

What is the Extraordinary Candidacy Project?

The Extraordinary Candidacy Project was launched in 1993 by concerned members of congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The Extraordinary Candidacy Project offers services in support of:

- ELCA ministerial candidates who have been denied commissioning or ordination solely because of their sexual orientation
- ELCA ministers who have been removed from the roster because of their sexual orientation

The ECP roster has been established to provide professional support and mutual accountability for ministry.

The project maintains regional candidacy committees. The committees evaluate seminary students, graduates, and persons removed from the ELCA roster. (The criteria for evaluating candidates are explained below.) The project includes members from across the United States.

The Extraordinary Candidacy Project works in cooperation with Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries (LLGM), but they are independent organizations.

LLGM helps to find ministry opportunities and supports sexual minority pastors, AIMS, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses.

LLGM also works with congregations who are willing to call ministers who are not on the ELCA roster.

Why is an Extraordinary Candidacy Project needed?

Current ELCA policy requires celibacy of lesbian and gay pastors, AIMS, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers. The net effect of this policy is that it has shut the doors on well-qualified candidates or forced them to hide their identity. Pastors whose gifts for ministry have been confirmed by their congregations have been required to resign or have been removed by disciplinary actions. Even in churches where gay and lesbian members are welcomed, how welcome can they really feel when that same church does not open its doors to gay and lesbian ordained and commissioned leadership?

Criteria and Qualifications

With the exception of the rule precluding "practicing homosexuals", the Extraordinary Candidacy Project upholds the criteria for candidates set by the ELCA. It is not a goal of this project to establish new criteria for ordination or commissioning in the Lutheran church.

To the extent possible, the ECP also follows the ELCA evaluation process. Each candidate's gifts and qualifications for ministry are thoroughly explored. The candidate's understanding of sexuality (as related to professional conduct and personal expression) as well as the candidate's preparedness for serving under extraordinary circumstances are also discussed as part of the evaluation.

The intent is not to circumvent the ELCA, but to reach out and draw back into the fold those who desire to serve and are well qualified to do so.

What does the Extraordinary Candidacy Project do?

ECP performs the similar functions to the candidacy committees in the ELCA:

- Seminary students are evaluated in the same way that ELCA candidacy committees do.
- For those who have been removed from the ELCA roster but are currently in ministry, we are using the process which the ELCA uses with pastors from the ELC in Canada: their credentials simply transfer to the ECP roster, but we also require an interview which includes a discussion of sexual ethics;
- Those who have been away from ministry for three or more years go into a process much like the ELCA's reinstatement to the roster;
- A roster is maintained of extraordinary Lutheran pastors, AIMS, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses to provide professional support and mutual accountability for ministry.

How to get more information

If you would like to learn more about how the Extraordinary Candidacy Project might be of help to you, we encourage you to contact us. All inquiries are strictly confidential. If you request more information, you will be put in touch with a person who can provide counsel and advice. You will not be pressured to make any decision you do not wish to make. Our task, should you contact us, is to be of assistance as you choose the path most appropriate for you.

For further information about the Extraordinary Candidacy Project please contact:

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4/27/99

Endorsers

The project has been endorsed by a number of individuals and ministries including:

St. Francis Lutheran Church, San Francisco
First United Lutheran Church, San Francisco
Lutherans Concerned/North America
St. Matthew Lutheran Church,
North Hollywood
The Alliance for Action
Lutheran Lesbian & Gay Ministries
University Lutheran Chapel, Berkeley

The Extraordinary Candidacy Project is not a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its activities are not endorsed by the ELCA.

Funding

We gratefully accept donations to help cover our expenses associated with communicating our purpose and goals. Please consider helping by sending a tax deductible contribution made payable to EXTRAORDINARY CANDIDACY PROJECT and mail it to:

Extraordinary Candidacy Project
1320 Evelyn Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94702

We also encourage donations to LLGM to support the ministry of pastors and lay ministers on the ECP roster.

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