



Evangelical
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in America

Candidacy Working Group

Proposal

Fall 2024



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**How did the
candidacy working
group **come to be?****

Candidacy Working Group



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The Candidacy Working Group was created out of discussion between the leadership committee of the Conference of Bishops and the Churchwide Unit responsible for candidacy.

These groups recognized

- the **growing frustration** with the candidacy process,
- **concerns about the current design** being an obstacle to the ELCA fulfilling its vision for the future, and
- the current process, created in 1988, was **designed for different societal and ecclesial realities** and has embedded assumptions that no longer align with current circumstances.

Candidacy Working Group



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The Candidacy Working Group was created out of discussion between the leadership committee of the Conference of Bishops and the Churchwide Unit responsible for candidacy.

The working group was formed under the leadership of **Bishop Susan Candea** (from the leadership committee of the Conference of Bishops) and **Phil Hirsch/Sara Cutter** (from the Churchwide Unit responsible for candidacy) and began their work in **March 2022**.

The working group was charged with providing a **refreshed candidacy process and candidacy manual** by Summer 2025. Any proposed changes to the ELCA constitution will be brought to the **August 2025** ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The implementation would take place over a period of time after August 2025.



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Who is the candidacy
working group?
What is the **purpose**
of their work?



Candidacy Working Group

Chaired by:
**Bishop Susan
Candea**
(Central States)
Pastor Phil Hirsch
and **Pastor Sara
Cutter**
(ELCA CW Staff)



Deacon Krista Anderson, (CaLM, Region 3), Rev. Cherlyne Beck (ELCA CW Staff), Rev. Irma Banales (NTNL Synod Staff), Rev. Jacqui Pagel (GC Synod Staff), Rev. Tim Feiertag (Candidacy Committee Member), Rev. Dr. Guy Erwin (President of United Lutheran Seminary), Rev. Dr. Terri Elton (Dean, Luther Seminary), David Lenz (member of ELCA Church Council)
Not pictured: Bishop Christopher deForest (NEPA), Rev. Dr. David Anglada (ELCA CW Staff), Rev. Dr. Javier Goitia (ELCA CW Staff), Rev. Marty Hampton (ELCA CW Staff).



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The purpose of the refreshed candidacy process:

Recognizing that candidacy is a process of accompaniment and ongoing discernment that forms and prepares rostered ministers for public leadership:

The candidacy leadership development working group will adapt the candidacy process of the ELCA to serve the needs of the current and future church.

Values that guide the team's work:

- For the sake of the Gospel through a Lutheran lens for the sake of the world
- Self-sacrificing openness and humility within the boundaries of the value stated above.
- Relationships
- Mutual Accountability



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This work will:

- **engage and listen** to constituents and stakeholders
- **use a process** that is open, transparent, and iterative
- **discover challenges and opportunities** related to candidacy
- **define** what current and future rostered ministers need to *be, know, and do*
- **study governing documents** and **recommend changes**, as needed
- **develop a proposal** for a refreshed **candidacy process**

Information and updates are posted on: elca.org/formation



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What is the **purpose of candidacy?**
Who is **responsible for candidacy?**

Purpose of Candidacy



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Candidacy is **the means**
by which the ELCA
calls and ordains qualified persons
to serve its mission.

Its primary task is to
identify, form and equip people
for leading ministries of
Word and Service and Word and Sacrament
through ordination
(with increasing need for synod authorized leaders.)



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The need for Christ and proclaiming the **gospel remains urgent.**

The ELCA has an urgent need to **identify, form and equip** leaders to proclaim the gospel within the church that is and is becoming!

The candidacy process has becoming increasingly **complex, inconsistent, and out of sync** with contextual realities.

At the same time, there is a **desire for a more open and accessible candidacy process** that will enhance the ELCA's ability to proclaim the gospel in this rapidly changing world.

Roles and Responsibilities



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The *Churchwide Assembly* approves Constitutional changes
with the approval of the Church Council

The *Church Council* approves the Candidacy Process
and updates to the Candidacy manual.

The *Conference of Bishops* advise and review the process.

The *Churchwide staff* write the manual and oversee the candidacy process.

according to the ELCA Constitution (Chapter 7).

Roles and Responsibilities



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Currently,

Regions have CaLMs who oversee and relate to Churchwide and coordinate candidacy processes within several synods.

Synods have candidacy committees who accompany candidates, provide opportunities for discernment, and approve for ordained ministry.

Congregations form leaders before, during, and after candidacy.

Seminaries teach, advise, and approve academic competencies of candidates, as well as provide opportunities for discernment.

There is a **desire and need** for greater clarity on each parties role and responsibility, as well as a clearer picture of how the parts fit with the whole to create a shared ecology.



