



Called to Public Ministry

An Overview of the Candidacy Process in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Discernment

Discernment is an ongoing process which continues throughout the candidacy process. Discernment involves not only listening to God's call to you, but also God's call to you through others. This is the time to talk with your pastor, friends, family, and other people in the congregation about your gifts for public ministry.

This is also a time to discern the timeline for entering into the Candidacy Process. Even someone who has been called by God to serve will need to get some things in order to give them the best start at seminary and in their public ministry. Attention should be paid to family readiness, finances, education preparedness, ability to accept a call to the whole church, and gifts and areas of growth. Part of discernment is also a personal assessment of our own discipleship practices: worship, prayer, study, giving, encouraging, and serving.

Learn more at <http://elca.org/candidacy>.

Entrance

Entrance begins a process of discernment that explores an individual's potential for rostered ministry and readiness to begin the process of seminary preparation and candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). One year of active membership in an ELCA congregation is required prior to entrance.

Rostered Ministry in the ELCA includes these public ministries:

- Ministers of Word and Sacrament—Pastors
- Ministers of Word and Service—Deacons

The Entrance Process Includes:

- Candidacy Application
- Entrance Essay
- Entrance Information Form
- Transcripts
- Congregational Registration
- Initial Interview
- Background Check
- Psychological Evaluation through Synod Candidacy Committee
- \$1.200 Application Fee

An Entrance Interview is held in consultation with the Candidacy Committee after which application is typically made to a seminary.

Endorsement

Endorsement encourages and affirms those who clearly demonstrate gifts and qualities for a specific ELCA roster of ministry as well as identifies areas for growth and development.

Candidates at this stage take part in an Endorsement Panel, with at least two Candidacy Committee members and an ELCA seminary faculty advisor, typically in the fall of the second year of study. A recommendation is made to the Synod Candidacy Committee for an Endorsement decision.

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

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

The Endorsement Process Includes:

- Endorsement Essay
- CPE Evaluations
- Transcripts
- Follow up on Entrance recommendations

Approval

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

The Approval Process Includes:

- Approval Essay
- Internship Evaluations
- ELCA Faculty Recommendation (Form D)
- Follow up from Entrance and Endorsement

Where Do I Start?

The place to begin is in prayer. Continue in study and review the candidacy resources found on the ELCA website (<http://elca.org/candidacy>) to become familiar with the process.

Talk with your pastor and other leaders in your congregation, and contact Pastor Chrisy Bright, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy.

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Scholarships

The ELCA and the North/West Lower Michigan Synod support those called to rostered ministry through a variety of scholarship and grant programs.

ELCA Fund for Leaders

Fund for Leaders offers scholarships for students at ELCA seminaries who are pursuing rostered ministry in the ELCA. Eligibility and selection criteria vary across the different types of scholarships available. All information is available on the ELCA website: <https://www.elca.org/our-work/leadership/elca-fund-for-leaders/our-scholarships>

North/West Lower Michigan Seminary Scholarship Fund

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod supports called leaders to the rostered ministry of the the Church through scholarships for tuition and non-tuition expenses. Eligibility information is available on our synod's website: <https://www.mittensynod.org/leaders/candidacy/>

Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod's Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program assists rostered ministers in addressing the burden of seminary debt through \$2,000 grants paid directly to the lending institutions for educational debt. Learn more on our synod's website: <https://www.mittensynod.org/leaders/resources-for-leaders/seminary-debt-reduction-assistance-program/>

ELCA Seminaries

There are seven ELCA seminaries located across the country. In these intentional Christian communities, students study scripture, engage in theological exploration, and examine the complexities and questions of life so that they can better communicate God's living Word in contexts that are always changing.

Most importantly, students are equipped to be leaders and teachers in word and action, inviting and equipping people to participate in listening to God, one another, and the world so that together, more people can love and serve their neighbors with a living, daring confidence in God's grace.

The ELCA Seminaries

- Lutheran Seminary (Saint Paul, Minnesota)
- Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (Chicago, Illinois)
- Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (Columbia, South Carolina)
- Pacific Theological Seminary (Berkeley, California)
- Trinity Lutheran Seminary (Columbus, Ohio)
- United Lutheran Seminary (Gettysburg & Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa)

Learn more at <https://elcaseminaries.org/>