



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Report of the Candidacy Subcommittee

Candidacy is the ELCA's process for discernment and preparing individuals for approval for public ministries of the ELCA. Right now this is namely for approval to one of the two rosters—Word and Sacrament and Word and Service. The Candidacy process has three steps: Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval.

The Candidacy Committee of the Northern Illinois Synod nurtures intentional relationships with our synod's candidates and accompanies them on this candidacy journey. This can involve listening, guiding, assisting, affirming, encouraging, reminding, speaking honestly, and more. The committee is responsible for being knowledgeable about Candidacy and its many processes within the process, reading paperwork, conducting interviews, and making decisions about each candidate's journey, which involves more paperwork. The committee meets about 4 times per year and also for interviews as they are needed.

Revived from pre-Covid times was the Candidacy Retreat, held in November 2023 at Immanuel, Dixon. Seven interested and potential candidates, as well as current candidates, gathered for deeper conversation about vocation, call, and candidacy process.

At the end of 2023, the Northern Illinois Synod had 4 candidates who are within the three steps, Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval. The Synod also had 10 individuals currently discerning rostered ministry. This is a decrease to be sure from previous years.

In the fall there was an ELCA-wide Candidacy Summit where among other fantastic tidbits, we learned that since 2019, there's been a 49% decrease in applicants for rostered ministry. Here is how Northern Illinois Synod's specific numbers compared to that national statistic:

January 2024

9 discerning

1 pre-entrance

2 entranced

2 endorsed

(All recently approved are serving in first calls.)

14 total on our current list

January 2019

0 discerning

3 pre-entrance

10 entranced

5 endorsed

1 approved awaiting seminary graduation and first call.

19 total on that list

While we experienced a drop in overall number of candidates, it was roughly only a 25% decrease.

Looking ahead: Concerning the wider ELCA, there has been a Candidacy Re-vamp in the works for some time. There's been the Candidacy and Leadership Working Group that has taken the often-used phrase, "everyone is frustrated with candidacy" and worked to understand exactly "who" is everyone and "what" is frustrating. And, then, what might be a new way to do it. We anticipate changes coming that will affect what work is ours to do, but in the meantime, we seek to do our best with the job that's been given to us.

We are made up of 12 voting members, a staff liaison, and two non-voting members. These include 4 laity, including 1 SAM, 1 Deacon, 1 seminary professor, and 7 pastors.

Candidacy Committee Members:

Sue Bull-Welch, Robert Gieraltowski, Becky Keller, Andrew Koresko, Deacon Shari Simon, Pastor Chris Lee, Pastor Deb Kelly, Pastor Rakel Evenson, Pastor Phil Potaczek, Pastor Jay Quinn, Pastor Chrissy Salser, Pastor Nord Swanstrom

Non-voting member: Pastor Ramie Bakken (Region 5 Candidacy and Leadership Manager), Professor Peter Vetanayagamony (Seminary Professor), Pastor Julie Monnard (synod staff liaison)