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What are **criteria,
process,
and timeline
for the candidacy refresh?**

Criteria



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- 1. Grounded in the Triune God** as witnessed through scripture, Lutheran theology and faith. God is the one who calls, we participate in God's mission.
- 2. Clear expectations.** The desired outcomes and competencies are well-defined and transparent, as are roles and responsibilities.
- 3. Simple** for candidates and committees to follow and **consistent** across the church.
- 4. Flexible and responsive** to the changing needs of the church and candidates. The design values context, assumes a dynamic environment and can adapt based on feedback.
- 5. Wholistic** from discernment to placement seeing the whole person and variety of ministry expressions.

Process



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The **proposal will blend the *current process with new practices*** so that the ELCA can accomplish its vision as it is responsive to current and future societal and ecclesial realities.

The hope is that the design will **focus on the core elements of candidacy** while at the same time **be flexible to refine and adapt** as needed.

The proposal was developed using **an open and iterative process** that engaged stakeholders using human-centered design thinking and standard research method practices. The process included listening to a wide range of voices, sharing learnings with stakeholders, testing ideas, and integrating feedback.

Timeline



Spring 2022

Launched Working Group and organized work

Summer 2022

Gathered data on contextual changes, what rostered leaders need to know, be and do, experience with candidacy process and experiences of marginalized leaders. Met with stakeholder groups (CoB) and surveyed rostered leaders (800+) and leaders of excluded communities (300+). Gathered information from ecumenical partners.

Fall and Winter 2022

Shared data and received feedback through Listening Sessions

Spring and Summer 2023

Tested ideas for potential changes

Fall 2023 – Winter 2024

Shared draft of potential elements of proposal to address challenges with stakeholders for feedback.

Spring 2024

Worked on Constitutional Revisions and developed first draft of competencies.

Summer 2024

Updated proposal, outlined candidacy manual, and received feedback on competencies.

Timeline



Fall 2024

Present the What of the Proposal and get feedback on the questions regarding How the Proposal is lived out.

Develop rubrics for competencies and candidacy manual.

- share with Conference of Bishops and engage stakeholders.
- bring constitutional changes to Church Council Meeting

Winter 2024-2025

Revise Candidacy Proposal based on feedback, develop rubrics, and work on candidacy manual.

Spring 2025 – Conference of Bishops Meeting and Church Council Meeting

Input on draft of candidacy manual and final candidacy proposal

Summer 2025

Draft of candidacy manual (approval based upon adoption of constitutional amendments) ready for testing and a plan for implementation

August 2025 – Churchwide Assembly

Approval of any needed constitutional amendments

Fall 2025 – Launch Implementation Plan



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What we heard

Context is Changing

...and will continue to change.



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Candidacy (and church leadership) **needs to be responsive** to cultural realities, on both the macro and global level, as well as the local level and connected to particular contexts.

The ELCA needs new models of church, ministry, and leadership formation that:

- *deeply engage current paradigm shifts,*
- *discover what it means to be church in a secular age,*
- *engage people/community outside of the congregation, foster cultural intelligence, and participate in anti-racism work, and*
- *equip all of God's people to live their calling.*

Competencies

...know, do, be



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There is ***a lot of agreement*** on what candidates need to know, do, and be - and not many competencies are new.

There is ***more emphasis in particular areas*** today than in the past (i.e. adaptive leadership and cultural intelligence and anti-racism are not optional competencies)

There is a ***desire for theological education*** that is grounded in the richness of Lutheran theology and at the same time translates ministry practices into daily life and help people make meaning within our current paradigm shifts.

Candidacy Process

...clear and flexible



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There is a desire for candidacy to **be a consistent, trustworthy process that is flexibility** to meet the current and future challenges and opportunities of the church and accompany a wide range of diverse candidates.

- not all candidates experience candidacy the same
- the candidacy process is more challenging for marginalized persons
- there is a concern about the way power is located and exercised within the process and propose a revised procedure for appeals
- desire clear training and accountability

There is a **need for the whole system to work together** on this shared calling (including: congregations, synods, seminaries, camps, churchwide, etc).

There is a recognition of the **dual roles** people have within the system that does not foster transparency and good formation/working relationships



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The Proposal

What

The Proposal



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Four Key Changes:

Competency-based - Shift from normalizing the degree requirement (MDiv) as the primary means of assessment to all candidates demonstrate competencies as the primary means of assessment.

Clarify roles and responsibilities - Separate and clarify accompaniment and assessment roles. Add the role of accompanier. Name the primary and secondary responsibilities of each party involved in the candidacy process.

Greater emphasis in formation - Focus on formation throughout the process related to the candidate's self-understanding with competencies and understanding of rostered leadership, starting with pre-entrance discernment and extending into first call education.

Connect rostered leader competencies with expectations/requirements for synod authorized ministers. As synod authorized ministers play an increasingly important role in serving the needs of the current and future church, create consistent churchwide competency expectations for this role and connect them with the expectation of rostered leadership.



