a community of believers and in delegating and sharing tasks tailored to those gifts.
9. **Cares for people.** A ministry of care encompasses both congregational and community care. Some key responsibilities related to this competency include:
- a. visitation;
 - b. counseling;
 - c. equipping the baptized to provide ministries of care, both within the congregation and in the wider community;
 - d. accessing community resources for appropriate referrals and participation, and
 - e. demonstrating sensitivity to people in major life and cultural transitions.
10. **Practices wellness in one's personal life.** Some actions to consider in this area:
- a. nurturing a vibrant and resilient faith;
 - b. maintaining a balance of work, play, and self-care;
 - c. maintaining clear and healthy boundaries in all relationships;
 - d. attending to diet, exercise, and mental/physical health; and
 - e. nurturing healthy family relationships.
11. **Evangelizes.** A rostered minister actively believes and carries out Christ's command to go out and share the gospel with neighbors. Some key traits related to this competence are:
- a. passion and imagination in sharing the gospel,
 - b. sensitivity and skill in welcoming the stranger into community,
 - c. creativity in discovering and implementing ways to share the gospel with people outside the church,
 - d. attentiveness in listening to people's stories and interpreting their experience in light of the gospel,
 - e. understanding of how Christian community aids in the formation of faith; and
 - f. a natural and authentic gift, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for engaging people in the bleakest moments of their lives.
12. **Relates theology with history, context, and culture.** A rostered minister understands and interprets context and culture through the lens of Christian faith and leads a community of faith to opportunities where the gospel can be understood and shared by people in specific cultural contexts. Some important indicators of this competency include:
- a. ability to engage culture and context theologically, critically, and creatively with a sensitivity to historical factors;
 - b. ability to analyze congregational and community demographics and trends;
 - c. engagement with complex social and religious issues as a practical theologian in context;
 - d. sensitivity to cross-cultural, intra-cultural, and counter-cultural dynamics; and
 - e. skill in addressing cultural differences.
13. **Equips disciples and sends them into the world.** A rostered minister prepares disciples to discern the leading of the Spirit as they share the gospel with neighbors in word and deed. Some important considerations for this competence are:
- a. demonstrated capacity to mobilize people of faith with different gifts and perspectives that can enrich the church's witness in the world and lead to acts of mercy and justice,
 - b. personal embodiment of Christian faith in one's daily life,

- c. demonstrated capacity for cultivating communities of well-being and holistic stewardship as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel (section 4.1.2),
- d. theological sensitivity to the presence and activity of God in the world,
- e. recognition of the public vocation of the Christian community in the world, and
- f. ability to interpret that vocation to people of faith.

In addition to the above, the candidacy committees will want to explore:

1. **a candidate's personal integrity** as expressed through consistent behavior, values, methods, principles, expectations, and morals, as well as a commitment to live one's life faithfully among the people of God;
2. **a candidate's trustworthiness** as reflected in a reliable ability to respect confidentiality and to inspire confidence through care and respect for others; and
3. **a candidate's call to ministry and ministry gifts**, whereby the committee can confirm to its satisfaction that a candidate possesses the preparation, commitment, character, and abilities expected of those called to rostered ministry.

7.1.4 The Approval Interview

This interview guide for candidacy committees describes the flow of an Approval interview. Each candidacy committee may adapt the guide to its particular situation and needs.

7.1.4.1 Approval Information Form

Note that the most current version of this form is available on the ELCA website.

Prior to the Approval interview, a candidate will complete an Approval Information form:

During the Approval interview, the candidacy committee, out of care for the church, asks every candidate the questions listed on the Approval Information Form that were also asked at the time of Entrance into candidacy.

Prior to the questions, the Approval Information Form begins with a statement that may be read out loud by the candidate.

APPROVAL INFORMATION

Name: _____

LAST NAME
FIRST NAME/GIVEN NAME
M.I.
SUFFIX
TITLE

Leader Key: _____ Synod: _____

Out of care for the church every candidate answers these questions as part of the application form. The questions will be discussed with the Candidacy Committee at the Approval Interview. The candidate and a member of the Candidacy Committee will then sign this form.

“As a candidate for rostered ministry in this church, I understand I will be held accountable regarding this church’s expectations for my speech and conduct as set forward in Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Rostered Ministers. I understand that rostered ministry brings increased attention to my life. I am responsible for informing my bishop regarding any circumstance that might subject me to discipline according to Definitions and Guidelines. I understand that the candidacy committee may modify my candidacy status at any time in response to my speech and conduct.”

- Yes No 1. Do you belong to any organization or lodge like the Free Masons or Eastern Star which claim to possess in its teachings and ceremonies that which the Lord has given solely to the Church?

- Yes No 2. Have you completed your on-line personal health assessment?
- 2a. What did you learn, and what will you do to remain healthy?

- Yes No 3. Do you have or have you had any health conditions (physical or psychological) that might interfere with your ability to serve as a rostered minister in the ELCA?

- Yes No 4. Are there issues in your family situation or personal life that could adversely affect your ability to serve as a rostered minister in the ELCA?

- Yes No 5. Is your personal debt, excluding mortgages, greater than \$50,000?

- Yes No 6. Have you ever defaulted on a loan or declared bankruptcy?

- Yes No 7. Do you now engage, or have you ever engaged in any addictive behavior, including drug or alcohol abuse or sexual or pornographic addictions?

- Yes No 8. 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?

- Yes No 9. 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?

- Yes No 10. 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?

- Yes No 11. Do you have any sexual attraction toward children or minors, or any history of sexually deviant behavior, including behavior with children or minors?

- Yes No 12. 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?

- Yes No 13. Are you prepared to accept a call from this church based on the needs of the church which might require service in a location different from where you now live?

- Yes No 14. Is there additional information that would assist the Candidacy Committee in considering your candidacy or that you believe the committee should know?

