

Candidacy Process – Northwest Washington Synod ELCA

Candidacy in the ELCA is an interdependent process: there is a sharing of responsibility and accountability among partners: candidates, congregations, Candidacy committees, seminaries, and candidacy staff in the Domestic Mission unit. 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.

For Word and Sacrament and Word and Service candidates not already ordained in another tradition (please note that steps 1 and 2 can take up to a few months and must be completed before an entrance interview can be scheduled):

1. **Interest in Candidacy:** *The synod trusts that God works through individuals' minds and hearts, as well as their communities, in discerning a person's call to ministry.*
 - a. Discernment begins with both an internal sense of call ("I sense God is calling me to ministry") and an external sense of call ("My minister/community believe I have a call to ministry")
 - b. View candidacy resources at elca.org/candidacy, especially "[Called to Lead.](#)"
 - c. Begin discussions with a rostered minister and/or a discernment group about your sense of call to ministry, including spending time learning about both rosters of the ELCA (Word and Sacrament or Word and Service) You are expected to discern openly between the rosters, and not to declare a roster preference until your Endorsement interview. The Candidacy Committee will encourage you to prayerfully consider serving either roster.
 - d. Start looking at ELCA seminaries (elcaseminaries.org) and/or non-Lutheran seminaries (an additional year of Lutheran learning and formation from a Lutheran seminary is required if you choose to attend or already have a degree from a non-ELCA seminary). Often seminaries require candidates to have a positive entrance decision by their Candidacy Committees before beginning seminary studies. However, it is sometimes possible to begin seminary classwork before beginning the candidacy process. Applying to seminary can occur concurrently with applying for candidacy.
 - If you have specific questions about candidacy, contact Northwest Washington (NWWA) Synod's Assistant to the Bishop: a2b@lutheransnw.org, 206-783-9292
2. **Application for Candidacy:** *The synod and ELCA ensures that individuals are psychologically healthy, mature, and trustworthy to engage in the process of candidacy.*
 - a. Before applying for candidacy, you must be a baptized member of an ELCA congregation/ministry site for at least one year.
 - b. Create an ELCA Community account at:
<https://www.elca.org/Resources/Candidacy#Candidates>
 - c. After the account is created, you can access the Leader Portal to complete a candidacy application.

- d. When your application is submitted to the ELCA, the NWWA Synod's Assistant to the Bishop will be automatically notified and will email you to confirm submission and next steps:
 - i. Submit Entrance Essay (questions are at the end of the Entrance Application) to a2b@lutheransnw.org.
 - ii. The Assistant to the Bishop will contact your congregation/ministry site requesting a Congregational Registration form and \$1,200 registration fee to pay for your psychological evaluation and background check. Sometimes the \$1,200 fee can be provided by the congregation and candidate together. *Congregational registration, the registration fee, and a psychological evaluation do not guarantee entrance into candidacy.*
- e. Once the Congregational Registration and \$1,200 fee are received by the synod office:
 - i. The NWWA Synod Administrator, will email you a form for the required background check. Please return the form directly to Traci who will run the background check. The background check results are reviewed only by the Bishop and remain valid for one year.
 - ii. The Assistant to the Bishop will email you information about the required psychological fitness assessment with an approved evaluator. Upon contacting the evaluator, a clinical interview will be scheduled (often two to three weeks out). The evaluator will send you an informed consent document, a personal background information packet and some initial online psychological instruments to complete. These must be completed at least five days prior to meeting for the clinical interview. The clinical interview generally lasts about 1 to 1.5 hours, plus there will be one final psychological assessment to be completed onsite taking an additional 1 to 1.5 hours. A summary report will be drafted and the evaluator will provide assessment feedback via phone to you. During this feedback phone call, they will confirm your consent to release the summary report to the designated synod staff and Candidacy Committee. The psychological fitness assessment process generally takes 5 to 6 weeks and the results remain valid for one year. Be advised that our evaluator maintains a full-time caseload—with priority given to these clients over candidacy psychological fitness assessments.
3. **Entrance Interview:** *The purpose of interviews with the Candidacy Committee is to welcome, form, evaluate, and build relationships with candidates.*
 - a. Once the Entrance Essay, background check and psychological evaluation are received by the synod office, Assistant to the Bishop will notify the Candidacy Committee Chair, that you are ready to schedule an Entrance Interview with the Candidacy Committee.
 - b. An optional "Initial Interview" may be arranged with one or more members of the synod Candidacy Committee. The Committee Chair will contact you with information. This will give you an opportunity to meet a Candidacy Committee member who can get to know you and introduce you to the Committee.
 - c. An Entrance Interview is scheduled with the whole Candidacy Committee (14 members: www.lutheransnw.org/resources/candidacy) or a panel of members. Interviews are held at the synod office when the Candidacy Committee is scheduled to meet, about once a month, often on a Thursday.

