**Preparing for Approval & First Call**

*2021-2022*

*Updated 12/15/2021*

Greetings from the Castle!

I invite you to pause for a moment to consider all the people prayerfully tending to and investing in your formation, discernment, and call. Please pray for your candidacy committee as they engage in the holy work of determining readiness and fitness of candidates for positions of authority as church leaders. Know that they are praying for you along with me, your advisor, and so many here at Wartburg!

To be approved means that the Candidacy Committee, on behalf of the whole church in partnership with the seminary, affirms that you are ready for ordination and a life of service as a deacon or pastor.

As has been the case for your candidacy process all along, you are encouraged to take the lead in the candidacy process. It demonstrates how you manage multi-layered projects (and people). You contact the candidacy committee, your advisor, arrange the meetings, and facilitate good communication.

The ELCA Candidacy Manual found [here](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Candidacy_Manual_2021.pdf?_ga=2.204648025.810330230.1622668933-1684206230.1607372521) is a great resource, especially if you appreciate details and a sense of the big picture.

**Approval Components**

1. Essay
2. Supporting Documents
3. Faculty Approval Interview – results in Form D (WTS faculty recommendation regarding Approval).
4. Candidacy Committee Approval Interview

**Essay**

It is important that you reach out to your candidacy committee and advisor to determine your Approval timeline in early/mid June. Particularly, the faculty meeting schedule and candidacy committee schedule so you can keep those fixed meetings in mind as you determine when you need your paperwork and approval interview completed.

A best practice is to talk with your synod candidacy soon so you might determine when the first draft your essay should be done (often late summer/early Fall(. Check your candidacy Endorsement decision for any recommendations or requirements associated with your candidacy. You may wish to address the recommendations in your approval essay and/or discuss your growth in these areas during the interview.

Provide a copy of your essay to your Synod Candidacy Committee, your Faculty Advisor, and keep a personal copy. Carefully follow the instructions within the first few pages of the Approval Essay.

The Approval Essay is online at the “essays” tab or simply click [here](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ApprovalEssayDocument.pdf?_ga=2.10730621.810330230.1622668933-1684206230.1607372521), the essay is updated annually.

**Documents**

*It is the candidate’s responsibility to provide the following to their candidacy committee and academic advisor:*

* Ensure that all required internship evaluations are submitted and signed.
* Approval Essay
* Academic Transcript: request a transcript be sent to synod ([registrar@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:registrar@wartburgseminary.edu))
* Any other items requested by the Candidacy Committee
* Complete a synod [FERPA](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Candidate_FERPA.pdf?_ga=2.14855167.810330230.1622668933-1684206230.1607372521) release for the seminary. This will allow the seminary to communicate with the synod. It is best to provide this approximately 2 months prior to your interview.

**Interview timing:**

Faculty Approval interviews are typically scheduled in the early fall. You will receive an email to this regard in late summer from Kevin Anderson, Registrar. If you are a distance or collaborative learning student, you will not be expected to travel to the seminary for your faculty approval interview. Your interview with faculty members takes place ***before*** the Faculty meeting to make a recommendation.

You can expect your Synod’s Candidacy Committee to contact you directly to arrange for the Candidacy Approval interview. Approval Interviews for MDiv and MA DM students tend to occur in the late fall. Please keep in mind that it is often the expectation that the candidate travels in person to the approval interview with their candidacy committee. TEEM Candidates should inquire with their candidacy committee as to their specific timeline as the dates tend to vary more for TEEM.

*Please be sure to communicate your candidacy approval interview date to your academic advisor, particularly if it is scheduled before November 15.*

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**First Call Process Components**

1. Roster Minister Profile (RMP)
2. First Call Form
3. Pre-Consultation Interview with your synod bishop
4. Regional Consultation
5. First Call Synod Affirmed
   1. Receive Ministry Site Profile(s) (MSP)
   2. Begin Interviewing

**Rostered Ministers Profile (RMP)**

Your RMP must be completed before your formal Pre Consultation Interview with your synodical bishop,

Your RMP helps call committee members imagine what kind deacon or pastor you might be, your first-call synod better match you with ministry sites with whom you interview, and it provides an opportunity for you to express your theological and biblical understanding of ministry in everyday language.

***If you are ready to dig into first call paperwork now – the RMP is a good place to start.***

* **RMP**  is available through <https://community.elca.org> > Leader Portal
* A Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) requires a Netcommunity account.
  + If you have an account, log in and use drop down and click on “interested in mobility – Filing a Rostered Minister Profile”
  + If you believe you may already have an account but don’t know the log in information, please first check with: [constituent.care@elca.org](mailto:constituent.care@elca.org)
    - If you have changed your seminary, your name, or anything else, please first edit your profile in Net community
  + If you do not have an account, register as a new user at [**https://community.elca.org**](https://community.elca.org) (Do not create a new account!!!).
    - Click on New User Registration – complete form – midway down you will see – I am: use drop down and then click on “interested in mobility – Filing a Rostered Minister Profile.”
    - *It may take 48 hours to receive an account.*
* If you would like to see the RMP sample, there is one available at this page in the right side bar: <http://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Rostered-Ministers>

**Tips for Completing the RMP**

* The RMP is used for all rostered leaders of the church for mobility, which means that this form is written for leaders with no formal experience (those just completing candidacy) and those with decades of ministry experience.  Keep this in mind as you move through the form.
* Keep CALL COMMITTEES in mind as you move through this form.
* Avoid using back arrow at the top of your screen.
* It is OK to leave white space.
* Use drop downs to guide you (example: ELCA Roster on which you are listed: drop down option – “Candidate for…” )
* Continuing Education question: Yes, you can use continuing education from internship. No, don’t put seminary.
* Competencies: Consider these carefully – be authentic to who you are not who you think you should be. After you select the competencies, you must then provide examples from your experience.  Internship and fieldwork examples work well.
* References:
  + Bishop: your Bishop of Candidacy
  + Clergy person: home pastor, campus pastor, academic advisor, another pastor, …
  + Lay person:  intern or fieldwork person works well for the first one
  + Lay person: home congregation …
  + Supervisor: often internship/fieldwork supervisor but you can use another as well
* Reflections section: Please remember this is not an academic paper but for the use of call committees in calling a rostered leader.
* Personal Ministry Statement:  Tell the bishops and call committees who YOU are as a rostered leader.
* Willingness to provide video, etc:  mark yes, if possible.
* Disclosure:  must complete – read carefully!
* Pg 16: Discernment and info for Bishop:  you do not necessarily need to complete these.
* Save, Print confirmation page with your profile ID, download pdf available, print and sign authorization page and forward to your bishop and reference.
* Print and save confirmation email.
* **Do not forget to complete the authorization page and send to your synod bishop and reference.**
* ***RMP blank page:*** *This page should list anything that you believe isn’t represented elsewhere in the paperwork.  For example, if you have a certain passion, skillset, interest, etc.  Remember that this will be provided not only to synod staff but to call committees so it should be thought of with your pastor hat on rather than your candidate hat on.*

**Pre- Consultation Interview with Your Bishop.**

Normally done at least 15-30 days prior to the Regional Consultation (a meeting with regional bishops to discuss first call openings and candidates in the region) - this is a chance for you and your bishop to have a candid conversation about first call possibilities, realities, and needs. Your bishop becomes your advocate during the regional consultation as prayerful deliberation is given to what synod each candidate from that region might begin their first call interviews.

**Note**: *Get on your bishop’s calendar soon! Their schedules fill up sometimes months in advance!*

**First Call Process Form**

Found [here](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ELCA_First_Call_Process_Form.pdf?_ga=2.48605295.810330230.1622668933-1684206230.1607372521), Part I of the First Call Form is to be filled out by you at least 30 days before the Regional Consultation and before your Pre-Consultation with your bishop.

This one-page form is an opportunity to clearly express where you believe God is calling you, what gifts you hope to bring, when you are open to start a first call, and what family information might be helpful to consider. The First Call form is seen only by synod bishops, staff and regional candidacy managers in order to discern and process your first call placement.

**Regional Consultation.**

This is a meeting of the bishops to discuss first call candidates, open calls, and to determine what synod each candidate may interview with ministries to receive their first call. Each region and synod communicate this decision differently. You may consider asking your bishop when you might expect to hear something.

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**Timeline: *To-Do List & “Due Dates”***

Approval and the First Call process go hand in hand. Some parts can be tended to at the same time, like writing your approval essay and filing out your Rostered Minister Profile (both take a lot of prayerful deliberation). You must have a positive Approval decision before officially entering First Call, but you can plan ahead by arranging your Pre-Consultation (some bishops may prefer to do this after you are approved) and preparing the paperwork.

**Ask your Candidacy Person**

* Which Candidacy meeting you might have your Approval Interview.
* Discuss if travel to the meeting is required.
* Review what is needed and when for the Candidacy Committee to be prepared.

**Ask your Bishop or Synod Staff Person**

* Which Regional Consultation you should use as a guide for completing your First Call Form.
* When you and the bishop can meet for your First Call Consultation and how you might prepare.
* Anything you might need to know regarding having your RMP activated.

**Ask your Academic Advisor**

* What Faculty Meeting date should you expect your Form D to be on the agenda (you need to have your faculty interview before then). Form D is needed for the Candidacy Committee Approval Interview
* Possible dates/times for the Faculty Approval Interview (Kevin Anderson, registrar, will send email).
* Review what is needed and when for those in the faculty approval interview to be prepared.

**Questions?** Contact WTS Director of Candidacy and Community Life, at [candidacy@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:candidacy@wartburgseminary.edu)

**First Call Process Timeline**

*Reverse Chronological Order*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Regional Consultation Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Pre-Consultation with your synod Bishop

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ WTS Faculty Meeting – Form D (WTS Registrar reports to your synod at least 30 days prior to regional consultation)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Submit Completed **First Call Form** &

**Rostered Minister Profile** (RMP) *Both due before Pre-Consultation with Bishop and at least 30 days prior to Regional Consultation.*

**Approval Timeline**

*Reverse Chronological Order*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Candidacy Committee Interview

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ WTS Faculty Meeting – Form D

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Approval Interview

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Approval Documents Sent

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Approval Essay – Final Draft

*“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.”*

**John 12:26a**