Following a discussion with the candidacy committee about the candidate's responses to these questions, the candidate and at least one member of the candidacy committee will sign the form and place it in the candidate's permanent file.

7.1.4.2 A Candidate's File

Prior to the Approval interview, members of the candidacy committee review pertinent information from the candidate's file, including the Approval essay, internship evaluations, CPE reports, and other relevant material.

7.1.4.3 The Approval Interview

At Approval, the candidacy committee has the privilege and responsibility of welcoming candidates, affirming ways in which they have been formed, and having intentional conversation with them about their readiness for rostered ministry. Candidacy committees use a variety of formats for the Approval interview, such as panels instead of the entire committee, retreat settings, and separate sections for different foci in the interview.

Understandably, candidates experience considerable anxiety in anticipation of an Approval interview. The panel or committee, therefore, will want to clarify the purpose of the interview and establish a tone of hospitality and appreciation with the candidate.

To facilitate and strengthen conversation during the interview, the candidacy committee may structure the interview around the components described below.

1. **Reflection on leadership (internship).** A candidacy committee reviews internship evaluations and faculty recommendations (form D) for clear instances of behavior and experience in which a candidate has demonstrated the characteristics of a missional leader (section 2.1).
2. **The Approval essay.** The focus here could be a candidate's theological articulation. It is important to have conversation about each section of the Approval essay. There may be concerns in one area that require more detailed questioning. It is also important to affirm strengths revealed in the essay.
3. **Developmental needs of a candidate.** The committee reviews and discusses with the candidate the following:
 - a. growth areas and developmental needs previously identified at Entrance and Endorsement,
 - b. any issues that have surfaced from the discussion of the Approval Information form,
 - c. identification of focal points for ongoing discernment and First Call Theological Education, and
 - d. hopes for future ministry settings.

In the Approval interview it is important for the candidacy committee to allow sufficient time to address all three components outlined above to ensure a comprehensive consideration of important factors. In order not to neglect or short-change any of them, the committee will budget the time and approach used for the interview to maintain a balance among the three components.

One possible strategy for attaining such a balance is for the candidacy committee to set up separate panels for each component — internship, Approval essay, and developmental needs. After the separate panels have met, the entire committee can discuss together what each panel has heard and concluded from its segment of the interview. Another model is an Approval retreat utilizing a three-panel format.

Candidacy committees should determine how to handle the suggested process for an Approval interview and the format that works best for them.

Following the interview, the candidacy committee excuses a candidate while it considers the Approval decision. Exactly how much time might be required is difficult to determine in advance. If a committee anticipates a difficult decision regarding the candidate's Approval, it is important to allow adequate time for careful deliberation. The goal of such deliberation is for the committee to reach agreement — preferably by consensus — on Approval (Approval granted, Approval postponed, or Approval denied). Once the committee has made a decision, it will inform the candidate.

7.1.5 The Approval Decision

The ELCA depends on the wisdom and discernment of the candidacy committee in determining who will serve as rostered ministers. Such responsibility relies upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit and calls for the utmost seriousness and humility on the part of those who serve on the committee.

At Approval, there are three possible decisions the candidacy committee may make.

1. **Approval granted** confirms readiness for rostered ministry.
2. **Approval postponed** indicates that certain issues or conditions must be resolved prior to the candidate's being considered again for Approval. In this case, the committee provides clear directions to candidates concerning specific developmental goals and concerns that must be addressed and a date when they may return to the committee. Candidates should be encouraged to provide a written response stating their understanding of the concerns and how they intend to address them.
3. **Approval denied** means candidacy is ended. A committee will state clearly in writing the reasons for its discernment. A committee will want to make certain the candidacy process has been faithfully followed and provide appropriate pastoral care with candidates who have been denied Approval. Such discernment is also an opportunity for a candidacy committee to spend additional time exploring candidates' appropriate avenues for service and enabling them to exit candidacy with a renewed sense of value, giftedness, and possible direction for pursuing and expressing their understanding of vocation. An applicant whose Approval has been denied may reapply for candidacy after one year. The candidacy committee will, at its discretion, determine whether to act on such reapplications. Consultation with the Christian Community and Leadership home area is required to determine the appropriate point of reentry into candidacy.

7.1.5.1 Reporting Approval Decisions (Form E)

Using form E, the candidacy committee reports its Approval decision to a candidate, a candidate's ELCA seminary, and the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

Following Approval, candidates remain under the care and guidance of the candidacy committee until they receive and accept a call. When a candidate does not receive a call reasonably soon after Approval and the completion of academic work, the period of uncertainty and perceived delay may be especially stressful. It is important, therefore, for the candidacy committee to continue to support and care for candidates during such times.

7.1.5.2 Withdrawal of Approval

The candidacy committee may withdraw Approval by action of the full committee at any time prior to a candidate's ordination. Such action may be taken when the committee determines that a candidate is no longer qualified to serve in rostered ministry. To withdraw Approval is a significant action that amounts to a denial of candidacy. An updated decision form must be submitted through the candidacy portal.

Reasons for such action may be related to:

1. conduct that is inappropriate for the standards and expectations of this church, or
2. a change in personal life that disqualifies a candidate.

If the candidate has already started the First Call process, the candidacy committee may act to withdraw Approval only after consultation with the bishop of the synod interviewing the candidate for First Call. The committee taking such action will report its decision to any synods considering a candidate for a First Call, the candidate's seminary, and the Christian Community and Leadership home area. Such action ends candidacy.

7.1.5.3 Reapplication

A minimum of one year must pass before a person who has had Approval denied or withdrawn may reapply for candidacy. Consultation with the Christian Community and Leadership home area is required to determine the appropriate point of reentry into candidacy.

7.2 First Call Process

The *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and related documents hold up a vision of gospel ministry for those who prepare to serve under call as rostered ministers in the ELCA. In our "Statement of Purpose" (Chapter 4) the Church is defined as "a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world." As this church engages in God's mission, we are committed to "carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people...."

