

*Gracious God, we thank you for the new life you give us through holy baptism. Especially, we ask you to bless those gathered in Synod Assembly and all who are discerning a call to rostered ministry. Continue to strengthen them with the Holy Spirit, and increase in them your gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (adapted from Anniversary of a Baptism, ELW Pastoral Care, p.131)*

Grace to you and peace as you gather in assembly. Thank you for answering the call to serve the church by attending to the work we do together. Thank you also for taking time to read this report about our shared ministry of Candidacy and First Call in Regions 7 and 8.

*What is Candidacy?* It is the process of formation and discernment that prepares someone considering a call to be a deacon or pastor in the ELCA. It is the avenue by which a candidate is evaluated for public service in the church in partnership with home congregations, seminaries, churchwide, and synods. Your Synod Candidacy Committee works confidentially to accompany and prepare potential candidates for ordained ministry through prayerful discernment, intentional conversation, and thoughtful interviewing. They act to make decisions regarding a person's readiness for ordained ministry.

*What is First Call?* Near the end of candidacy, one may be approved for ordination. As a candidate approaches approval, a potential pastor or deacon enters a process where bishops meet by region to discern and determine in which synod God might be calling that candidate to serve.

*What is my role?* In my call as a deployed staff person of the ELCA, I listen to people share their sense of how God might be calling them to serve. I assist committees in their prayerful deliberation of candidates and provide education about candidacy and the first call process. In September 2023, candidacy committee members will have the opportunity to participate in a national online candidacy summit.

*You are a part of this ministry.* When you pray for people who are considering a call to ordained ministry; when you pray for your bishop, synod staff, and other leaders; when you ask a young person or a retiree or your lay Bible study leader if they have ever considered being a pastor or a deacon, you are a part of candidacy ministry.

*How can you learn more about Candidacy?*

- To learn more about the current candidacy process, go to [ELCA.org/resources/candidacy](https://www.elca.org/resources/candidacy) There are many materials for those considering becoming a pastor or deacon. I particularly recommend a discernment document, "Called to Lead" as a guide for considering the many ways a person's baptismal call might be lived out in the world.
- We have also recently launched a new online discernment tool at [www.journi.faiht](https://www.journi.faiht) for anyone who is interested in exploring how their gifts for ministry can be used in the church and beyond.
- In March 2022, a Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group convened for the purpose of formally reviewing the entire candidacy process. You can learn more about the progress of the Working Group at [ELCA.org/our-work/leadership/candidacy-leadership-development](https://www.elca.org/our-work/leadership/candidacy-leadership-development)

Thank you for your synod's participation in this shared ministry and for the privilege to serve among you.

In Christ,  
The Rev. A. Rebecca Resch  
Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Regions 7 & 8  
[becky.resch@elca.org](mailto:becky.resch@elca.org)

Region 7: ~ New Jersey Synod ~ New England Synod ~ Metropolitan New York Synod ~ Upstate New York Synod ~  
~ Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Slovak Zion Synod ~

Region 8: ~ Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod ~ Allegheny Synod ~  
~ Lower Susquehanna Synod ~ Upper Susquehanna Synod ~ Delaware-Maryland Synod ~  
~ Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod ~ West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod ~