

# North/West Lower Michigan Synod Call Process Manual From Rostered Leader's resignation to the new Rostered Leader's Installation



North/West Lower Michigan Synod  
2900 N. Waverly Road  
Lansing, MI 48906

Welcome to the Call Process!

This greeting is indeed a mixed blessing. Your pastor or rostered leader is leaving, whether through resignation or retirement, and the present is sad and the future uncertain. The stakes seem high—and they are. Some say the right rostered leader will help a struggling congregation to soar and the wrong rostered leader will bring a soaring congregation crashing to earth. So lay aside your expediency and strive to open yourselves to the Holy Spirit. For the Triune God leads this process as surely as God led Israel through the wilderness to the land of promise. In fact, congregations—particularly call committees and congregational councils—who can minimize their anxiety and need to control by prayerfully listening and trusting the Triune God report that they experience God's presence, power and tendency to surprise in very tangible ways.

You are not alone. Pastor Sarah, Pastor David, and I, together with congregations and individuals around the synod, are praying for you in this period of transition. Pastor Sarah, Pastor David and I meet every Wednesday to discuss and pray over every congregation in the call process. Pastor Sarah Friesen-Carper is our guide. Pastor Sarah knows that this is a pivotal time in the life of a congregation that directly impacts Christ's work in Michigan and beyond. I am grateful for the wisdom, grace, and joy that Pastor Sarah brings to this work. You are in good hands.

What we name the Call Process is really a period of transition that begins the moment the Pastor or Rostered Leader resigns to the time of the new Pastor or Rostered Leader is installed. This manual is a map of the journey, particularly for the Congregation Council, Transition Committee, Call Committee and any others who may be involved in the transition process. It even includes some documents for the departing rostered leader. Each chapter indicates the group for whom it is most useful, but we recommend that everyone involved in the transition read the entire manual.

Even as we provide a guide and a map, we best not forget that the Holy Spirit leads this journey. God rather than any of us are in charge of the call proves. So God is the best person to be in conversation with—through prayer, reflection, assessing, discipleship, and pressing forward. God will help us to hear our brothers and sisters and realize that people in the congregation and community are experiencing a wide range of feelings: anger, fear, grief, relief, excitement—and not all at the same time. Like the Israelites on their journey, some among us will be impatient and some will view this in-between time of wandering in the wilderness as an unnecessary waste. They may stop coming and stop giving. Anxiety can be high. Trusting that God is leading helps us to embrace the time between pastoral leadership of the congregation as a holy season set apart for mission and vision as the congregation discerns the gifts needed in the next leader God is shaping for ministry in this place and time. It is a time to grieve, to celebrate, to wait on the Lord.

The call process involves the three expressions of our church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: (1) the congregation is the ministry site that the Lord is preparing for a new leader; (2) the synodical bishop's office works with the congregation/ministry and with rostered leaders to find and recommend candidates with needed gifts, passions and expectations;(3) the Churchwide expression provides the system in which we find Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Minister of Word and Service who have a call to serve the whole church for the building up of all through the grace and love of Jesus the Christ.

On average, the call process is taking eighteen months from the time a congregation submits paperwork and a rostered leader is installed. Yet, this is not a prescribed period of time—it depends upon the Holy Spirit and the people of God. Sometimes there is a pastor available with the gifts needed and desired by a congregation right at the moment they are ready; sometimes there is not. Sometimes the pastor has the "right" gifts or skills, but neither the pastor nor the congregation feels God's call into this relationship. Sometimes call committees take time to pray and grow in faith. Sometimes councils move quickly to expedite the process and sometimes that hurriedness means self-understanding is truncated and the process

bogs down rather than speeds up.

God bless you as you set out on this journey that will prove to be an adventure. Study your map, consult your guide, pay attention to the God who leads you, and be ready to be surprised. As your pastor when you don't have a pastor, know that you hold a special place in my heart and in my prayers.

Peace,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

## Table of Contents

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Checklist for Transition and Call Process	page 5
Chapter One: Closure—Our Pastor is Leaving. Now What? (Council and other leaders)	page 6
Chapter Two: Preparing for the Work Ahead (Council, Transition and Call Committees)	page 19
Chapter Three: Receiving Candidates and Interviewing (Call Committee)	page 32
Chapter Four: Selection of Candidate and Congregational Vote (Call Committee, Council)	page 39
Chapter Five: Beginning a New Relationship in Ministry (Council, Mutual Ministry, Personnel)	page 41

## Addendums

---

A. Excerpt from Model Constitution regarding Pastors (Chapter 9)	page 9
B. Certification of Church Records (departing pastor/rostered leader)	page 12
C. Certification of Completion of Financial Records (departing pastor/rostered leader)	page 13
D. Exit Interview Option 1	page 14
E. Exit Interview Option 2	page 15
F. Pastoral Ethics: Pastors Relating to Previously Served Parishes (departing rostered leader)	page 16
G. Covenant for Departing Pastors (departing pastor/rostered leader)	page 18
H. Theology of a Call	page 27
I. Qualities and Gifts for Public Ministry	page 29
J. Best Practices for Congregations	page 30
K. Possible Bible Study/Devotions	page 31
L. Sample Interview Questions	page 36
M. Commendation/Dismissal of Call Committee	page 43

# Checklist for Transition and Call Process

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- Council President contacts the bishop's office when pastor resigns or retires
- Exit Interview is scheduled with bishop's office within 30 days of pastor's departure
- All end of service forms are completed and submitted
- Farewell and Godspeed service on pastor's last Sunday
- Bishop or bishop's designee will preach and preside the Sunday after pastor departs when possible
- Pastoral ministry is secured for the transition period
- Ministry Site Profile is completed and submitted
- Call Committee is formed
- Call Committee attends Call Committee Training
- Candidate paperwork is received
- Candidate is interviewed
- Final Candidate is selected and then approved by Council
- Definition of Compensation is completed
- Final Candidate visits site
- Congregational vote
- Letter of Call is signed and attested by bishop
- Installation service is planned

# Chapter One: Closure---Our pastor is leaving!

## Now what? (Council and other leaders)

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When a rostered leader submits a letter of resignation to the congregation/parish council, the council has a new set of responsibilities. As soon as possible, the council notifies both the congregation and the Office of the Bishop about the resignation, including the date the resignation is effective. Keep communication flowing, realizing people will feel differently about the transition.

### *How People will Respond*

The resignation of a pastor or rostered leader usually comes as a shock to most people in the congregation and often brings a lot of questions. Why does she/he want to leave? Did we do something that made her/him want to leave? Is there any way we can change her/his mind? Is she/he going someplace "better" or someplace "bigger?" Why now? Did someone or a group of people drive her/him out?

These questions are rooted in confusion and grief. Even in times of planned resignation or retirement, members of the congregation will experience grief. The challenge is that members of the congregation will be at different stages. A temptation might be to just move on, to state, "We just need to get over it". There will be a time to move forward, yet it will be important for leadership to be supportive of one another and to be listeners for those in the congregation. People may experience:

**Denial:** Despite the announcements in letters, pulpit, and face to face, there may be some who will say, "Pastor X is leaving?" It may be that they haven't read information sent out or are truly unable to imagine the congregation without the pastor. Leadership cannot assume all people know or accept that the pastor is leaving.

When people are in denial, things can be overwhelming and things won't make sense. This is not the time to be making major decisions, particularly about calling a pastor.

**Anger:** This may be manifested in many ways. Some may be angry at the pastor, others at those he/she feels is responsible for the departure. Underneath the anger is pain. Anger is a way to feel connection and feels better than being numb. It feels more active. Again, this is not a time for major decisions, and a time when leadership wants to be responsive but not reactive.

**Bargaining:** Some people will wonder, What if we would have done something different, would our pastor have stayed. The "if onlys" and "what ifs" can take on a life of their own. This is a time when people remember the past and wonder if things could have been different. The length of this stage varies, and people will move in and out of this phase.

