



Manitoba/Northwest Ontario Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Handbook

**for Candidates
for Ordained Ministry**

A summary of the steps on the road to entering the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).

**prepared by the MNO Synod
Committee for Theological Education and Leadership
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Called to Ministry?

Lutherans believe that every individual, as a part of the Body of Christ, is called to use his or her talents and gifts as a minister of Christ. This is Luther's "priesthood of all believers". There are many ways to serve Christ - in the church and in the community. For some the call is to serve in the church as an ordained minister or as a diaconal lay minister. This handbook is intended to assist candidates for ordained ministry discern their call and received approval by the church. There is a separate handbook for those seeking to enter the diaconal ministry.

A call to ministry involves both a personal conviction and a corporate affirmation by the church. Perhaps you are reading this handbook because you have a personal conviction that God is calling you to enter the ordained or diaconal ministry of the ELCIC. The synodical Committee for Theological Education and Leadership (CTEL) acts on behalf of the entire church to help individuals to understand their personal vocation, and to provide the church's corporate affirmation of the call to be a minister in Christ's Church.

The call to be an ordained minister is a special calling in the plan of Christ. "...how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?" (Romans 11:14-15). The role of the ordained minister is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and administer the sacraments of the church. The church is seeking candidates for ministry who

- demonstrate commitment to Christ
- accept and adhere to the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God
- accept and adhere to the Lutheran Confessions of this church
- show willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of the church
- have academic and practical qualifications for ministry, including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships
- exhibit commitment to lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and in so doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living
- are willing to receive and accept a letter of call; and
- maintain active membership in a congregation of this church

Those sensing a call to ministry are encouraged to consult prayerfully with their congregational pastor, campus chaplain or bishop, and consult resources such as the book *Do I Belong in Seminary?* by Ronald E. Parker (Alban Institute, 1998) which is available from the CTCL. Or access the Ministry website of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for helpful suggestions (www.elca.org/churchwide units). The ELCIC document *Expectations – Ordained Ministers of the ELCIC* may also be an informative resource. Discernment of a call to ministry is a path of awakening and reflection entered into in a spirit of contemplation and prayer regarding one's personal gifts and of the needs of the church and community.

How Can CTEL be of Help?

The synodical CTEL acts on behalf of the whole church to approve candidates for ministry. CTEL also helps candidates to navigate through the preparation procedures required by the ELCIC. These procedures outline the criteria that the church has put in place in addition to seminary study.

CTEL provides guidance and evaluation regarding the academic, personal and spiritual maturity and readiness for candidates for ministry. It serves as a liaison between the candidate and the synod, interpreting the requirements, processes and support services related to entering the ministry. The committee also maintains liaison with the seminaries of our church which provide the academic foundation for ministry.

Candidates for ordained ministry must meet both seminary and ELCIC requirements. Academic preparation for ministry involves earning a Master of Divinity degree (or Bachelor of Theology degree) from an approved theological seminary. The M.Div. is a four-year program of studies following the completion of a bachelor's degree, and includes an internship year under the supervision of the seminary, and a first quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Students are advised to contact a seminary well in advance of the academic year. Acceptance into a seminary requires a separate application, the meeting of academic requirements and endorsement by CTEL. Candidates for ministry are encouraged to attend one of the theological seminaries in Canada: the Lutheran Theological Seminary – Saskatoon or the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Consult with the CTEL regarding other pathways to ministry.

The ELCIC requirements are administered by the synodical CTEL. This committee consists of pastors and lay people appointed by the synod who are familiar with the challenges of ministry and supportive of those considering ministry. The CTEL functions to provide guidance to candidates as well as evaluate the spiritual and personal qualifications of candidates for ministry. Contact with the CTEL may be made through the synod office, your pastor or the synodical bishop.

What are the Steps in the Process?

There are four key steps in the guidance and evaluation process of preparation:

1. Registration with CTEL
2. Initial Endorsement
3. Annual Endorsement
4. Recommendation to the Examining Committee

Through these steps the synodical CTEL committee affirms or redirects a candidate's career plans in order to ensure that the expectations for the professional leadership in the ELCIC are met.