To fulfill its mission of outreach, worship, service and advocacy for justice and nurture, this church calls and sends qualified people to serve as rostered ministers. Because our mission is global in its scope, with particular responsibility for ministry in the United States and Caribbean, this church calls and sends ministers where they are needed.

The First Call Process marks the final step of the candidate's public confirmation of their personal call to rostered ministry, their candidacy journey. The First Call Process serves to bridge the time between candidacy and ordination (or being reinstated or added to the ELCA roster), allows for the Holy Spirit to be at work, and offers an opportunity for the candidate and the other bodies of the church to be in prayerful discernment. It also provides an opportunity for the Christian Community and Leadership home area to confirm that the candidate can be added to the roster upon receipt of call.

Prior to Approval, the candidate prepares for the First Call Process by completing the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) and part I of the First Call Form prior to the deadline posted by the region of candidacy. The candidate also participates in a preapproval conversation with the bishop or designated staff person of their synod of candidacy. The bishop or designated staff person of each synod in the region and the Candidacy and Leadership Manger of the region will meet at a scheduled regional consultation to discuss the candidate and determine a post-approval First Call plan for the candidate, including helping to determine in which region or synod the candidate will be available to interview for first call. Relevant information about the process is available on the ELCA website at <https://elca.org/Resources/Candidacy#FirstCall> .

7.3 Renewal and Re-Approval

7.3.1 Renewal of Approval

An Approval is valid for 12 months. When an approved candidate has not received and accepted a letter of call within one year after Approval, the candidate may request in writing a renewal of Approval prior to the meeting of the candidacy committee closest to the end of that 12-month period. The candidacy committee may request an interview with the candidate prior to deciding on a renewal of Approval but does not have to. When an approved candidate whose request for renewal has been granted has not received and accepted a letter of call within two years after Approval, the candidate again may request in

writing a renewal of Approval, following the same procedure.

When Approval is renewed, the candidacy committee notifies the Christian Community and Leadership home area via the note section in the candidacy portal.

7.3.2 Re-approval

When an approved candidate has not received and accepted a letter of call within three years after Approval, the candidate requests the candidacy committee consider the candidate for Re-approval. The Re-approval process includes:

1. The preparation of the current Approval essay;
2. An Approval interview.

The candidacy committee may also require a Theological Review Panel that includes at least one faculty member of an ELCA seminary. The candidacy committee may also require a new psychological assessment.

When Re-approval is granted, the candidacy committee submits a new Approval form (form E) electronically to the Christian Community and Leadership home area.

Re-approval is valid for one year. When an approved candidate whose request for Re-approval has been granted has not received and accepted a letter of call within one year after Re-approval, the candidate requests in writing a renewal of Re-approval prior to the meeting of the candidacy committee closest to the end of the 12-month period. The candidacy committee notifies the Christian Community and Leadership home area via the note section in the candidacy portal. When an approved candidate whose request for renewal of Re-approval has been granted has not received and accepted a letter of call within two years after Re-approval, the candidate again requests in writing a renewal of Re-approval, following the same procedure. The candidacy committee notifies the Christian Community and Leadership home area via note section in candidacy portal.

7.3.3 Re-approval and First Call

A candidate who is granted Re-approval participates in the First Call process (section 7.2) and provides the required information by the deadline for the next Regional First Call consultation in their region of candidacy. Each region has its own schedule of consultations and its own paperwork deadlines.

7.3.4 End of Candidacy

When an approved candidate has not received and accepted a letter of call within six years, candidacy ends, and this decision is entered into the committee's minutes.

Appendix A: Guidelines for Discernment

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2 NRSV).

A.1 Journey of Discernment

A journey of discernment designed specifically for the ELCA candidacy process focuses on the development of healthy habits and practices during a lifelong process of discernment. Such discernment is not an additional decision point in the candidacy process. Rather, it encompasses the entire life span of an applicant – before, during, and following candidacy. Consequently, a candidacy committee should not expect applicants at Entrance to have answers to all the questions that will be addressed during their seminary formation process. Candidates will continue their discernment of call throughout the candidacy process.

God works in the life of every person. Every Christian has a baptismal call to ongoing discernment of God’s activity in the world, in the church, and in one’s life. The primary purpose behind emphasizing a phase of discernment prior to candidacy – normally with a mentor – is to assist applicants in reflecting upon aspects of their lives that might confirm a call to rostered ministry. Some aspects worthy of consideration include an understanding of baptismal vocation, spirituality and prayer life, critical life experiences, relationship with a community of faith, significant life influences, and family of origin. Such preliminary discernment can help applicants clarify the interrelationship between internal and external dimensions of a call. It can also enable them to articulate some definite insights about what God is calling them to consider vocationally. The ultimate outcome of such discernment will be a decision on whether to apply for candidacy. Even if individuals discern that God is calling them to another expression of baptismal vocation, this time of discernment will have been a valuable use of the church’s resources.

Once a person begins candidacy, there will be further discernment. At its best, the candidacy process — both through a candidacy committee and on a seminary campus — provides a way for people of faith to arrive at a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and the various ways in which God calls a person into ministry, as a rostered minister or as a lay person, both in the church and in the world. The goal of discernment is to walk with people of faith in such a way that they come to a firm sense of what God is inviting into their life. Whatever the final outcome, the process will have been faithful to its objective of accompanying people of faith in discernment if the candidates take ownership of the outcome and complete or exit the process with a positive sense that the direction so discerned is a good fit for their gifts and interests as well as the needs of the church.

