

Reinstatement to the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I. REINSTATEMENT PROCESS

- A. Reinstatement to the rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee of the synod where the applicant was last under call rostered as an ordained minister, associate in ministry, deaconess, or diaconal minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.¹
- B. In the case of an applicant whose rostered ministry was last in one of the ELCA predecessor churches, the successor ELCA synod has the responsibility. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster or its successor.
- C. For a period of two years, from January 1, 2010, until December 31, 2011, Candidacy Committees may begin to consider, without waiting for five years to elapse, applications from those whose removal from the roster was solely the result of being in a lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship.
- D. Except as provided in paragraph I.C. above, in the case of an applicant whose removal from the roster was the result of either:
- 1) the official disciplinary process of this church, or
 - 2) resignation or removal from the roster in lieu of the disciplinary process, or
 - 3) application of ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.31.16., where the person

was on leave or without call after conduct or allegations that could lead to disciplinary charges, then a minimum of five consecutive years without call must elapse before an application for reinstatement may be considered. The passage of five years without call does not guarantee reconsideration.

II. APPLICATION

- A. The applicant provides the completed “Application for Reinstatement” to the appropriate roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the synod, and the synod sends a copy to the Vocation and Education unit for information.
- B. Upon receipt of the application, the synodical bishop will notify the Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and request any pertinent information the churchwide office may have concerning the applicant.
- C. With the approval of the ELCA secretary, the reinstatement process may be transferred from the synod of previous roster to the synod of current residence, upon the written concurrence of both candidacy committees and both synodical bishops. The original synod will provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation concerning the applicant.
- D. The bishop of the synod in which the reinstatement application will be considered arranges an interview with the applicant. The purpose of this interview is to determine the applicant’s eligibility to be a candidate in the synod for ministry. The bishop also determines whether the application is

¹Any person removed from a lay roster that existed on December 31, 1987, who seeks to return to active lay roster status, must apply for acceptance to a roster of this church under the standards, criteria, policies, and procedures that apply to the roster of associates in ministry, as identified in ELCA churchwide bylaw 7.52.13. This requirement shall apply to those certified during the period of January 1, 1988, through September 1, 1993, as associates in ministry of this church.

timely under paragraph I.C. or premature under paragraph I.D. above.

- E. In the case of an applicant where inappropriate conduct or allegations of misconduct led to resignation or removal from the roster, the synodical bishop examines the applicant for indications of repentance and amendment of life as well as indication of or attempts at reconciliation with those injured by the conduct, and documents the corrective actions that have occurred before proceeding with the reinstatement process. The bishop should invite comments from those directly affected by the applicant's inappropriate conduct or alleged misconduct.
- F. The applicant is considered for reinstatement by the Candidacy Committee when the application is forwarded to the committee by the bishop. The bishop may, in his or her sole discretion, decline to forward the application to the Candidacy Committee or may forward the application to the Candidacy Committee with a written statement of the bishop's opinion of the application.

III. CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

- A. The synod Candidacy Committee will receive and review the registration by the pastor and Congregation Council of the congregation of which the applicant is a member in good standing. The registration attests that the applicant is an active member of an ELCA congregation.
- B. The committee shall determine that it has received all records and information concerning the applicant, including verification of synodical records concerning the reason for removal from the roster. If synodical records are incomplete, this verification may include conferring with the former bishop,

synod staff, or with the churchwide office.

- C. The committee may request any additional information from any source that it deems necessary in order to determine the applicant's readiness for ministry and suitability for reinstatement to the roster.
- D. The applicant must prepare an approval essay and submit it to the Candidacy Committee.
- E. In the case of any applicant who has been off the roster or without call for more than five years, the Candidacy Committee will require the applicant to participate in the Psychological Evaluation and Career Consultation according to the policies of the Vocation and Education unit. The expense of this evaluation is the responsibility of the applicant.
- F. The Candidacy Committee follows the Candidacy Manual standards and procedures for new applicants as its guide in considering a request for reinstatement. The Candidacy Committee interviews the applicant to explore all concerns related to reinstatement, including but not limited to:
- 1) the circumstances surrounding the removal of the applicant from the roster, including the applicant's reason(s) for leaving the roster;
 - 2) the applicant's reason(s) for requesting reinstatement to the roster with a special focus upon what has changed in the person's life, faith, attitudes, and circumstances since the time of removal;
 - 3) discussion of the applicant's understanding of ordained, commissioned, or consecrated ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the applicant's willingness to serve in

- response to the needs of this church;
and
- 4) discussion of “Vision and Expectations,” and the applicant’s commitment to live according to the expectations of this church.
- G. The Candidacy Committee may request the Vocation and Education unit to convene a Review Panel to determine the applicant’s theological readiness for ordained ministry. The Review Panel will make a recommendation to the committee following the procedures developed by the Vocation and Education unit.

IV. DECISION

- A. The Candidacy Committee will decide the applicant’s suitability to serve as a rostered minister of this church. This decision is one of the following:
- 1) approval of the candidate for reinstatement upon receipt and acceptance of a letter of call;
 - 2) postponement of approval with specific recommendations for remedial or developmental work before further consideration for reinstatement; or
 - 3) denial of approval for reinstatement.
- B. If the decision of the Candidacy Committee is to deny an applicant reinstatement, that decision is final. Any such applicant who desires reconsideration must begin the process again by applying under II.A. above.
- C. If an applicant who was removed from the roster under the circumstances described in paragraphs ~~I.C.~~ **I.D.** above is approved for reinstatement by the Candidacy Committee, such approval is not effective unless affirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the total membership of the Executive Committee of the Synod Council. After the Candidacy Committee reports its

approval and the reasons for that approval to the Executive Committee of the Synod Council, the Executive Committee may obtain whatever additional information or advice, including legal advice, it deems necessary before reviewing the decision of the Candidacy Committee.

V. APPROVAL

- A. If approved, the candidate will complete the normal ~~candidacy documents assignment paperwork~~ and will participate in the churchwide assignment process through the ~~Synodical Relations section~~ **Vocation and Education unit**.
- B. If after consultation with the synodical bishop, the Vocation and Education unit determines that the process for reinstatement described herein has not been fully or properly completed, then the ~~Synodical Relations section~~ **Vocation and Education unit** shall postpone the candidate’s participation in the assignment process until all requirements are met.
- C. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for a period of one year after approval by the synod. Any delay occasioned by a postponement under V.B. above is not counted toward that one-year period of eligibility.
- D. The process for renewal of approval, as defined by the Vocation and Education unit (“Candidacy Manual”), is the same as that for other candidates for rostered ministry.
- E. Upon receipt and acceptance of a properly issued and duly attested letter of call, the candidate is reinstated to the appropriate roster of this church.

See form for “Application for Reinstatement” in the “Candidacy Manual,” page I-29.

Adopted by action of the Church Council as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, April 16, 1989, revised on November 14, 1994, and further revised by the Church Council April 12, 1999 [CC99.04.29], and November 14, 2004 [CC04.11.69c], and November 2009 [CC09.11.XX].