

What Does the Church Expect of Applicants and Candidates for Rostered Ministry?

Indiana-Kentucky Synod, ELCA

The ELCA's Candidacy Manual provides helpful insight into the kind of expectations and responsibilities that applicants to the candidacy process should be aware of as they contemplate this next step in discernment, should they be granted Entrance and become a candidate in the process:

Expectations of Applicants and Candidates

Personal faith and commitment to Christ is at the heart of one's decision of seeking to serve as a rostered leader in the church. That decision often comes after uncertainty and a lengthy period of prayer and thought. The decision should involve others in a process of discernment and reflection about the individual's gifts and abilities for rostered ministry (see Appendix A in the *ELCA Candidacy Manual*). The process of discernment and the utilization of available resources are key elements in beginning the candidacy process.

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

A person seeking to serve this church shall contact the office of the synod in which congregational membership is held to begin the candidacy process as an applicant. If Entrance is granted, a candidate will need to exercise initiative in completing the steps of candidacy and demonstrate competence in the tasks of theological education and practical preparation for ministry.

Growth and development are expected as one seeks to become equipped for rostered ministry. A candidate is expected to be a mature, healthy, and trustworthy partner in the process of preparation, formation, and evaluation for rostered ministry. During the application process, the applicant provides a signed release to the candidacy committee so that the partners in the candidacy process, including the candidate's personal references, may fully and openly communicate.



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

Responsibilities of Applicants and Candidates

A mission-oriented leader can be defined as someone who:

- a. is rooted in the gospel;
- b. is knowledgeable, passionate, able to articulate his or her faith and the confessional teachings of the ELCA;
- c. through the church participates in God's mission of love, redemption, justice and reconciliation.

People who have discerned a call to rostered leadership 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 and the areas of competency that relate to those principles.

I. We are church

1. Rooted in the presence and activity of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
2. Actively participates in God's mission through the church
3. Cultivates vision and purpose
4. Leadership skills

II. We are Lutheran

1. Engages the way of the cross
2. Proclaims the faith
3. Leads worship and administers the sacraments (Word and Sacrament leaders)

III. We are church together

1. Interprets mission
2. Cultivates Christian community, discipleship, leadership formation and the practice of reconciliation of differences
3. Cares for people
4. Practices wellness in one's personal life

IV. We are church for the sake of the world

1. Evangelizes
2. Relates theology with history, context and culture
3. Equips and sends disciples into the world

During a candidate's process of formation, the church expects a candidate's orientation to mission to develop in a progression from *missional awareness* at entrance, to *missional articulation* at endorsement, and finally to *missional actualization and practice* at approval.

In addition we expect that:

- Applicants are active members of an ELCA congregation for at least one year prior to their entrance interview.
- Candidates demonstrate an understanding of and follow the guidelines for living a lifestyle appropriate to leadership among God's people as stated in the document, *Vision and Expectations*.
- Candidates honor and fully participate in the established process of candidacy in the ELCA.
- Candidates shall submit all required documents and information related to the candidacy process, as requested by the other partners, within the agreed-upon time frame.
- Candidates shall fully and openly communicate with all the partners in the process.
- Candidates are accountable for all aspects of preparation.
- Candidates engage in the on-going work of self-discovery, self-evaluation, reflection, and healthy lifestyle that enhance a leader's ability to fully and actively carry out the responsibilities of ministry as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel.