

South Dakota Synod Endorsement Panel Information Sheet:

Source: ELCA Candidacy Manual, April 2010

Endorsement is the official action of a Candidacy Committee by which candidacy for a specific form of ministry is conferred upon a person seeking to serve in a rostered ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The time from Entrance to Endorsement is understood to be a time of theological study, spiritual formation, and personal growth as well as ongoing discernment and clarification of call. Endorsement serves to encourage and affirm those who clearly demonstrate the gifts and qualities for a specific ministry in this church. The areas of development that will be addressed are:

1. Understanding of call to ministry;
2. Spiritual growth and faith commitment;
3. Educational and theological wisdom; and
4. Personal and interpersonal skills.

I. Endorsement Components

Prior to the interview, the following items are received and become a part of the candidate's file. These are private and are not to be shared beyond the Endorsement Panel and Candidacy Committee:

1. Entrance decision report and other file materials as appropriate;
2. Endorsement Essay – see below;
3. Second \$300 Application Fee;
4. CPE report (if completed prior to endorsement); and
5. Academic reports for all completed study.

Endorsement Essay

The current Endorsement Essay assignment is available on the ELCA Web site (www.elca.org/candidacy) The essay asks the candidate to reflect on what they have discerned during the first year of study, their understanding of ministry and sense of call to a particular form of ministry, and the ways developmental issues identified during Entrance have been addressed. The candidate addresses particular issues stated in the essay, including baptismal call, gifts for ministry, this church's leadership needs, the Lutheran confessional witness, functions of ministry, personal development, and *Vision and Expectations*.

II. Endorsement Panel

After completing at least one academic year and upon the submission of all required materials, an Endorsement Panel is convened. The Endorsement Panel is composed of one faculty member of the ELCA seminary where the candidate is enrolled (normally the candidate's advisor) and two Candidacy Committee members. For candidates enrolled at ELCA seminaries, the Endorsement Panel is convened and chaired by a member of the Candidacy Committee during a time arranged through the seminary. The partnership is strengthened through the interaction of committee members and the faculty member in the Endorsement Process. Candidates attending non-ELCA seminaries and candidates preparing to serve as commissioned associates in ministry not enrolled in seminary will meet with the Candidacy Committee at a time and place determined by the committee for an Endorsement Interview. An appropriate faculty advisor may be consulted or invited to participate. NOTE: Candidates attending a non-ELCA seminary must affiliate with an ELCA seminary prior to Endorsement.

III. Endorsement Panel Interview

The interview provides an opportunity to affirm gifts and reflect on aspects of health and wellness as illustrated in the Wholeness Wheel. The panel should identify primary topics and formulate lead questions for each of the areas covered by the Endorsement Essay: personal and interpersonal skills (emotional and social health), theological wisdom (intellectual health), spiritual growth and faith commitment (spiritual health), understanding of the specific ministry (vocational health) they wish to enter, and goals for growth.

It is helpful to remind the candidate that this is a time to assess with him or her strengths and growth areas as he or she prepares for ministry in this church.

IV. Endorsement Decision

Three possible decisions may be made: ***Endorsement; Denial of Endorsement; or Postponement of Endorsement.*** The Endorsement Decision is made by the full Candidacy Committee using all information available. The recommendation of the panel is an important factor in this decision. Normally, the recommendation of the panel and the decision of the committee should be no more than one level of decision apart, i.e. a positive or a negative recommendation by the panel would result in a committee decision that is in agreement with the recommendation or the postponement, but not a diametrically opposite decision. This process honors the partnership between seminary and committee while retaining the final responsibility in the Candidacy Committee.

Positive Endorsement reflects the committee's confidence in the candidate's formation and growth and indicates that unless there are unforeseen difficulties, there is every reason to believe the person will continue to grow in readiness to serve in one of this church's rostered ministries.

Endorsement Denied indicates that there are specific reasons why the person is not an appropriate candidate for rostered ministry in this church. Reasons must be clearly identified.

Endorsement Postponed means that while the committee sees potential for the individual to serve in rostered ministry, there are developmental needs or issues which must be addressed and reevaluated or conditions that must be met before the candidate can be Endorsed or participate in an ELCA internship. The report should clearly identify the developmental needs and indicate conditions that are to be met prior to reconsideration.

Withdrawal of Endorsement

Endorsement, though a strong word of confidence, does not guarantee the committee's final approval of the candidate. If warranted by events or new information, Endorsement may be withdrawn by the Candidacy Committee. A decision to withdraw Endorsement is made on the basis of a determination that the individual is not qualified to serve in rostered ministry and ends candidacy. Such an action may be taken by a Candidacy Committee at any time.

From Endorsement to Approval

The responsibility for monitoring continued theological and pastoral growth of the candidate is shared by the committee and seminary. The Endorsement Panel or Candidacy Committee may provide suggestions for an appropriate internship setting or other specific recommendations concerning preparation. The seminary will provide regular reports to the committee on course work, supervised clinical ministry, contextual education, internship, and any other pertinent information regarding the candidate that could assist the committee in making a decision.