



**Vocation and Education**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

# **Approval Essay**

**2010 - 2011**



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Dear Candidate for Rostered Ministry:

The Approval Interview with your Candidacy Committee is the final step in the process of candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The decision to approve a candidate who will provide leadership as a public minister is among the most significant this church makes as we seek to carry out our mission in God's world. Approval confirms the call that has led you in your spiritual formation and theological preparation. Assuring that qualified leaders serve on the rosters of the ELCA is essential for the people and congregations of our church.

Your Approval Interview provides an opportunity to review and inquire in depth into your readiness for rostered ministry as a diaconal minister, pastor, deaconess, or associate in ministry. Your Candidacy Committee will use your Approval Essay as an indication of your competence in certain vital areas of ministry, and as a tangible expression of your faith as it has developed throughout the candidacy process.

All approved candidates participate in the ELCA churchwide assignment process. Please remember that our rostered leaders serve the whole church - the needs are many for varieties of places and forms of ministry. More information on the churchwide assignment can be found in *A Guide to the ELCA Assignment Process* available from your seminary or candidacy committee. This guide, as well as your forms for the churchwide assignment, can be accessed at [www.elca.org/assignment](http://www.elca.org/assignment)

On behalf of the Vocation & Education Unit, we send blessings and appreciation to you for your faithful participation in the candidacy process. It is our hope that your preparation and formation have been challenging and fulfilling. May God's spirit be strong in your heart and mind as you prepare this essay, participate in the interview, and offer yourself in the service of the church for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

Your partners in the Vocation & Education Unit



## **THE APPROVAL PROCESS**

The approval decision is made by the Candidacy Committee according to guidelines provided by the Vocation & Education Unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. While your complete candidacy file is available to the committee for review, the following material is of primary importance for the approval decision:

- + The Approval Essay
- + The Report of the ELCA Seminary Recommendation
- + The Report of Internship (or Supervised Field Experience)
- + Academic Report
- + CPE or other supervised clinical ministry reports

### **Approval Interview**

The interview is the setting for the Candidacy Committee's final evaluation meeting with you. The committee will assess readiness in the areas of theology, spirituality and faith, and personal integrity and leadership, as well as exploring the sense of call from God and from the church. The criteria for approval are those described in two documents of the church: *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and *Vision and Expectations*. In the first document, candidates must be able to meet the Basic Standards determined for the roster for which they are being approved. The second document sets forth what this church expects of those who serve in positions of trust and responsibility, as well as stating a vision for what rostered ministry can be in the life of the ELCA. Candidates should be able to indicate their commitment to meet these expectations of the ELCA in their own lives and ministries.

The committee will engage with you in an in-depth discussion of your Approval Essay. Your committee is genuinely interested in the preparation and formation that have brought you to this moment, and the interview will provide an opportunity to demonstrate your readiness as well as to review your experience as a candidate. The committee will also want to discuss future ministry setting possibilities with you. The candidacy committee celebrates with each candidate who successfully completes this time of preparation and candidacy.

### **Approval Decision**

1. **APPROVAL** is a public confirmation that an individual has the character, commitment, preparation, and ability to serve in a specific public ministry roster. After receiving a letter of call to a particular setting, the candidate may be consecrated, commissioned, or ordained through a public rite.
2. **DENIAL** of Approval must include reasons for this decision clearly stated in writing to the candidate. This decision ends the person's candidacy.
3. **POSTPONEMENT** of Approval indicates that there are issues or conditions that must be resolved prior to being considered again for approval. The committee must provide clear, specific goals in writing that must be fulfilled before a candidate is reconsidered for approval.



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## APPROVAL ESSAY

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** Candidacy for Ordained, Consecrated, and Commissioned Ministry

Instructions: Four topics are to be addressed in this essay: Scripture; Theological Reflection; Integration; Person in Ministry.

1. All roster tracks will answer each question. Section one offers an alternative for candidates for commissioning and consecration.
2. Keep your audience in mind as you prepare your essay. It may be read by faculty at an ELCA seminary, as well as rostered leaders and lay people on your candidacy committee. While it is important to provide evidence of your academic study, it is also important that your essay be clear, interesting and that the directions be followed.
3. Prepare the essay double-spaced, 12 pt. type, on white paper so that clear, legible copies may be provided for your faculty panel/candidacy committee.
4. Your essay should be about 17-20 pages in length. It is suggested that Section I (your sermon/contextual question) be about eight pages, with sections two through four each about three to four pages in length.
5. Type your name at the top right-hand corner of each page and number each page sequentially.
6. Type the question that you are answering in each section.
7. You are encouraged to be in conversation with theological partners, including cultural references, theologians, commentaries and contemporaries. The final writing is to be your own. Include bibliography and footnotes as appropriate.
8. Send a copy of the completed essay to your candidacy committee no later than the date requested. If applicable, please send a copy to your seminary as well.
9. Please bring a copy of your essay to your approval interview.



## **Approval Essay Questions 2010-2011**

### **I. Proclaiming the Word**

All rostered leaders are called to the ministry of Word, that is, proclamation. This ministry happens through a number of means including preaching, worship, music, care and consolation, and teaching. For this question, all candidates are encouraged to answer Option 1. Word and Service candidates may choose to answer Option 2. The texts for both Options are taken from The Baptism of Our Lord, Year A:

Isaiah 42:1-9  
Psalm 29  
Acts 10:34-43  
Matthew 3:13-17

#### *Option 1: Prepare a Sermon*

Compose a sermon for The Baptism of Our Lord, Sunday, January 9, 2011. As preparation:

- Outline your *exegetical process* of these texts as you prepare the sermon and append the notes of this process to the sermon. How does this process prepare you for moving from text to proclamation?
- Consider the *liturgical context*. What is your understanding of this festival theologically and historically? How does this understanding impact your sermon?
- Describe the *congregational context*. For the purposes of this sermon, consider your internship or project/field placement congregation as your congregational context. How does this context affect how you will move from text to proclamation within the framework of a sermon?

#### *Option 2: Prepare a Bible Study*

Prepare a Bible study for The Baptism of Our Lord, Sunday, January 9, 2011. As preparation:

- Outline your *exegetical process* of these texts as you organize the Bible study and append the notes of this process to the Bible study. How does this process prepare you for moving from text to proclamation?
- Consider the *liturgical context*. What is your understanding of this festival theologically and historically? How does this understanding impact your preparation?
- Describe the *congregational context*. For the purposes of this Bible study, consider your internship or field placement congregation as your congregational context. How does this context affect how you will move from text to proclamation within the framework of Christian education?



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## **II. Theological Reflection**

In recent years there has been a tendency in ELCA congregations toward an understanding of the Lord's Supper as primarily a matter of hospitality and of Baptism as primarily a matter of initiation into the community. Discuss the theological, liturgical, and pastoral strengths and weaknesses of this tendency, paying attention to:

- the relationship between Baptism and the Lord's Supper and how their practice is fundamental for an authentic understanding of Christ's person and work;
- personal and corporate discipleship; and,
- congregational mission and outreach.

## **III. Integration**

Given your response to Question 2, how would you unfold the meaning of the ELCA's motto, "God's Work. Our Hands." to a confirmation class (7th-9th grade)?

## **IV. Person in Ministry**

What area(s) of ministry practice do you find to be the most daunting challenges for you personally? How can your own emerging theology and experience of the Sacraments help you address these challenges?