Step One: Registration

Registration with CTEL begins the process of being considered for ministry. A registration packet can be obtained from the MNO Synod office, or through contacting your pastor or a member of the CTEL committee.

Candidates are required to complete and submit a Candidate Registration form, academic transcripts, an autobiographical summary of your life experience that has influenced your desire to consider full-time service in the church, along with a personal photo.

Recommendations are needed from your pastor, church council and a non-relative. A physician's examination and report is also required, and your authorisation for the committee to use the information you have submitted. It is your responsibility to ensure that all these items are returned directly to the committee through the synod office.

Congregational participation is an important requirement for consideration. If you have been a member of an ELCIC congregation for less than two years, statements may be required from the pastors and councils of your previous congregations.

In order to maintain the highest standards of personal conduct for pastors, the ELCIC also requires candidates for ministry to provide police records and provincial child registry checks.

When all of the above documentation has been received, the committee usually interviews the applicant. If all appears in order one is registered as a candidate for ordained ministry.

Checklist for Registration with CTEL

- Application for Registration (form 1)
- Autobiography
- Statement of Pastor from Home Congregation (1.A)
- Recommendation from Congregational Council (1.B)
- Statement from Non-Relative (1.C)
- Statement from Physician (1.D)
- Child Abuse Registry check
- Police Registry check
- Academic Transcripts

Step Two: Initial Endorsement

Upon completing the registration process, CTEL will arrange for a Structured Interview. This is a one-on-one interview with a seasoned church leader regarding your personal and family background, work history, academic and career interests, faith development, church involvement and areas for growth. This interview provides a personal assessment of your gifts and life experience.

CTEL also arranges for a psychological and career evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to help you develop a better self-understanding, to assist the committee in understanding you, and to guide you toward a vocation that makes the best use of your God-given talents.

A certified psychologist will interview you regarding your early growth and development. The assessment touches upon such topics as

- family relationships
- educational achievement and abilities
- development of motivation for religious service
- ability and methods of coping with stress
- ability to form meaningful and healthy interpersonal relationships
- history of any deviant or pathological behaviours
- history of any mental or physical illnesses
- and generally your assets or liabilities for a professional leadership role in the church.

A number of psychological instruments are utilised to assist in this assessment. The psychologist will discuss the results of the testing with you and provide a report to the committee. You will be asked to provide consent to release information to the committee. The psychologist will help you evaluate whether counselling or additional assistance might be helpful for your development and growth.

When all the above procedures have been completed, the members of CTEL will review the materials, reports and recommendations submitted, conduct a personal interview and then come to a decision whether or not to endorse you as a candidate for ministry. Endorsement is required to pursue a Master of Divinity or other program of studies at one of our church's seminaries and to commence the process of preparation for ordained ministry. At the time of initial endorsement, the CTEL also assigns a member of the committee as a Relator to provide encouragement and guidance in your preparation for ministry.

Checklist for Initial Endorsement

- ___ Completion of all Registration materials
- ___ Initial interview by committee
- ___ Structured interview
- ___ Psychological and Career Assessment
- ___ Approval by CTEL committee
- ___ Assignment of Relator

Step Three: Annual Endorsement

The progress of a candidate is reviewed each year. You will be asked to complete an Annual Developmental Interview Report. CTEL will also conduct an annual developmental interview to assess your progress toward career goals.

During the interview, goals for the forthcoming year will be agreed upon in the areas of personal and interpersonal skills, educational and skill development, and personal faith and commitment.

You are also asked to provide a transcript of your academic studies. The annual endorsement is required to continue an approved course of studies. Endorsement is also required to move forward to internship, which usually occurs in the third year of study.

Checklist for Annual Endorsement

- Complete Annual Development Interview Form
- Submit academic transcript for the year
- Contact with Relator and interview with CTEL
- Formation of Annual Development Interview Annual Goals
- Approval by CTEL of study plans for the next academic year
- Approval by CTEL to proceed to internship when scheduled

Step Four: Recommendation to the Examining Committee

In the final year of study, CTEL decides whether or not to recommend you for evaluation by the synod's Examining Committee. The Examining Committee is appointed by Synod Council to make the final decision regarding readiness to serve as an ordained pastor in the church and be open to call. CTEL reports on your relationship with the committee during the period of preparation and summarises your progress and development noting any areas in which further growth may be desirable.