Several theological understandings undergird a journey of discernment:

1. Discernment is an ongoing process that may begin at different points in a person’s life, continues over a lifetime, and is revisited periodically. This is true both for applicants who enter into candidacy and for those who choose to pursue opportunities for service other than rostered ministry in the ELCA.
2. Discernment of readiness for candidacy originates in the context of how the church understands the vocation of every Christian. Some are called to a ministry of Word and Sacrament or to a ministry of Word and Service; however, many Christians are called to other avenues of service that are better suited to their gifts and interests. All paths are valuable and necessary for God’s mission through the church in the world.
3. Discernment of readiness for candidacy includes a communal component that is part of belonging to a community of faith. Such discernment is both internal (personal) and external (corporate), each dimension complementing the other.

What follows are suggested ways to structure and guide preliminary discernment with potential applicants for candidacy, along with recommended resources. Not every model or resource will be used with every individual. The needs of the individual and the circumstances of the individual's context will determine applicable approaches.

Since discernment of call is a continuum and not a separate step in candidacy, usually the candidacy committee will not work directly with individuals during this phase. Instead, this preliminary discernment will normally occur in the individual's current context, e.g., home congregation, campus ministry, or Lutheran outdoor ministry setting. Candidates may select a discernment mentor to assist them during this period. A mentor can be a pastor, a lay leader in the individual's congregation, a campus minister, a camp director, a college or seminary faculty person, or a trained spiritual director.

The characteristics of people who might serve as discernment mentors include the following:

1. ongoing spiritual growth and maturity in their own lives;
2. embodiment of personal holistic stewardship and well-being as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel;
3. love for the church;
4. ability to listen deeply and reflect actively with others;
5. ability and willingness to pray with the individual, both in person and apart, as a regular practice;
6. ability to think critically and ask difficult questions; and
7. commitment to a process of discernment with an individual.

Discernment mentors can benefit from a focused orientation and preparation on how to use the discussion guide and other tools provided in this manual. To facilitate the discernment process, a synod may select a discernment team of two or three people who will help identify and train mentors. Synods should be flexible in applying the guidelines for discernment and adapting them to the specifics of an individual's situation to honor and respect the particular needs and uniqueness of each person.

A.2 Call

A Lutheran understanding of call is threefold. There is an internal call, in which an individual senses God's invitation to consider rostered ministry. There is also an external call, in which the church discerns, along with individuals, their appropriateness for such service. Finally, following the completion of candidacy, the call is confirmed by a specific ministry setting in which the individual will serve.

A preliminary discernment should focus primarily on call. In discernment conversations, the individual and mentor might specifically address:

1. the individual's faith story, reflecting especially on where the individual has experienced God as active;
2. understanding of the baptismal call;
3. understanding of the wider church and how one's individual call to service is related to and representative of the whole church; and
4. exploration of possibilities and preparation for bi-vocational ministry and other leadership needs of the church.

A.2.1 Possible Lines of Inquiry

1. Share your faith story, especially times when you have been aware of God's call in your life.

2. Who is the triune God in your life?
3. How do you understand your baptism and its connection to your sense of vocation?
4. What is the relationship between your personal sense of call (internal call) and the call of the whole church (external call)?
5. What other vocations have you experienced or considered? How might you envision those in tandem with your anticipated ministry?

A.2.2 Tools and Related Resources

Suggested readings for discussion:

Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Muhlenberg Press, 1957)

Timothy J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today* (Fortress Press, 2008)

William C. Placher, ed. *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005)

Paul Baglyos, [“Called to Lead: God’s Call, Your Vocation”](#)

A.2.3 Spiritual Direction

One noteworthy resource for discernment is spiritual direction. Probably the most desirable approach for the discernment described in this manual is personal spiritual direction with a trained practitioner who is mature in the spiritual life and in a good position to be helpful to the applicant. Spiritual direction can draw from a variety of traditions and approaches, many of which are not specifically Lutheran. In cases where either a seminary or a candidacy committee recommends spiritual direction to an applicant, it is helpful for the partner recommending this option to have firsthand knowledge of the expertise and experience of any person recommended for referral. Normally spiritual direction occurs on a frequency mutually determined between the directee and the spiritual director and continues over a period of several months to several years. Conversations in personal spiritual direction should focus on the prayer life and spiritual sensitivity of the person seeking direction and should transpire in a climate of confidentiality and transparency on the part of both director and directee. For more information about spiritual direction and contact information for locating individuals who offer it, consult:

1. [The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation](#)
2. [The Academy for Spiritual Formation](#)
3. [Spiritual Directors International](#)
4. Synod offices and ELCA seminaries.

A.3 Current Life Situation

Many aspects of applicants’ lives can have an impact on their ability to prepare for and serve in rostered ministry. During discernment, applicants should:

1. reflect on their family situation, considering the way this journey will impact other family members, and gauge support from family;
2. realistically assess their financial situation and create a plan for funding seminary education,
3. consider how one’s health might enhance or hinder ministry, and
4. contemplate the likelihood of geographic relocation for theological education and first call.

A.3.1 Possible Lines of Inquiry

1. Think concretely and specifically about how a possible call will impact others in your life, such as parents, spouse, children, or a significant other. How are you addressing their concerns and needs in relation to your anticipated future life directions?
2. After you complete a personal financial worksheet, what do you identify as your financial strengths and challenges? What plans are you developing to cover the costs of further education?
3. What health issues do you need to address to sustain a healthy lifestyle throughout candidacy and ministry?

A.3.2 Tools and Related Resources

ELCA [Personal Financial Worksheet](#)

ELCA [Personal Health Assessment](#)

A money autobiography, such as the one developed by Dr. Marty Stevens at Gettysburg Theological Seminary and published in “How Much Is Enough?” (available through Region 9 ELCA, 1003 Richland St., Columbia, SC 29201).

The Wholeness Wheel (section 4.1.2), which provides a visual overview of all facets of one’s life that should be considered in a time of ongoing discernment.

