

CHAPTER 1: The Spiritual Work

The Biblical/Theological Grounding for the call process

Chapter Contents: Introduction -- Understanding Call -- Prayers -- A Community Bible Study -- Suggested Biblical Texts

Introduction

The time of calling a pastor can be a special time for reflection and prayer in the life of a congregation. This time of transition is an opportunity for the Congregation Council to provide encouragement, trust in God, unity and spiritual growth. Prayer, bible study, and regular devotions keep the leadership spiritually centered as it guides the congregation in grieving its loss, assessing the current congregational strengths and weaknesses, creating a vision for mission and ministry, and calling a new pastor.

What: *Prayer, Bible Study, Devotions, Theological Reflection,* These are tools that will help you as you move through the call process. With these tools a congregation learns not only the mechanics of the call process but also the spiritual nature of what is happening. There are suggested resource materials in this section of the manual.

When: Begin with Prayer *every time* members of the congregation gather. *Regularly* include reflections in newsletters and bulletins that tell of the call process and invite people into a deeper understanding of call.

Where: In church during *worship*, during *meetings*, in *bulletins*, as part of *announcements*, in *newsletters* there should be regular communication of the call process and invitations to pray. All of the places that communicate the work of the congregation are opportunities for sharing the call process and inviting people into a process of spiritual growth. Appendix A contains an example of a brochure created by Trinity Lutheran Church in Stillwater for a recent senior pastor call process. You might consider creating a similar brochure to convey information.

Who: *The whole community* needs to always be in prayer. During this process the prayer is focused on the call process as well as the other community concerns. Every group and committee should be furnished with information about the call process and be asked to share in this spiritual work.

How: The leadership begins its meetings with *bible study, devotions, and prayer* before beginning its various tasks. The leadership should also provide suggested prayers, biblical material and other devotional materials to other groups in the congregation. Some sample materials are included in this manual.



Understanding “Call”

What is a “Call”?

At the heart of our Lutheran theology is something Martin Luther termed “the priesthood of all believers.” In our baptism God has called us all to be part of the body of Christ. Luther reminded us of the Latin origin of the word “vocation” - *vocare* - which means “to call.” All of us take up our vocations - our callings - as God's people. We are all ministers in whatever daily activity is ours. Within this priesthood of all believers there exists the ordained office of ministry, the “office of Word and Sacrament” (see *Augsburg Confession*, below).

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.

In order for a call to be issued there must be first a congregational vote for the candidate; second the president and secretary of the congregation, representing the congregation's decision, must sign the letter of Call and finally the Bishop, representing the whole church, must sign the letter of Call.

What the Augsburg Confession says

The Lutheran Church looks to the documents called “The Lutheran Confessions” for its understanding of scripture, the faith and the church. Chief among these documents is the *Augsburg Confession*, adopted by the reformers in the city of Augsburg (Germany) in 1530. These short, concise statements help us understand the nature of the office of ministry in the Lutheran Church:

“We cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions. We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.”

(Article IV, The Augsburg Confession)

“To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.”

(Article V, The Augsburg Confession)

“Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.” All Christians are called to the ministry of serving God and neighbor, but for the sake of good order in the church certain Christians are specially called to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament.

(Article XIV, The Augsburg Confession)

The Call to Ministry

It is through the church that God calls some Christians to ordained ministry. Once that call is discerned, the candidate normally devotes years to study, training, and preparation under the guidance of the whole church through the Bishop and the Candidacy Committee.

In a similar way, it is through the church that God calls ordained ministers to a specific pastorate. Not only does the local congregation participate in the call process, but so does the whole church through the office of the Bishop. Just as the whole church took an active role in the call to ordination, so now the whole church takes an active role in the call to a specific ministry.

This is shown in the fact that once a person is approved for ordination, the candidate must receive and accept a call to a specific ministry in order to be ordained. Ordination may occur in a local church, but it is always an ordination by the whole church as shown in the presence of the Bishop at the ordination service.

The Church and Call

The local church is fully the church, but the local church is not all the church there is. The local church calls a person to be its pastor, but the whole church has a stake in who is called and how the call process is handled.

The Call Committee, the Congregation Council and, eventually, the entire congregation participate fully in the process. But so does the Bishop, who represents both the interest and the commitment of the whole church in seeing that the pastor called is suited to ministry under the call that is extended.

The Bishop’s office has a deep concern for the well being of the congregation’s life and ministry. The Bishop and the staff also have a deep concern for the person and gifts of the prospective pastor. In the call process the Bishop and staff, the



congregation, and the prospective pastor work together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring about a new partnership that is faithful to the Gospel, empowers the local church in its ministry, and strengthens the whole church as people of God.

Prayers

For the work of the call committee

Almighty God, giver of all good gifts: Look on your Church with grace and guide the minds of those who shall choose a pastor for this congregation, that we may receive a faithful servant who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 46)

For new ventures

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 153)

For the departing pastor

Gracious God, you have united us all in one body. We give you thanks for the work of Pastor _____ among us. As he/she leaves *to a new congregation/retirement* surround *him/her* with your Spirit. Give us the courage to release *him/her* to a new call and bless our remembering of the work that has been done among us. Guide Pastor _____ and us as we continue to seek to share the Good News of salvation through your son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

During the interim time

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

During interviews

God, keep us mindful of your presence among us as we seek to discern your will for us. We pray that you will help us see beyond our own needs to the needs of your whole church. We pray that you will open our eyes to new possibilities, and opportunities of being your people. Guide us and lead us O Lord. Amen.

At Meetings

Life giving God, create among us a desire to do your will. Open our hearts to your Word. Lead us as we seek to lead. Guide us as we seek to guide. God, we desire a new pastor to be among us to lead us and walk with us. Direct us as we wait. Bless all who serve in the congregation, especially those who have the responsibility to lead us in the call process. Bless us Lord Jesus. Amen

A Community Bible Study

Suggested texts on following page

LEADER: Open with 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.

A. One person reads the lesson:

In silence write one word or phrase from the lesson that seems significant:

Each person shares the word or phrase without additional comment.

B. A second person reads the lesson:

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

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

C. A third person reads the lesson:

Each person reflects in one sentence or less what this passage is saying to the congregation at this time while you are in the Call Process.

If time allows, a 10-20 minute open discussion may be included at this time.



Closing Prayer:

LEADER: *Lord God, we are your servants in need of your love.*

The leader then offers a prayer for the person on his/her right. That person prays for the person on his/her right, continuing around the room until each person has been included.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Suggested Biblical Texts

The following are just a few texts that may be used for devotions or bible study during the call process. The lessons for each Sunday may also be used for your study.

Matthew 28: 16-20

The Call of Matthew: Matthew 9:9-13

Call of the first Disciples: Luke 5: 1-11

John 1:35-46: "Come and See"

John 11:33-35

John 12:20-26

Romans 12: 1-8 (9-21)

I Corinthians 3:1-9

Ephesians 6: 10-18

Philippians 2: 1-11

I Timothy 2: Instructions concerning Prayer

3: 1-7 Qualifications of Bishops

3: 8-13 Qualifications of Deacons

4: 6-16 A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

Reflections on God's Call:

Call of young people:

Samuel : I Samuel 2:1- 3:18

Mary: Luke 1: 26-38

Call of Elderly

Elizabeth and Zechariah : Luke 1

Abraham and Samuel: Genesis 18: 9:15

Simeon and Anna: Luke 2: 22-38

Call of the Disciples:

Follow Me: Matthew 4:18-22; Mark:1-16-20; Luke 5: 1-11

Reflections on being the church:

Read The Book of Acts together. Read one chapter a week. Begin meetings by reflecting on recent readings and the ministry of your congregation.

Other Bible Studies

Chapter 12, Appendix A contains two four-part Bible studies on the call process, designed for use with the call committee, the Mission Exploration Team, or any group of interested congregation members in an adult forum or small-group setting. You could choose one, or do both of them at different times in the call process.





CHAPTER 2: Timeline/Checklist

Timeline / Flow Chart for Call Process

	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
	<p>Leave Taking. Pastor Announces he/she is leaving.</p>	<p>Congregational Mission Exploration. Pastor leaves. Interim begins, Mission Profile Team starts.</p>	<p>Calling the Pastor. Mission Profile Team work completed. Call Committee begins.</p>	<p>Beginning new ministry. Call issued. Welcome of new pastor</p>
TIME FRAME	1 - 3 months (may be longer)	3 months to 1 year	2 - 4 months	
PASTORAL COVERAGE	Pastor's final weeks; supply pastor as bridge to Interim Pastor if needed	Interim Pastor. (Interim may work with the Mission Profile process.)	Interim Pastor	Interim. New Pastor
COUNCIL	Plans farewell activities for current pastor. Meets with synod Staff person for exit interview, to secure interim, to begin call process. Arranges for pastoral coverage before interim begins. Develop Communication strategy	Introduces interim ministry to the congregation (blessing). Selects the group to be responsible for the development of the Mission Profile. Sets directions for the Mission Profile process. Sees that the ministry and work of the congregation continues. Is in contact with Synod staff person.	Sets congregational meeting to receive Mission Profile Team report in consultation with Synod staff. Appoints call committee. Receives report of call committee, sets dates for vote. Works with Synod staff to prepare pastoral package. Maintain the ministry and mission of the congregation.	Plan farewell for interim pastor. Prepares for welcoming new pastor. Works with synod staff and new pastor to set installation date.
CONGREGATION	Participates in the farewell activities for pastor.	Maintains the ongoing ministry and mission. Participates as invited in the development of the Congregation's Mission Profile.	Meets to hear and approve Congregational Mission Profile as basis for call. Meets to vote on call committee recommendation for pastor.	Says farewell to interim pastor. Welcomes new pastor.
MISSION PROFILE TASK FORCE, CALL COMMITTEE, OR OTHER DESIGNATED GROUP	(Not yet formed)	May meet with synod staff person to define tasks. Develops the Congregation's Mission Profile, comprised of descriptions (a) of congregation's current life and dynamics, and (b) future mission challenges and goals. Writes a final report to present to congregation.	Reports to council. Presents report to congregation. Members may be asked to serve on call committee	(Finished)
CALL COMMITTEE	(Not yet formed)	Meets to review Congregational Mission Profile as Profile is finalized. Call Committee is formed at completion of Phase II.	Determines process for interviewing candidates. Receives names. Interviews candidates. Recommends candidate.	(Finished)
SYNOD STAFF	Conducts exit interview with pastor and council. Meets with council to review process. Makes contact with Interim Pastor possibilities	Helps develop process for development of Mission Profile. Work with Interim as needed.	With Bishop if possible, attends congregation meeting to review transition report. Meets with Call Committee to set process. Brings names to call committee. Works with council to set salary package.	Synod representative (usually bishop or staff) present to install new pastor.



Checklist

Phase one: Leave Taking

- In consultation with synod staff, decide on interim pastoral coverage.
- Future Pastoral Acts of Former Pastors is discussed with leadership.
- Exit interview is completed.
- Congregational Records are certified as up to date
(Certificate of Completion of Congregational Records is given)
- Financial Obligations (both of pastor to congregation and of congregation to pastor) are certified as completed.
(Certificate of Completion of all Financial Obligations is given.)
- Farewell Celebration occurs
- Congregational Leadership attends “Calling the Called” event

Phase two: Mission Exploration Process

- Mission Exploration Team is formed.
- Mission Profile is developed
- Call Committee is formed
- Congregational “Town Hall Meeting” is held.