**Depression:** Here the person moves into the present time. This stage feels like it could last forever, things will never be the same again. You may see people withdraw—from worship, from activities, from each

other. It will be important for the leadership to recognize this is an important part of the process and a time to remain connected with each other without forcing people through this stage before they are ready.

Acceptance: This is the acceptance of reality, but it is not the same as stating that what happened was okay or alright. This is the stage where one admits to themselves and to each other the reality and is ready to move along in the process. It is accepting we will not be able to replace or replicate our pastor or past, but we can move forward into the future as a congregation.

People may vacillate between stages. Everyone in the congregation will not be in the same place at any one time. As leaders, you will need to recognize where you are in the process and be supportive to each other along the way. Each will experience this differently and that is normal.

In spite of the grief, there are still things that need to be completed and tended to.

#### *Before Your Rostered Leader Leaves*

Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call: Because a resignation signals the end of an important relationship, congregation/parish members may experience feelings associated with grief: sadness, anger, anxiety, etc. In order to assist the congregation in beginning to move through this experience, the council arranges for a farewell event and closure service for the resigning leader and his/her family. A service of farewell and godspeed in the final worship service is a great way to publically recognize the leader and congregation's relationship and to thank God for the time and ministry together. Order of service is on page 111 of the Occasional Services for the Assembly book.

Exit Interview: The bishop expects an exit interview with the rostered leader because it is very helpful for all involved. A representative of the Office of the Bishop, appointed by the bishop, conducts the interview with the rostered leaders and members of Council. The interview is scheduled within the rostered leader's last 30 days. Samples of exit interview agenda's are available in Addenda D and E. The exit interview includes addressing and completing the "**Certificate of Church Records**" and "**Certification of Completion of Financial Records.**" The exit interview will also review the church's expectations of former rostered leaders in relating to their former congregations.

Also at the Exit interview the bishop's representative will dismiss the departing pastor and discuss the transition process with the Council.

Obtain a forwarding address to forward any mail that the pastor should receive and to mail anything that is not completed by the time of departure. It is helpful if the pastor provides address, phone and email to the bishop's office as well. Arrange for the termination of the rostered leader's congregational voice and email.

Parsonage: If there is a parsonage schedule a walk through with the current pastor. Discuss any issues that

develop during this walk through.

Portico Benefits: The president and treasurer ensure that an "**End of Call**" form is completed ([www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org)) so that billing from Portico ceases. Until this is filed, you are responsible for the pension and benefits. Pastor will complete a "**Change of Call**" form for Portico.

In consultation with the bishop's office, begin to arrange for supply preachers following the pastor's last day and begin to determine what the congregation will need during the time without a called pastor. The bishop endeavors to have a member of the staff preach within the first few weeks after the completion of a call. The office of the bishop will work with congregations to determine if they are best served by an intentional interim pastor, a regular supply pastor, or arranging weekly supply pastors. At times, availability could be challenging, so consultation with the bishop's office is expected. More information regarding the Interim process and a recent supply pastor list is on the website [www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org).

### *Saying Good bye with Grace and Care*

Saying good bye can be one of the most difficult aspects of this transition. A clear, grace-filled good bye assists the members of the congregation, the departing pastor and his/her family to move through this transition, and helps to prepare the way for the pastor (and family) who will come. The normal desire is to maintain relationships with the pastor and the pastor with the congregation. However, when a pastor leaves, the relationship as pastor and congregation no longer exists. For this reason we say good bye with grace, rather than saying so long or see you later. For further information see Addendum F Pastoral Ethics. A Covenant for Departing Pastors (Addendum G) is sent to each member and regular participants of the congregation.



Excerpt from Model Congregation Constitution

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Chapter 9. THE PASTOR

\*C9.01. Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by [this congregation][the Congregation Council] to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

\*C9.02. Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.

\*C9.03. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Every ordained minister shall:

1. preach the Word;
2. administer the sacraments;
3. conduct public worship;
4. provide pastoral care; and
5. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed,
6. calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.

Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

1. offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
2. supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
3. install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and with the council, administer discipline.

Every pastor shall:

1. strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;
2. seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
3. impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
4. endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the *(insert name of synod)* Synod of the ELCA.

\*C9.04. The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.

\*C9.05. a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:

1. mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;

2. resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
3. inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
4. the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
5. disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
6. the dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
7. suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.

When allegations of physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office have come to the attention of the bishop of the synod, the bishop in his or her sole discretion may, or when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop shall, investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.

In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.

In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in \*C9.05.b. shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

If, in the course of proceedings described in \*C9.05.d., the committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action to the synodical bishop, who may bring charges in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of this synod.

If, following the appointment of the committee described in \*C9.05.b. or d., it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation(s) being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation(s) without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint synodical and churchwide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

\*C9.06. At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

\*C9.07. During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the

bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.

\*C9.08. This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

\*C9.09. When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

\*C9.11. With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from \*C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of \*C9.05.a.

\*C9.12. The pastor of this congregation:

1. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
2. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
3. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

\*C9.13. The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

\*C9.14. The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

C9.20. Ecumenical pastoral ministry

C9.21. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, an ordained minister of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between the congregation and the ordained minister in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by the congregation.

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NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD

**Certification of Church Records**

Upon the resignation of a pastor, the following policy of the Central States North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America applies:

"The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book which shall remain its property. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his/her hands in good order by a departing pastor before: installation in another field of labor, or the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer." (S14.15)

**Before** the pastor leaves the present field of service, he/she must bring the record books to the secretary of the congregation for review. Upon finding them in good order, the secretary shall complete the form below and forward it to the synod bishop. **This form should be completed within a month of the pastor leaving.**

Date:

This is to certify that I have examined the parochial records of \_\_\_\_\_

Lutheran Church, located in \_\_\_\_\_, and find them to be in good order.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Congregation Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

Please return to:

North/West Lower Michigan Synod 2900 N. Waverly Road

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NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD

**Certification of Completion of Financial Records**

Upon the resignation of a pastor, the following policy of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America applies: "The pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before: installation in other field of labor, or the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer." (S14.16) and "The congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. (C9.08)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This is to certify:

That all financial obligations, salary, pension, health, death benefits and allowances, together with continuing education funds have been met and paid to \_\_\_\_\_ up to the effective date of termination of services.

That satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations have been made by \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Church), located in \_\_\_\_\_, Michigan.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer of the Congregation Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Pastor Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer of the Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_

Pastor

*In most cases, this form should be completed within a month of the pastor leaving.*

Please return to the:

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**Exit Interview - Option Two**

Interview Date:

Pastor:

Congregation/Ministry:

Date of Call:

Last Sunday:

Last day:

Start date for new call:

Type of Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Associate/Assistant Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Specialized Ministry

- Assessment of the congregation when pastor arrived:
- Now when pastor is leaving:  
How has the congregation changed during pastor's tenure?
- For the pastor:  
What have been your greatest accomplishments and satisfactions?
- For the pastor:  
What frustrations have you had? What has blocked your effectiveness?  
What are the congregation's greatest weaknesses?  
What are the congregation's greatest strengths?  
What ministry goals for the congregation seem most important for the next 5 years?
- For the pastor:  
Describe the reason(s) you are leaving your current call.
- For the pastor: If call was associate/assistant or to specialized ministry:  
What changes would you suggest be made in the current position description?
- For the pastor: What would you like to see changed within the synod?
- For the pastor: If leaving the synod:  
If the opportunity presented itself, would you be interested in returning to the synod?

**Pastoral Ethics: Pastors and Rostered Leaders Relating to Previously Served Parishes**

When a pastor accepts a call to a congregation, a sacred covenant is established between that pastor and the people of God in that place. In order that the ministry might be strong and effective, it is important for that relationship to be strengthened and nurtured until God calls that pastor to another sector of ministry. When a pastor resigns or retires - that covenant - ends. How does a pastor relate appropriately to members of congregations where one has previously served? The following best practices give guidance to healthy faithful practices that have positive rather than negative impact with the congregation.