A.4 Life Experience

At any age, people bring past experiences into a new venture. It is important for candidates to understand how these experiences continue to impact them — positively and negatively. Some areas of specific focus might include:

1. educational background,
2. transferable skills from work and volunteer positions,
3. cross-cultural experiences and travel,
4. self-awareness of gifts and areas where growth is needed, and
5. formative experiences and influences.

A.4.1 Possible Lines of Inquiry

1. How has your educational experience prepared and shaped you for theological education? How has your prior education influenced or informed your sense of call?
2. What skills from previous work or volunteer experiences have prepared you for rostered ministry?
3. What kinds of cross-cultural experiences (such as travel or ethnic immersion) might inform your sense of ministry? How might such experiences make a difference in the way you approach ministry and mission?
4. What people and experiences have had the greatest impact on your life? How have they shaped you spiritually, vocationally, and personally?

A.4.2 Tools and Related Resources

Spiritual direction (Appendix A.2.3)

Wholeness Wheel (section 4.1.2)

Suggested reading: Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (Jossey-Bass, 2000).

A.5 Leadership Models

The role of rostered ministers in the life of the church continues to change and develop. Individuals may have limited experience with a variety of leadership models. During the discernment period, an individual should explore and reflect upon:

1. the church's need for rostered ministers with a sensitivity to mission,
2. various models for leadership, and
3. one's own leadership skills and style.

A.5.1 Possible Lines of Inquiry

1. Who stands out for you as a model for ministry? What qualities in these people do you most wish to emulate? Why?
2. What is your understanding of missional leadership? Why is this important for the church in our time? What specific gifts or barriers for missional leadership do you recognize in yourself?
3. What is the relationship between missional leadership and servant leadership in your approach to ministry?

A.5.2 Tools and Related Resources

Suggested readings for discussion:

Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Meet a Changing World* (Jossey-Bass, 2006) and Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989).

Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Baker Academic, 2011) and Craig L. Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation*, second edition (Fortress Press, 2010).

Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Introduction to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

A spiritual gifts inventory, such as the one available on the ELCA website, [“Spiritual Gifts Assessment Tool”](#)

A tool for determining leadership style, such as DISC (a personality assessment test.)

A.6 Discernment About Ministry and Seminary

There are a variety of seminary (ELCA and non-ELCA) and other accredited degree programs that prepare people for rostered ministry. Preliminary discernment can be an important time for exploring options and developing a plan for preparation.

A.6.1 Possible Lines of Inquiry

1. What areas of ministry particularly excite you?
2. What are you seeking in a seminary community?
3. What are the deciding factors in your choice of a seminary?

4. What resources are you utilizing to make a decision about where you might attend seminary?
5. What is your anticipated timeline for entering and completing seminary studies?
6. Given your understanding of the church's need for servant leaders with sensitivity to God's mission in the world, what do you consider to be the most important formative elements in your preparation for rostered ministry?

A.6.2 Tools and Related Resources

Summary of ELCA seminaries with descriptions of curriculum and context

Expectations for Lutheran learning and formation (section 4.5.4)

Philip G. Camp, *Finding Your Way: A Guide to Seminary Life and Beyond*

Appendix B: Guidelines for Psychological Consultants

B.1 Qualifications

A psychological consultant must:

1. be registered as an approved psychological consultant with the director for candidacy;
2. conduct a psychological evaluation consistent with the theological purposes and goals of the ELCA candidacy process;
3. be sensitive to issues of race, language, gender, age, and ethnicity, and use appropriate tools for evaluation;
4. provide the candidacy committee with recommendations regarding an applicant's current psychological/emotional state and specific issues for further attention or conversation;
5. provide an applicant with an assessment of personal strengths and areas for growth, including a candid evaluation of psychological/emotional health; and
6. at a minimum, use the assessment instruments recommended by the ELCA Christian Community and Leadership home area.

B.2 The Interview and Assessment

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

Each assessment should evaluate the applicant's ego strength, self-awareness, self-concept, physical health, family health history, relational systems issues, interpersonal skills, personal and professional priorities/values, emotional intelligence, psychological health, and personal qualities (including potential for leadership), as well as any perceived deficiencies that might disqualify or impede a person from beginning candidacy. Clinicians are invited to recommend other psychological and/or vocational instruments that may be especially appropriate for the ELCA candidacy process. They may also use additional assessment tools requested by a candidacy committee.

At a minimum, psychological consultants will use the following instruments:

1. Personality instruments:
 - a. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2, MMPI-2 -RF, or MMPI 3)
 - b. Another personality assessment of the consultant's choice, such as the California Personality Inventory (revised), Meyer-Salovy Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), The Sixteen Personality Factor, Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), Profiles of Ministry, or any other valid and commonly used instrument.
2. Vocational inventories, such as the Strong Campbell Vocational Interest Inventory (or another valid inventory).
3. IQ and cognitive functioning assessments, such as the Shipley-Hartford Institute of Living Scale, Concept Mastery Test (Terman), or Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale—Revised (should be administered only if a psychological consultant doubts an applicant's intellectual capacity for graduate-level work).
4. Culturally sensitive and/or alternative-language instruments and professional resources as appropriate, (e.g., the Spanish-language version of the MBTI and/or consultation with a culturally sensitive psychologist).

Note: Where major language or cultural barriers exist, the candidacy committee may contact the Christian Community and Leadership home area for further guidance and assistance.

Because a psychological evaluation is critically important for both an applicant and the candidacy committee, the applicant should not be rushed during the testing or interview process. As noted earlier, it is especially important that a psychological consultant explain fully the evaluation results that will be summarized in a written report, especially any areas for further growth or development.

After sharing the results of the evaluation with the applicant, the psychological consultant will provide a written summary and secure an informed written release of information for both the candidacy committee and the ELCA seminary where the applicant has applied for admission. The report will then be sent to the candidacy committee for use in the Entrance decision and to the ELCA seminary named on the release of information form. The report becomes part of the confidential candidacy files maintained by the seminary and by the candidacy committee. An additional written release of information from an applicant should be obtained before the report can be shared beyond the candidacy committee and the seminary of admission.