Phase Three: Call Committee is Active

- Call Committee attends “Calling the Called” Event
- Suggestion of Names is elicited from congregation
- Packets (including congregational mission profile) are prepared for candidates

- ___ Call Committee meets with Bishop’s Associate for orientation.
- ___ Call Committee meets with Bishop’s Associate to receive candidates’ names.
- ___ Call Committee meets with Congregation Council to suggest a candidate
- ___ Call Committee and Council, together with candidate, agree to a compensation package
- ___ Congregation Council sets the date for the congregational meeting
- ___ A reception is held to “meet and greet” the candidate in advance of the congregational meeting.
- ___ The Letter of Call is prepared
- ___ (148A investigation is completed.)

Phase 4: Welcoming the Rostered Leader:

- ___ Where appropriate, a staff-building consultation occurs.
- ___ Installation of the new leader occurs
- ___ “Meet and Greet” sessions are planned in conjunction with the new leader
- ___ Six month review occurs with pastor, leadership and Synod Staff Person





CHAPTER 3: The Current Pastor Resigns or Retires

Chapter Contents: The Exit Evaluation and Interview -- The Termination Date -- The Farewell Celebration -- Liturgy for Departure of a Pastor from a Congregation -- Completion of Obligations -- Future Pastoral Acts of Former Pastors – Getting Familiar with what is about to unfold the “Call Process”

When the pastor resigns or retires, the primary concern for many congregations is to find a new pastor quickly. No one can guarantee how long the call process will take. Most congregations greatly underestimate the time needed for completion of the call process. Congregations are encouraged not to hurry the process of calling a new pastor. There is work to be done to lay a sound foundation for the next chapter in the congregation’s life. The next chapter will explore more fully the dynamics present for an effective period of “interim ministry”. In this chapter we give attention to the leave-taking of the pastor whose ministry is ending.

The Exit Evaluation and Interview

No one is in a position to have come to know the congregation from the intimate perspective of the pastoral office as has the pastor who is leaving. Both the congregation and the synod are well-served to explore the insights that pastor has to share as she or he takes leave. It is also a time for the congregational leadership to become more fully aware of dynamics that might affect the next pastorate, both positively and negatively. It is a conversation held in gratitude, honesty, and charity. The Exit Evaluation Forms on the next page can be used as a format for an exit interview between the Congregation Council or designated group and the pastor and the Synod staff person.

The Process:

- Coordinate with synod staff to lead the meeting, using the structured format (Chapter 12, Appendix B)
- Plan to meet about one hour
- Choose a site that is comfortable and non-threatening
- Identify someone to take notes which can be shared with council, pastor, call committee, synod staff, and candidates being considered for call.
- Adopt a positive attitude for the interview, both in terms of the discussion and the insights that will be gained for future use.
- Create a climate of honesty, candor, and mutual respect.
- Begin with prayer and/or devotion.
- Rejoice in the ministry that has been completed and begin to anticipate the future ministry



- Be flexible regarding the structure to allow for spontaneous discussion relevant to the specific context.
- End the interview with a closing prayer

(Note: If for some reason the pastor is unable to be present, the exit interview process may be completed without the pastor.)

EXIT INTERVIEW FORM

(Pastoral Response)

(Photocopy-ready form in Chapter 12, Appendix B, one copy per participant, one copy to be the official record.)

Pastor: _____

Person filling out the form: _____

1. What were the compelling reasons that attracted you to accept the call to this congregation?
2. How did your expectations of ministry here compare to the realities of your ministry here?
3. What things have given you the sense of greatest fulfillment? (With which things are you satisfied and pleased?)
4. What things have given you the sense of greatest frustration? (With which things are you unsatisfied/ dissatisfied or displeased?)
5. What do you consider as the strengths of the congregation?
6. What do you consider the weaknesses of the congregation?
7. What present areas of ministry and program do you think should be retained and continued?
8. What new areas of ministry and program do you think should get emphasis in the future?
9. What do you think that this congregation can do to strengthen and support the incoming pastor?
10. What would you like this congregation to do to help you and your family in the transition soon to take place?
11. Are there any critical issues or ongoing concerns that should be addressed in the near future?



EXIT INTERVIEW FORM
(Congregational Response)

(Photocopy-ready form in Chapter 12, Appendix B, one copy per participant, one copy to be the official record.)

Congregation: _____

Person(s) filling out the form: _____

1. What were the compelling reasons that attracted the congregation to call this pastor to the congregation?
2. How did your expectations of the pastor compare to the realities?
3. Regarding this pastoral ministry: What things have given you a sense of greatest fulfillment? (With which things are you satisfied and pleased?)
4. Regarding this pastoral ministry: What things have given you the sense of greatest frustration? (With which things are you unsatisfied/dissatisfied or displeased?)
5. What do you consider the strengths of the congregation?
6. What do you consider the weaknesses of the congregation?
7. What present areas of ministry and program do you think should be retained and continued?
8. What new areas of ministry and program do you think should get emphasis in the future?
9. What do you think that the congregation can do to strengthen and support the incoming pastor?
10. What would you like the pastor to do to help the congregation in the transition soon to take place?
11. Are there any critical issues or ongoing concerns that should be addressed in the near future?

The Termination Date

When a pastor accepts a new call, the pastor will normally notify the congregational leadership first, then the congregation through a letter to all members. Normally the termination date is approximately 30 days from the time of announcement, and any accrued vacation is taken at the end of the tenure. (For instance, if a pastor announces her leaving in early September and has two weeks vacation accrued, the pastor may announce “My resignation will be effective October 30, with the last two weeks of October taken as vacation. My last Sunday will be October 16.” The congregation pays all salary and benefits through October 30, though all expenses (car allowance, etc.) would end as of October 16.

The Farewell Celebration

A congregation will want to arrange with the pastor a time to celebrate and give thanks for the years of ministry together. Often this takes place on the final Sunday. It is often appreciated that others of the pastor’s extended family and ministry colleagues also be invited.

Liturgy for Departure of a Pastor from a Congregation

When used as part of the Sunday Service, to be used following the Prayers of the Church; at other times, it can be used in conjunction with Responsive Prayer II, after the Evening Prayer before the benediction.)

The Pastor (P), a Representative of the synod/conference designated by the Bishop (B) **, and a Representative of the Congregation (R) come forward.

*(** - Due to availability, a representative from the synod may not be able to be a part of this service. For a retiring pastor, it is especially important to have synod representation to express appreciation on behalf of the whole church. The likelihood of representation is increased if the date is first coordinated with a synod staff person.)*

R: Pastor N____, on _____, we called you to be our pastor: to proclaim God’s Word, to baptize new members into the Church of Jesus Christ, to announce God’s forgiveness to us, and to preside at our celebration of the Lord’s Supper. With the gospel you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you (and your family) have been important to our life together in the Church of Jesus Christ and in our service to this community.
You have served our congregation faithfully for ___ years. You are now leaving our midst to [become pastor of ____]. As your fellow members of this



congregation we wish to honor your ministry among us and bid you farewell and Godspeed in your new endeavor, bringing closure to your ministry at ____.

- P: I thank the members of ____ Lutheran Church for the love, the kindness, and support shown to me (and my family) during active ministry among you. I ask forgiveness for the ways I have sinned against you. I am grateful for the ways my ministry has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.
- C: We receive your thankfulness. We offer you our forgiveness and accept that you now leave to resume your ministry [in another congregation]. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask forgiveness for the ways we have sinned against you. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.
- P: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.
- B: Do you, members of ____ congregation, release him/her from the duties as pastor?
- C: We do, with God's help.
- B: Do you offer encouragement for his/her ministry as it unfolds in his/her new [congregation]?
- C: We do, with God's help.
- B: Do you, Pastor ____, release ____ congregation from turning to you and depending on you?
- P: I do, with God's help.
- B: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here?
- P: I do, with God's help.
- B: On behalf of the Saint Paul Area Synod I witness to the words spoken here: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. We will hold you in our prayers as you begin your ministry at ____ [or as you retire]. We pledge our support and love to you and wish you God's blessing.
- R: Let us pray: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. We give you thanks for the countless ways our lives have been woven together in the

tapestry of your church. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories, but move us in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

R: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

R: The Lord bless us, defend us from evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C: Amen.

The peace is shared.

Completion of Obligations

The ELCA constitution indicates that the pastor is responsible for maintaining congregational records. Similarly, the second statement certifies that there are no outstanding financial obligations of either the pastor or congregation. Both forms are to be filled out and returned to the Synod office as the pastor leaves.

- (A) see Chapter 12, Appendix B for “Certification of Completion of Congregational Records”
- (B) see Chapter 12, Appendix B for “Certification of Completion of all Financial Obligations”

Future Pastoral Acts of Former Pastors

One of the most commonly troublesome issues in ministry is the matter of former pastors continuing to perform pastoral acts for former parishioners. It is unethical for pastors to do so, but in any given instance it seems so natural and even desirous. The following is offered as a newsletter piece or bulletin insert to be used shortly after the pastor's departure. (See Chapter 12, Appendix B for two other letters. One from an interim pastor explaining appropriate involvement of previous pastors and one a personal letter from a departing pastor.)



An Open Letter of Pastoral Advice - from Bishop Peter Rogness

The following was originally published in the newsletter of the Saint Paul Area Synod, and has been widely reproduced. It is intended to give guidance to pastors and congregations alike.

WHY NOT ASK OUR FORMER PASTOR?

(An Open Letter of Pastoral Advice from Bishop Peter Rogness)

With our synod being as geographically compact as it is, pastors who have moved from one congregation to another ministry are often asked to perform pastoral acts by their former parishioners. There is no painless way out of this situation that is both understandable and awkward.

A good pastoral relationship is not coldly functional; it is personal as well. So, it's not at all uncommon for people facing a wedding, funeral, baptism, or illness to desire the presence of a pastor who has been personally important in their lives. Good pastors can expect that times will come when former parishioners would like the pastoral relationship to continue for a special occasion.

That's where we run into trouble. We need to be clear on what has come to be understood as a professional ethic for pastors: when a pastor leaves a parish, she/he is no longer those people's pastor. He/she may continue to be a friend, but the pastoral relationship is ended. The implications for pastors are clear; it is often (not always) appropriate to do what other friends do - attend a wedding or funeral - but the act of presiding or participating as a pastor in those moments belongs to the current pastor.

I served a wonderful parish for ten years and for the next 15 years continued to live in the same house, just over a mile from the church. I knew this awkward situation well – I was often asked. I found the most helpful response to be something like, “I’m not your pastor anymore, _____ is. But I’m glad you’d like me there, and I’d love to come if invited, as your other friends do.”

I don't say, “You'll have to talk to your pastor about that.” That would put the current pastor in the no-win situation of either saying yes and relinquishing the pastoral role to me or saying no and being regarded by the parishioner as cold, jealous, and insensitive to their wishes.

Nor could I say that the church has rules against that, leaving the people to be angry at this arbitrary and autocratic church (and at me for caving in and going along with it). It was best to simply draw the line – I would not do those things.

So what is the best way to handle this?

For laity: Don't even ask - it immediately puts both the current and former pastor in very awkward positions. Even if the current pastor is someone that you hardly know, you affirm your former pastor best by inviting her/him to come while showing high regard for the pastoral office he/she held by seeking out that new pastor to be your pastor.

For pastors: Don't ever give in to the temptation to think “just in this case.” Everybody is going to

think their situation is the exceptional one. You reduce future difficulty for yourself, your colleagues, and all you former parishioners by being very clear that you simply don't do pastoral acts for former parishioners.

There are also other situations that arise, such as contacts with former pastors over personal life struggles, complaints about the life of the parish, etc., but the same principle applies: we honor our former pastors most highly by recognizing the importance of the work they do and the office they hold by looking to current pastors for those ministry acts.

Most pastors know of this issue, and most are sensitive and appropriate. Many laity have never thought about it and may innocently make this kind of request, not thinking about the complexities. It doesn't hurt to remind congregational members from time to time that his is how we create and nurture healthy on-going pastoral relationship. I don't mean this to sound arbitrary and legalistic. I mean it to be pastoral. This is how we best care for the whole body and each other as members of it.

Getting Familiar with What is About to Unfold – the “Call Process”

The Saint Paul Area Synod staff holds an event three times a year for congregations entering or already in the process of calling a new minister. “*Calling the Called*” is a one-evening event held in January, May, and September. The target audience is Church Council members, Call Committee members, and others involved in this transition period in the congregation’s life. There is an overview of the process, conversations about adaptations helpful in your particular setting, opportunity for questions and discussion with the synod bishop and staff as well as with folks from other congregations. There is also opportunity for more in-depth discussion of particular phases of the process. Some have found it helpful for Council leaders to participate as a vacancy looms or is beginning, and Call Committee members to attend several months later as they take on their work. Check the synod website (www.spas-elca.org) or call the synod office to find the next dates and sign up to attend. The only cost is to cover a light supper.





CHAPTER 4: After the Pastor Leaves...The Transition/Interim Period

Chapter Contents: Increased Leadership by Lay and Remaining Staff -- Response to the Emotional Dynamics Caused by the Pastoral Vacancy -- Planning for Continued Pastoral Support -- Multiple Pastor Situations

Following the resignation or loss of a pastor the congregation will be required to move through a successful transition from one pastor to a new pastor. The pastoral vacancy usually occurs with little advance notice, sometimes catching the congregation off guard. Emotions and anxieties may quickly surface that will need prompt attention. The uncertainties, emotions, and questions about the future of the congregation present significant challenges to the congregation. (See Chapter 12, Appendix C for a look at the emotional stages your congregation may experience).

Yet, the transition period can be an opportunity for the congregation to grow through the challenges created by the pastoral vacancy. The transition/interim period can be a time of revitalization for the congregation.

The transition/interim period will include the following:

- Increased leadership by lay and remaining staff
- Planning for continued pastoral support – the interim pastor.
- Development of the Congregational Mission Profile (ref. Chapter 5)
- Selection of the Call Committee (ref. Chapter 6)
- The Call Process, and calling of the new pastor (ref. Chapters 7, 8, and 9)

Increased Leadership by Lay and Remaining Staff

The announcement of a pastoral vacancy will trigger the need for increased leadership among the lay members of the congregation, and the remaining staff members. There will be an immediate need for an ordered process to keep a sense of stability in the congregation's life and to help people stay focused on the mission they share as God's people. The congregation will normally look to its Congregation Council members, other Pastor(s), and remaining staff members (Program directors, administrative assistants, etc.) for this leadership. This leadership "team" has the task of overseeing and guiding the ministry of the congregation during this time. At the outset the leadership "team" may simply attempt to maintain the status quo, which is no small task given the challenges presented by the pastoral vacancy. The leadership "team" should communicate



closely with the Synod staff for assistance during this period.

The following leadership tasks need to be assigned and individuals authorized to handle them:

- Provide to the membership of the congregation reassurance that pastoral ministry will be fulfilled;
- Assist the membership of the congregation in the processing of their feelings related to the departure of the pastor;
- Assure the continuation of services of worship and to assist those who lead worship (supply pastors, interim pastor(s), assisting ministers, musicians, and others);
- Give support and guidance to staff persons (office personnel, music personnel, custodial personnel, etc.) who normally function under pastoral oversight (continuation of staff meetings or conferences which help clarify needs, directions and expectations);
- Assure continuation of pastoral ministries (hospital visits, other visitations, emergency pastoral response, funerals, weddings, confirmation, baptisms);
- Support congregational leaders (council members, financial people, etc.) in the service of their various responsibilities;
- Assure confidentiality in regard to sensitive issues that arise during the period of transition.
- Be a resource to the next called pastor and assist her/him in the continuation of immediate and special pastoral ministry needs;
- Assign a persons or small group to develop a communications strategy, in order to make sure that the members of the congregation and the staff are well informed about issues relating to the transition, e.g. how the call process works, where you are in the time line, etc.

The leadership tools for addressing these needs may include: Newsletter or bulletin items, small group discussions, review of current policies and other current congregational resources.

Planning for Continued Pastoral Support

Although lay and staff leadership can attend to many of the issues presented to a congregation in transition, pastoral presence and support is still needed. The congregation must continue to worship and pray together during the transition period. A congregation that relaxes or ignores the worship needs of its members will find it even more difficult to deal with the pastoral vacancy. It is recommended that close contact be maintained with the Synod staff as a source for pastoral support resources.

Interim Pastors

When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the congregational leadership, with guidance from the Synod staff, will need to determine how best to arrange for continuing pastoral leadership during the transition period. The intentional interim pastor is used in the Saint Paul Area Synod. This approach gives full pastoral presence and support during the transition period. Interim pastors are particularly effective when a congregation experiences significant emotions due to the pastor's departure (anger, grief, sadness, hard feelings, etc.). Interim pastors are trained to work through the emotions so that the congregation is able to continue to minister, engage in a meaningful Call Process and, ultimately, to warmly receive a new pastor. Chapter 12, Appendix C, contains helpful information about interim ministry, including a liturgy for the Blessing of the Interim that is appropriate for use in worship whenever an interim pastor begins serving.

Model One – Intentional Interim Pastors

(See Guidelines for Interim Pastoral Ministry in Chapter 12, Appendix C)

Those who serve as Intentional Interim Pastors work under an agreement called an Interim Covenant (in Chapter 12, Appendix C). They are not under Call to the congregation and they will not be available as a candidate for a regular Call to the congregation. They may serve on a part time or full time covenant. Salary is based on the salary package of the former pastor.

1. Interim Part time: Depending on local circumstances and their personal availability these pastors would serve congregations in a limited way in the role of interim pastor.
2. Interim Full time: These pastors would serve congregations full time during the transitional period with all of the usual pastoral duties of a full time pastor.

Model Two - Pastors Under Term Call

Under some circumstances, particularly after a long pastorate or in a conflicted congregation or other unusual circumstances, a Call may be extended for a specific term. These are pastors who are called by the congregation for a specific term. Their availability as a candidate for regular Call following the ending of the term Call must be negotiated prior to the issuance of the Term Call. A congregational meeting is required with a 2/3 vote in favor of extending a Letter of Call. In most cases, a term call is suggested by the synod because of the particular needs of congregations and the availability of a particularly well-suited pastor. When a term call is issued, the process as identified in this manual may be modified; it is usually put in place more quickly.

Availability of pastors is a significant matter at any given time. The Synod Staff will assist in the search for Intentional Interim pastors and those available for Term Call.



Supply pastors

Supply pastors may preside at worship, preach, teach on Sunday morning and/or may provide a minimum of pastoral care for the seriously ill or those in crisis. (*A list of pastors who have indicated their willingness to serve congregations for this type of ministry during pastoral vacancies is available from the Synod office.*)

These pastors work either for specific, one-time duties, or for very limited work defined in a carefully designed contract that outlines the scope of their work and range of authority. Sunday supply and part time pastors may be pastors who are retired, On leave From Call, or lay persons with special training who have been authorized by the Synod to engage in this ministry.

Multiple Pastor Situations

The call process takes on a different dimension when there is a pastoral staff of more than one pastor. When one pastor resigns a call the other pastor's relationship and responsibilities in the congregation may change dramatically. While most material in this manual will not specifically change when a new Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor is being called, there are a few dimensions of this process that should be highlighted.

There are always exceptions, but generally in a staff situation it is best for an Associate or co-pastor to begin to seek another call when the Senior Pastor leaves. This is not always possible. It is also important to note that it is rarely advisable for an associate pastor to seek the Senior position.

When an Associate Pastor is being called

- The Senior Pastor may, with the support of the Congregation's Council or Call Committee, screen potential candidates before a call committee interview is initiated.
- A Senior Pastor does not necessarily serve on the Call Committee, but in either case there must be a plan for the Senior's input on potential associates.
- It has been the practice of the Synod to recommend that two stipulations be included in Calls issued for Associate Pastor positions. They are: a) *"In the event of a vacancy in the position of Senior Pastor, the pastor here called shall under no circumstances be considered for the position of Senior Pastor."* Rationale: There is inevitably some sentiment by those closest to the Associate Pastor to "elevate" that pastor to the Senior Pastor position. Just as inevitably, there is sentiment among other members for seeking a new Senior Pastor. The experience of the church over the years is that there is a high frequency of failed or unsatisfying ministries

when such a call is issued. Experience has taught the wisdom of having all parties agree at the outset that such a move is not a possibility; and b) *"This Call terminates six months after the arrival of a new Senior Pastor."* Rationale: This condition is preferable to the previously used "co-terminus" language, which implies the Associate leaves simultaneously with the Senior Pastor. This recommended language allows for pastoral continuity during the Interim/Transition period; it gives the Associate Pastor time to consider the changing nature of the ministry; it leaves open the possibility that a new Senior Pastor and congregational leadership may wish to continue the Associate Pastor's ministry. If the latter comes to be the case, the congregation is free to issue a new call to the Associate Pastor at that time.

When an Associate Pastor is under consideration for call as Senior Pastor

- As was stated above, "it is rarely advisable for an associate pastor to seek the Senior position." This counsel arises out of the accumulated experience of the church that such pastorates are often less than satisfying. Nevertheless, congregations and pastors continue to express interest in exploring this possibility, which can in some cases turn out very well.
- The overarching concern in this scenario is this: do not shortchange the call process! This means:
 - Attend to the work of saying farewell to the outgoing pastor
 - Do a thorough job of mission exploration – analysis of congregation and community, seeking clarity over the mission profile for the next 5-10 years you believe God is calling you to, and what skills and abilities you will need in a new lead pastor to move into that mission.
 - When you reach that point, then face the question of considering the associate pastor for the call to Senior Pastor. If the decision is to proceed into such consideration, be aware of several factors/ steps:
 1. Determine whether you will (a) consider the associate pastor alone and make a decision to call or not call before moving to others, or (b) consider the associate pastor along with several other candidates.
 2. Make the interview experience itself as thorough as you would with any other candidates. Don't make any assumptions because of familiarity. Do the same preparation of interview questions, the full interview based on experience and mission profile, the same evaluation of interview by the committee afterward.
 - If the decision is made to recommend the associate pastor for call as Senior Pastor, it is strongly advised that there be nearly unanimous



support from both the call committee and council. Lacking this invites disaster. Similarly, it is recommended that the congregational call vote be over 90%. A well-known pastor who has over 10% of the congregation voting against him/her would be foolish to accept a call to a divided church.

