

Candidacy Committee Chair Report

by Pastor Ben Hogue

Grace and peace to you all. It is my honor to serve as the Chair of the Metro DC Candidacy Committee, having started serving in this capacity in October. I have the benefit of serving alongside incredibly talented individuals, both rostered and lay leaders, who take their role as members of this committee seriously and spiritually. It has also been a pleasure to serve with Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson-Reinhold and the entire Synod Staff in this capacity. It might seem odd to say that our committee meetings are spiritual experiences, but leaving each meeting, I am reminded of how powerful the sharing of stories can be and how moving the witness of the work of God truly is.

First and foremost, I think it is worth mentioning that our synod is filled with deeply gifted candidates for ordained ministry in the ELCA. Thank YOU for raising up these leaders in your congregations and communities and bringing them to our committee. Our candidates are attending seminaries near and far, interning at congregations in a variety of settings, some in clinical pastoral education settings, all bearing witness to the love of Christ. Even in these times of wilderness, our candidates remain committed to this church and to you, their siblings in Christ. Thanks be to God!

Over the past year, the Candidacy Committee has started Discernment Cohorts, led and organized by Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson-Reinhold. This intentional discernment process fulfills the candidacy's manual's requirements for discernment prior to coming before the Candidacy Committee, but more importantly, it allows interested individuals space and time to reflect, together with a trusted mentor and others in discernment, on who God is calling them to be in this world. This intentional space allows for informal and structured wrestling and engagement with the work of the church on, and beyond, Sunday morning, deepening of prayer life and study, and observation and conversation with others in the Synod. Our prayer is that this process will help each potential candidate for ministry grow in their faith and articulation of their call, yes, even before entering into the candidacy process.

My aspects of our Synod respond to the new Synod Motto and the Candidacy Committee is no exception. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we too, as a committee, are called to cultivate bold and boundless love for Jesus and for God's beloved creation by raising up leaders in our church, partnering with candidates for ordained ministry in the ELCA, and discerning the ways they are called to live out their vocations. Thank you for your continued partnership with the Candidacy Committee and your prayers as continue this important work – all done in the name of Christ!