

Section C—Candidacy for Diaconal Ministry

C-1 Introduction to Candidacy for Diaconal Ministry

Diaconal ministers are baptized persons whom the ELCIC calls and consecrates to the church's ministry of Word and Service. A diaconal minister in the ELCIC is called by and publicly serves the church with primary responsibility for witnessing to the gospel through a ministry of service mandated by the Word and Sacraments that enables and equips the people of God in their ministry. They work in intentional partnership with bishops, pastors, other diaconal ministers, lay leaders in congregations and synods, synod and national staff, and ecumenical partners in common mission.

The Constitution of the ELCIC (Article IV, Section 1, 2015) says that *The mission of this church... is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through proclamation of the Word, celebration of the sacraments, and through service in Christ's name.* The public diaconal ministry of the church has a particular calling to strengthen and support sharing the gospel through service in Christ's name.

In order to encourage and enhance service of the whole people of God in Christ's name and to have a body of rostered church workers serving as agents of the church in interpreting and responding to needs, hopes and concerns within church and society, this church has instituted a roster of diaconal ministers. (From: *The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity, The Hanover Report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, 1996*)

C-2 Standards for Diaconal Ministry

The ELCIC is a church *In Mission for Others*. The ELCIC recognizes the emergence of a renewed emphasis upon God's mission in the world in the 21st century. Christians enter into partnership with God's work in the world through baptism into the body of Christ. Every faith community is part of a mission field. Every baptized Christian is to be an ambassador for God's mission in the world. Through Word, Sacrament and service, individuals and communities are strengthened for mission. Rostered leaders are called *to equip the saints for the work of ministry* (Ephesians 4:12).

A mission-oriented leader can be defined as someone who:

- is rooted in the gospel;
- is knowledgeable, passionate, able to articulate his or her faith and the confessional teachings of the ELCIC; and
- through the church participates in God's mission of love, redemption, justice and reconciliation.

People who have discerned a call to diaconal ministry will demonstrate and build upon the characteristics of a missional leader. The ELCIC seeks candidates for diaconal ministry who demonstrate certain competencies. The candidacy process provides educational and formational opportunities to integrate skills, knowledge and tools for ministry in five interrelated areas:

- Spiritual and Personal Formation
- Vocational Awareness and Diaconal Identity
- Adherence to Lutheran Theology
- Missional Awareness and Cultural Context
- Capacity for Public Ministerial Leadership.

It is important to keep in mind that these areas are interrelated, as per the diagram below.



The competencies listed here have been identified to assist committees in the assessment of a candidate's formation throughout the steps in candidacy. The ELCIC values the diverse experiences, gifts and skills that individuals bring to rostered ministry.

C-2.1 Spiritual and Personal Formation

Diaconal ministers shall demonstrate personal faith and emotional maturity. Formation is an ongoing process before, during and after candidacy that requires practising personal spiritual discipline through prayer, Bible study, worship, reflection and active membership in a congregation or synodically recognized ministry of this church. Diaconal ministers shall demonstrate a commitment to leading a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and exemplify faithful service and gracious living.

The ELCIC places a high value on strong interpersonal skills. These skills shall be lived out in the exercise of leadership, in acts of service, in the practice of spiritual care, in public witness and as a public representative of this church.

Key competencies in this area include the skill to:

- Maintain a disciplined life of prayer and personal devotion.
- Demonstrate passion and imagination for sharing the gospel.
- Take responsibility for one's own actions, admit mistakes and take appropriate corrective measures.
- Listen to people's stories and assist them with interpreting their experience in light of the gospel.
- Practice wellness in one's personal life.

C-2.2 Vocational Awareness and Diaconal Identity

The grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ means that all the baptized, as members of a universal priesthood of believers, are called to a vocation of mission in their daily lives. Diaconal ministers are called to a public ministry that is accountable to the wider church and offers leadership for helping people engage in God's mission through service. This calling has internal and external dimensions—both an individual sense of call and an affirmation of call by the wider church. A letter of call to serve in a particular ministry setting is received and accepted prior to consecration.