When the pastor accepts another call:

- a. It is the responsibility of the former pastor to decline invitations to conduct pastoral acts in any former parish. It is important that the burden of such decisions does not fall back to the pastor who currently holds that call. As professional people, we commit ourselves to act responsibly in these matters. For the sake of the church and the ongoing ministry of the congregation, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." When we do that, our relating to members of previous parishes can be used by God to build up the body of Christ.
- b. It is the responsibility of the former pastor to be supportive of the successor, even when that is difficult to do. The responsibility for the success of the current pastor is also part of the former pastor's responsibility. If it is not possible to be supportive of that pastor's ministry, it is extremely important to cut off contact with members of that congregation, in order not to become a hindrance to its ministry.
- c. While the above statements are addressed to pastors, spouses of pastors must consider the same factors, and also respect the recommendations made above. Spouses share a pastoral identity and, as a result, can become hindrances as easily as a pastor can.

When the pastor retires

- a. Meet with the bishop well in advance to discuss your decision.
- b. Whenever possible, plan retirement so that you will not be retiring in the parish where you have served as pastor.
- c. If considering remaining in the same community, or moving to a former community, please consult with the Bishop before any firm decisions are made. A covenant will be written in conversation with the bishop, the congregation and the rostered leader.
- d. Consider retirement as a "call to the ministry of the baptized." Retirement does not mean being uninvolved as an active church member; it means to be involved in ministry as we have encouraged members to be involved throughout our ministries. Belonging to the same congregation that one served as pastor may not allow the former pastor to function actively without creating problems for the congregation, which now has a covenant with a new pastor. Therefore, if there is any other ELCA congregation within commuting distance, transfer.
- e. If you decide to live where you have served as a pastor, recognize that this may become the focus of difficulty in that setting. As you prepare to leave, declare the new relationship to members of the congregation. Visit in depth with the new pastor who has been called to the parish, so the pastor can



be assured that your presence will not be a hindrance, and that you will do everything possible to be of support and help. Ongoing communication within the pastorate is absolutely essential. "Do to others as you would want them to do to you" is the guiding principle.

- f. It is the responsibility of the former pastor to decline invitations to conduct pastoral acts in any former parish. It is important that you say "no," rather than, "I'll come if the current pastor says okay."
- g. While the above statements are addressed to pastors, spouses of pastors must consider the same factors, and also respect the above recommendations. Spouses share a pastoral identity and, as a result, can become hindrances as easily as a pastor can.
- h. It is the responsibility as a former pastor to be supportive of your successor, even when that is difficult to do. If it is not possible to be supportive of the pastor's ministry, it is extremely important that you remove yourself from that congregation, in order to not become a hindrance to its ministry.

This guideline on pastoral ethics is shared for the sake of the Church and the ongoing ministry of the congregation, to enable us to act wisely in difficult circumstances. It is provided to help rostered leaders and congregations understand S14.14 of the Synod Constitution:

S14.14 Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.

Adopted by the Synod Council of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod September 2012.

**Covenant for Departing Pastors**

It has been my privilege to serve the mission and ministry of \_\_\_\_ Church as \_\_\_\_ Pastor during these past \_\_\_\_ months/years. As God called me for a time to serve among you, God now calls me forth to serve in a new way, in a new place among a new people though still one in the body of Christ.

In prayerful conversation with the Congregation Council of \_\_\_\_, I have discussed the policies and expectations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and I enter into the following covenant.

I agree:

to pray for the ongoing mission of the congregation and for their new pastor;

to communicate to the congregation, in writing and in conversation, the terms of the covenant, which terminates this pastoral relationship;

to not be involved in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in this congregation and to refrain from behaviors that seek in any way to control the transition process, including any attempt to influence the choice of a successor;

to refrain from language or behavior that could undermine the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor (temporary or successor);

to not support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement;

to refuse requests for pastoral services made by members of the congregation, including baptisms, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, visiting the sick and homebound;

to consult with the current pastor regarding my attendance at worship and special events;

to encourage my family members to support me in maintaining this covenant and to support the ministry of the congregation's new pastor.

(Other items may be added that are consistent with the particular relationship and mission of this congregation.)

It is understood that this covenant does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals who are members of this congregation.

Signature of Pastor: \_\_\_\_ Date:

Witnessed by President (Vice-President): \_\_\_\_ Date:

After sharing this covenant with the congregation, please mail a photocopy of the completed and signed document to the office of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, where it will be kept in the departing pastor's file.

## Chapter 2: Preparing for the Work Ahead (Council, Transitional and Call Committees)

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This period of transition is important and intentional prayer and discernment is vital. During this time, lay leaders in the congregation will need to work together to ensure ministry is being completed. It can be an exciting time as people in the congregation step forward to help. Do not hesitate to invite people to participate in the ministry of the church.

There are various options when it comes to pastoral leadership during the transition period. These options are discussed with the Bishop's office to determine what is best for the congregation at this time. Options include:

1. Contracting with an Intentional Interim Pastor. These are pastors with specific training to work with congregations in transition and are under call by the synod council. Because of the low number of pastors called for this special ministry, availability may be limited.
2. Contracting with or calling an Interim Pastor. These pastors have received specific training to work with congregations in transition or are in the process of receiving the training.
3. Contracting or securing a regular supply pastor. These pastors are either on leave from call or retired. Responsibilities may range from preaching and presiding only to including some days in the office, visitation and/or work with the Council and other committees. These responsibilities along with compensation and reimbursements need to be written into a contract, signed, and shared with the bishop's office.
4. Administrative Pastor. In some cases a local pastor will be contracted as the Administrative pastor while supply pastors serve on Sunday mornings. The Administrative Pastor holds the authority of an interim pastor, advises the Council and other leadership and may do some visitation.
5. Secure a supply pastor each week. This means that a different pastor will preach each week or over a period of time. There is not a contract. Area pastors can be contacted to provide some pastoral care or the supply pastor can agree to serve.

During the transition period, it is imperative that communication of lay leaders with the rest of the congregation be a priority. This is a time to review the history of the congregation, to discuss the hopes and dreams of the congregation, and to lift up in prayer the preparation of the pastor and congregation.

### Suggested prayer:

Consider including this petition each Sunday in the Prayers of the People and in regular Council and committee meetings.

Loving God, be with us and guide us during this time of discernment. Fill our leaders with your wisdom. Keep us mindful of the work you would have us do. Lead us and guide us O Lord to be about the work of your kingdom even as the search for a new pastor continues. Bless all who have taken on extra responsibility, and fill them with a sense of your love and presence. We pray in your Son's name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (Or Lord in your mercy, hear our Prayer.)

## *What is a "Call?"*

At the heart of our Lutheran theology is something Martin Luther termed —the priesthood of all believers. In the waters of baptism all people receive the promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. God names us each "Child of God," seals us with the Holy Spirit and marks us with the cross of Christ forever. Through these waters Christ brings us into his body and we become members of the priesthood of all believers. The Holy Spirit through the Christian community nurtures us, equips us to carry out the ministry to which we are called, and sends us out in service as ambassadors for Christ in and to the world. In baptism God calls us all to be part of the body of Christ. We each take up our vocation - our calling - as God's people. We are all ministers in whatever daily activity is ours. Within this priesthood of all believers there exists the offices of ministry: Word and Sacrament and Word and Service.

On the basis of our Lutheran theology, a pastor is called, not hired, to serve a congregation. The call process is not the same as the hiring process in other parts of society. Any process that seems to focus on head hunting, resume shuffling, or high anxiety interviews is missing the point in the calling of a pastor. A call is one element in the church's seeking and following God's movement into the future.

The call process is not a pageant, in which contestants present themselves to their best advantage so they will be the winners. The Lutheran call process is unique because it is an effort to discern what God wants for the local church and for the whole church in order that the Gospel may be proclaimed and the sacraments administered in accordance with the Gospel.

Issuing a call to a pastor or rostered leader requires: first (1), a congregational vote for the candidate; second (2) the president and secretary of the congregation, representing the congregation's decision, must sign the Letter of Call and finally (3) the Bishop, representing the whole church, must sign the Letter of Call. When a pastor is called it is truly a call to the whole church. Be sure to read Addendum H, "A Theology of Call."

## *Completing the Ministry Site Profile*

Some councils will choose not to complete a Ministry Site Profile. In this case the bishop and staff are entrusted to prayerfully bring candidates to the Call Committee without any paperwork. If this is the case, some written information will still be helpful. The Call Committee will not receive the Rostered Leader Profile of prospective candidates in this case, though some written information may be available. The bishop's office expects that if this route is chosen, every candidate will be interviewed. In this case there will be much more emphasis placed on the interview so extra time for interviews will need to be considered.

The Ministry Site Profile, or MSP, is the document used ELCA-wide, completed by congregations in transition seeking a new rostered leader. It is used by the bishop's office to help determine suitable candidates for interview and seen by potential candidates as the discern whether to move forward with a particular congregation.

The completion of the MSP is the responsibility of the Council. Some will choose to assemble the Call Committee and ask them to complete it. Some will assign a sub-committee of the Council. Some will assemble a Transition Team to survey the congregation and create the profile. Be sure to involve as much congregational input as possible in this process. If an interim or intentional interim pastor is working with the congregation he/she will take part in surveying and creating the profile. The Profile shall be approved by the Council before it is submitted on-line.

One of the challenges of this phase in the process is that some will want to rush this step. However, it is important to take some time here. Determining the mission, goals, and vision is vital as the congregation prepares for new pastoral leadership and discerns what gifts and passions are needed in the next leader.

If the congregation contracts with an Intentional Interim Minister, this pastor may have developed a Transition Team to help with the assessment of the congregation and this information is valuable. Even if an Interim Minister is not contracted, take time to seek the wisdom of the congregation. Ask, what is God calling us to now? What does the congregation need? What does our community need? What do we discern as our goals as we live into God's mission? This may be done in the form of surveys, one-on-ones, or small groups. Just don't skip it.

This is one of the most important parts of the transition. If not done well, it can result in miscommunication of expectations and potential lack of trust in building relationships. It is a time to assess where the congregation is currently and where God's mission is calling the congregation to be. It is important you are as honest and forthright as possible. You can imagine the struggle if you report the congregation wants a leader who has the gifts of Creativity/Innovation, Recruit and Equip Leaders, Preaching/Worship Leadership; however in reality, the congregation expects the pastor to spend most of his/her time in visitation of the homebound, pastoral care and chaplaincy. When completing the MSP, be as specific as possible rather than writing platitudes. For example, if your congregation is welcoming, give an example of welcome rather than just calling yourselves welcoming.

### *Completing and Entering the Ministry Site Profile*

The MSP must be completed online. It is best to designate one person to do the data entry. It is a .pdf which is downloaded from [www.elca.org/call](http://www.elca.org/call) and an account is entered. \*Remember the account name and password, because you will need that if you want to make changes in the future and not have to reenter the entire profile. A sample MSP is available on line to work from at [www.elca.org/call](http://www.elca.org/call).

As you enter the information, be sure that what you document is truthful. You do not need to fill all the space, but bullet points may not be enough. This is your first introduction to a potential pastor, so put your best foot forward. Below are some suggestions for the profile. Some sections require the selection of a drop down answer. If nothing applies as you like, choose the best answer.

#### Part One

1. Your congregational ID number is constant. You may find it on the parochial reports that are submitted

annually or in an ELCA yearbook. If you can't find it, call the Bishop's office and we can find it for you.

2. Double check contact information is correct—including emails.
3. Demographics—some congregations will research this in depth. We don't need exact data, but the information is often helpful and telling about a congregation.
4. From reports of treasurer.
5. When recording the three ways the community has been challenged or changed, give enough information that a potential candidate can get an idea of the challenge not being from the area. And be honest.

List three trends in the congregation. Utilizing the trend report may be helpful to address issues of membership, attendance, money, giving—as potential pastors will likely be looking at this report when they are discerning if they wish to interview.

## Part Two

6. This part can be confusing. Look at the statements across from each other. Which one best describes your congregation. Then determine if this is a little like us or a lot like us.
7. Follow directions
8. The summary description is what those seeking a call will see from the website when they are searching. Sell your community—if you are on a lake, in a college community, in beautiful northern Michigan, etc. As well a brief description of the type of candidate you seek. A question you might consider as you write this section is why would a pastor want to serve with us in ministry? Be specific.
9. References: Use the Lansing Office number for Bishop Satterlee – 517-321-5066. No other numbers are necessary.

## Part Three

10. Often the available compensation package determines the level of experience a congregation is able to call. Please talk with the bishop's office about what it might mean for your congregation.
- 11 and 12. Some congregations use a survey method to complete this section. You will see some items that seem very similar. Please select the five most important. Again, if you need someone with a specific gift, mark it. The committee should have a unified agreement on what each gift means to them, so that when interviewing a candidate they will be able to answer. You may want to consider defining the gifts the congregation needs in Part Four. For instance, if Administration is needed, what do you mean by this? Does this mean they will be the only one in the office, expected to facilitate all meetings, needs to keep a neat office—explain.
13. Mutual Expectation—These statements are important as they are the statements that will likely be carried over in the Definition of Call when a pastor is called and accepted. Knowing that a new pastor cannot do everything the first year, what do you see as the priorities. In turn, what can the pastor expect the congregation to do to assist. \*\*\*Many early conflicts begin because of lack of clarity in expectations, for both the pastor and the congregation.
14. Compensation—Maximum Defined Compensation includes salary, housing or parsonage allowance and Social Security offset. It does NOT include benefits. The bishop's office can help in this arena if there is

misunderstanding. Compensation shall reflect the time for which the leader is called. In other words, if full time is expected, the leader shall be compensated for full time. Current Compensation Guidelines can be found on the North/West Lower Michigan Synod website. [www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org)

15 and 16. Benefits—Contact Portico Benefits Services [www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org)

This is a good time to review policies and create them if you don't have them for sabbatical and parental leave as well as professional expenses. Information is included in the Compensation Guidelines.

First Call rostered leaders had a background check when they entered the candidacy process which is generally at least four years prior to ordination. Congregations are responsible for current background checks.

17. A candidate for interview will often request these materials before or after the initial interview.

#### Part Four

Here you can expand or add anything you feel necessary to help a pastor understand your context. As stated before, consider expanding on what is meant by the five top gifts you seek in the new leader.

#### Part Five

20. The person to contact is someone on the Bishop's staff who helps with call process. If you do not know who this is, please ask.

21. The reference you select here must have email. When the MSP is submitted, you will log back into your account and follow the instructions to email the reference form to the person you choose. They will then complete and submit on-line.

Once the MSP is completed it is shared with the Congregation Council for final approval. Ideally, information has been shared with the council during the process so few changes will be necessary. It is also helpful prior to submitting online to email a copy to the member of the bishop's staff who is assisting you for review. That person can also offer insight into modifications that need to be made. Once all have reviewed, "submit" the profile. Follow the directions and send a recommendation to the person you identified and complete the Seven Reflections if you desire or have been asked. \*\*\*Remember your identification email and password!

Once the profile has been submitted, reviewed by the synod staff and the recommendation has been received, the Bishop's office staff will activate the MSP. This allows potential candidates to view your congregation's MSP in a database along with MSPs from other synods.

#### *Seven Reflections*

The Seven Reflections are questions you may wish to answer in writing. Even if you choose not to, these are good questions to reflect upon as the candidate can gain insight into the congregation. These are also questions that the candidate may ask in the interview. Questions include:

What key issues or concerns of our church and society are reflected in your ministry context? Explain.

How do your stewardship practices reflect your priorities?

In what ways is your congregation or ministry similar or different from the community where it is located?

Identify and explain three significant formative events in your history?

How is the congregation or ministry involved in the larger church and ecumenical relationships?

Has your ministry experienced significant conflict and what did you learn? You may wish to include how the congregation handles conflict.

Anything related to the building and physical plant.

### *First Call Candidates*

There are situations where a congregation is encouraged to consider calling a First Call Pastor. These are candidates who have completed the Candidacy Process and Seminary Education and are available now for call.

Congregations are often deemed a first call congregation if they are seen as a ministry where a First Call pastor would likely thrive. Please see Addendum K.

If a congregation is interested in being a First Call Congregation or if the Bishop's Office believes this congregation may be called to be a First Call Congregation, there will be further conversation.

Resources regarding First Call can be found at [www.elca.org/firstcall](http://www.elca.org/firstcall) under Resources. You will find: Becoming a First Call Congregation (video and discussion guide)

One thing to note when calling a First Call pastor is that for three years they are required to participate in First Call Theological Education. Currently this includes periodic meeting with a mentor and two annual retreats. Congregations should also encourage the pastor to participate in synod leadership events.

### *Selection of a Call Committee*

In consultation with the interim, administrative or supply pastor and the Bishop's office, the congregation will determine when the faithful time is to begin the process for calling a new pastor. Council should begin by reviewing their congregational constitution to determine if there is a constitutional statement about the number of people on the call committee and if they are selected by the council or elected by the congregation. The Call Committee is not formed until after the previous pastor has departed and a significant period of time has passed (1-3 months at the least).



The number of members on the call committee varies, but we recommend 6-12 persons. In part, this depends on the size of the congregation. If the constitution states 6 members, the congregation may want to include up to 6 more that have voice but no vote. The goal is to have a cross section of people in the congregation: i.e. selection by age, gender, race, length of time as a member, active and less active, if more than one worship time that both/all are represented. If not indicated by the constitution, the call committee selects the chair of the committee. Call Committee members must be members of the congregation in good standing.

The Call Committee should be installed in a worship service to ground their work in Word and Sacrament and to encourage the congregation to include in their prayers these people who have been set apart to serve in this ministry. A general service of Affirmation of Christian Vocation may be adapted for use (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 84).

\*\*Congregation presidents serve as ex-officio members of the call committee, but we recommend presidents serve as an encourager, not as an active member and not plan to attend meetings or initial interviews. The number of council members on the call committee should be limited. It is the responsibility of the call committee chair to communicate with the congregation president; which can be delegated to another member of the committee who serves on council.

### *Getting Started with the Call Committee*

After the MSP is completed and a Call Committee installed, the Call Committee shall attend the mandatory Call Committee Training. Trainings are held periodically throughout the synod and led by Assistants to the Bishop. Training includes understanding the difference between calling and hiring, information about where names come from, preparation for interviews and process for moving forward with a candidate. It also includes time with the Director for Evangelical Mission. Rostered Leader Profiles will not be given to Call Committees until they have completed the training.

One of the benefits and responsibilities of the committee is to build relationships with each other thereby learning more about who the congregation is and in what ministry the congregation participates. Because of the cross section of people on the committee, it is likely that each will learn something about each other and a ministry.

Sometimes members desire to serve on a call committee and come with a specific desire in a pastor. It is important to listen to this, but also to encourage people to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit moving with the call committee for the good of the whole congregation. In fact, it is more important to be a good listener than to push one's own agenda.

Each meeting should begin with Bible study and prayer. A few options are included in the addendum. Some committees will rotate this responsibility, others will designate a devotion leader. Devotions need to be intentional so as not to rush into just getting the work done. The need for personal prayer and prayer within the Call Committee cannot be overstated. Inviting God into the conversation and opening our ears

to hear is vital.

During these devotions or as part of the meeting agenda, the committee should review the Theology of a Call (Addendum I) and Qualities and Gifts for Public Ministry (Addendum J).

The Call Committee shall regularly communicate with the congregation where they are in the process. Some ways of communication include bulletins, newsletter articles, a display in the narthex or fellowship hall, email updates, personal announcements, and videos. Be as creative as you like, be thorough, and be regular in your communicating.

## A Theology of Call

In the waters of baptism the Triune God promises us eternal life and forgives all of our sins. God names us beloved children and claims us as God's very own, sealing us with the Holy Spirit and marking us with the cross of Christ forever. Through these baptismal waters Christ initiates each one into the Church, which is body of Christ, and sets every newborn Christian apart to share in Christ's own ministry as a member of the priesthood of all believers. As we live in Christian community, the Holy Spirit nurtures us in our baptismal vocation through Word and Sacrament, equips us to carry out the ministry to which God calls us, and sends us in service as ambassadors for Christ in and to the world.

Most Christians too easily lose their baptismal identity and vocation in the busyness and responsibilities of daily life in the world. However, God promises that the mark of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit will be with all who are baptized, no matter where they go and what they do.

The majority of Christians live out their baptismal vocation within vocations found in the midst of the world. They carry out their ministry while living and working in an almost limitless variety of life situations and professions. In Christ, the faithful more than doctors, farmers, students, teachers, shopkeepers, children and parents who come to church. They are ministers in Jesus' name who engage the world as doctors, farmers, teachers, shopkeepers, children and parents. As they serve God and each other in their life together within the church, they also represent Christ and the church as they work in the context of a pluralistic and heavily secular world. This calling to vocation within the world is one of the key ways that the baptized participate in Christ's own work of reconciling the world to God's very Self.

To nurture and empower the baptized, God calls some Christians as ministers of Word and Sacrament to ensure that the gospel is faithfully preached and the sacraments rightly administered in the Church. God also calls ministers of Word and service to keep the world, which God loves and for which Christ suffered and died, ever before the Church. Rostered leadership is not better or higher than the ministry of the baptized. Rather, rostered leaders play a circumscribed but essential role in nurturing and empowering the ministry of the baptized.

The church as Christ's body of all the baptized is bigger than the single ministry to which individuals belong. Through partnership with synods and churchwide structures, training and the formation of leaders can happen in a way that can shape the church to be faithful and effective in the mission God entrusts to it. Partnership in the call process embodies this reality and ensures greater depth and accountability for this work. The process of calling rostered leaders within the life of the church is therefore primarily about discerning God's will for and God's call upon the congregation or ministry in which they will serve. Prayerfully, congregations, in partnership with the synod and greater church, call forth those they believe God can best use to help them carry out their mission together.

Rostered leadership is not a self-called vocation but a unique calling from God through the church. Rostered leadership is a means by which God serves and equips the whole people of God so that the church can live together in the peace and harmony of Christ, equip the baptized for their work, serve faithfully as the body of Christ in the world, and participate in Christ's own work of reconciling the world to God's very Self.

As a baptized person, how is your calling being fulfilled in your daily life?

In your experience, how has your congregation equipped you to do that?

How does reflecting about your vocational calling affect your thinking as you prepare to call a new leader?

How is calling a rostered leader in the church different than hiring someone in a secular position?

How will the rostered leader you are seeking to be someone who works for the whole church, not just your particular ministry?

What do you believe is essential for a public pastoral leader?

Spend some time talking about what are the essential qualities for the pastoral leader at your congregation.