- d. If English is not your first language, you may request a translator to be with you. Please be sure to connect with the Candidacy Chair about need.
 - e. When you arrive at the synod office for your Entrance Interview (5519 Phinney Ave. North in Seattle), synod staff will welcome you and offer hospitality. When the committee is ready to see you for the interview:
 - i. Two members will first meet with you to verbally ask the questions you first answered in your candidacy application.
 - ii. You will sign a FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) consent form to release information between the Candidacy Committee and your seminary.
 - iii. You will meet with the committee or panel for about 45 minutes to answer questions of the committee members based on your Entrance Essay, as well as questions such as those on pp. 40-41 in the [ELCA Candidacy Manual](#).
 - iv. At the end of the interview, you will be asked to exit the room while the committee makes a decision about your entrance (entrance approved, entrance postponed, or entrance denied) and writes the paragraph that will accompany your entrance decision throughout your candidacy. The committee will then call you back into the room to hear the committee's decision and pray for you.
 - v. If entrance is approved, you will be assigned a member of the Candidacy Committee as your relator who will serve as your main contact with and support from the Candidacy Committee.
4. **Seminary education:** *Candidates begin theological education. If you are studying at a non-ELCA seminary, affiliation with an ELCA seminary should occur within the first few months. Often candidates from our synod affiliate with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (plts.edu) or Luther Seminary (luthersem.edu). See seminary websites for application information and affiliation fee.*
- a. During your first year, your relator and/or Assistant to the Bishop or Regional Candidacy Manager will work with you and your ELCA seminary of enrollment or affiliation to create a "Candidate Plan" which outlines an anticipated timeline of your seminary program, anticipated CPE site and duration, and anticipated contextual learning experiences.
 - b. For students at non-Lutheran seminaries, Lutheran learning and formation that meets the expectations found on pp. 46-47 of the [ELCA Candidacy Manual](#) is required.
 - c. While you are in seminary, your Candidacy Committee relator will try to maintain regular contact with you and update the Candidacy Committee at each meeting about your experiences as well as your need for support and prayer. You will be lifted in prayer at each Candidacy Committee meeting.
5. **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE):** *All candidates for rostered ministry in the ELCA are required to complete one unit (at least 400 hours) of supervised CPE for growth in ministerial identity, self-identity, and theological reflection.*
- a. Your ELCA seminary of enrollment or affiliation has primary responsibility for managing and administering your CPE program. For students in a traditional seminary track, this usually takes place during the summer after your first year in seminary, and must take place before you go on internship.
 - b. For candidates at a non-Lutheran seminary: typically any seminary is the instigator of CPE for non-Lutheran-seminary students. However, internship will primarily be handled

through the ELCA seminary of affiliation, or in the rare cases of candidates who are not affiliated with an ELCA seminary, the candidacy committee will instigate the internship. It's imperative that the candidate confirm whether or not their seminary will assist with CPE, and if not, the candidate can connect with the synod candidacy committee for assistance.