The psychological consultant may make recommendations for counseling, treatment, or other services. Such recommendations should be thoroughly and sensitively discussed with the applicant during the evaluation feedback session. The candidacy committee has the responsibility to decide whether the recommended counseling/therapy should be completed prior to granting Entrance. If a candidacy committee recommends counseling/therapy, it should not be with the consultant who provided the evaluation.

B.3 Reporting to a Candidacy Committee

In the summary report the psychological consultant provides the following information:

1. personal identity/level of self-awareness and self-concept;
2. quality of past and present family relationships;
3. sense of vision or imaginative ability;
4. intellectual capacity;
5. integrity;
6. emotional maturity and coping ability/durability;
7. motivation for religious service;
8. empathy and affective expression;
9. interpersonal relationship skills;
10. any history of misconduct related to employment;
11. any history of deviant or pathological maladaptation;
12. any history of medical or psychiatric illness;
13. any history of substance abuse or addictions;
14. flexibility;
15. leadership style;
16. assets and liabilities relating to leadership roles in the ELCA, as described in the documents of this church provided to the psychological consultant; and
17. personal and professional values/priorities.

Appendix C: INITIAL INTERVIEW REPORT SYNODICAL/MULTI-SYNODICAL CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

Synod: _____

Name of Applicant: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____ Interview Date: _____
MM/DD/YYYY

1. General Observations About the Applicant

- + Manner
- + Self-expression
- + Responsiveness

2. Work and Volunteer Experience

- + Relevance of work or volunteer experience
- + Sufficiency of work or volunteer experience
- + Leadership experience
- + Skills and competencies that can be useful in ministry
- + Adaptability
- + Productivity
- + Initiative
- + Follow-through
- + Interpersonal relationships
- + Growth/development

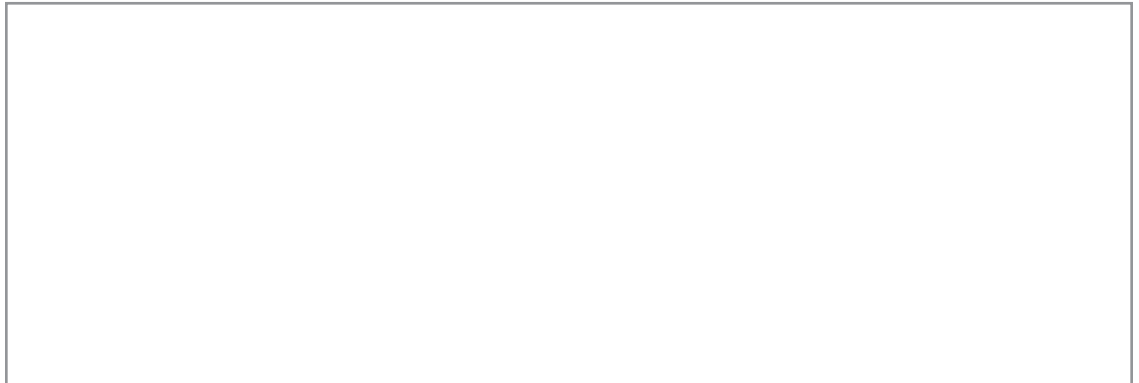
3. Education

- + Scope and relevance
- + Courses completed
- + Leadership
- + Discernible patterns in learning style
- + Intellectual abilities
- + Self-discipline
- + Motivation, interests



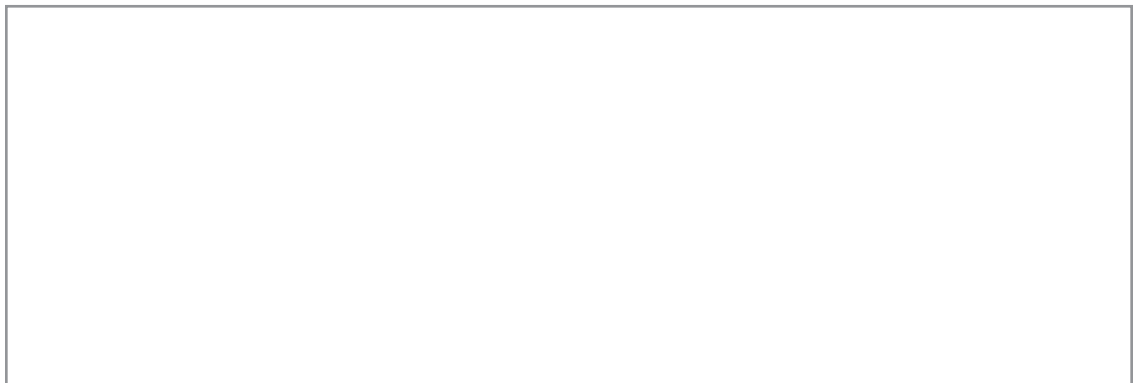
4. Early Years and Family Background

- + Family of origin dynamics
- + Socio-economic status
- + Parental examples
- + Basic values (attitudes toward people, achievement, work ethic, service)
- + Self-image
- + Influential developments or significant family events (e.g. divorce of parents, death of a parent, death of a sibling, etc.)



5. Current Life Situation

- + Significant relationships
- + Diversity of interests
- + Situational factors
- + Economic situation
- + Marital/family situation



6. Faith Formation and Call to Ministry

- + Journey of discernment
- + Faith formation and discipleship
- + Family attitudes
- + Involvement in congregational life
- + External indicators of call



7. Applicant's Self-Awareness

- + Identified personal strengths
- + Identified growth areas



8. Interviewer's Summary and Recommendations

1. Positive factors recommending Entrance into Candidacy.

2. Unfavorable factors or concerns related to Entrance into Candidacy.

3. Developmental needs of the candidate. In the case of recommended postponement, please make specific suggestions / recommendations for addressing the identified needs.