Faithfulness: Biblical, Personal Depth, Committed to Church, Abiding in Jesus, Witnessing, Spiritually Disciplined, Genuine, Believer, Integrated, Living Jesus' Grace

Leadership: Giftedness, Spiritual, Creative, Empowering, Courageous, Equipping Others, Responsible, Visionary, Awareness of One's Style, Practiced, People Skills, Willingness, Servanthood, Humility, sense of Privilege in Serving, Selflessness

Love: For the Lord, For the Church, Churchpersonship, Devotion, Passionate for God and God's Kingdom, For the Gospel, Relationally Oriented to People and World, Collegiality, Compassion, Caring for People, Fresh and Passionate, A Pastor's Heart, Hospitality, Empathy, Vulnerability

Sense of Call: Flexibility, Understanding, Clear, Inner and Outer Senses of Call, Desire to Learn, As a Way of Life, Sense of Mission, Curiosity, Life-long Learner, Sense of Transformation, Sense of Re-formation, Teachability, Open to Change and Self-discovery, Listener

Integrity: Genuine, Authentic, Transparent, Self-differentiated, Self-aware, Character -can grow up, Honesty, Trustworthiness, Spiritually and Emotionally Healthy, Sense of Humor, Self-care, Mentally Healthy

Competence: Biblically Literate, Academic Ability, Biblical and Theological, Sense of Context, Vision, Balance of Law and Gospel, Both Therapeutic and Prophetic, Articulate Grace, Intelligent, Common Sense, Wisdom

Grounded: Spirituality, ELCA/Lutheran Identity, Balanced Life, Integrated Theology and Practice, Ability to Live in Dialectical Tension/Paradox/Ambiguity, Spiritual Depth, Graced and Know It

(This list of essential qualities was compiled from characteristics identified in 11 candidacy consultations held throughout the ELCA with synod and seminary candidacy leaders.)

**Vocation of First Call Congregations Project, 2010**

*A checklist of ideas that can enhance and sustain best practices in congregations related to beginning a first call in public ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

- The first call congregation claims its vocation as a "teaching" and "mentoring" context for a new leader in public ministry.
- The call process includes attention to what is unique about calling a rostered leader into a first call.
- The call committee uses available resources in understanding a call to a first call leader.
- The congregation is intentional in providing a healthy, safe environment for a new leader to shape her or his ministerial identity.
- The congregation honors and welcomes the gifts of its new pastor, deaconess, associate in ministry or diaconal minister.
- The congregation invites the new leader to join members in reflecting on its identity and mission as a community of faith.
- The congregation is open to and makes connections with its larger community.
- The congregation's goals and actions reflect flexibility and openness to change.
- The congregation addresses financial realities in positive, hopeful ways, especially during the call process.
- A sense of possibility and hope for the future is reflected in behaviors and decision-making by the leadership.
- Leaders are intentional in visioning and planning for mission.
- The call committee serves as or arranges for a mutual ministry committee in the first years of a first call ministry.
- Members are respectful of the needed boundaries between the new leader's personal/family life and congregational leadership.
- The congregation members and new leader enjoy each other.
- The congregation pays special attention to hospitality, making the new leader feel welcome and cared for during the months of transition into the first call and into the broader community.

**Possible Bible Study/Devotions**

One method of Bible study and Reflection is known as Lectio Divina, which is Latin for Divine Reading. The intent is to let go of our own agenda and open our hearts and minds to where God is leading. There are many ways people will practice Lectio Divina, below is one way. Any text may be used for this. I have included some texts that may be helpful in the work of the call process.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, we look to your Word for guidance and hope. Open our hearts and our minds that we may hear your word for us. Guide us through your word to hear the good news for our lives together through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One person reads the lesson:

In one minute of silence, reflect or write one word or phrase from the lesson that seems significant.

Each person shares the word or phrase without additional comment.

A second person reads the lesson:

In two minutes of silence reflect on what this passage is saying to you.

Each person may share his/her reflection without additional comment.

A third person reads the lesson:

In three minutes of silence, reflect what this passage is saying to the congregation at this time while you are in the Call Process.

Each person may share in one sentence or less his/her reflection.

Suggested Texts: You may also consider individuals choosing a favorite text or use the text from worship.

Matthew 28: 16-20—The Great Commission

Luke 5: 1-11- Call of the Fishermen

John 12:20-26—Jesus Predicts his Death

Acts 2:42-47—The Fellowship of Believers

Romans 5:1-11—Reconciliation

Romans 12:9-21—Love and Good

2 Corinthians 4:1-12—Treasure in Clay Jars

Philippians 2: 1-11—The Christ Hymn

1 Timothy 4:6-16—Instructions to Timothy

Matthew 9:9-13-The Call of Matthew

John 1:35-46: —Calling the First Disciples

Acts 2:1-13—Holy Spirit and Pentecost

Acts 6:1-7—The Choosing of Seven Priests

Romans 12: 1-8—Be a Living Sacrifice

I Corinthians 3:1-9—Fellow workers

Ephesians 4:(1-13)14-16—Unity and Truth

1 Timothy 3:1-13-- Qualifications of Bishops and Deacons

# Chapter Three: Receiving Candidates and Interviewing (Call Committee)

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The Bishop's Office begins to search for potential candidates that have identified the gifts the congregation listed in the MSP. Note that a candidate may not possess all of the gifts listed. All candidates must be in good standing on the ELCA roster. In certain circumstances, congregations may be best served by calling a person from another tradition with which the ELCA has a Full Communion agreement. In this case, the Bishop's office will be in contact with the appropriate judicatory. It is not appropriate for the congregation to initiate this process.

If the congregation has names that they would like to submit for consideration, it is most helpful to do so in the beginning. The congregation or a member of the congregation is not to contact the person directly. Once a name has been received, the Bishop's office will see if the leader's Rostered Leader Profile has been submitted and if so, will review. If it has not, the Bishop's office will contact the appropriate Synod office for inquiry. All candidates have a confidential Bishop's recommendation that is reviewed by the synod office prior to the name and profile is given to a congregation. Our desire is that the pastor is a gifted pastor for your ministry site, as well as for the whole church.

Some congregations have asked about advertising in "The Lutheran." You must obtain the Bishop's approval before doing this. The advantage is that it may broaden the number of people who will see the advertisement. The disadvantage is the search time is lengthened in order to give the magazine the opportunity to print the ad and have people respond. If this ad is placed, the candidate contacts the Bishop's office if interested and all materials are reviewed as with other candidates' profiles.

*What is going on in the bishop's office?*

The congregation knows that the MSP is completed and likely very anxious to move forward. This is probably the time that will require the most patience, prayer and understanding. The average call process in the ELCA is 18 months from the time the MSP is submitted until the time the new pastor arrives. The leadership of the congregation will need to model patience for everyone. Also be sure to stay in constant communication even if the update is that nothing has happened in the last week.

The bishop's office is reviewing the MSP and searching for possible matches in the ELCA database. Candidates who are discerning a change in ministry have completed a Rostered Leader Profile (RLP) and they are available to Bishop's staff for review. This is also the time the Bishop's office is checking into any recommendations from the congregation and receiving and reviewing candidates materials from those who have indicated an interest. The bishop and staff interview each potential candidate before recommending to a congregation.



Candidates who have an interest in reviewing the congregation's MSP are sent the profile for review and asked to contact the Bishop's office if interested in beginning the process. Some people the profile is sent to will decide not to proceed. Others may have more questions and need time for prayer and discernment.

This period also is dependent on what else is going on in the life of the church. Rostered leaders often find themselves immersed into their current parish in particular seasons of the church year and so it may take longer to find the time to review. There may be vacations, youth trips, mission trips, family responsibilities—all of which will impact the candidate's availability to discern faithfully.

In some congregations anxiety will increase during this time. The Call Committee should use this time to develop the basic interview questions, to determine hospitality issues, to gather any publications you will want to share with candidates, to be in intentional prayer, and to continue to discover more about your congregation and community in preparation for receiving candidates.

