

Report of the Candidacy Committee to the Southeast Michigan Synod, March 2026

As the world and the church continue to evolve, the Holy Spirit has been hard at work in ways that bring us great hope in the realm of candidacy. In the fall of 2025, we received updates from the ELCA Candidacy working group that will shape how the partnership between seminaries, synods, and candidacy committees moves forward beginning in January 2027. The recommendations of the Candidacy working group are currently in the process of being tested in other synods.

We also held a Candidacy discernment retreat in February 2026, which was attended by 13 individuals who are either currently in candidacy or who are discerning applying for Candidacy. It is our hope that these retreats will continue on an annual basis, hopefully with the inclusion of other synods in our region.

As I mentioned at the 2025 Synod Assembly, all candidates for ordained ministry in the Southeast Michigan Synod are now required to participate in Anti-Racism training and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity training, in addition to Professional Boundaries and Ethic training. United Lutheran Seminary has been a valuable resource for these and we continue to look for opportunities that will allow our candidates to engage in these trainings.

2025 Actions and Decisions

Candidate Approval: Alysa Offman, Michael Wentzel, Ian Boden, Keith Miller
Ordinations: Alysa Offman, Keith Miller, and Ian Boden (called to a congregation in the North West Ohio Synod)
Candidate Endorsement: Kelle Shepherd-Bavsar
Candidates on Internship: Natalie Downs, Richard Durance
Candidate Entrance:
Theological Review Panel:
Candidate Awaiting Call: Michael Wentzel
Candidacy Withdrawals:

Candidacy Committee Members: Dr. Robert Thompson, Pastor Jack Eggleston, Pastor Kate Zywicki, Pastor Jeff Ogonowski, Dr. Todd Perkins
Representing Trinity Seminary: The Rev. Dr. Kevin Dudley
Representing ELCA Region 6: The Rev. Denise Russell

This spring, we will bid farewell to Pastor Kate Zywicki, who will complete her service on the Candidacy Committee in May. We are grateful to her for her faithful service on the committee.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Rev. Jennifer Kiefer, Director of Candidacy