Diaconal ministry is public ministry of Word and Service. Diaconal ministers take on a role and identity as deacons⁵ and as leaders. This calling includes serving and leading in ways that proclaim the gospel and help others participate in God's mission. Diaconal service focuses on the whole person and includes being attentive to the need for advocacy and social justice. Diaconal Ministers are to be grounded in community with other diaconal ministers and committed to a common calling which serves as a reminder and model for building community in all ministry settings. The call to diaconal ministry is a lifelong commitment that supports and complements the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and equips the baptized for ministry.

Diaconal ministers shall demonstrate a willingness to serve in response to the needs of the church, voluntarily place themselves under the legitimate authority and discipline of this church, and assent to the polity of this church. Diaconal ministers must covenant to abide loyally by the constitution, administrative bylaws, and enactments of this church and of the synod under which they serve.⁶ They are called by God through the church for a ministry of servanthood and not for the exercise of domination or coercive power. Faithfully living out this calling requires a commitment to lifelong learning.

⁵ All diaconal ministers consecrated by the ELCIC have the right to use the title "Deacon." (*ELCIC Administrative Bylaws* Part V, Section 14.) Some ELCIC diaconal ministers choose to use the title "Deaconess" and some choose "Sister." These choices are respected.

⁶ *ELCIC Constitution* Article IX Section 2. The Constitution includes a Confession of Faith (Article II) and articulates an understanding of the Nature of the Church (Article III) and of the Mission of the Church (Article IV).

Key competencies in this area include the skill to:

- Reflect theologically on the connection between diaconal and personal self-understanding.
- Reflect theologically on God's mission through the church and in the world, with particular attention to contexts where church and world overlap.
- Encourage and equip individuals and communities to live out their vocation/calling.
- Maintain a relationship with a diaconal community.

C-2.3 Adherence to Lutheran Theology

Diaconal ministers are expected to be committed to the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God and the Lutheran confessions of this church. This commitment is demonstrated in a life of discipleship. They shall use their understanding of Lutheran theology and history in service, teaching, public witness, spiritual care and the practice of diaconal ministry.

The ELCIC expects diaconal ministers to teach, uphold and interpret both scripture and this church's confession of faith. This requires a broad and comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran theology. It also requires knowledge of the social and institutional history of Lutheran theology and how this history informs mission in the current context. The understanding of Lutheran theology is connected to the wider Christian tradition and to interfaith relationships in our current context.

Key competencies in this area include:

- Broad knowledge of the Scriptures and an ability to interpret scripture using a gospel and missional lens.
- Broad knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions, theology, church history and tradition.
- A demonstrated ability to integrate doctrine and practice.
- Ability to communicate insight from Lutheran theology and tradition.
- Basic knowledge of Christian history and various faith traditions.

C-2.4 Missional Awareness and Cultural Context

Mission occurs in a cultural context. Participating in God's mission includes studying issues in contemporary society in the light of the Word of God and responding publicly to social and moral issues as an advocate for justice and an agent for reconciliation. The ELCIC expects diaconal ministers to be leaders in understanding, studying and engaging contemporary culture and social issues. Reflecting on context, diaconal ministers shall draw on insights from a variety of disciplines including the arts and humanities, the natural and physical sciences, and the social sciences, along with insights from theology.

Diaconal ministers are called to give particular attention to contexts where the mission of the church interacts with the needs of the world. *Diaconal ministers reach out to the excluded and marginalized on behalf of the church and bring their experiences into the midst of the community of faith. Thus the church and its mission are solidly grounded in the world, its hopes and fears, its joy and suffering.*⁷ Diaconal ministers carry public responsibility to speak for the needs of God's world to the church and to apply God's saving gospel to the needs of the world through the actions of God's people both individually and collectively. Diaconal ministers are committed and prepared to equip the baptized for ministry in the world and in the church, including encouraging and supporting people in ways to participate in God's mission through service, accompaniment and advocacy.

⁷ Final Statement, LWF global consultation on *The Diaconal Ministry in the Lutheran Churches*, São Leopoldo, Brazil, 2-7 November, 2005.

Diaconal ministers are called to function with respect in diverse cultural contexts and learn from a variety of people and experiences. This includes an understanding of the history of Indigenous peoples and the work of reconciliation in the Canadian context. Diaconal ministers shall help people discern God's activity in various contexts and support communities in identifying possibilities for mission through service, witness and advocacy. The ELCIC values the ability of diaconal leaders to carry out ministry in ecumenical and interfaith partnerships.