Consider adding the following prayer to the Prayers of the People in worship

*Loving God, be with us and guide us during this time of discernment. Fill our leaders with your wisdom. Keep us mindful of the work you would have us do. Lead us and guide us O Lord to be about the work of your kingdom even as the search for a new pastor continues. Prepare the pastor you are calling to our congregation and prepare us to discern and recognize that calling. Prepare us in this congregation for new leadership and opportunities in this vast world in which we minister. Fill us with patience and understanding during this in between time. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

The names submitted by the Office of the Bishop will have had a broad screening: they will have a positive recommendation from the appropriate synod office unless otherwise indicated; there will be a broad agreement between the congregation's compensation offer and the leader's needs; the candidates will have expressed a positive interest in the call based on the Ministry Site Profile, reference, and Seven Reflections. Candidates are likely to be involved in the call process with other congregations. Only when a call committee recommends a candidate to the council is the leader expected to withdraw from all other processes.

#### *Candidate Names Received by the Call Committee*

The bishop's representative will submit names to the call committee chair. We will do our best to have more than one set of paperwork for each congregation depending on the search and availability of candidates. The ELCA is currently experiencing a shortage of pastors meaning that the call process is taking longer than ever before and there are fewer people available to interview in any given call. The Call Committee should consider each candidate's paperwork at the time it is received rather than wait to receive more so that you do not miss out on a potentially good candidate.

Forms will be sent electronically. The contact in the Office of the Bishop will keep the call committee chairperson informed as to the availability of names. Sometimes a call committee will have to decide

whether to interview another candidate or not. Considering another person often adds a month to the interviewing process and the committee risks losing a worthy candidate already interviewed. All call committee members should receive complete copies of the candidate's materials in order to prepare a final list of questions for the interview process.

As the committee reviews the profiles, they may gather specific questions they may ask of that particular candidate. Remember these profiles only give a snapshot of the candidate and cannot share everything about the candidate; just as the congregation's Ministry Site Profile does not say everything about a congregation. You may wish to review the qualities identified earlier in the process. You can raise questions with the candidate about what you read in the profile.

Caution: Do not attempt to answer the question you pose yourself. Do not assume you know what the candidate will say in response. If you have a question, ask!

### *Confidentiality*

The call committee keeps the names and profiles of all candidates in the strictest confidence throughout the committee's work. The reason for maintaining confidentiality is respect of the other parties involved in the process: the potential rostered leader and her/his present congregation. It is inappropriate for a congregation to find out that a pastor is considering a new call through any means other than from the pastor him/herself. How this is handled in the call process often is indicative of how confidentiality is held within the congregation in other circumstances and may cause a candidate not to accept a call.

Once a candidate has been released, each call committee member should have that person's RLP shredded. This may be a role the call committee chair could assume.

### *Contacting and Preparing to Interviewing Candidates*

As soon as the call committee receives candidates' materials, the chairperson should contact each candidate by phone to let the candidates know: 1) that the committee has her or his materials; 2) an idea regarding when the candidate can anticipate further contact; 3) the committee's request for additional material from the candidate; and 4) the additional materials which he/she can expect from the committee.

It is wise to contact candidates every two weeks throughout the process. Otherwise they may conclude you are not interested. It is acceptable to let the candidates know you are interviewing others, and they may let you know they are interviewing elsewhere. They do not need to say where they are interviewing. Remember, you are building a relationship with your new pastoral leader even before they actually receive the call.

The call committee interviews candidates as their materials are submitted. Bishop Satterlee encourages call

committees to in some way interview every candidate provided. Face to face interviews are best, of course. However, if the costs are prohibitive for the congregation, the committee may do screening interviews by conference call or Skype in order to decide which candidate(s) to bring for an on-site visit and interview. These should be very carefully structured to indicate hospitality to the candidate in a very artificial situation. It is best if the candidate has a biography of each call committee member, and the general questions that will be asked.

On-site interviews include a general introduction to the community, supper (hosted by a couple of call committee members), and a two-three hour evening interview. Indications of thoughtfulness and hospitality make a deep impression on candidates. If there is a parsonage, a tour of the parsonage should be included. If the candidate has traveled some distance, may consider showing the community the next morning before leaving. The congregation is responsible for the costs involved in the interview process. This includes mileage, transportation, car rental, hotel accommodations, and food.

Prepare a packet of information for each candidate and either mail it to him/her or have it available when he/she visits. This may include a recent newsletter, a booklet from the most recent history celebration, a visitor booklet for the area, or anything else that demonstrates the character of your congregation and community.

You may want to use some basic questions in the interview of all candidates. Some sample questions are in Addendum M. Include specific questions that arise from reading the person's profile. Some congregations provide questions before the interview for the candidate, especially if the interview is not in person. Some of your questions may arise out of the questions the candidate asks the committee. Be sure each member of the committee asks at least one question.

After initial interviews, committees may desire to have second interviews with one or more candidates. These are conducted in person. Since ordained ministers are often serving in congregations, taking a Sunday off for interviews can be difficult. Consider asking the candidate to open with a Bible study or devotion—but be sure to ask this before they arrive.

Interviews should include prayer, time for each person to share about him/herself, time for the candidate to share about him/herself and questions from the candidate. Remember he/she is discerning his/her call to this congregation at the same time you are discerning. This is a time to work together in discernment with the candidates.

**PASTORAL INTERVIEW GUIDE**

Candidate \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

[personal motivation]

Describe some of your most important accomplishments.

How did you go about reaching your goals?

What outside interests or hobbies do you enjoy?

[building body cohesiveness]

Describe how you would help new members become part of the congregation.

From your experience, can you tell us of a time when you confronted a person or a group of people who were undermining the unity of the church. How did you resolve this?

[commitment to church growth]

How much time and effort do you put into accomplishing your ministry?

[visioning capacity]

Describe a situation that was stagnate or failing and describe how you took action to revitalize it.

[responsiveness to community]

How important to you is your visibility in the community?

Describe how you might contribute to the quality of life in our community.

[creating ownership of ministry]

Tell us about techniques you might use to recruit members to carry out areas of ministry of the congregation.

What ideas do you have to stimulate the congregation to do outreach?

[gift utilization]

How do you recognize talents in others and motivate them to use their gifts.

[relationship building]

What steps do you take to help others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?

Describe a relationship you have had or initiated with a person who is radically different from yourself or holds very different beliefs.

[flexibility]

How do you see that your work gets completed when it is disrupted by emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances?

[reaching the unchurched]

Describe ways that you typically associate with unchurched people in your community.

What guidance or training could you provide to members who seek to reach unchurched persons?

[resilience]

When pressure mounts, how do you maintain your cool in ministry?

How did you survive when a defeat or failure got the best of you?

[demonstrating strong Christian faith]

How do you go about describing your personal faith with your members?

How do you help others with faith issues? For example, describe techniques you might use to counsel those who have suffered a loss and are having trouble with issues of faith.

In what ways have you paid a price for your Christian faith? What can you do to help others understand the cost of discipleship?

[developing faith formation]

How would you help people understand that there are varying stages of development of faith?

How could you provide opportunities to people to grow in their faith?

[multicultural ministry]

Describe how you have assigned a group of people to work together toward a common goal, despite their differences.

Describe how you have helped persons of varying cultures look through another's eyes at a situation.

[commitment to the elca]

Describe how a congregation should participate in the ministry of the ELCA.

Describe your special interests for National or World ministry.

What concerns you most about the ELCA?

[youth]

What is your comfort level with children in general, and how do you see your role as Pastor in providing leadership in their spiritual and social growth?

Would you encourage the children and youth of our congregation to come to you for help and/or counsel with their problems or concerns? Would you value their input and consider their ideas?

We have some very good leadership for children at St. John, and understand from your comments that you do not wish to become a "youth pastor". We realize that young families and children are a very important part of our ministry. How would you work with our Sunday School and youth leaders to strengthen that ministry?

Occasional children's sermons and regular youth participation have been part of our Sunday morning worship. What is your view on this?

[music]

Our music program is functioning well, staffed with nonprofessionals. What would your expectations be for a music program?

