

1 *Notes on Clarifications and Possible Revisions*
2 *to the Candidacy Process and Manual and the Call Process*
3 *Vocation and Education Unit*
4 *October 10, 2009*
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7 **The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly directed that provision be made in its policies to**
8 **allow the rostered service of members who are in publicly accountable, lifelong,**
9 **monogamous, same-gender relationships and that provision be made in its policies to**
10 **recognize the conviction of members who believe that this church should not call or**
11 **roster people in such relationships. In order to accomplish the change in policy and to**
12 **allow for the respecting of bound conscience, several things in ELCA candidacy and call**
13 **process need to be clarified and some revisions will likely be necessary. The list below**
14 **summarizes the primary items thus far identified for attention.**
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18 A. *Hospitality*

19 Hospitality to candidates on behalf of this whole church is an important element of the
20 candidacy process. The *Candidacy Manual* should encourage candidacy committees,
21 bishops and other synod staff, and seminaries to consider how such welcome will be
22 assured for candidates who meet the vision and expectations of this church, including
23 those who are publicly accountable, lifelong monogamous, same-gender relationships.
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25 Every effort should be made to accompany a candidate hospitably. Because this church
26 will include different understandings and practices, a synodical candidacy committee or a
27 faculty may conclude that hospitality requires it to encourage candidates to work with
28 another synod or seminary, if that committee or faculty, because of bound consciences,
29 does not anticipate being able to extend the church's hospitality to anyone in this
30 particular group of candidates.
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32 B. *Mutual respect within discernment and decision making bodies*

33 On this matter and others, mutual respect is important as a manifestation of respect for all
34 members of the body of Christ. The *Candidacy Manual* should acknowledge that faculties,
35 committees and synod staff will often be of diverse convictions and that in this church
36 such convictions are respected, even though policies have changed.
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38 No person will be excluded from a decision making role simply because he or she
39 disagrees with the church's change in policy. And, individuals who have a share in
40 discernment and decision-making responsibility need to decide whether they can function
41 in that role under the new policies. A body is not forced to take any particular action under
42 the policies of this church, but it cannot block the use and intent of these policies. When
43 necessary for the discernment and preparation of candidates, the body may transfer
44 discernment and decision responsibilities to others, using existing procedures for transfer.
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46 C. *Transfers* – Under present policy, a candidacy process (including one related to
47 reinstatement) can be transferred to another synod with the consent of both bishops and
48 both committees and, in the case of application for reinstatement, also the Secretary of the
49 ELCA. Transfer is a procedural step, not an evaluative one. The consent of the several
50 parties is required to assure openness and the full availability of information. Transfer is
51 not blocked for reasons of conscience. Some greater clarity on this point may be necessary
52 in the *Manual*.
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54 D. *Discernment & voting are separate responsibilities* – The *Candidacy Manual* should
55 make clear that, because the discernment of a call to public ministry involves many and
56 varied elements and questions, a member of a candidacy committee or of a seminary
57 faculty can in good conscience participate in discernment with a particular candidate, even
58 though the member may anticipate being unable to vote in favor of that candidate because
59 of bound conscience.
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61 Note must also be made that a committee or faculty cannot, as a whole, make a negative
62 decision on a particular candidate based on criteria in opposition to this church’s policies.
63 Thus, in a timely manner it must consider whether hospitality and integrity require that the
64 candidate be urged to seek a transfer, as noted in point “B” above.
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66 E. *Transparency about status* - Candidacy materials and call/mobility materials (the Rostered
67 Leader Profile) must be amended to assure transparency about relationship status at
68 appropriate times, thus providing information that will assist decision-makers in
69 recognizing public accountability. Two options for requesting this information are
70 suggested below, but better language for such disclosure may well be available:
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72 *Possibility 1:*

73 *In establishing a relationship of trust between rostered leader and those who are*
74 *served, disclosure of various factors is important. These factors may include*
75 *whether one is single, married, or in a same-gender relationship, whether one*
76 *intends to remain in that circumstance or anticipates the possibility of change.*
77 *These factors may include one’s sexual orientation. They may include family*
78 *responsibilities. To assist the candidacy committee in its discernment with you,*
79 *please write briefly about such factors in your life.*
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81 *Possibility 2*

82 *Please indicate your present status:*

83 *Single*

84 *Married*

85 *In a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender*
86 *relationship*

87 *Please comment about any factors that may bear on your present or future*
88 *response to this question.*
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F. *Public Accountability* – The Rostered Leader Profile could have a place for the candidate to respond with additional comments, “If you have indicated that you are married or that you are in a lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, please explain how that relationship is publicly accountable.”

The synodical bishop approves the posting of each Rostered Leader Profile. Such approval would indicate that the bishop considers the response acceptable. Public accountability, of course, is an ongoing expectation, it does not point simply to something that happened in the past.

G. *Divorce* – Wherever present forms ask about divorce, amendment would need to be made to ask whether a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationship has been ended.

H. *Congregational registration* – A congregational registration, signed by pastor and council, is required as an element of the candidacy entrance decision. Language in the *Manual* and on forms will need to be clarified to show that congregational registration is a procedural matter and not a decision point in a person’s candidacy. The requirement of registration certifies that the person has been a member of an ELCA congregation for at least a year, as is required by ELCA policies, and gives pastor and council occasion to offer helpful insight about the candidate. The congregation or pastor does not use refusal to complete the registration as a means to block someone from entering candidacy, though the information shared at that time always informs the committee’s decision about candidacy.

I. *Internship and contextual education* – Present practice for assigning students to contextual education or internship sites already allows interviewing and expression of preference by congregation or ministry site. Because of present practice, the sentence in the *Manual* that says a congregation or ministry applying for an intern is expected to indicate its openness to any endorsed candidate should be deleted.

J. *Assignment* – Under present policy, an approved candidate who is not assigned to another synod continues with the synod of candidacy. Some have expressed concern that this policy may now cause a problem for bound consciences. However, there is likely no actual difficulty. Under present policy, continuance with the synod that approved the candidate implies that the synod will do everything it can to support and assist the candidates they have worked with and approved as they await call. But, as is presently true for any assignment, the synod of assignment does not and cannot guarantee that the candidate will be recommended for a call in that synod or any other, nor that he or she will receive a call. Existing practice includes ways to keep other synods aware of a candidates availability for call.

K. *Bishop’s Attestation of Call* – The signature of the synodical bishop on a letter of call indicates that she or he believes that appropriate procedures were followed in the issuing of the call. The signature does not indicate agreement with the decision of the calling body. The bishop may attach a letter with comment.

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L. *Providing for the Expression of Differing Convictions* – Because this church acknowledges that faithful people will be of different convictions on the rostering and calling of someone in a publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, provision must be made to allow congregations, synods, synod councils, and synod call committees to state openly their diverse convictions, doing so in ways that do not violate governing documents.

By the governing documents, all candidacy and call decisions are made on an individual basis, thus no body can make a blanket statement of approval or disapproval for a group of candidates. Nor can a body alter the policies which this church has accepted. However, a decision making body may express its general understanding of what will best serve the mission of Christ in the places and times for which they have decision making responsibility. No body can restrict the authority given to another by the governing documents. Thus, for example, a synod council cannot bind a synod call committee nor can a synod bind its congregations, but any of these entities may express convictions and preferences to the others.

M. *Other* – In order to have faithful, wise and practical policies, other changes and clarifications may also be needed in the process and/or the manual. However, policy documents cannot cover every possible situation. As now, and as directed by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, we must and can trust the faithfulness, wisdom and humility of those who have accepted discernment and decision responsibilities for the candidacy and call processes of this church.