What is the role of the Examining Committee?

This committee has the final decision whether a candidate is ready to serve as an ordained or diaconal minister in the church and be approved for call.

You are required to prepare a Dossier of documents, transcripts and other materials for review by the committee. The Dossier packet is available from the synod office.

For those seeking ordination, the evaluation is based upon two parts, a written exam called the ELCIC Candidate's Examination, and an oral exam referred to as a "colloquy."

After these examinations, the Examining Committee makes a decision regarding recommendation for ordination, and submits an appropriate motion to the Synod Council.

Checklist for Recommendation for Examination (colloquy), Call and Ordination

- ___ In final year of studies, request CTEL to recommend you for Examination
- ___ Submit transcripts to CTEL
- ___ Forward student and supervisor reports of CPE to CTEL.
- ___ Forward internship reports to CTEL.
- ___ Final interview by CTEL
- ___ Complete Senior Dossier and submit to synod's Examination Committee
- ___ Complete written ELCIC Candidate's examination
- ___ Oral examination (colloquy) by Examining committee
- ___ Approval by Examining Committee for Ordination
- ___ Approval of synod Council for Ordination
- ___ Contact Synod Bishop to arrange for a Call
- ___ Receipt of Call from Congregation
- ___ Ordination into Ministry

Is there any Financial Assistance for Candidates?

The committee will assist you in accessing financial support from the seminary, synod, ELCIC national office or other funding sources. Your home congregation is encouraged to provide assistance. Assistance, however, is somewhat limited so students must weigh carefully their financial resources to complete the program of studies.

The committee will also assign one of its members to be a relator to each candidate. The relator is a source of personal encouragement and information regarding the preparation process and decisions made by CTEL.

In the case of any disagreement with the decisions of CTEL, the committee chair can be contacted to explore appeal processes.

Summary and Checklist

Prior to entering Seminary

- Register with the committee by completing registration packet.
- Upon registration, a structured interview is arranged.
- An appointment is made with a designated psychologist for interview and testing.
- Initial interview with CTEL
- Endorsement by the committee for your first year of study.
- A relator is assigned for you.
- You are encouraged to begin the registration process in January of the year you wish to enter seminary.

First Year

- Submit academic transcripts to CTEL.
- Complete the Annual Developmental Interview Form and return to the synod office.
- Meet with the CTEL following your first year of studies and seek endorsement to proceed to your second year of studies.

Second Year

- Complete above procedures as requested by CTEL.
- Consult with seminary advisor regarding procedures to apply for an internship assignment for your Third year of study.
- An interview with CTEL will take place to receive endorsement to proceed to internship.
- - A quarter of Supervised Pastoral Education (CPE) is normally completed in this year.

Internship Year

- Forward final student and supervisor evaluations of CPE to CTEL.
- Forward final internship evaluations to CTEL.
- Complete Annual Developmental Interview Form.
- Meet with CTEL for annual interview and Endorsement.

Final Year

- Meet with CTEL in the Fall to seek endorsement and recommendation to proceed to evaluation by the Examining Committee.
- Prepare materials to submit to the Examining Committee, complete written examination and complete colloquy with the Examining Committee.
- Upon approval by the Examining Committee and decision of the Synod Council, candidates are recommended for call.

What Should I Do to Work with the CTEL?

CTEL will normally meet in the Fall, Winter and Spring to consider candidate applications endorsements and recommendations.

Candidates are informed by mail of decisions of the CTEL, and goals or recommendations for the coming year. The CTEL may make decisions regarding conditions and specific expectations that are required of candidates for ministry.

This Handbook is based upon Article VII, Section 3 of the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada: “Ordination of candidates and reception of ordained ministers shall be the function of the synods, acting on behalf of this church. Synods shall also have responsibility for recruitment, approval and supervision of all candidates for the ordained ministry.”

Policies and procedures for entering the ordained or diaconal ministry of the ELCIC are outlined in the *Candidacy Manual of the ELCIC*.