When a Senior Pastor is being called

- The Council will have an initial meeting with the associate(s) and determine the participation level of the associate in the Call Process, and review the pastoral status of the assistant/associate. The Council shall note:
 - What, if any, limitations of call are placed on the associate in regard to a Senior Pastor leaving. (May not be called as a Senior, co-terminus provision, Call terminates 6 months after the Senior departs, etc.)
 - What are this pastor's intentions? (The associate may not know, or have a clear idea, and may not be able to share much. But the issue should at least be opened. Confidentiality at this point is essential)
- If an Associate or Assistant Pastor intends to stay under call to the congregation, or is at least open to that possibility, he/she:
 - will need to be kept informed regarding the Call Process;
 - may be asked to advise in the development of mission profile (see chapter 5);
 - may be asked to be a part of some of the call activities;
 - should not be in on the structured interviews or decision process.
- All candidates should be provided an opportunity in their interview/visitation time to have a private conversation with all program staff including the Associate(s).
- After a name is selected by the Call Committee, and before a congregation votes, it is recommended that a day be arranged for a meeting between the candidate and the rest of the staff. This day may be led by a facilitator from outside the congregation.
- While the vote for Senior Pastor will take place after the staff meeting, it may be the recommendation of the facilitator, synod staff, and/or the Senior Pastor candidate that the Associate should begin to seek another call.

When a Co-Pastor is being called

- In the case of a clergy couple, several considerations:
 - A separate call is issued to each, even if one position is being shared.
 - Structure the interview so that the Call Committee has some time with each pastor individually, and some time with them together. Feel free to ask the same question of each person - don't make assumptions about similarities! Ask about strengths and weaknesses of each, complementarity, etc.
 - Note in the Compensation Guidelines the information on benefits Chapter 12, Appendix E or online at www.spas-elca.org).
- In the case of a co-pastor being called to join an incumbent co-pastor
 - The same advice given above for the calling of a senior pastor applies here as well. Especially important are the conversations between the incumbent and the candidate(s), and the outside facilitator described above.

When a Co-Pastor is being called as Senior Pastor

Some congregations have called their pastors to serve as co-pastors. When one of the co-pastors leaves the congregation, the following process may be used to consider the remaining pastor as senior/lead pastor:

1. The Church council (or mission study task force) study and review the vision and mission of the congregation, including a thorough job of the mission exploration—analysis of congregation and community, seeking clarity over the mission that God is calling the congregation to for the next 5-10 years.
2. Make a list of skills and abilities needed in pastoral leadership to move into that mission.
3. Determine whether the council will recommend continuing the co-pastor arrangement or move toward lead/senior pastor and associate roles.
4. Review the job description, ministry skills, and leadership qualities of the remaining co-pastor in light of the congregation's future mission, and determine if the congregation's mission needs are a good match to the pastor's ministry skills and abilities.
5. The council would then vote to bring a recommendation for action to the congregation regarding one or more of the following:
 - a. Continue the co-pastor arrangement, reaffirm the remaining pastor as one of the co-pastors, and open the call process for a new co-pastor, or
 - b. Change the pastoral model to lead/senior pastor with associate(s),
 - c. Consider calling the remaining co-pastor as lead/senior pastor
 - d. If the decision is made to issue a new call to the co-pastor as lead/senior pastor, then a call process for associate pastor(s) begins.





CHAPTER 5: The Mission Exploration Process and Development of the Congregational Mission Profile

Chapter Contents: Introduction -- Mission Exploration Process – The Congregational Mission Profile -- The Congregational "Debriefing" Meeting

Introduction

When a pastor leaves, the primary challenge facing the congregation is not simply the calling of another pastor as replacement. The vitally important first challenge is to do the work necessary to put in place the foundation for a successful next chapter of ministry in the congregation. This means developing a “mission profile” of the congregation – who you are and where you are being called to go. The process leading up to the calling of a new Pastor, Diaconal Minister, Deaconess or an Associate in Ministry is important in four distinct ways. First, it provides the opportunity to review and assess the mission and ministry of the congregation. Second, it provides the Call Committee with basic information and a description of leadership needs which will guide their work. Third, the profile will assist the synod staff in recommending candidates to be considered by the Call Committee. Fourth, it provides a picture of the congregation for the candidates as they consider serving the congregation. (Additional insight into the important tasks of the interim time is given in Chapter 12, Appendix C – Developmental Tasks of the Interim Period.)

Who oversees this work

It is recommended that your Congregation Council work with your Interim Pastor to develop and execute a mission exploration process for the congregation. This process, which is the primary work that the congregation engages in during the interim period, is designed to assist a congregation in taking an in-depth look at its context for mission. Oversight for this process can rest with one of several groups:

- a) The *Council* itself, or a sub-group of council members, could take it on.
- b) A specially appointed task force could be charged with this work. Some congregations appoint *Transition Teams* to oversee the mission study and other transitional concerns. Some synods have begun using *Mission Exploration Teams* that will be responsible for this work through the completion of the Congregational Mission Profile. To help focus outward, some congregations invite one or two participants who are not members of the congregation. (You may consider representation from a neighboring ELCA congregation, partner congregations, the community, the conference dean, or persons from programs housed in your church building. The Synod Staff can help identify persons.) See Chapter 12, Appendix D for a model of how a “mission exploration team” might work.



- c) If the congregation has a *Long Range Planning Committee* already in existence, it is a good fit to ask them to do it.
- d) The *Call Committee* itself can be convened and given this task. It is valuable to have one or two members from the Team which oversees the Mission Exploration Process to continue as members of the Call Committee, since these people would have extensive knowledge of all the work which led up to the completion of the Congregational Mission Profile

Purpose: Why this work is important

The purpose of the mission exploration process is to enable the congregation to:

- Claim ownership of the mission of the congregation and the call process
- Review the congregation's life and mission as the Church, the Body of Christ
- Discuss the church's challenges/opportunities in next 5-10 years
- Evaluate the congregation's present strengths
- Identify specific areas where the congregation needs to strengthen its ministry
- Identify the congregation's present context for mission
- Specify resources necessary to fulfill the mission of the congregation, including especially mission tasks in the parish community.
- Identify issues of conflict that affect the life of the congregation
- Arrive at a current understanding of the mission of the congregation
- Identify the gifts that are most important for the next pastor to possess

The Mission Exploration Process

This work can be done in several ways, however, each of the steps listed below is an important component of the process. Each step also contains ideas for process and activities. (See "The Mission Exploration Process" in Chapter 12, Appendix D for an expanded mission exploration process outline.) Summarized, those steps look like this:

STEP 1: Who we are

In this step, the congregation is invited to review the present focus of its life and mission and to decide whether this accurately reflects who they understand themselves to be. Also during this step, congregational members are invited to share their hopes and concerns for their future mission and ministry. The goal of this step is to assess where the congregation has been, where it sees itself now and possible directions for its mission and ministry. This step is intended to involve the whole congregation in reflection and discernment.

Key questions in this section of the mission exploration process include:

- What is our history?
- What do we say about ourselves?
- How do others describe us?

STEP 2: What are the mission possibilities for our congregation?

In the first step the focus is internal – what is happening in the congregation. During this step, the mission exploration process is focused externally. The task is to discern the needs in the community surrounding the congregation; and to look at mission opportunities provided in the wider church.

Key questions to be answered in this step include:

- What is the community we serve?
- What are the assets of our community? (What services are available?)
- What are the needs in our community?
- Who are the invisible people in our community? (The poor, lonely, homeless, hungry, angry, etc.)

What opportunities for partnership are available to our congregation: locally, synod wide, nationally and globally?

STEP 3: Assessment

In order to develop a proposal for mission the team which is working on the mission exploration process will need to explore the information gathered and seek to develop a definition of mission and ministry on behalf of the congregation.

Key questions to be answered in this section include:

- What have we learned about our mission and ourselves?
- What is Outreach?
- What is the relationship of the congregation with the community?
- Who are our mission partners?
- What is our mission focus now... where are we being led?

STEP 4: Development of a Mission Plan

After listening and assessment comes the task of creating the plan for the congregation. The plan needs to include a vision with a specific strategy to work toward the vision.

Key questions for this section:

- What of our current mission needs to be preserved? (Current projects, plans, mission statements?)
- What are our gifts?



- What is our Mission?
- How has our mission changed?
- What do we expect of our pastor in our mission work?
- What do we expect of the congregation's members?

STEP 5: Putting together the Congregational Mission Profile

As a final step in the mission exploration process, the Congregational Mission Profile is developed. This document is used throughout the ELCA by congregations who are seeking a new rostered leader. (See Chapter 12, Appendix D). The Congregational Mission Profile has five parts:

Part I. Congregational Information (Items 1 through 7)

- Before recording membership or attendance statistics, talk to the people responsible for these numbers. When was the last time the membership rolls were updated? How accurate are your church records? What is the policy for maintaining accurate records? (An interim pastor can help if work needs to be done in this area.)

Part II- Ministry Practices, Structure, Future

- Copies of newsletters, annual reports, or brochures on various aspects of ministry are good additions to this section.

Part III- Mission in the Community

- This is an opportunity to take a serious look at your community. Plan a day to have someone from outside your church re-introduce your congregation to the community. (A local history buff, a community organizer, a neighboring pastor may be good resources for this.)
- It is helpful to draw on materials, information and resources gathered during the mission profile process sessions to learn from others about how your congregation is perceived and what some of the basic needs of the community may be.

Part IV – Where is God Leading Us?

- This section describes the mission priorities which have been identified by the congregation in the mission exploration process.

Part V- The Leader We Seek

- Most Mission Exploration Teams survey the congregation to identify the characteristics of the pastor they seek. Note: While helpful, most people will think primarily in terms of worship

and their own personal relationship with the Pastor. The team is to use this information along with the rest of the profile to establish the key leadership needs.

How to Complete the Congregational Mission Profile

It is usually best for a small group to complete the Congregational Mission Profile. Much of the information for the profile will have been gathered during the Mission Exploration Process. Other information that congregations sometimes use to complete the profile includes:

For the statistical information:

- Demographics and congregational statistics from the ELCA (Go to the ELCA Home Page at www.elca.org. Under Quick Links on the right click locate a church near you. Enter the name of the congregation and the state. Click locate. Click on the name of the church. On the lower left side of the page click on *trend report for this congregation*. For community demographic information go to the ELCA Research and Evaluation page at <http://www.elca.org/research/>).
- Additional information on community characteristics and demographics available through the census bureau website.
- The annual Parochial report that your congregation fills out for the synod each year.
- Congregation treasurer
- Other congregational records

For the descriptive, subjective material:

- Surveys – both written and telephone (see Chapter 12, Appendix D for two examples)
- Focus groups
- Interviews with individuals or committees
- The local chamber of commerce, City hall, business associations, libraries
- Interviews with interim pastor
- Conversations with other local pastors and/or lay leaders

The Synod staff can:

- Share examples of congregational mission profiles done particularly well
- Share suggestions of persons from other congregations that have done this well



Tying It All Together - The Congregational "Debriefing" (Town Hall) Meeting

As this work is completed a report is prepared for the congregation. The report should contain a summary of the material collected for the mission exploration, a copy of the Congregational Mission Profile, and copies of any other documents or materials that will be illustrative of the conclusions. It is very helpful if materials are made available and read beforehand.

While this material is being put together, the committee should be in contact with the Synod to set a congregation meeting for de-briefing.

Usually the Bishop and the Associate working with the congregation will be present to participate in the de-briefing.

At the debriefing, the team responsible for the development of the Mission Profile presents the results of their work. The congregation is expected to discuss and approve the document at this meeting, along with the Bishop and/or Staff present. The purpose of this meeting is to gain clear congregational buy-in, and insure a good common ground of understanding between congregation, synod, and call committee. The meeting ends with congregational affirmation of the congregational mission profile and description of the skills and abilities needed in the pastor to be called. Together, these constitute the Mission Profile which becomes the base for future decisions.

It is important that the Call Committee be chosen before the Town Hall Meeting, since the results of the mission exploration process will be the materials that they will work with as they interview candidates for the call.

Upon approval of the Congregational Mission Profile, the Synod will review possible candidates who fit the needs of the congregation based on the mission profile presented at the debriefing. (See Chapter 7.) While the Synod is preparing to bring names the Call Committee prepares for the actual interview process. (See Chapter 8.)



CHAPTER 6: Forming the Call Committee

Chapter Contents: Why – When – Who – How – Basics -- Authority and Charge -- Synod staff

Why do we need a Call Committee?

Calling a pastor to be in a mutual ministry with the lay members of a congregation is an important event. We believe it is our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Call Process. The calling of a pastor represents a valuable partnership between God, the calling congregation and the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. An ideal Call Process builds on trust, openness, and good communication. When the Call Process results in a good match between pastor and congregation, the total mission of the church is furthered.

In the call process the Bishop/synod, the congregation and the prospective pastor work together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring about a new partnership that is faithful to the Gospel, empowers the local church in its ministry, and strengthens the whole church as people of God.

The Right Question

It's important for the Call Committee to be clear about its task. The foremost question for the Call Committee always is whether this is the person God requires this congregation to have as its pastor. These are the wrong questions to be asking: Will the congregation like this pastor? Will it approve of the Call Committee's choice of candidates? Will people feel good having this pastor around on Sunday morning? Will this person do until a better pastor comes along?

Human preferences and personalities never come before the mission to which God calls the church. That is why every meeting of the Call Committee should include prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the work that is being done.

The Significance of Service on a Call Committee

Many people report that serving on a Call Committee turned out to be one of the most important things they ever did as members of the church. It allowed them to experience firsthand how the Holy Spirit works through committed Christians to help the church be faithful to its calling. It gave them an opportunity to see how the local church is vitally connected to the whole church. And it let them participate in opening a new chapter in the life and ministry of their church as part of the history-long, worldwide Church of Jesus Christ.



When Should the Call Committee be Formed?

There are differing opinions over when the Call Committee should be formed. In some congregations, the Call Committee is formed at the beginning of the transition period; they are then given the task of overseeing the mission exploration process. However, as noted in Chapter 5, page 32, the skills that are needed by members of the Mission Exploration Team are not always the same as those needed by members of the call Committee.

Therefore, most congregations form the call committee toward the end of the Mission Exploration Process – after the congregation has defined its ministry, its mission and its staffing needs. It is recommended that the Call Committee be formed before the Congregational Town Hall Meeting to debrief the Congregational Mission Profile, since this profile is an important basis for the Call Committee's work. It is also valuable to have one or two members of the Mission Exploration Team continue as members of the Call Committee, since they have extensive knowledge of the work behind the Congregational Mission Profile document.

Who Should Be on the Call Committee?

The constitution governing your congregation will prescribe appointment or election of a Call Committee. The composition of the Call Committee should intentionally reflect the makeup of the congregation. There should be a diverse representation of gender, age, and ethnic/racial identity on the Committee. All segments of the ministry of the congregation should be represented (Worship, Youth, Education, Evangelism, etc.). Beyond these, there should also be a balance of long-term and newer members, people from different elements of the congregation, drawing upon a variety of contributing styles and gifts. An effective Committee is usually more than five people and fewer than nine. There should be representation from the Mission Profile Task Force on the Call Committee, including option of inviting one member (non-voting) from outside the congregation. The overarching consideration is that this should be a combination of people in whom the congregation has confidence, and who represent the broad and diverse makeup of the congregation.

How is the Call Committee Organized?

After the Call Committee is selected, one of the members must be designated as the *Chairperson*. The Call Committee Chairperson can be appointed by the Congregation Council or can be elected by the Committee itself. The Chairperson convenes meetings, sets meeting agendas, and may be the primary contact with pastoral candidates. He/she should also be the primary contact person with the Synod. The Chairperson oversees the Call Process.

The Committee will also select a *Secretary* to keep the minutes of Call Committee meetings. While motions may not necessarily be made, Committee assignments need to be recorded for future reference. The Secretary may also be responsible for written communications between candidates and the committee, including letters informing candidates of the Committee's time line and the interview process to be used, confirming invitations, travel arrangements, thank you notes, and letters informing candidates of decisions reached. The Secretary may send copies of correspondence to the synod office, and may write the newsletter articles, notes for Sunday bulletins, and other materials that keep the congregation informed of the committee's progress.

It is advisable to have one Congregation Council member sit on the Call Committee as a liaison. The council representative may or may not have a vote on the Call Committee, depending on the constitution of the congregation. The council representative will report back to the Congregation Council on the progress of the Call Committee, but he/she may not violate the confidences of the Call Committee.

Recognition of the Ministry of the Call Committee

It is important that the ministry of those who have been selected to serve on the Call Committee be recognized in some formal way by the congregation. The Committee members will spend many hours in meetings, expending significant energy over many months during the course of their service on the Call Committee. It is a ministry requiring dedication and commitment by persons who will provide leadership of the Call Process.



AN AFFIRMATION OF A CALL COMMITTEE

P=Pastor C=Congregation CC=Call Committee members

P: Let us pray. Gracious God, in times of change and transition you provide leaders to guide and direct us. Through them, you lead us over the rough places, and comfort us when we are afraid. We pray today that you will send your Spirit to be with these leaders and each one of us during this time of discernment. We ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

P: Do you, the people of _____ (*church*) _____ promise to hold this Call Committee in prayer?

C: We do.

P: Will you accept their leadership, support them in their work, and encourage them in their deliberation?

C: We will.

P: (*To the Call Committee*) - You have prayerfully been selected to serve this congregation in selecting a pastoral candidate. You have been asked to give generously of your time. You have been entrusted with this responsibility on behalf of the whole congregation. Do you accept this responsibility and trust?

CC: We do.

P: Will you faithfully participate in the process, support one another in meetings, and call upon the Spirit for guidance and direction in all you do?

CC: We will.

P: Let us pray - Lord, Bless this committee, its work and its decisions, that through them we might all be strengthened to serve you. Bless each member of the committee, that he or she might have the compassion, wisdom and energy to fulfill this responsibility. Keep us strong in faith and resolute in proclaiming the gospel to all people. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Call Committee Basics

- Prayer is an important activity for the Call Committee and the entire congregation throughout the Call Process. Call Committee members are encouraged to commit themselves to pray for one another and for the work of the Holy Spirit among them as they seek to discern God's will for their congregation. Special prayer at worship and during other meetings of the congregation is encouraged. When the Call Committee is selected, the names of the members are made public, with a request that special prayers be made on their behalf.

- Confidentiality cannot be overemphasized in the task of calling a pastor. Confidentiality boundaries for the Call Committee's work should be clearly agreed upon at the first meeting. Issues that are discussed about candidates need to be open and forthright among the members of the Committee. However, these discussions should be kept in confidence between the Call Committee members. Verbal and written information about prospective candidates must be kept within the confines of the Committee. Committee members will need to establish ground rules and boundaries, not only with the congregation at large, but also with those in their household or place of work.

The names of candidates must be kept confidential. Mention of specific candidates outside the Call Committee is inappropriate until the Committee is ready with its recommendation to the congregation council. Confidentiality is different than secrecy. The Church Council and the congregation should be kept abreast of the status of the Call Committee's progress, but no names or other identifying information about the candidate can be shared until a candidate is selected and ready for recommendation to the Congregation Council.

- Communication is very important to the Call Process. The Call Committee will be well served if it develops a communication strategy for the whole time they are at work on behalf of the congregation. There is a two-fold goal with regard to communication. First, frequent and consistent communication builds trust in the Call Committee by the congregation. Second, good communication also helps to gain the consent and commitment of the congregation to the recommendations made by the Call Committee. Every means ought to be utilized to keep the members of the congregation informed about the Call Committee's work and progress, including
 1. Newsletter articles explaining the Call Process to the congregation, with follow up articles each time another stage in the process is reached.
 2. Notes in the Sunday morning bulletins.
 3. Temple talks by members of the Call Committee to update the congregation.
 4. Question and answer forums during education hours. Members of the congregation can be invited to meet with the Call Committee to ask questions and find out about the progress of the Call Committee's work.
 5. Chart/timeline describing the Call Process displayed in a public place.

With the exception of confidential information, there is no such thing as sharing too much information with the congregation.



A specific time line for the Call Committee should be proposed and announced to the congregation. This time line may be modified as the Call Process unfolds, but any changes should be communicated to the congregation.

Call Committee Authority and Charge

The congregation and the Congregation Council must give the Call Committee a very specific charge as to its duties. The Call Committee needs to understand fully the needs and desires of the congregation so that the Call Process progresses in a manner consistent with those needs and desires. The Congregational Mission Profile is meant to guide the Call Committee.

The Congregation Council needs to provide the Call Committee with information concerning salary and benefit possibilities that the congregation can offer. Salary and benefit considerations are matters to be negotiated between the candidate and Call Committee in partnership with the Congregation Council. The ultimate responsibility for financial matters lies with the Council. The Synod publishes compensation guidelines annually (see Chapter 12, Appendix E).

The congregation or Congregation Council needs to authorize funding to the Call Committee for carrying out its responsibilities, such as cost of travel, meals and hotel expense for candidates invited to come to interview, or for travel by the committee to hear a candidate preach at some other location. There may be other Call Committee expenses for training, material, resources, etc.

The Call Committee must be given the authority to develop a process that will allow it to meet with and interview candidates for the pastoral position. At some point the Call Committee will select a candidate to recommend to the Congregation Council (or the congregation depending on the constitution) for selection and call. Thereafter, in conjunction with the Call Committee, the Congregation Council (or congregation) will consider the candidate. In the end, the congregation is the body that votes to issue a Call to a candidate.

Synod Staff

The Synod will serve as a valuable partner and resource during the Call Process. A Synod staff person will be assigned to work with the Call Committee. The synod staff person will work with the Call Committee as needed throughout the process, including in providing the names of candidates to be interviewed by the Committee. The Synod will provide the following support to the Call Committee:

- Interpreting the Call Process to the Call Committee and Congregation Council, clarifying the steps and goals;

- Interpreting to the Call Committee their own *calling* to lead and guide the process as a part of their spiritual journey within their congregation;
- Clarifying issues when there are questions or times of confusion;
- Attending, as a participant, the first meeting of the Call Committee to interpret and assist the Call Committee in their process. It is likely that the Synod staff's involvement will lessen as the Call Process moves forward. However, she/he is available to guide, coach and assist at the request of the Call Committee throughout the entire process;
- Helping the Committee fulfill its responsibilities as they face moments or issues that are difficult and potentially derailing or conflicting;
- Reminding the Committee about its goals and tasks and the process most helpful in fulfilling them (e.g. communication, scheduling, deadlines);
- Identifying and contacting potential candidates;
- Presenting candidates' papers to the call committee.
- Coaching the Committee as required to assist the Committee in fulfilling its calling, (e.g. interviews, presenting a candidate to the congregation, the congregation meeting, etc.); and
- Providing liaison between the Synod, the Bishop, the Call Committee and the congregation





CHAPTER 7: Identifying Candidates

Chapter Contents: Where they come from -- Candidates selected -- Bringing names -- Mobility Forms -- Making Contact

As the Congregational Mission Profile and MET Report are completed and the results are reviewed with the whole congregation and the Synod staff, the Process begins to focus on the identification of the pastor to be called. This chapter is provided not so much as direction for work you as a congregation are to do, but rather to make clear how the process will unfold.

Where Do the Names Come From?

There are several possible sources:

- Most possibilities surface through the ongoing work of the Synod staff. Synod staff spend a great deal of their time in conversations relating to pastoral mobility. There are on-going communications with pastors serving in this Synod, including assessments of a pastor's openness to considering a new call. In addition, pastors from outside the Synod are routinely in contact with other synods where they might be open to serving. The Synod staff regularly interviews these pastors and talks to other synod offices about vacancies and pastoral mobility. Synod staff is in regular contact with the Minneapolis Area Synod; they regularly have face-to-face conversation with candidates from other synods; they regularly receive mobility forms from around the country and run computer matches.
- Sometimes candidates surface through members of the congregation. (See Chapter 12, Appendix F for forms that can be used for congregational members nominating possible candidates.) When this happens, the Call Committee shares those names with the Synod staff person working with them. The Synod staff will look into the possibility - checking with that pastor's synod, determining his/her openness to call, considering the suitability of the match, etc. Regardless of whether the person is recommended for interview, a report will always be given to the Call Committee regarding these candidates.
- Occasionally a pastor might express interest in a specific position. In such a case, the Synod staff would consider the pastor, with the primary consideration being the suitability of the match of pastoral gifts and congregational needs.



The Candidates Selected

The primary criterion used by both the Synod staff and by the Call Committee in discerning the pastor to be called is the Congregational Mission Profile. The Committee's focus will be on the question: "Where is God leading us, and who will have the pastoral gifts we need to move that direction?" The pastor is to be more than a chaplain to a membership list, and more than a caretaker of the status quo; the pastor is to be part of God's movement of your congregation into the future. As the Synod staff considers specific pastoral candidates, the congregation's mission needs are the primary focus, and the main question is always whether the skills and interests of the pastor will match the needs of the congregation.

Other considerations also come into play:

- Readiness to move. Neither a bishop nor a Call Committee can tell a pastor to move who is still feeling called to the present place of service. Timing is often a major factor.
- Family considerations. You want a pastor to value family life, and sometimes those considerations impact a pastor's openness to considering a call.
- Financial considerations. Most congregations and most pastors assume that salary will fall generally within Synod guidelines. The Synod staff will not submit the name of a candidate whose salary needs are above the congregation's reach; however, sometimes a question will be raised early on about a congregation's willingness to go higher, or a candidate's willingness to accept less. But financial negotiations should not be a major factor.
- Housing. In our Synod, over 90% of congregational pastor positions include housing allowance rather than a provided parsonage. Again, the Synod staff will assist in addressing any housing considerations.
- Geographic restrictions. Some pastors, for reasons of family or spouse vocation, may be restricted as to where they can serve. This must be weighed as a consideration, but should never be the primary reason for considering a candidate or extending a call.

Bringing Names

The Call Committee and synod staff person should have conversation about how many names the Call Committee would like to deal with. At first look, many committees feel "the more, the better." In reality, deciding to focus on few names presses synod staff to focus attention on the strongest candidates, and generally means the staff has more in-depth conversation with potential candidates. A longer list of candidates often means making decisions on rather superficial factors. For certain types of openings (urban settings, Associate positions) it is increasingly difficult to generate many candidates that fit the profile well. In all cases, the staff will have had conversation with the candidates, giving some description of the

congregation and the position, and determining that the pastor is open to considering a call.

The congregation is expected to make contact with all candidates, informing them that their names have been received and letting them know when decisions regarding interviews will be made.

In most cases, a Committee will enthusiastically support one of these first candidates. Occasionally this doesn't happen; when that is the case, the Synod staff will have further conversation with the Committee, clarify what is being sought, and move on to other candidates. (A Committee is sometimes tempted to "hold on to one," release the other two, and look for more; experience has shown a decision should be made before receiving more names - that "holding on" is unfair to both the candidate and congregation, and rarely results in a call. The Committee needs to decide!)

Reviewing the Mobility Forms

When names are presented, the Committee will be given a form filled out by the pastor/candidate(s), and signed by his/her bishop, commonly referred to as "mobility forms." A mobility form is a good start in introducing you to the candidate, but it is not meant to be an exhaustive resource. (A copy of the mobility form is in Chapter 12, Appendix F)

- Mobility forms will include information about the pastor's education and work experience, a self-description of his/her particular areas of interest and skill, and brief responses to a few questions about his/her style, convictions, situation preferences, etc.
- Mobility forms will also include the names of four references. *Do not neglect to call them all!!* Often, Committees assume the references will simply give positive responses because they are, after all, provided by the pastor. But references will be honest, and good information will be forthcoming. If the committee desires to talk to references beyond these four, the candidate should be informed.
- Chapter 8 will more fully discuss preparation for interviews, which should include consideration of what additional information the Committee will want from the candidates. Mobility forms, and the insights of the Synod staff person presenting the names, will serve to get you started.



Making Contact

Since the Synod staff has discussed the congregation's Call Process with the candidates, they are aware that their names are being recommended. As soon as the Committee receives these names, it should make contact with the candidates by phone. After arrangements are made by telephone, a follow-up letter needs to be sent. If the Committee is prepared to schedule interviews, it can proceed to that directly. If the Committee needs further time for preparations, communicate that to the candidates. They will appreciate knowing that their name has been received, and having some idea of when the next steps of the process will unfold.

Sample Letter - Invitation for Personal Interview Following Initial Contact

Date

The Rev. Jane R. Doe
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Pastor Doe:

This is a follow up to our phone conversation on _____.

We wish to invite you to meet personally with *(indicate who would be included in that meeting)* in order for us to become better acquainted and to discuss in greater depth the current leadership needs of this congregation. In preparation for our time together, an exchange of information would be helpful. Enclosed for your review is _____. We would like to ask you to share with us at your earliest convenience the following _____. *(See Preparation for the Visit in Chapter 8.)*

We would like to arrange a time when this visit would be convenient for you. Once we have arrived at a suitable time, we will arrange accommodations for you *(and your spouse)* while you are here. Please plan to spend *(indicate the length of time)* with us so that we might more fully explore our mutual vision for ministry.

Expenses which you incur, including your transportation, will be reimbursed by the congregation. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. If you have special needs, please make them known and we will try to accommodate them. I can be reached by phone at _____

I wish God's richest blessings on your continued ministry.

Sincerely yours

Your Name

Cc: The Rev. Peter Rogness, Bishop
Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA





CHAPTER 8: The Pastoral Candidate Visit and Interview

Chapter Contents: Preparation: information, format, plan, evaluation -- Conducting the interview -- Follow-up -- Discernment/Decision

For all parties, a great deal rides on the encounter between the pastoral candidate(s) and the Call Committee. Careful attention should be given to thorough preparation and exchange of information ahead of time, wise use of time during the visit, and carefully considered decision-making following the visit. Throughout the planning and interviews the overarching tone should be one of invitation and hospitality rather than interrogation. This chapter is divided into those three periods - preparation, the visit, and the decision.

Preparation for the Visit

Exchange of information

Determine what information you want from the pastoral candidates, and what information you want to send to them. Some things others have found helpful are

From you to the pastor:

- The Congregational Mission Profile and MET Report;
- Copies of the congregation's last several annual reports;
- Several newsletters, publicity brochures, etc., describing the congregation;
- Information about the community - Chamber of Commerce info, etc.;
- Topics/questions to be explored in the interview/visit; and
- Sample bulletins from recent Sunday services
- A picture of each member of the Call Committee

Consider asking for any of the following from the pastor:

- Annual reports from his/her current congregation;
- Any other resume or mobility information not already shared;
- Original material – sermons (including video tapes), class outlines, continuing education projects, etc; and
- A few bulletins from recent Sunday services;
- Further references

Determine the Format of the Visit

Before contacting the candidates, the Committee should plan for the visit. It is important to be open to the candidate's interests as well, but some elements of the visit format might be:

- Time for the candidate to experience the parish community;
- A walking or driving tour;
- A meal in a local place;
- A look at housing, educational facilities, library, and other places that may be of interest as reflected in your reports and/or the Pastor's personal situation;
- An overview of where the current parishioners are living;
- A time with the interim pastor and/or other staff members;
- Informal time for the Call Committee to experience an unstructured conversation with the candidate... and for the candidate to experience an unstructured conversation with Committee members. This often takes place around a meal.
- A formal conversation—the interview. (See "Conducting the Interview" beginning on page 55.)

The following tasks will need to be covered by Call Committee members in structuring an effective candidate visit. Be clear about who will handle which responsibilities.

- Set up appointments with candidates.
- Determine what congregational materials will be given to the candidate and send before the actual visit.
- Arrange for travel, housing, meals.
- Determine who will meet and welcome the candidate and/or spouse.
- Escort the candidate around the facility and allow time to “freshen up.”
- Escort to Interview with Call Committee.
- Escort to meal.
- Provide opportunity to look around the community.
- Arrange for conversation with interim and other program staff.

Important things to keep in mind regarding the interview stage of the Call Process include:

- ALL expenses should be covered by the congregation.
- A candidate's spouse should not participate in the formal interview. If the spouse accompanies the candidate you may ask someone to host them during this time.
- Tell candidates the anticipated time line - when other interviews will be completed, decisions made, and candidates notified.
- Determine who will write thank you notes.
- The Committee may want to audio or video tape the interview for subsequent review. (This is a must if any committee member is absent

- for any interview.)
- The Committee may want to consider a telephone interview as a means of gathering preliminary information.

Plan the Formal Interview

The interview remains a frequently used technique by most congregations. Congregations rarely call a pastor without first having had the opportunity to get to know them through the interview process. However, many members of Call Committees approach the interview with varying degrees of anxiety. Common concerns include: What is the purpose of the interview? What questions should we ask? What questions shouldn't we ask? How will we know if an answer is a "good" one? While each Committee will develop its own interview process and questions, the Committee should consider the following points when developing its approach:

Planning the questions:

First of all, make sure you have read the information the Synod has provided about the candidate. Identify any information that may need to be clarified by the candidate. The best way to develop call-related interview questions is by referring to the Congregational Mission Profile and related materials, and the Candidates' mobility forms.

Second, develop a format in which a predetermined list of questions is asked of each candidate. There is wisdom in developing questions that mirror the pastoral profile you are seeking. Chapter 12, Appendix G has additional materials regarding specific questions.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, spend time exploring the pastor's mobility forms, and find questions that help you come to know him/her as a spiritual person and leader.

Make sure the interview is two-way. The committee is not only learning about the candidate, the candidate is learning about the committee and congregation. Calls are a process of finding the best match between congregation and pastor; the interview itself needs to work in both directions. A committee will interview several gifted and insightful candidates, and call only one. The other interviews can also be learning time as the committee is open to hearing the questions and observations of the candidates.

Situation-specific questions:

The specific content of the interview should reflect the pastoral opening which is being filled. The majority of the interview, therefore, has the potential to vary from parish to parish and from call to call.



An emerging trend in interviewing is the use of so-called “situational interviews”. Situational interviews focus heavily on the behaviors necessary for success in a given setting. These kinds of interview questions ask the candidate what he/she would do in a particular situation, what he/she has done in situations in the past, and for specific demonstrations of relevant knowledge or expertise. For example, let’s say that based on your analysis one of the factors you identify as important to success is working effectively with lay leadership. A sample situational interview question addressing this factor might be, “Suppose you and the worship committee disagree on whether Christmas carols may be sung before December 24th... or... Suppose your liturgical preferences are at odds with key members of the worship committee.” What would you do?

By focusing on the most important (or critical) call-related factors, you will be focusing your interview on “what really matters.”

Once the Committee has decided upon the questions to be asked, assign questions to members of the Call Committee so the candidates feel all members are involved in the conversation. Discuss briefly the issues to be aware of in the interview itself (next section), including the extent of follow-up and spontaneous questions.

It is helpful for the committee to practice interviewing through role playing or a mock interview (with the interim pastor, a neighboring pastor, synod staff person, retired pastor, etc.)

Discuss and agree upon evaluation criteria/form

If you have planned well, you should also have agreed upon how you will evaluate what you hear. Using the areas of greatest concern as they've emerged in the Congregational Mission Profile and the interview questions, develop a ranking system for the candidates. This may be as simple as a grid on which each Committee member gives each candidate a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5, with 5 being the best. Chapter 12, Appendix G contains an example, though your criteria may be different.

Just a word about using a “ranking format.” Each Call Committee member would receive a piece of paper with a grid format. Establish criteria based on your Mission Profile. This will reduce the subjectivity of the interview by helping Committee members listen for responses which correspond with better performance, insight, knowledge, etc. As the interview is held, each Committee member will grade the categories using a predetermined value system. For example, if the category is “strength as a pastoral care person” each person would rank their impression from the conversation 1 -5, with the 1 as lowest and 5 as highest. The ranking should focus on the areas deemed to be most important by the Call Committee, based on the congregational Mission Profile. This ranking should be done after the interview is completed, not during.

Mock Interview

Congregations have found it helpful to conduct a mock interview with a pastor who is not a candidate for the call. Synod staff will help you set up such an interview if you wish

Conducting the Interview

Tips on conducting the Interview

- The Call Committee should designate a Committee member to host the candidate. This person, frequently the chair of the Committee, serves as the candidate's contact person and should be on hand well before the candidate's anticipated arrival at the interview location.
- Following brief, formal introductions of each Call Committee member and his/her role in the congregation, a member of the Call Committee may conduct an opening devotion.
- Following the devotion, the Committee member chosen to direct the interview should outline the anticipated procedure for the interview.
- Listening, A Crucial Act... A discussion on the importance of listening and other guidance for effective interviewing is included in Chapter 12, Appendix G.
- As noted above, the early questions should be foundational in order to allow the candidate to "settle in." Questions which allow the candidate to introduce themselves (e.g. "Share with us briefly about where you were raised and a bit about your family of origin"). Allow ten to fifteen minutes for this portion.
- The formal questioning, with structured questions, should begin. Questions should be situational (i.e., call-specific) and may be asked by more than one member of the Committee.
- If the response received from the candidate is unclear or incomplete, a follow-up question may be posed.
- A Committee member(s) may be designated to record candidate responses using various means (e.g., notes, audio, video) for further scrutiny by the Committee. Audio and video recording should, however, be undertaken only with the consent of the candidate.
- Committees will vary in the length of time devoted to the structured portion of the interview. One hour may be typical, with two hours considered a desirable upper limit.
- Allow time at the conclusion of the interview to answer specific questions posed by the candidate. After answering the candidate's questions, a "wrap up" phase should be led by a member of the Committee in which the candidate



should be thanked for coming and encouraged to be in phone contact with a designated member of the Committee, should additional questions arise as a result of the interview. Future steps should be outlined, including the anticipated time line.

While the interview is still fresh in the minds of committee members, a time should be set to reconvene the Call Committee in order to share initial impressions. Impressions should be recorded for use at a later date.

Interview follow-up and decision

Following up on the Interviews

The Call Committee should send a letter of appreciation to each candidate for his/her willingness to be interviewed. This letter may encourage the candidate to address additional comments and/or questions to the Committee. Any expense reimbursement should be made now. Again, a promise of keeping the candidate current regarding the Call Process is essential.

It is crucial that the Call Committee immediately notify the candidate when he/she is no longer being considered. (Sample letter at end of this Chapter.) The decision not to consider a candidate further should be submitted immediately to the Synod staff person who is assisting in the Call Process. Because it is the practice of some bishops to invite a pastor to interview exclusively for one call at a time, this notification will allow the Synod staff, in consultation with the candidate, to submit a pastor's name to another congregation currently in the Call Process.

Discernment/Decision

At a meeting following all interviews the Committee will begin a selection process. Suggested format might be as follows:

1. Begin with Prayer and Devotion

Lord we come before you asking for the guidance of your Spirit. As we seek a new pastor keep us mindful of all that we have learned, all that we have heard and guide us. Grant us wisdom and understanding through this time. Amen

2. Select a recorder for gathering information. (It is often helpful to have a sheet of newsprint for each candidate.) If a grid has been developed, these rankings can be compiled. Each member of the Committee then, responds to three questions about the candidate.

- Where did the candidate fit best with our congregational needs?
- What gifts does this candidate bring to ministry? What areas of ministry are not strengths for this candidate?
- Could this person serve this parish well? (Could he/she serve as my pastor?)

3. Data or in-pu from the interim or other staff may be heard at this time.
4. Review information gained from contact with references.
5. After data is collected on all candidates the chairperson asks for comments/ reflections or observations on the data.
6. Review
 - Ask again for the guidance of the Holy Spirit
 - Review and clarify the understanding of what it means to reach consensus
 - Allow ample time for each Call Committee member to speak and be heard
 - Come to a decision measured against the leadership needs of the congregation (considering the mission profile, each members evaluation of the interview and general sense of leadership and fit.)
 - Choose the most suitable candidate, not necessarily the one most likely to accept the call
 - While listening to your own heart and impressions, go beyond asking, “Which candidate do I favor?” to “Which pastor will best lead us into God’s mission?”
7. Each committee member shares a statement or word reflecting their response and their choice.
8. Make a choice. Note if the selection is obvious based on comments from Committee. The ranking should be used to guide Call Committee decision-making, but should not be the overriding factor.
9. If the Committee is inclined toward one or more of the candidates, and feels further in-pu is needed, a second interview may be scheduled with one or more of the candidates.
10. If the Committee determines that no candidate can be recommended, then usually a meeting with the Synod staff and the Call Committee is held to “debrief” the experience. This process may help to clarify the Committee’s expectations and also answer questions which may have arisen about how to proceed. Discussion with Synod staff will determine the next step.
11. As a decision is made a prayer is offered. Each member of the Call Committee then states he/she will support the decision.
12. The Congregation Council president is informed of the recommendation of the Call Committee. The Call Committee prepares to present the candidate to the Council and the congregation.
13. All candidates are promptly informed of decision. (Synod staff is also informed of decision.)



Sample Letter - Release of Candidate following the Interview

Date

The Rev. John H. Doe

Address

City, State Zip

Dear Pastor Doe:

On behalf of the Call Committee at First Lutheran Church I want to express our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to visit with you on _____. It was a very helpful and informative interview. It certainly allowed us to gain a clearer perspective regarding your many gifts as a Lutheran pastor and we thank you for that. *(make reference to some of those gifts)*

After careful and prayerful discernment, it is our conclusion to release you from further consideration. I hope you will not interpret this decision as a personal reflection on your skills as a pastor. It is intended to be a reflection of our assessment of the current leadership needs of this congregation and our effort to find the person who best meets those criteria.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview, I would be happy to discuss them with you. You may contact me at _____

I wish God's richest blessings on your continued ministry.

Sincerely yours,

Your Name

Cc: The Rev. Peter Rogness, Bishop
Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA



CHAPTER 9: Calling Your Pastor

Chapter Contents: Staff building -- Minnesota Statue §148A -- Council Recommendation -- Compensation Package -- Meeting the congregation -- Call meeting -- Call Letter

Consultation for Staff-building

In multiple staff situations, it is very helpful to take an extra step – asking that the candidate to be called join with existing staff to spend time with a consultant in staff dynamics. Synod staff can assist in identifying consultants skilled in doing this. During this time, usually several hours, the candidate and staff can explore how well they will relate to each other. The EAP facilitator can discover areas where the "mix" of the candidate and staff is solid; and also where the "mix" may need work. It is most effective if this process can be completed prior to the call being issued, so the call decision can be considered in the light of insights into staff potential.

Note regarding Minnesota Statute §148A

When the Call Committee has made its decision about the candidate to be recommended for call, the synod office is informed. At that point, as the congregation prepares to vote on a Letter of Call, the synod office performs the background check required by Minnesota Statue §148A, contacting employers from the previous 5 years, inquiring regarding any accusations of sexual misconduct. The bishop cannot sign the letter of call until that step has been completed.

Recommendation to the Council

In most congregations, the expectation is that once the Call Committee has decided upon a candidate to recommend, a meeting of the Congregation Council will be called. The entire Call Committee or only the chair of the Committee may be present at this meeting. Careful preparation by the Call Committee member who is chosen to present the candidate is important. Thorough information about the candidate, with ample opportunity for dialogue between the Call Committee and the Council, will enable the Congregation Council to come to a decision regarding concurrence with the Call Committee's recommendation.

The Congregation Council may choose to meet the candidate the Call Committee recommends, or the Council may decide to accept the recommendation and forward it directly to the congregation. The Council should not assume the position of a further interviewing body, making its own independent judgment. The Council meets the candidate only to lay groundwork for a strong working partnership.



Determining the Compensation Package

Normally the Synod staff person who has worked with the Call Committee will meet with the Congregation Council (or Executive Committee, or Call Committee) to work through the specific figures in the Letter of Call and Definition of Compensation and Benefits (See Chapter 12, Appendix H). It is expected that the guidelines for salary and benefits as set forth in the Synod's Compensation Guidelines booklet (See Chapter 12, Appendix H or online at www.spas-elca.org) will be followed.

Should questions arise about any particular issue, the Synod staff can be consulted. It is most helpful for the Synod staff person to facilitate communication between the pastor and the congregation; sometimes it will be advised that they have direct conversation.

In any event, the compensation package should be worked out prior to the congregational meeting at which the call is officially voted.

Meeting the Congregation

In most instances, the congregation will invite the recommended candidate to come, along with spouse/family, to be introduced to the congregation prior to the congregational vote. This visit may entail:

- conversation with the Congregation Council (if it did not happen previously);
- a congregational gathering, primarily social in nature, with time for a whole-group session of questions as well as informal mixing time. The pastor might be invited to open the group time by leading a devotional reflection;
- opportunity for the candidate and family to more fully explore the community - housing, schools, spouse job possibilities, etc.