6. **Endorsement:** *Endorsement is the official action of a Candidacy Committee recognizing and affirming, along with seminary faculty, a candidate's readiness to complete the candidacy process and a candidate's demonstration of appropriate gifts and characteristics for a specific roster.*
 - a. Endorsement usually takes place after 1/3 of the candidate's seminary coursework and CPE has been completed.
 - b. A FERPA form will be emailed to you by the NWWA Synod Administrator. You must complete and sign the form and return it to the synod office which will be shared with your seminary, authorizing the seminary to share information with the Candidacy Committee.
 - c. You will write an Endorsement Essay ([questions found here](#)) to submit to the Candidacy Committee Chair and your seminary, due by September 1 for fall endorsements, or at another date determined by the Candidacy Committee and seminary.
 - d. Once your essay has been submitted, an endorsement interview will be scheduled with a panel consisting of at least two Candidacy Committee members and a seminary faculty member from your ELCA seminary (if an affiliated student, a faculty member of your seminary of affiliation must participate in the interview, and a faculty member from your seminary may participate) at a time and location arranged with the Candidacy Committee panel convener and the seminary. The panel may meet electronically or on the seminary campus in a face-to-face format. Questions such as those on pp. 58-59 of the [Candidacy Manual](#) may be asked.
 - e. During the interview, you will be asked to declare which roster of ministry (Word and Sacrament or Word and Service) you intend to serve. This decision will guide the remainder of your seminary and candidacy process.
 - f. The Endorsement panel will ask you to leave the room while it makes a decision and composes a paragraph to recommend granting endorsement, postponing endorsement, or denying endorsement. You will be invited back into the room to hear the decision and be prayed for by the panel.
 - g. The recommendation of the panel will be shared with the whole Candidacy Committee at its next scheduled meeting. The decision of the whole committee will be shared with the candidate and their seminary by their relator or Candidacy Committee Chair.
 - h. Once Endorsed, a candidate is able to begin an internship arranged by the ELCA seminary of enrollment or affiliation.
7. **Approval:** *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.*
 - a. A FERPA form will be emailed to you by the NWWA Synod Administrator. You must complete and sign the form and return it to the synod office which will be shared with

your seminary, authorizing the seminary to share information with the Candidacy Committee.

- b. You will write an Approval Essay ([questions found here](#)) and submit to the Candidacy Committee Chair at least 10 days before your Approval interview.
- c. The Approval interview with the Candidacy Committee will be set when the date your seminary of enrollment or affiliation will submit Form D (the ELCA Seminary Faculty Recommendation) to the Candidacy Committee is known.
- d. Your internship evaluations must be sent to the synod office after your internship is complete and at least 10 days before your Approval interview.
- e. Your full academic seminary records must be sent to the synod office at least 10 days before your Approval interview.
- f. When you arrive at the synod office for your Approval Interview (5519 Phinney Ave. North in Seattle), synod staff will welcome you and offer hospitality. When the committee is ready to see you for the interview:
 - i. Two members will first meet with you to verbally ask the questions you first answered in your candidacy application.
 - ii. You will meet with the committee or panel for about 45 minutes to answer questions of the committee members based on your Approval Essay, as well as the competencies such as those on pp. 65-68 in the [ELCA Candidacy Manual](#).
 - iii. At the end of the interview, you will be asked to exit the room while the committee makes a decision about your approval (approval granted, approval postponed, or approval denied) and writes the paragraph that will accompany your entrance decision throughout your candidacy. The committee will then call you back into the room to hear the committee's decision and pray for you.
- g. If approval is granted, Assistant to the Bishop will walk you through the process of assignment and the [necessary paperwork found here](#). From that point on, the Assistant to the Bishop will be your main point of contact from the synod.
- h. If approved, you will remain on our prayer and relator list until you receive a call. If you have not received or accepted a call within a year, you may request from the Candidacy Committee a renewal of your approval for a year. After three years, the process outlined in the Candidacy Manual on page 74 will commence.

Contact People as of 02/2021

Bishop - Pastor Shelley Bryan Wee - bishop@lutheransnw.org

Assistant to the Bishop - Pastor Andy Yee- a2b@lutheransnw.org

Candidacy Committee Chair - Pastor Jana Schofield - pastorjana@gmail.com

Candidacy & Leadership Manager for Regions 1 & 2 - Deacon Laura Gifford - Laura.Gifford@elca.org

Northwest Washington Synod Staff - Traci Hall - traci@lutheransnw.org

Susan Berg - susan@lutheransnw.org