REPORT OF THE CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

THE UPPER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD-ELCA, 2021

The Candidacy Committee is tasked with walking with potential leaders of this church as they discern and prepare for the church’s call to become rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Ministers of Word and Service. Committee members are called to appraise the character, qualifications, and potential of applicants and candidates, while providing guidance, encouragement, and support throughout the candidacy process. The committee usually meets three times during the calendar year in day-long meetings. During much of 2020 and 2021, the committee has met via ZOOM.

Candidates for rostered ministry in the ELCA meet with the Candidacy Committee for three decisions during the candidacy process:

**ENTRANCE:** The first step in the process, the committee votes on an applicant’s “entrance” to candidacy, assessing the person’s initial discernment and readiness, and vetting their background. A candidate must have a positive entrance decision before starting seminary classes.

**ENDORSEMENT:** The second decision comes after some period of study, the length depending on the candidate’s roster. Candidates are assessed on their progress of formation, and their clarity of call to a particular roster. A positive endorsement decision is required before rostered minister candidates may start their internships.

**APPROVAL:** The final decision comes after most coursework and field work has been completed. Candidates are assessed on their ability, willingness, and sense of calling to serve as a rostered leader. After a positive approval decision, a candidate is available for call as an ordained leader in this church.

In addition to its responsibilities for the candidacy process, the committee also distributes synod scholarship funds to its candidates enrolled in seminary courses.

**Current Candidacy Committee Members:**

Bishop Barbara J. Collins, Rev. Paul Baglyos, ELCA Regional Candidacy Leadership Manager, Susan Burns, James Girven, ALWL, Rev. William Henderson, Rev. Scott Kershner, Rev. Christine Kirchner, Pamela Rhoades, Eileen Stauffer, Greg Lutz, Rev. Dr. Gilson Waldkoenig, United Lutheran Seminary Representative, Rev. Ronald Montgomery, Candidacy Committee Chair.

The Rev. Erin Bovendam resigned from the committee and was called to a congregation in Minnesota.
The Rev. Joshua Reinsburrow, Secretary of the committee, resigned from the committee during 2021.

The Rev. Christine Kirchner volunteered to be Secretary of the committee.

The Candidacy Committee meets three times during the year and whenever necessary. In 2020 and 2021, we met 14 July 2020, 20 August 2020, 24 September 2020 & 21 January 2021—all via ZOOM.

A Competencies Assessment Panel (CAP) meeting is scheduled TEEM candidates Mindelle Bartholomew and Carol Johnson, 23 March 2021. An Approval Interview is scheduled with Karla Leiby, 29 April 2021.

Candidate Information:

Elizabeth (Libby) Baker-Mikesell—Libby received a positive Entrance decision on February 12, 2020; and she is presently studying at United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg. (ULS)

Mindelle (Mindy) Bartholomew—Mindy is a TEEM* candidate who received a positive Entrance Decision on 14 July 2020. She has completed the Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE). Mindy’s Competencies Assessment Panel (CAP) will be held 23 March 2021.


William (Denny) Buttorff—Denny received a positive Entrance decision on December 11, 2019. He is an Authorized Lay Worship Leader, and serves Garman, Jersey Shore. Denny elected to withdraw from candidacy 17 August 2020.

Victoria (Tori) Callahan/Giger—Victoria received a positive Entrance Decision 20 August 2020, and she is presently studying at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Jodi Ellis—Jodi received a positive Entrance decision on January 3, 2018, and is enrolled in the TEEM program at United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Jodi received a positive Endorsement Decision 21 January 2021, and she presently serves St. John’s, Leck Hill.
Ryan Fitch – Ryan was Entranced as a candidate for Minister of Word and Sacrament on April 19, 2016, and received a positive Endorsement decision January 3, 2018. Ryan received a positive Approval Decision for rostered ministry on 30 April 2020. Ryan was released to Southwest Pennsylvania Synod-ELCA, during March 2021, to accept a position at Lutherlyn, an outdoor camp.

Larry Herrold—Larry received a positive Entrance Decision 21 January 2021. He will be attending Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, California.

Carol Johnson—Carol received a positive Entrance decision on December 11, 2019. She is enrolled in the TEEM* process and is studying at United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg. Carol has completed the Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE) and will have her Competencies Assessment Panel on 23 March 2021. Carol serves Redeemer, Williamsport, and St. Michael’s, Quiggleville.


Karla Leiby—Karla received a positive Entrance decision on May 1, 2018, and a positive Endorsement on December 11, 2019. As of this writing, Karla is presently completing her studies at United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg. She participates in the Accelerated Cooperative Pathway program in order to shorten the overall candidacy process. Karla’s Approval Interview is scheduled for 29 April 2021. Karla serves as Vicar at St. John’s, Northumberland.

Samuel Leister—Sam received a positive Entrance decision on August 27, 2019. He is a TEEM* candidate and is studying at United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg. Sam completed his Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE), and received a positive Endorsement Decision 21 January 2021. Sam serves Messiah, Mifflintown.

Seth Phillips—Seth received a positive Entrance Decision for candidacy 24 September 2021. He enrolled at Trinity Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. Bishop Collins and Rev. Montgomery, Chair of this committee received notification from Seth on 19 February 2021, that he had decided to withdraw from candidacy. In the future, if Seth decides to re-apply for candidacy as a rostered minister in the ELCA, he must complete all Entrance procedures and requirements again, prior to an Entrance Interview. A note indicating Seth’s withdrawal from candidacy was posted to his file on the ELCA website 25 February 2021.
Harold J. Rinker, Jr.—Harold J. “Dutch” Rinker received a positive Entrance decision on 12 April 2019. He is enrolled in the TEEM* program at United Lutheran Seminary-Gettysburg for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Dutch received a Future Fund for Leaders Scholarship from the ELCA for mission development. He has completed his Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE), and he received a positive Endorsement Decision 21 January 2021. Dutch serves as Vicar at Zion, Renovo.

Gary Schaeffer—Gary was called to the Milton, PA, parish, and was ordained 6 September 2021.

As our committee continues to prayerfully discern, along with our candidates, we are thankful for the opportunity to serve as the Candidacy Committee of the Upper Susquehanna Synod. We remind our sisters and brothers in Christ; it is all of our responsibility to continue to raise up leaders in the ELCA. If you observe the gifts for ministry in someone, let them know about the Candidacy Committee! Our Bishop and the committee stand ready to aid in any way a potential candidate’s discernment of their call to ministry.

*TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries)

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ronald G. Montgomery – Candidacy Committee Chair, 16 March 2021