Key competencies in this area include:

- Ability to help others reflect on their own context and experience.
- Ability to relate theology with history, context and culture.
- Skill in addressing cultural differences.
- Ability to foster awareness of community needs and encourage others to participate in action and advocacy, especially with those most vulnerable in society.

C-2.5 Capacity for Public Ministerial Leadership

Diaconal ministers shall offer leadership for mission to both the church and the wider community. They are expected to help people discern God's mission, and equip and send disciples into the world. Diaconal leaders have knowledge of ELCIC's structure and governance processes, and carry responsibility for helping church structures build up the body of Christ through effective communication, reporting, administration and leadership.

Diaconal ministry is a public ministry of Word and Service. Diaconal ministers shall have demonstrated competence and expertise in an Area of Specialization.⁸ Diaconal ministers may serve both within and outside of congregational settings, in each case bearing responsibility for making connections between church and world. A diaconal call within a congregational setting shall be marked by a focus on extending the witness of the church into the larger community.

Diaconal ministers shall model the life of Christ-like service by addressing all forms of human need with commitment that supports and complements the ministry of Word and Sacrament, focusing on ministry to the whole person. An ability to equip people for serving is essential, including the ability to assist with reflecting on how acts of service are connected with their own faith experience, with the faith experience of others and with God's story. While preaching is not the primary focus for diaconal ministers, they shall be prepared to preach, when invited, as part of the calling to make connections between church and world. Diaconal ministers shall express spiritual care through listening, prayer, conversation, empathy, reflection, accompaniment and advocacy.

Strong professional ethics support the credibility of public ministry, promote trust within communities, and help create a safe space for spiritual care and the sharing of stories. The ELCIC places a high value on maintaining confidentiality and respecting boundaries.

⁸ A non-exhaustive list of areas of specialization for diaconal ministers is in the *ELCIC Candidacy Manual*, Section C-10, Addendum 4. (Page 48)

Key competencies in this area include:

- Expertise in an area of specialization.
- Ability to serve in ways that address human need and demonstrate care for the whole person.
- Ability to equip people for serving by addressing all forms of human need and by demonstrating care for the whole person.
- Ability to encourage people to reflect on the connections between acts of service, their own faith story, the faith stories of others and God's story.
- Skills in communication and conflict management.
- Leadership skills for developing vision, making plans and administering organizational accountability.
- Ability to work in partnership.
- Mentor the community to help everyone tell stories of faith and live a Christian life.

C-3 Academic and Practical Criteria for Consecration

In preparation for consecration as a diaconal minister of this church, a candidate is required to engage in a comprehensive program which includes: 1) theological education; 2) formation for ministry; 3) supervised pastoral education; and 4) a supervised field experience. These steps are intended to help individuals develop competencies for missional leadership and public ministry.

C-3.1 Theological and Specialized Education

Except as otherwise provided, a candidate for consecration as a diaconal minister shall:

- A. demonstrate competence in at least one area of specialization or expertise according to guidelines established by the ELCIC (see point B);
- B. have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, college degree, a graduate degree or a professional certificate appropriate to the designated field of specialization. If the degree is in an unrelated field of study, significant work experience (minimum of three years) with leadership responsibilities appropriate to the type of diaconal ministry being sought is required. In some special cases a person not holding a bachelor's degree may be considered for candidacy under the provisions described in *Equivalencies and Alternatives in Lieu of Academic Credentials*. (Section C-7, Addendum 1, page 45).
- C. complete the basic foundation coursework in theological education which shall include a minimum of one year of studies at the bachelor's level (or 30 semester credit hours). At least a one-term/3-hour course must be completed in each of the following areas:
 - Biblical Studies, Old Testament
 - Biblical Studies, New Testament
 - Lutheran Theology and Confessional Writings
 - Church History
 - Ethics
 - Theology of Diaconal Ministry

Additional courses should include practical theology appropriate to the specialization. All theological credits must be earned through courses at an accredited college or seminary of this church or through a course of study approved by the Candidacy Committee based on evaluation by an ELCIC seminary. See Appendix 7, page 106 for a list of approved courses. Candidates are encouraged to consider a Masters in Theological Studies offered at Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon or Waterloo Lutheran Seminary;

- D. complete the required formational component in the preparation program for Lutheran diaconal ministry as defined by the ELCIC (see below);
- E. satisfactorily complete supervised field experience in the field of specialization as approved by the synodical Candidacy Committee (See C-3.4, page 41); and
- F. successfully complete the final evaluation by the Examining Committee.