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The Proposal

competency-based

Shift from normalizing the degree requirement (MDiv) as the primary means of assessment to all candidates demonstrate competencies as the primary means of assessment. This shift includes ***contextual learning and CPE requirements***. Competencies, along with assessment rubrics, would be transparent and consistent throughout the candidacy journey and across the whole ELCA.

Why?

to identify the core requirements and respond to the call for a consistent, trustworthy process that is flexibility and able to adapt to diverse contexts.

Core Competencies

Bible

Ministerial and
Leadership Practices

Formation

Theology/History

Cultural Context



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Bible

Critical
engagement with
the Biblical Story

Articulate the Gospel

Biblical Hermeneutics



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Theology/ History

Articulation of the
Triune God

Missional Ecclesiology

Understanding of
Lutheran Confessions

History of Christianity,
including Reformation
History

Interprets and
Contextualizes History

Distinctiveness of the
Lutheran Witness

Public Witness in
Society



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Ministerial and Leadership Practices

Public Worship

Preaching with a Lutheran Distinctive

Care for Persons and Communities

Evangelical Discipleship

Missional Leadership

Adaptive Leadership

Formation

Personal Formation

Interpersonal
Formation

Vocational Identity

Spiritual Formation

Cultural Context

Cultural Analysis

Cultural
Competency

Contextualization



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The Proposal

competency-based

Options:

- theological education and contextual learning via seminary degree
- theological education and contextual learning in a TEEM-like pathway
- serve as SAM or lay professional with theological education and contextual learning coming from a variety of places.

Best Practices:

- **three assessment points:** entrance, endorsement, and approval.
- engage contextual learning and theological education ***simultaneously*** (via seminary degree and/or lay school education)
- fulfill formation and ministerial competencies via ***CPE programs and internships*** (as is done now)
- fulfill ministerial and leadership competencies via ***culminating internships or residencies*** that could become first call

The Proposal

competency-based



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Work left to be done:

- develop **rubrics** and **assessment process**, including how candidates will demonstrate competency and what training for assessors will entail - *partner with seminaries*
- develop **manual** - *with churchwide staff*
- develop **implementation process** with timeline
- develop a **digital platform strategy** that allows for sharing of assessment components of candidates among partners in confidential and secure manner
- make **constitutional changes** to allow this change - *work with church council*



