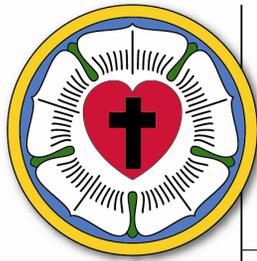


CANDIDACY PROCESS



NALC

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CANDIDACY PROCESS

NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The candidacy process of the North American Lutheran Church ensures that those who are seeking to serve as pastors within the denomination are fit for ministry, competent theologians, orthodox in their beliefs and teachings, and disciples of Jesus Christ. The candidacy process, which is laid out in the following pages, runs parallel with the seminary education experience. While the candidates are receiving their education, the Candidacy Committee meets with, interviews, advises, and supports the formation of the NALC's future pastors.

The Candidacy Committee functions as a gatekeeper to ensure that those who are called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament accept the NALC's confession of faith and are committed to the mission of the Church. This is the committee's primary task. Secondary tasks include encouragement of the students; assisting the forming of pastoral identity for the candidates; support, prayers, and walking alongside the candidates throughout the process. This document serves to familiarize the reader with the process and the various steps towards ordained ministry in the North American Lutheran Church.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRANCE TO THE CANDIDACY PROCESS

In addition to the requirements mentioned below, the following basic requirements must be met for entrance into the Candidacy Process:

- Living at all times in compliance with all the standards set forth in the NALC's *Standards for Pastoral Ministry*.
- Be a member of an NALC congregation for at least two years prior to applying for entrance in the candidacy process.

REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF THE CANDIDACY PROCESS

In addition to the requirements mentioned below, the following basic requirements must be met for successful completion of the Candidacy Process:

- Participate in person at least twice in a June term intensive course at the North American Lutheran Seminary in Ambridge, PA and an accompanying retreat for NALC candidates.
- Receive a Master of Divinity degree or the equivalent thereof.

ENTRANCE TO THE CANDIDACY PROCESS

There are three primary steps in the candidacy process: Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval. These steps are outlined in detail with many other pertinent details included. Entrance is the initial step and it serves to formalize a relationship with candidates and the NALC.

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A key component of the ordination process is the selection of a seminary. Selecting where one engages in theological education is a serious issue for the candidate and for the NALC. The NALC maintains its own seminary, the North American Lutheran Seminary, with a Director at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA, and with other Lutheran Houses of Studies attached to other theological seminaries. The candidate will pursue theological education at one of these Lutheran Houses of Studies. Under extraordinary circumstances, the candidate may pursue theological education at another education institution, but only with the approval of the Candidacy Committee.

There are seven components of the Entrance step.

1. *Initial Contact.* The candidate will make an initial contact with one of the following: an NALC pastor, a member of the Candidacy Committee, a member of the bishop's staff, the dean of the mission district or another person as may be appropriate. This person will communicate to the Candidacy Committee the candidate's availability for pastoral ministry in the NALC.
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 any 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 Evaluations.* The candidate will complete a psychological evaluation with an approved clinician in Columbus, OH the day before the entrance interview with the Candidacy Committee. The evaluation will include specific critical components related to personality traits, vocational aptitude, relational maturity, and other relevant competencies and inclinations. The cost of the evaluation will be split in thirds between the candidate, the candidate's home congregation or mission district and the NALC.
6. *Interview.* 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 resources to be used during the process of formation for ministry. The NALC document, [Standards for Pastoral 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

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document. As appropriate, a list of spiritual directors will be provided from which the candidate is to select one to contact and use.

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.

ENDORSEMENT FOR INTERNSHIP

Endorsement is the second step of the candidacy process. Its purpose is to affirm a sense of call for ordained ministry and to confirm the progress in the first portion of seminary education. A particular concern will be to determine the candidate's commitment to the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions. Endorsement is required prior to going on Internship. The steps outlined below explain this portion of the candidacy process.

1. *Essay.* The candidate will complete an essay by answering questions provided by the Candidacy Committee. The essay will be written after the candidate has concluded a primary course on the Lutheran Confessions. 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 biblical and theological thought. The essay will also address the candidate's personal spiritual growth and identity as a candidate for ministry. While not a research paper, the essay must reflect competency in thinking, writing, and English grammar reflective of a master's level degree program.
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. 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 preparation for the ministry – to endorse for internship; delay; or deny. The committee's decision will be communicated the same day in person to the candidate, and then in writing. Endorsement is given when the committee ascertains that the candidate is ready to go on internship. The 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.

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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 and is normally for a full year. The Candidacy Committee has the responsibility to arrange internship sites for the candidate.

During the internship year, interns will meet regularly (typically over the phone) with a Life-to-Life Discipleship Guide, provided by the NALC. The meetings are intended to facilitate the intern's continued growth as a disciple of Christ, as well as help him/her develop lifelong habits of prayer and living that ensure a healthy and fruitful ministry for the long-term.

APPROVAL FOR THE CALL PROCESS AND ORDINATION

The approval step of the candidacy process is the final component to be completed before moving toward seeking a first call to ordained ministry. It takes place near the completion of the final year of theological education and the expectation is that the candidate has a satisfactory understanding of the Lutheran Confessions; pastoral identity and formation; a strong understanding of the Bible; the capacity for ministry within the NALC; and a devotional life that reflects the candidate as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The candidate can expect to share examples of his/her ministry within a church setting and to be able to respond to real life ministry issues that may arise in congregational life.

1. *Essay.* The candidate will complete an essay to answer questions provided by the Candidacy Committee. In addition, the candidate will prepare the text for a sermon, and a one-page exegetical summary that exhibits the theological basis for the sermon.
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, formation, and internship. 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. 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 will discuss with the Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry the process for receiving a first call to ordained ministry in the NALC. The procedures outlined in the NALC call process will be followed.

Ongoing formation in the pastoral office will continue in first call through a support system with peers, 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. *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. Securing a particular site for CPE is the responsibility of the candidate, in consultation with the Candidacy Committee and the Director of the North American Lutheran Seminary. Normally CPE comes at the conclusion of the candidate's first year of theological education, but may take place at any point during the candidacy process. There are other options beside CPE that provide effective training in pastoral care. A conversation with the Candidacy Committee and the candidate will help to determine what, if any, training is required.
2. *Introduction to Congregational Ministry*. Prior to the Internship year, the candidate will participate in an introduction to congregational ministry (variously called Field Education; Mentored Ministry; or Contextual Ministry) under the supervision of a competent NALC pastor. The Director of the North American Lutheran Seminary will consult with the theological seminary regarding the fulfillment of this expectation.
3. *Annual Seminar*. An annual seminarians' gathering will be held for all candidates. The gathering will be one to three days in length and will emphasize community building, spiritual formation, and vocational growth. All candidates are expected to attend.
4. *Standards for Pastoral Ministry*. 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 Pastoral Ministry](#). The candidates for ordained ministry in the NALC are called to live in accordance with these standards. 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. *Equivalencies*. 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

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Candidacy 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. *Financial Aid.* 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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