## Chapter Four: Selection of Candidate and Congregational Vote (Call Committee and Council)

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### *Selecting the Final Candidate*

Once a call committee discerns to call a candidate, the call committee chair notifies the candidate that they are the preferred candidate and that the committee desires to give the candidate's name to council for consideration of a call. Once this candidate accepts this consideration, he or she must remove their name from any other call processes they are participating in with other congregations. In some cases, they may ask to delay the contact with council until another interview with a congregation is complete. Be sure to clarify when it is agreeable to share the candidate's name with the council.

Other candidates are then notified by the call committee chair that another candidate has been selected and that you appreciate their discernment with you.

In conversation with the congregation council, there may be a desire to bring the candidate and their family for a visit. This would be prior to the Congregational Meeting to vote to call. The pastor may lead worship and preach, or the pastor may lead a Bible Study. A Meet and Greet should be arranged so that people can meet them. Generally if the pastor and family visited, the vote would be scheduled for the following weekend. At the time of the visit, it would be helpful to arrange for the candidate to meet with a realtor and anyone else that would help them begin to settle into the community.

The Definition of Compensation should be completed and negotiated with the pastor and approved by the bishop's office before the congregational vote (see below).

### *Scheduling Congregational Meeting and Congregation Vote*

It is imperative that the congregation follow the constitution for this vote. Most will require at least two weeks written notice to members. Only those present may vote, no votes by proxy. The council prepares and moves two resolutions for the congregation to consider. The congregation should receive materials about the candidate well before the meeting. When the call is to a parish (more than one congregation), each congregation of the parish arranges for its own meeting.

Resolution One must be approved by a two-thirds majority in each congregation.

RESOLUTION ONE: "Shall \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_, be called to serve as pastor/associate in ministry/diaconal minister/deaconess of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church?"

\*Voting on this resolution is by written ballot and requires a two-thirds majority for approval.

RESOLUTION TWO: "Shall the initial annual compensation of the leader be: [an itemized list of compensation]?"

\*\*Voting on this resolution may be by voice vote and requires a simple majority for approval.

If the first resolution fails to be approved, the congregation president contacts the bishop's office for consultation about next steps. The president informs the candidate of the vote by telephone.

Once the vote has been taken, the actual vote is communicated by phone or email to the Office of the Bishop and the candidate is informed. If there was a change made in the compensation or Definition of Call, the president would also inform the candidate of these changes. It is helpful to begin to have a conversation about when the pastor plans to begin at the newcall.

#### *Letter of Call and Definition of Compensation*

The Definition of Compensation is under Congregational Recourses on the synod website, [www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org). should be completed and negotiated with the pastor and approved by the bishop's office before the congregational vote. The current salary are also on the synod website. These discussions will be primarily with the congregation president and the candidate. Compensation that is below guidelines will not be approved.

Once the compensation is agreed upon the bishop's office will produce the official Letter of Call and mail it to the Council President before the day of the congregation vote. The Letter will be signed on that day and mailed back to the bishop's office for signatures. The bishop must also receive the actual vote count and assurance the meeting was held per constitution in order to attest the vote. The bishop's office will mail it to the called pastor, a copy to the congregation and retain a copy for record.

On the second page of The Definition of Compensation, expectations for the first year of the newly called pastor and the congregation are to be specified. It is important to put thought into this as it is completed. Lack of clear expectations can result in misinformation and conflict.

The congregation is expected to cover the cost of the pastor's move. The congregation should ask for at least three estimates. Some moving companies may provide clergy discounts.

The candidate has thirty (30) days to formally accept the call once they have received the paperwork. Once the candidate has received the paperwork, they sign and return the signed copy of the Definition of Compensation to the congregation and they keep the Letter of Call. (Note the Letter of Call is utilized in the installation service). This serves as the formal acceptance of the call.



# Chapter Five: Beginning and New Relationship in Mission (Council)

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## *Scheduling the Start Date and Installation Date*

The council president and pastor communicate with the Bishop's office to determine the date for the installation service. The best practice is to host the installation service at a time when other congregations and clergy can be invited to participate, for example, Saturday or Sunday evening or even a weeknight. Usually a reception follows. The bishop or his appointee will be the pastor serving as the installing minister. The pastor may begin their ministry with the new congregation prior to the installation date.

If the pastor called is a first call pastor, they will also need to be ordained. Ordination is the responsibility of the synod bishop, and Bishop Satterlee expects direct communication with the candidate to determine the appropriate setting and date. In the ELCA, bishops ordain. Pastors are generally ordained prior to starting at the new congregation and will not administer the sacraments prior to ordination.

The Ministry Rites for Installation of a Pastor can be found at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Resources/Ministry-Rites.aspx>. You can download in a Word format and edit as necessary. At the installation service the Call Committee should be formally dismissed and thanked (see Addendum N).

## *Acknowledge the Transitional Ministry*

If the congregation has been served by an interim or regular supply pastor, it is helpful to recognize his/her ministry among you. It is generally recommended that the congregation plans at least one week between the transitional pastor and the new pastor. As with saying good bye to the previously called pastor, this is a time of saying good bye and setting the formal boundaries that a new pastor will be serving with the congregation.

## *Transition Team and Mutual Ministry*

As has been previously stated, ministry is about relationships. Getting started in a new place with new people, new expectations—both stated and unstated, is a challenge. Ministry is not only the work of the pastor. Ministry is the work of the church, the mission of the church. According to the constitution, the call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment. (C9.05.a)

As the new pastor begins, it is beneficial to ask him/her what information would be helpful. Things you might consider are where do they get a key to the church, where are the worship supplies, computer passwords if needed, where council minutes are filed, upcoming meetings scheduled, where is a good

place to get coffee, and where is the list of shut-ins or persons they should visit early in his/her ministry.

Some congregations may choose to begin with a Mutual Ministry Committee immediately. However, it might be more beneficial to set up a Transition Team with some members of the call committee as the pastor begins ministry in the new place. The Transition Team provides a place for discussing expectations, traditions, questions, unwritten practices, challenges. They may also serve as a team that helps arrange informal gatherings to meet people in the congregation and the community.

We recommend the book "Pastor and People" published by Augsburg publishing, ISBN: 9780806646510 for all leaders in the congregation. The Mutual Ministry Committee, Personnel Committee as well as ways of setting and maintaining healthy practices are covered therein.

### *Conclusion*

Please remember that you are carried in the prayers of your brothers and sisters in Christ around this synod and by the bishop and staff. May the Holy Spirit bless you and guide you as you seek to love God and neighbor.

**COMMENDATION/DISMISSAL OF CALL COMMITTEE**

**VP/P:** Now that the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of newly installed pastor*) is installed as Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of congregation*) Lutheran Church, we take a moment to release the Call Committee from their Charge. Today it is our privilege to give thanks for the Call Committee as they have completed their time of service. Would the call committee members, please come forward?

**PR:** Following prayerful discernment of this congregation, the Holy Spirit summoned you to serve as members of the Call Committee. You were charged in this service to prayerfully gather together, seeking guidance by the Spirit as you studied, reviewed, engaged in conversation with pastoral candidates and make a recommendation to the congregation council. Your journey was not without moments of frustrations and disappointments as well as self-discoveries and celebrations. Through it all you remained faithful in your charge and trusted in God's wisdom and direction. With thanks and praise, God has brought you and the members of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of congregation*) Lutheran Church to a successful conclusion of your charge. Let us pray. "Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. We give thanks for the ways these gifts have been shown forth among us through your servants, \_\_\_\_\_ (*names of call committee members*). We praise you for shared joys and accomplishments, and we commend our work to you. Grant that we may continue to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen."\*

**VP/P:** As the president (vice-President) of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of congregation*), and on behalf of the congregation, I now release you from your charge as the Call Committee and commend you for your faithful work. Well, done good and faithful servants! Please join me in offering our thanks for their time and dedication.

VP/P = Vice President/President of congregation

PR = Pastor

\*Prayer in quotes is from Sundays and Seasons' *Occasions in Church Life*