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The Proposal

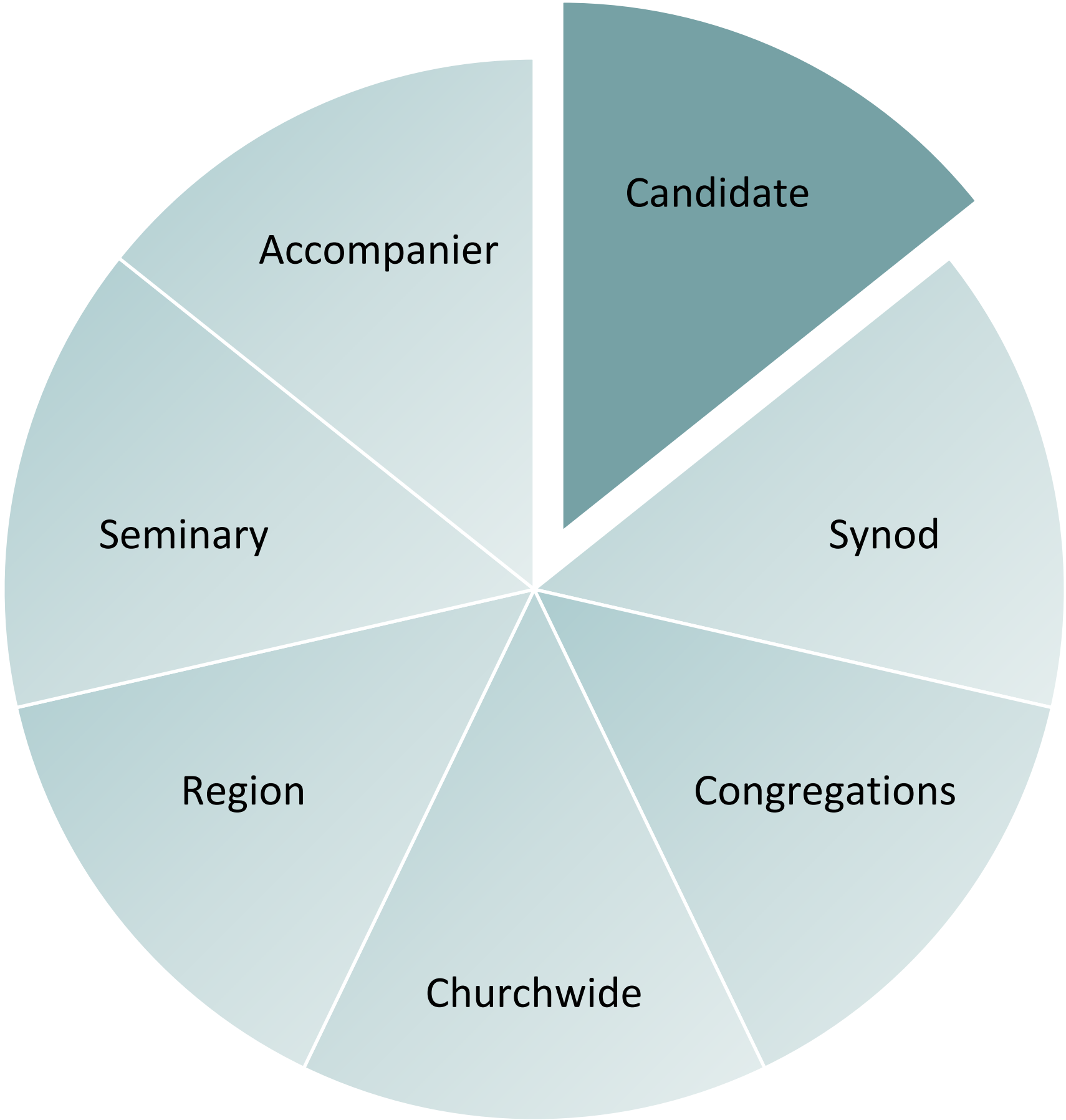
clarify roles and responsibilities

Separate and clarify accompaniment and assessment roles. Add the role of accompanier. Name the primary and secondary responsibilities of each party involved in the candidacy process. Develop “job descriptions” for candidate, candidacy committee members, faculty advisor/seminary, accompanier, regional staff, churchwide staff, contextual supervisor, and congregations (sponsoring and contextual sites).

Why?

to address the need for clarity and consistency as well as to respond to the call to separate the *dual role* of relator and the need to *identify who has primary responsibility* for assessment and decisions in which areas.

Candidacy Partners





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The Proposal

clarify roles and responsibilities

Options:

- Accompanier can be nominated by the candidate or chosen by candidate from pool of persons lifted up by synod.

Best Practices:

- Accompanier responsibility is to support the candidate and does not have assessment responsibilities.
- Training for everyone involved in assessment around their particular role.
- Candidacy committees are appointed by Bishops and approved by Synod Council.
- Synods could collaborate to combine resources and best serve their candidates.
- Have a clear appeal procedures.

Work left to be done:

- develop **job descriptions**
- develop and implement **training for assessment**
- develop best practices for **accompanier role**



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The Proposal

greater emphasis in formation

Focus on formation throughout the process related to the candidate's self-understanding with competencies and understanding of rostered leadership, starting with pre-entrance discernment and extending into first call education.

Why?

to carry out the main purpose of candidacy, honor the commitment of formation to be wholistic, and to respond to the changing leadership needs and roles.



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The Proposal

greater emphasis in formation

Options:

- engage in discernment retreats/activities (offered by synods, seminaries, and/or camps)
- synods partnering together or with other organizations to do this work together

Best Practices:

- pre-entrance discernment including conversations with synod bishop or designee
- review and reflect on the candidate's current abilities and growth areas
- exploration of spiritual gifts and be able to articulate internal/external call
- explore potential candidates awareness of what it means to be ordained in the ELCA and the different paths available
- place candidates sense of call in conversation with contextual needs
- enhance congregations awareness of what their roles in formation

Work left to be done:

- **define discernment markers** at each point of candidacy
- **map** discernment activities/resources



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The Proposal

connect rostered leaders with SAMs

As synod authorized ministers play an increasingly important role in serving the needs of the current and future church, recommend common competency expectations for this role and connect them with the expectation of rostered leadership.

Why?

to simplify and connect the identification, formation, and equipping of leaders for ministry across the church, as well as address the call to be flexibility and responsive to contextual needs.



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The Proposal

connect rostered leaders with SAMs

Options:

- encourage SAMs and potential rostered leader candidates to engage in discernment and assessment practices together

Best Practices:

- ELCA wide expectations allow the whole ecosystem (synods, seminaries, camps, colleges and other ministry partners) to focus on shared goals around identifying, forming, and equipping leaders for ministry
- Synods, seminaries, and other educational opportunities collaborate to equip leaders
- Trainings and educational offerings are oriented toward the identified competencies

Work left to be done:

- **identify competencies, levels, and assessment** of SAMs (not the role of this committee, but will make recommendations)

What's NOT changing



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1. **The purpose** of candidacy remains the same.
2. **Synods** continue to have the primary leadership in candidacy.
3. Three markers within the candidacy process - **entrance, endorsement, approval** - remain.
4. **Theological education** and **contextual learning** continue to be required, even as the forms will vary by candidate.