



Guidelines for Ordination Under Special Circumstances

AUGUST 2022

These guidelines are based on the document proposed by the Commission on Theology and Doctrine and approved by the Executive Council. (See notes.)

This is a new concept for the NALC and we are still working on honing this process. As such this guideline is a living document, open to adjustments as time and experience move us further along. Ultimately, OUSC must be rare, safe, legal, and accountable to the church.

If you are a congregation with a full time or part time pastor, or you have the ability to call a full or part time pastor, then this process is **NOT** for you.

The Special Circumstances of the local church are:

- a. Location of church is in a rural area where it's very difficult to find a pastor to serve the congregation AND/OR,
- b. Small worshipping attendance that makes it impossible to call even a part-time pastor, AND/OR,
- c. An ethnic congregations, that is, congregations using a language other than English at worship, for whom an ordained minister in their own language is not readily accessible.

Requirements

A candidate for Ordination Under Special Circumstances must normally fulfill the following criteria [**Please do these steps IN ORDER**]:

Be **nominated** for the OUSC,

- By a congregation who is willing to call the candidate (see #1 below);
- In conjunction with the Mission District Dean who deems the congregation is in a special circumstance.

1. The congregation or congregations who, by 2/3 vote of the congregation's council, have indicated they will call the OUSC candidate, following completion of Year One studies and an approval interview by the OUSC panel.
2. Be willing and able to study/take online courses at the NALS.
3. Submit to a background check (through General Secretary) and psychological evaluation (by our contracted psychiatrist).
4. Participate in an entrance interview and an approval interview.

Nominations to the OUSC Program

1. A lay member being considered for “Ordination under Special Circumstances” may be retired, semi-retired, or have other employment.
2. A nearby pastor or the dean of the mission district will submit a nomination to the OUSC coordinator describing the character traits of the candidate and how he/she sees the candidate serving the NALC in the future. All parties need to be aware of and supportive of the candidate. It is of utmost importance that a plan is in place for the candidate to serve a particular parish or ministry site before moving forward with the process. It is expected that the church council of the parish or ministry site will take official action supportive of the nominee’s participation in the OUSC process.
3. Once nominated, the candidate will fill out an application:
 - A. The NALS Network: thenals.org
 - B. [OUSC application](#) (Your name has to be inserted into the digital form before you can actually fill it out. The OUSC coordinator will set this up.)

The Process

1. Once the candidate has been accepted into the NALS and the OUSC program, he/she will begin the course of study. (All courses will contribute to an MDiv if a student chooses to further their education.)

Diploma of Lutheran Studies:

- Overview of Church History
- Lutheran Studies
 - Creeds and Catechisms: An Introduction to Theological Thinking
 - The Lutheran Confessions
 - Introduction to Theology I and II
 - Christian Ethics in the Lutheran Tradition
 - Homiletics
 - Introduction to Lutheran Liturgy
 - Spiritual Formation: Catechesis and Discipleship

PLUS:

- Survey of Old and New Testament including a basic understanding of biblical languages
- Two June-term classes (these one week intensives are held in Ambridge, PA and cover one of the NALC’s core values each year: Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded, and Congregationally Focused)

Year One:

Survey of the Old Testament

Survey of the New Testament

Creeds and Catechisms: An Intro to Theological Thinking

Intro to Theology 1

Homiletics

Lutheran Liturgy

Year Two:

Overview of Church History

Lutheran Confessions

Intro to Theology II

Christian Ethics in the Lutheran Tradition

Homiletics II

2. After successfully completing “year one” study, the candidate is eligible for ordination if they are approved by the OUSC panel. The requirement is that the candidate, after ordination, will continue to year two of studies.
4. OUSC Coordinators will provide assistance, guidance, and oversight to candidates throughout the process.
5. Once approved, the Bishop ordains the candidate at the local congregation and the pastor begins Word and Sacrament ministry within the congregation.
6. The pastor participates in a 2-year cohort for continuing pastoral formation. Specific topics of discussion for this cohort will be developed by the Coordinators in consultation with the Bishop’s office and Candidacy.
7. Pastors ordained under special circumstances who do not complete the full process will be designated as “Pastors Not in Good Standing” by the NALC Bishop and Executive Council and will thus be unavailable for other calls in special circumstances until successful completion of the process.
8. If the particular congregation or congregations which initiated the process should close or call another pastor, pastors ordained under special circumstances who are in good standing (i.e., actively pursuing the process) may be recommended to another congregation or congregations in the NALC at the discretion of the Bishop, in consultation with the Coordinators and the Dean.

Other Notes:

- Official OUSC candidates, those who have been accepted as an OUSC candidate by the NALC AND have been accepted into the NALS) may apply for scholarships/grants through the existing NALC process or through the supporting congregation or local Mission District.

- Candidates will not normally be authorized for Word and Sacrament ministry during the initial term of coursework. The Mission District Dean will work with the closest pastors available to provide ministry to the congregation during this time.
- If possible, pastors ordained under special circumstances will receive compensation from their congregations. Based on individual circumstance, these pastors may be retired or bi-vocational. It may also be the case that their call is non-stipendiary. However, as in 1 Timothy 5:18, “For the Scripture says... ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’” Every effort should be made on the part of the congregation in question to provide appropriate and commensurate compensation and benefits. The local Mission District and/or Mission Region may also elect to provide additional financial support.
- The time it takes to complete the coursework may vary, depending upon the life situation of each candidate and the availability of courses, online or otherwise. OUSC Coordinators will provide guidance to ensure progress through the process as appropriate for each candidate.

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