4. Recommendation(s) to the committee regarding entrance.

Appendix D: Candidate Plan

Candidate's Name: _____
Last Name First Name / Given Name Middle

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Synod of Candidacy: _____

Date of Entrance Decision: _____ **Candidacy Committee Relator:** _____

Seminary Where Enrolled: _____

Seminary Program/Track: _____

Seminary Advisor: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Anticipated Timeline of Candidate's Seminary Program:

Anticipated CPE Site/Program and Dates/Duration:

Anticipated Contextual Learning and/or Field Experience Site/Program:

Contextual Learning and/or Field Experience Supervisor(s): _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Anticipated Timing of Candidate's Endorsement and Approval Interviews:

Endorsement:

Approval:

Section for Candidates Attending a Non-ELCA Seminary

ELCA seminary of affiliation _____

ELCA Faculty Advisor _____ Email _____

Outline below your plan for fulfilling Lutheran Learning and Formation requirements.

Date form completed:

4. Have you completed your CPE requirement?

a. Date of completion:

b. Place:

c. Supervisor:

d. Was a copy of the supervisor's report sent to your Candidacy Committee? Yes No

e. Date sent:

Candidate Signature:

ELCA Seminary representative:

Synod candidacy representative:

Date form completed:

Appendix F: Guidelines for Internship

F.1 Word and Sacrament Candidates

The Christian Community and Leadership home area has established internship standards and guidelines for candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry. Each seminary, in turn, creates policies and procedures for implementing those standards.

An ELCA seminary approves internship sites in consultation with the synodical bishop where the site is located and the appropriate candidacy committee.

An approved internship will consist of:

1. A minimum of 2,000 documented contact hours, or one year, at an approved site.
2. An internship supervisor who meets with the intern on a regular basis and documents the meetings. (The internship supervisor may be on- or off-site.)
3. An internship committee, selected from members of the ministry site, that meets regularly with the intern during internship.
4. Opportunities to experience the full scope of pastoral duties, including worship leadership, regular preaching, teaching the faith, relationships across the spectrum of ages, pastoral visitation, administration, and, as much as possible, participation in significant life events such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals.

Both the supervisor and the internship committee will submit regular reports to the seminary and the synod candidacy committee.

The internship site and the seminary will agree upon remuneration for the intern, including housing and health coverage.

F.1.1 Responsibilities of ELCA Seminaries

The seminary will:

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 seminary;
3. distribute seminary policies and procedures concerning internships;
4. maintain effective communication with synodical bishops concerning settings and supervisors and with synodical candidacy committees regarding internship candidates prior to placement;
5. in partnership with the Christian Community and Leadership home area, provide common programs to orient and train new supervisors and further the development of experienced supervisors;
6. maintain effective processes for placement and orientation prior to internship, as well as reflection following internship;
7. receive and review supervisor's written reports at least twice during the internship;
8. confer with synodical candidacy committees as necessary and provide summary evaluations (form D) at the conclusion of internships prior to Approval interviews;
9. provide guidance and support during the internship in a variety of ways, including site visits; and
10. when necessary, terminate an internship after appropriate consultation.

F.1.2 Responsibilities of Synods

The synodical bishop (or designee) will:

1. encourage congregations and pastors to consider applying for an internship through an ELCA seminary,
2. maintain effective communication with seminary field-education offices relative to settings and potential supervisors, and
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.

The candidacy committee will:

1. advise candidates at non-ELCA seminaries to affiliate with an ELCA seminary during the first year of their academic program to meet prerequisites for an eventual ELCA internship;
2. at Endorsement, convey any recommendations regarding internship 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 Approval interviews.

F.1.3 Interns

Interns are candidates who are enrolled in or affiliated with an ELCA seminary and approved for internship placement by that seminary in consultation with the candidacy committee to serve in a sustained, supervised ministry experience.

To assist seminaries in internship placement, candidates will consult with the appropriate candidacy committee and the seminary internship director. Interns will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the policies and practices of the ELCA.

Responsibilities of internship candidates:

1. Applying for internship through the internship office of the appropriate ELCA seminary or, if attending a non-ELCA seminary, through the ELCA seminary of affiliation.
2. In consultation with the candidacy committee and seminary faculty, developing broad learning goals for the internship to be used in considering placement.
3. Once placement has been made, developing specific and agreed-upon learning goals with the supervisor and internship committee.
4. Developing and maintaining sound and effective relationships with the supervisor, other staff, the internship committee, and members of the congregation.
5. Maintaining appropriate contacts with the synodical bishop, the candidacy committee, and the seminary. While on internship and as requested, interns submit reports and evaluations in a timely manner.
6. Engaging in personal prayer, study, and theological reflection/discussion on issues related to ministry and being accountable to a spiritual director or the internship supervisor.
7. Attending internship cluster meetings, conference meetings, and synodical events, and participating in appropriate community groups and activities.
8. Becoming familiar with ELCA and seminary policies, programs, and curricula, including official ELCA documents and statements.
9. Informing the seminary internship director in a timely manner of any concerns or difficulties that develop during the internship.

F.1.4 Supervisors

A supervisor is normally an ordained ELCA pastor who has served a minimum of three years in a parish and at least one year in the internship setting. Supervising pastors serve as effective models and guides for interns with regard to faith, spiritual discipline, personal habits, public ministry, and participation in the wider church. They provide opportunities for interns to participate in all dimensions of pastoral ministry with oversight and reflective feedback. All supervisors participate in training provided by ELCA seminaries.

Supervisors are expected to be committed to internship as an educational component in the preparation of candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry. Each ELCA seminary, in consultation with the synodical bishop and field education colleagues, approves pastors to serve as internship supervisors.