C-3.2 Spiritual Formation

All candidates for diaconal ministry are expected to engage in spiritual formation through regular worship, prayer and other spiritual disciplines.

It is highly recommended that all candidates engage in a relationship with a mentor, coach and/or a spiritual director. The purpose of these relationship(s) is to provide space for personal and confidential reflection and feedback in the areas of vocational identity, emotional maturity, spiritual practices, and self-awareness of how one tends to act in relationships and as a leader.

Resources for mentors are available in Appendices 8 through 11 of this manual.

As part of the Annual Developmental Interview, the Candidacy Committee shall ask candidates to identify their plan for spiritual formation. It is understood that the content of sessions with mentors, coaches and spiritual directors is confidential.

Each candidate for diaconal ministry is expected to attend one **Diaconal Formation Event** as part of the candidacy process (Section C-5, page 43).

C-3.3 Supervised Pastoral Education

ELCIC candidates for rostered ministry are required to complete one quarter of supervised pastoral education. Such a course provides an opportunity to practise the art of spiritual care while converting experience into learning. The usual program to meet this requirement is a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or Pastoral Counselling Education (PCE) accredited by the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care www.spiritualcare.ca. Any alternative to fill this requirement must be pre-approved by the candidate's Candidacy Committee.

C-3.4 Supervised Field Experience

Supervised Field Experience facilitates the integration of academic study and theological education with the practice of diaconal ministry. A positive endorsement for field experience from the Candidacy Committee is required prior to placement in a field experience setting. (Appendix 5, page 98).

C-4 Steps in Candidacy

Persons seeking consecration as diaconal ministers in the ELCIC are expected to fully participate in all steps of the candidacy process established by the National Church and administered by a synod Candidacy Committee. Initial contact begins a process of discernment which explores an individual's potential for rostered ministry and readiness to begin theological study and candidacy in the ELCIC. Two years of active membership in an ELCIC congregation is required prior to endorsement.

A Summary of the steps to ordination or consecration in the ELCIC is found in Section A-5, page 16.

The process consists of four phases described in subsequent sections of the Candidacy Manual.

C-4.1 Registration (Section D, page 49) involves completion of the registration application and forms including recommendations from a variety of sources, a structured interview, and psychological testing and career evaluation.

C-4.2 Initial Endorsement (Section D-5, page 59) concludes the registration phase. Generally, candidates do not begin diaconal studies prior to endorsement. Endorsement by the Candidacy Committee is required in order for theological courses to be credited toward fulfilling candidacy requirements.

C-4.3 Annual Endorsement (Section E, page 63) is required for continuation in studies and for internship. Reports of academic and contextual education are required as well as successful completion of the annual developmental interview.

C-4.4 Final Evaluation (see Section F, page 71) combines a final evaluation report and recommendation by the Candidacy Committee with self-evaluation by the candidate and reports from a variety of sources. A positive recommendation will bring the candidate to examination (colloquy), consisting of a written examination and interview by the synod Examining Committee. The Examining Committee may then recommend the candidate to Synod Council for first call and consecration.

C-5. Diaconal Formation Event

A diaconal ministry formation event will be offered at least every second year under the sponsorship of the ELCIC. A candidate must be endorsed by the Candidacy Committee of their synod prior to participation in a formational event. Successful completion of this event meets the formation component requirement for approval as a candidate for consecration to the diaconal ministry.

C-5.1 Purpose:

The formation event is considered integral to the preparation of diaconal ministry candidates. Ideally the formation event precedes theological studies and will assist candidates in shaping their course of study and field experience. Candidates will:

- study and explore biblical, theological, historical and ecumenical roots and expressions of diaconal ministry;
- examine current diaconal approaches and models for ministry in a variety of settings through study and field trips;
- gain deeper understandings of Lutheran theology as it relates to all forms of ministry, call and ecclesiology; and
- develop spiritual insights and disciplines for active ministry through worship, prayer and group processes designed for spiritual formation, development of community and mutual vision for diaconal ministry.

