

CANDIDACY PROCESS: FORMATION FOR MINISTRY



NALC

North American Lutheran Church

Entrance to the Candidacy Process

- 1) Initial interview. The candidate will participate in a structured interview that will be conducted by a person approved by the candidacy committee.
- 2) Essay. The candidate will write an essay for the candidacy committee. The essay will include such subjects as the candidate's personal faith journey, Christian formation to date, profession of faith, why the candidate is considering ordained ministry, and why the individual is seeking candidacy in the NALC.
- 3) References. The candidate will provide letters of reference from the candidate's home pastor, college chaplain and/or other pastor who knows the candidate well. The letters will include the reasons, if any, the person should or should not be considered for candidacy and areas needing attention and growth during their preparation for ministry.
- 4) Background checks. The candidate will submit a criminal background check from a provider approved by the candidacy committee.
- 5) Psychological evaluation. The candidate will complete a psychological evaluation with an approved clinician. The evaluation will include specific critical components related to personality traits, vocational aptitude, relational maturity, and other relevant competencies and inclinations.
- 6) Interview with the candidacy committee. The candidate will meet with the candidacy committee. The interview will include questions related to the call to ministry within the NALC. The committee will make clear to the candidate that formation for ministry is a priority during the years of candidacy. The candidate will demonstrate an understanding of the unfolding formation process and his/her discernment of a possible call. The candidate will be provided with a list of selected resources to be used during the process of formation for ministry. The NALC document, Standards for Ministry, shall be utilized and discussed throughout the formation process. Candidates will seek to live and serve in a way that is compliant with that document. As appropriate, a list of spiritual directors will be provided from which the individual is to select one to contact and use.

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- 7) Decision by the candidacy committee. The candidacy committee will make a decision on the candidate - approve, delay, or deny - and will communicate its decision to the candidate that day in person, and then in writing.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

CPE is available for candidates who intend to serve as ordained ministers within the NALC. The candidacy committee will determine if a candidate should participate, on a case-by-case basis. The candidate may voluntarily choose to participate as well. Placement within a particular site is the responsibility of the candidacy committee. Normally CPE comes at the conclusion of the candidate's first year of theological education. The intent of CPE is to have the candidate develop pastoral skills and experience mutual conversation and consultation within the CPE group.

Second Year Review/Endorsement for Internship

- 1) Essay. The candidate will complete an essay prepared by the candidacy committee. The essay will be scheduled after the candidate has concluded a primary course on the Lutheran Confession. The essay will measure Biblical, confessional, and theological knowledge and understanding and will provide the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate the ability to articulate and synthesize. The essay will also address the candidate's personal spiritual growth and identity as a candidate for ministry. Good written English is required.
- 2) Interview with the candidacy committee. The candidacy committee will meet with the candidate and will discuss the candidate's practice in ministry and the candidate's ability to relate to persons. A common set of questions will be used, addressing matters including the nature of the church, what it means to be Lutheran, the meaning of ordination, the doctrine of the Word, the role of the law in human behavior, and other relevant matters. The committee will review the candidate's academic performance from the seminary where the candidate is studying. Questions for the interview will be provided to the candidate before the interview. Other relevant questions will be asked, especially questions pertaining to essay responses. The committee will inquire into the candidate's worship life, both corporate and personal, and participation in the seminary community.
- 3) Decision. The candidacy committee will make a decision in regard to the candidate's future in preparation for the ministry - to approve, delay, or deny. The committee's decision will be communicated the same day in person to the candidate, and then in writing. Approval is given when the committee ascertains that the candidate is ready to go on internship. The

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decision to delay is made only when clear steps are to be completed prior to a reconsideration of the postponement. A specific timeline and date for reconsideration is to be set as soon as is practical. The decision to deny constitutes a termination of the candidacy process. A candidate who is denied may approach the bishop to request re-initiation of the process after a minimum of one calendar year has passed.

Internship

An internship is an integral element in the candidacy process for ordained ministry in the NALC. Internship typically occurs after the second year of theological education. The candidacy committee has the responsibility for arranging internship sites, in some cases in consultation with the seminary.

Approval for the Call Process and Ordination

- 1) Essay. The candidate will complete an essay prepared by the candidacy committee. In addition, the candidate will prepare the text for a sermon, at the direction of the committee.
- 2) Interview. The candidate will meet with the candidacy committee for a personal interview. The committee will review the academic performance of the candidate and may consult with a representative from the seminary. The committee will review and evaluate the entire body of documents relating to the candidate's preparation and formation and internship. During the interview the committee will use both a common set of questions provided by the committee, and presented to the candidate before the interview; and other relevant questions. Throughout the interview, the committee will seek to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the church.
- 3) Decision. The decision to approve, delay, or deny is made by the committee and communicated to the individual in person the same day, and then in writing. The decision to approve is made when committee members are as certain as they can be that the candidate has been formed and prepared well for the office of ministry. The decision to delay is made only when clear, concrete steps are to be completed prior to a reconsideration of the postponement. A specific timeline and date for reconsideration are to be set as soon as is practical. The decision to deny constitutes a termination of the formation process. A candidate who is denied may approach the bishop to request re-initiation of the process after a minimum of one year has passed.

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First Call

The approved candidate and the bishop will discuss placement for the first call process. The NALC may develop additional procedures and assistance in the calling process.

Ongoing formation in the pastoral office will continue in first call through a support system with peers, with an experienced pastor, and through the ministerium. The continuing process of formation will include worship, personal devotions, theological study, and mutual conversation and consolation.

Other Matters

- 1) Candidacy Committee. Initially the candidacy committee will be composed of six persons, plus the bishop and general secretary of the NALC.
- 2) Selection of a seminary is a serious issue for the candidate and for the NALC. The NALC does not maintain its own seminary. The candidacy committee will provide guidance to a candidate in the selection process and will indicate its preferences for where theological education will take place. The committee will name a mentor for each candidate. The mentor will typically be an experienced pastor who will meet regularly with the candidate for personal growth, spiritual formation, and for conversation regarding Lutheran theology and doctrine.
- 3) An annual “seminar” will be held for all candidates. The seminars will be of varying lengths (one to three days) and will emphasize community building, spiritual formation, and vocational growth. All candidates will be expected to attend.
- 4) The NALC is committed to providing pastors who will have the gifts and abilities to serve the church according to the church’s Standards for Ministry. Depending on circumstances, the candidacy committee may require candidates to take additional study in Lutheran-specific matters - Lutheran church history, worship, the Lutheran Confessions, preaching, and other studies that reflect the Lutheran Confessions.
- 5) The process outlined in this document is considered to be the norm for theological education in the NALC. However, based on need and circumstances, the candidacy

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committee may approve alternate routes for theological education. In such cases, the requirements for a Master of Divinity degree and other elements in this document may be waived, at the discretion of the committee. A description of the alternative candidacy process will be provided to the candidate, in writing, by the candidacy committee and maintained in the candidate's permanent file.

- 6) The NALC has established a fund for theological education. The candidacy committee will develop and implement procedures for providing financial assistance to candidates according to the needs of the candidates and the church.

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