Responsibilities of internship supervisors:

1. Sharing and appropriately involving the intern with all aspects of parish ministry.
2. Collaborating and sharing accountability with the intern to achieve mutually agreed-upon learning goals.
3. Through weekly supervisory sessions, reflecting with the intern on pastoral ministry and the intern's work and well-being.
4. Guiding an intern in developing responsible and effective partnership in ministry with laity.
5. Knowing and supporting the polity, policies, and positions of the ELCA, including sacramental practices.
6. Participating in the life of the synod and providing 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.
7. Participating in continuing education.
8. Supporting the internship committee and facilitating its functioning (but not as a committee member).
9. Regularly attending internship cluster meetings.
10. Cooperating with the seminary regarding policies and practices contained in its internship manual.
11. Providing written evaluative reports to the seminary at least twice during the internship, which include perspectives on discerning growth and progress in, as well as pertinent concerns about, the intern's ministry.
12. Participating in the placement process as requested by the seminary.

F.1.5 Settings

Settings provide opportunities for interns to be broadly engaged in appropriate ministry practices, including occasions unique to each setting. Such opportunities are an expression of the setting's commitment to internship as an educational component in the candidate's preparation and formation for rostered ministry in the ELCA.

Responsibilities for internship settings:

1. Internship settings are normally open to any ELCA candidate.
2. After consultation with the synodical bishop, an ELCA seminary will choose and periodically evaluate each internship setting.
3. Normally, internship sites will be congregations.
4. Each site must have written policies for sexual ethics, sick leave, and lifelong learning.
5. Sites will apply for internship to only one ELCA seminary.

6. Sites will ensure that the necessary resources (e.g. financial, supervisory, etc.) are available.
7. Sites will commit to internship as an educational component in the preparation of candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry.
8. Sites will provide opportunities for the intern to be broadly engaged in appropriate ministerial activities.
9. Sites will provide adequate support to the intern (and the intern's family), including forming a committee of lay members to provide both the intern and the supervisor with feedback and evaluation.
10. In accordance with ELCA policies, interns will not preside at baptisms, except in an emergency, nor will an intern preside at the Eucharist without authorization from the synodical bishop, and then only in extraordinary circumstances.
11. An internship site models awareness of and connectedness with the ELCA as a whole with ongoing supportive relationships, including but not limited to mission support.

F.2 Word and Service Candidates

Ministers of Word and Service serve at the interface of church and society. As a result, they must understand the dynamic relationships within and between congregational and societal systems and provide leadership in connecting these systems. Internship placements should reflect the range of diaconal purpose and still be specific to the candidate's unique characteristics and specializations. Each internship **assignment** must also include a significant engagement with a congregational context. With all these pieces, all partners must demonstrate flexibility in choosing and approving internship sites.

An approved internship will normally consist of a minimum of 1,000 documented contact hours. Various ministry experiences may be arranged sequentially and/or concurrently to achieve these hours.

General responsibilities of the partners involved in an internship can be found under the Word and Sacrament Candidates (section F.1). These responsibilities may change based on placement and oversight.

F.2.1 Internship Placement and Oversight

Candidates for the ministry of Word and Service are diverse in their areas of specialization, previous experience, educational requirements, and formation. A wide variety of programs and experiences are used to meet the theological requirements for deacon candidates, including but not limited to: M.A. degree from an ELCA seminary, M.A. degree from a non-ELCA seminary with ELCA seminary affiliation, specific coursework established through a Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates, M.Div. degree from an ELCA or non-ELCA seminary, or some other combination of formation and experience.

A candidate for Word and Service ministry is normally enrolled in a theological degree program or is pursuing education that fits into one of the following categories:

1. a degree program with a contextual education component that fully meets the internship requirement for deacons;
2. a degree program with some contextual education that meets part of the requirement for internship (e.g., a part-time congregational experience that meets the congregational requirement for those whose main area of service, and therefore internship, will be outside the congregation);
3. a degree program with no contextual education component of any kind; or

4. in some circumstances, a Competencies Assessment Panel Report for Word and Service Candidates (CAP) that approves a formation path not involving a degree program or affiliation at an ELCA seminary.

For candidates for the ministry of Word and Service, a 1,000-hour internship is a requirement of the candidacy process, even though the internship may or may not be a part of the candidate's degree program. For this reason, arrangements for the placement and supervision of internship may be the responsibility of the candidacy committee and/or the contextual education office of an ELCA seminary.

Tending to the Candidate Plan early in formation will be essential in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the seminary, candidacy committee, and candidate, and in determining when in the formation process internship will take place. Internship placement and supervision is a partnership based on the context and individual situation of the candidate.

Internship Concurrent With Seminary

The ELCA seminary, in conversation with the synod candidacy committee, will ensure placement and supervision of the internship when the candidate anticipates completing internship while enrolled in an academic degree program. The internship may or may not be part of the degree requirements.

Non-concurrent Internship

To show competency in an area of specialization, a candidate may participate in an internship that begins during an academic degree program and is completed in a context-specific site after graduation. For example, the congregational component may be completed during seminary under the oversight of the contextual education director. The specialization component may be completed after graduation. In this case, the synod candidacy committee oversees the organizational component of the internship.

Internship Apart From an Academic Degree Program

When field education is not required or does not meet internship requirements, and when candidates are not enrolled in a degree program or affiliated with an ELCA seminary, the synod candidacy committee will ensure placement and supervision of the internship, as described in the Candidacy Manual (F.2).

When internship follows the completion of an academic degree, the synod candidacy committee may complete a modified form D so that the candidate's gifts and ministry demonstrated during internship may be documented for use during the First Call process.

F.2.2 Internship Committee

While internship may take place in a variety of settings, it must include an internship committee. The committee, composed of four to six people who have a particular interest in the ministry of Word and Service and the candidate's area of specialization, may include representatives of the sites and congregations related to the service of the candidate.