C-5.2 Components:

A variety of learning and community building experiences will include lectures, reading, writing, small group and individual reflection, field trips to diaconal ministry sites and optional tutorials. Worship, spiritual formation and community life are central to the experience. Seminary faculty, guest lecturers and ecumenical guests may all be involved.

C-5.3 Expectations:

All participants will be asked to be in residence for housing and meals at the chosen venue for the entire event. Applicants who are accepted will be sent a reading list to complete prior to arrival. A journal/evaluation is to be kept during the event and given to the event co-ordinator following the event. The journal may be shared with the candidate's Candidacy Committee.

C-6 First Call and Consecration

After a successful final evaluation by the Examining Committee of her or his synod and approval by the Synod Council, the bishop shall recommend the candidate for call. Those persons currently serving in a position, who wish to remain in that position, may do so providing the appropriate call process is followed under the direction of the synodical bishop. Diaconal ministers may be called by congregations, synods or the National Church as identified in the ELCIC Bylaw Part V, section 3b as congregations, synods, National Church Council and, in the case of National officers, the convention of the ELCIC.

Once a candidate has received and accepted a letter of call, he or she is consecrated a diaconal minister according to the rite of this church. The service for consecration is arranged and conducted under the direction and oversight of the bishop in the synod where the first call is received, but may be delegated to another bishop, as particular circumstances require.

Diaconal ministers will be presented with a medallion and a diaconal stole at the service of consecration and the stole shall be worn during liturgical functions.

C-7 Addendum 1: Equivalencies and Alternatives in Lieu of Academic Credentials

Persons interested in serving as diaconal ministers who have not completed the necessary academic requirement of a bachelor's degree may in some cases be considered for candidacy. This exception is reserved for those persons who for reason of age and prior experience may find it is not appropriate to complete a bachelor's degree. Such persons may apply for consideration upon evaluation of gifts for ministry, the needs of the church, and the demonstrated abilities of the individual. Age alone is not an acceptable criterion for consideration under this provision.

The ELCIC Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry will evaluate all requests received from a Synod Candidacy Committee (see #3 below) for consideration under this provision. Following evaluation, a recommendation will be made to the appropriate Candidacy Committee for an alternative course of study and/or the granting of equivalencies. Evaluations will be based upon experience in non-degree studies and in demonstrated work performance comparable to that expected of a person holding a bachelor's degree. A candidate granted equivalency to academic credentials will not have credentials with which to study at the seminary and will need to complete their theological education at the bachelor level through an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited college. A list of ATS accredited colleges can be found at www.ats.edu.

The basic theological education requirement may not be met by equivalency. The basic requirement is one course each in Old Testament, New Testament, Lutheran and/or Canadian Church History, Lutheran Confessions and Christian Ethics.

The following is an outline of the procedure to be followed by those wishing consideration under this provision.

1. Applicant completes all requirements for registration.
2. Applicant submits a written request and rationale for consideration under this provision. Based on this request and all materials submitted, the Candidacy Committee will determine whether the applicant should proceed under this provision.
3. Upon determination of appropriateness for consideration, the Candidacy Committee shall request a review and recommendation by the Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry (PCLM). This request should be forwarded to the ELCIC national staff person for Leadership and include all of the following material:
 - a. a copy of the application for registration;
 - b. a copy of the written request and rationale for consideration;
 - c. a detailed listing of the applicant's work experience, including relevant volunteer experience;
 - d. a detailed listing of all education completed, including related continuing education. All available transcripts should be included;
 - e. a detailed current position description;
 - f. three letters of recommendation from persons well acquainted with the candidate's background and work. Letters of recommendation should include more than character references and should include knowledge and illustration of the person's demonstrated ability. References should include the applicant's pastor, a congregational leader familiar with the applicant's demonstrated leadership ability and gifts for ministry, and a person with competence and knowledge consistent with the candidate's area of specialization.
4. The staff person shall forward the recommendation and documentation to the Candidacy Committee.

Having received the evaluation and recommendation of PCLM, the final decision regarding equivalency or alternative study rests with the appropriate Candidacy Committee. Following a decision regarding equivalency or alternative study eligibility, the Candidacy Committee shall proceed with endorsement, oversee the designated course of study and appropriate supervised field education, and provide at least one annual endorsement before the final evaluation and approval of the candidate for consecration.