The Congregation Call Meeting

The Congregation Council will set a date for a special congregational call meeting. Once the date has been established, the officers should follow the congregation constitution in notifying all eligible voting members of the special meeting. The mailing to notify members may include a brief statement from the Call Committee and information about the recommended candidate's experience and qualifications.

In preparation for the congregation call meeting, the officers should review and have at hand portions of the congregation constitution relative to the calling of a pastor, including the number of voters required for a quorum and the definition of a voting member.

Before the beginning of the meeting, all qualified voters may be invited to “sign in.” The special meeting of the congregation to consider the calling of a pastor should open with a devotional time. The Council President may then establish that a quorum of members is present and ask that this number be recorded in the minutes. Information concerning the proposed candidate should then be presented to the congregation. The congregation should then be invited to address questions about the proposed candidate to representatives of the Congregation Council and Call Committee.

The vote to call a pastor will be by written ballot. A two-thirds majority of those present and voting is necessary for call.

Tellers should be appointed by the Council President to distribute, collect and count the ballots. The chief teller should then report the vote outcome to the Council President who announces the results to the congregation. Detailed minutes must be taken.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the chair should express gratitude to the Call Committee for its work and assistance in the Call Process. If an approval to call takes place, the congregation should be informed that the candidate has three weeks to consider the Call and will normally notify the congregation of his/her decision within that time.

If the required two-thirds majority vote to call is not met, the Council President declares that the candidate has not been called. When possible, the Congregation President and chair of the Call Committee are advised to meet with the bishop or bishop’s representative to discuss the failure to elect and to initiate a renewal of the search process. Other Congregation Council members and Call Committee members may be included in this meeting, if desired.

Preparing the Letter of Call

If the congregation votes affirmatively, the Letter of Call and "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibility of the Pastor" (the green sheet) are signed and forwarded to the Bishop for his signature. A sample Letter of Call is included in Chapter 12, Appendix H (Please note the instructions to fill out the "working copy" of the Letter of Call, leaving the final copy with signatures to be filled out by the Synod office.) The Bishop signs the Letter of Call after Minnesota Statute §148A. The Synod office sends them to the pastor, with copies made and sent to the congregation for its records. (See Chapter 12, Appendix H for copies of the forms.)



A decision needs to be made when calling an associate pastor regarding the following two stipulations.

- In the event of a vacancy in the position of Senior Pastor, the pastor here called shall under no circumstances be considered for the position of Senior Pastor.
- This call terminates six months after the arrival of a new Senior Pastor. See Chapter 4, page 26 for further discussion.

First Call Theological Education – Expectations included in a Call issued to a Newly-Ordained Candidate

One of the most dramatic transitions in the life of newly called leaders is the transition from seminary or non-rostered status to the first call to public ministry. For that reason, the ELCA has prescribed standards and expectations for continuing theological education during the first three years of public minister under call.

Basic Information

A. Required Participation in:

- Continuing education events:
Participation in the Fall Theological Conference of the Synod each fall
Participation in the First Call Theological Retreat of the Minneapolis Area and Saint Paul
Area synods of the ELCA
Participation in the Conference or local clergy text studies and other gatherings
- Mentoring:
Each newly rostered leader is connected with a mentor. It is expected that the mentor and the pastor will meet together regularly for the three years. The suggested time frame is once a month for the first six months, with fewer meetings as the time progresses.
- Participation in a Colleague Group

B. Time

While it is strongly suggested that every pastor participate in 50 hours of continuing theological and leadership education every year, it is a requirement for First Call leaders.

C. Cost

The costs of the program are intended to fall within Synodical guidelines for continuing education funding.

Pastor's Response

The Congregation President or Call Committee chair should notify the pastor of the call immediately following the meeting. The pastor normally has 30 days to respond beginning from the time the Letter actually arrives in his/her hands. (It is helpful to notify the Synod staff person also.)

The candidate's decision to accept or decline the call will be delivered to the congregation via the Council president. In accepting, the pastor should be asked to indicate a starting date, usually within one or two months. Any variance will need to be negotiated between the congregation and the candidate. Acceptance of the call should be conveyed promptly to the bishop.



Sample Letter - Following Successful Vote of the Congregation

Date

The Rev. John H. Doe
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Pastor Doe:

I wish to confirm, following our telephone conversation of (*indicate when*), that the members of the congregation at a specially called congregational meeting on (*indicate date*) have voted to extend to you a Letter of Call to become *Pastor* of _____ Lutheran Church.

The Letter of Call, along with the “Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities of the Pastor” has been delivered to our Bishop’s office for signature. Once you have received these documents you have thirty days to consider your decision. When you respond, please send a copy of your response letter to our synod office. We will pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit through your deliberation and place our hope in God’s hands that you will be led to consider a favorable response to our invitation to become our *Pastor*.

We await your answer with excitement and enthusiasm at the prospects of engaging with you as our spiritual leader in service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the ministry of _____ Lutheran Church.

Sincerely yours,

Name

Cc: The Rev. Peter Rogness, Bishop
Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA



CHAPTER 10: Welcome & Installation

Chapter Contents: Moving -- Installation -- Welcome & Getting Acquainted -- 6-month Review -- Periodic Evaluation

Moving

Moving expenses are the obligation of the Calling Congregation (see Chapter 12, Appendix H "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Pastor", and Chapter 12, Appendix E Synod Salary Guidelines). There should be clear understanding of arrangements and reimbursements. It is common to ask the pastor to submit an estimate of moving expenses (provided by a mover) to the congregation for approval prior to the move.

(An editorial observation for any congregational members who may want to choose a pastor on basis of proximity: When you consider that you will be investing many hundreds of thousands of dollars in this pastor over the full length of ministry, not to mention the health of the congregation depending on the best possible selection, the difference in moving costs between someone nearby and someone far away is insignificant!)

Installation

The Congregation President and the pastor-elect need to confer to decide upon a date for installation, in consultation with the bishop or bishop's representative (synod staff). The Presiding Minister for the Rite of Installation is usually the bishop or Synod staff person, or someone else representing the synod. It is a fitting symbol, especially if the installation happens shortly after arrival, for the bishop or staff (in the case of a solo pastorate) or another pastor on staff (in the case of multiple staff settings) to preside over the service up until the point of installation; then, upon the completion of the Rite of Installation, the newly-installed pastor becomes the presiding minister for the remainder of the service. This symbolizes the pastoral care of the whole church over the congregation during this time of transition.

In most cases the installation takes place on Sunday morning, facilitating the best possible participation of the congregational members. If there are multiple services, the Rite of Installation is usually conducted at each service.

It is encouraged that invitations to the Service of Installation be extended to neighboring ministers and congregations. In areas where these relationships are already significant, the Service of Installation is sometimes held in the afternoon, allowing for greater participation by ministry partners from outside the congregation.



Order of Service.

The Service of Installation is printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship Occasional Services Book*, published by Augsburg-Fortress. The Service of Installation is normally inserted between the Hymn of the Day and the Sharing of the Peace. Feel free to creatively adapt the service to your setting - Call Committee members writing prayer petitions, offering words of blessing, etc.

Invitations

Don't overlook the importance of the Installation Service as a time to lift up the life of the whole church. Invite neighboring and partner congregations to be present; even if the congregation is holding the Installation on Sunday morning, other congregations may send representatives or greetings. And think ecumenically - including your sister communities of faith is an important witness to your own people and the whole community.

Welcome & Getting Acquainted

It generally falls naturally to the leadership of the Call Committee and/or Congregation Council to stay in close contact with the newly-arrived pastor in the first weeks. Close communication for both professional and personal matters is appreciated by the pastor and family, and establishes a good posture of mutual support. Some kind of welcoming event helps celebrate the new beginnings; often the day of Installation involves a special reception or luncheon to which congregation and neighbors are invited.

Six months later... a 6-month review

It would be helpful for a Synod staff person to come back 6 months or so after the beginning of the new ministry for conversation with the pastor and the congregational leadership. Usually this will involve a personal conversation with the pastor, then a conversation with the Congregation Council as well. The purpose is to provide opportunity to use this early stage to compare expectations with actual happenings. The Congregational Mission Profile can be reviewed, and questions posed to each: What were you expecting as you entered into this Call? How has reality compared? What are the pleasant surprises? What may some unexpected findings be? What has been the focus of the first 6 months? Would it be good to think about some early-course corrections?

Some questions that evaluate the impact of this entire calling process might be:

1. Does the decision to call this pastor still “feel right?” Explain.



2. What have you learned about your pastor that is consistent with the image you had of him/her during the Call Process?
3. What have you learned about your pastor that varies from the image you had of him/her during the Call Process?
4. Based upon what you now know, how could the Call Process have been better designed?
5. What impact has the pastor made since he/she has started?
6. What progress has the congregation made toward fulfilling its missional objectives?
7. What have you learned about being on a Call Committee that you feel may benefit others who will serve in the future?

Generally these conversations are very affirming. The review provides a non-threatening, supportive setting for raising any concerns or issues from either perspective. It is helpful, before patterns are too ingrained, to review the unfolding ministry.

Moving Forward - Periodic Review and Evaluation

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Mission Exploration Process can be profitably used apart from the Call Process. Periodic review and evaluation of ministry can be life-giving. The performance of a called pastor needs to be evaluated in the context of overall mission and ministry goals of the whole church. A Staff Support or Mutual Ministry Committee is a helpful vehicle for on-going, supportive review and evaluation.





CHAPTER 11: Evaluation of the Process

Good evaluation is the foundation of a good Call Process. We need to draw on the experience of those who are regularly involved in Call Processes (i.e., Synod staff) and those who are involved only once in a while (i.e., parishioners comprising a Call Committee). We need to develop an understanding of what's good and what's bad that extend beyond our personal experiences so others will benefit from our experience.

Evaluation is more than asking, “Did it go well?” It includes questions like: Were your needs met? Was it well designed? Did it work? Did you learn anything? Did you use the recommended steps? Did doing so do any good? And so on.

This booklet has included some questions for evaluating the Call Process *along the way*, rather than merely after it is over:

Needs Evaluation:

How well did we identify our congregation’s needs? (in this manual at the end of Chapter 5, to be completed after the congregational profile/leadership profile have been created)

Design Evaluation:

How well was Call Process designed? (in this manual in Chapter 8, between Preparation and Interview, to be completed after the Call Committee has mapped out its process, but prior to implementing it)

Impact Evaluation:

How did the Call Process benefit the candidate, Call Committee, and the congregation? (in this manual at the end of Chapter 10, to be used as part of the six-month review.)

Implementation Evaluation:

How well did the Call Process work ? (To be completed after the Call Process has been completed. It may be helpful to include the Synod staff in this evaluation process to both give and receive feedback

1. Did the Call Committee find the process that was used helpful? Why or why not?
2. Did the congregation find the process that was used helpful? Why or why not?



3. What parts of the Call Process worked well?
4. What parts of the process didn't work so well?
5. Were there unexpected problems? If so, how could they be avoided next time?
6. What parts of the process produced frustration, confusion, mistakes, etc.?
7. What did you find helpful about the role played by Synod staff?
8. What didn't you find helpful about the role played by Synod staff?