



SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

CALL PROCESS MANUAL

PHASE 2: INTERIM & TRANSITION TEAM



CHECKLIST

PHASE 2 INTERIM & TRANSITION TEAM

This section of the Call Process Manual addresses interim and transition work and the creation of the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). Begin or continue Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) work. Remember that the synod staff can help with recommendations and resources. Continue to provide clear communications to all entities.

- ☐ Interim pastor and congregation council determine needs/issues to be addressed before and/or during a call process, and set schedule for moving forward.
- ☐ Transition team is formed and briefed on tasks.
- ☐ Transition team explores vision, mission and ministry needs of the congregation.
- ☐ Transition team uses Map Dash demographics to better understand the neighborhood and the surrounding community.
- ☐ Transition team spends time listening to God through the three Great Listeners (listening to God, to one another, and to the neighborhood/community).
- ☐ Transition team, with assistance of interim pastor, congregation council and synod staff, develops online Ministry Site Profile (MSP) including gifts/skills needed in a pastoral leader.
- ☐ Call committee is formed per congregation's constitution.
- ☐ Congregation holds a town hall meeting to review and comment on MSP.
- ☐ MSP is reviewed by synod staff, approved by council and posted on ELCA website.
- ☐ Council/call committee researches the current cost of a pastor and congregation's budget to determine financial resources for new rostered minister. (See synod compensation guidelines at <https://spas-elca.org/resources/forms-reports/>.)
- ☐ Group from the congregation attends Synod Vitality Workshops during the transition (Check SPAS website at <https://spas-elca.org/mission/domestic-mission/congregational-vitality/>.)



When a pastor leaves, the challenge facing the congregation is more than the calling of another pastor. The congregation needs to do the work necessary to lay the foundation for a successful next chapter of ministry. This transition process defines future directions and priorities for the mission and ministry of the congregation and culminates in the development of a Ministry Site Profile (MSP). The MSP describes in detail who the congregation is and where God is calling it to go in mission, and the qualities needed in the new pastor.

Overview

The transition process provides:

- An opportunity to review, assess and claim the priorities of the congregation
- Information for the call committee about the congregation and a description of leadership needs, which will guide their work
- Direction for the synod staff in recommending candidates for consideration by the call committee
- A picture of the congregation to the candidates as they consider serving the congregation

Formation of the Transition Team

The congregation council and interim pastor will work together to develop/appoint a transition team. This team will run an interactive mission exploration process for the congregation, compile data, complete the MSP, and possibly manage other transitional concerns. The exploration process is a work of discernment for the whole congregation during the interim period. The Transition Team under the guidance of the interim pastor leads that process, and could be any one of several groups depending on the context:

- A specially appointed task force
- A long-range planning committee already at work in the congregation
- The call committee

Elements of the Process

The transition process (with interim pastor's leadership) enables the congregation to listen to God, one another and the community, and specifically to:

- Identify and address issues of conflict, grief and/or guilt that affect its life and ministry
- Review its life and mission as the Body of Christ
- Discuss its challenges/opportunities in the next 3-5 years
- Evaluate its present gifts and strengths
- Identify specific areas where it feels called to strengthen its ministry
- Identify its present context for mission
- Specify resources necessary to fulfill its mission, especially mission tasks in the community
- Arrive at a common understanding of its mission, and some ways to sustain it
- Identify the gifts that are most important for the next pastor to possess
- Pray for everyone involved

Steps in the Process

Each outlined step contains ideas and activities to engage the congregation in conversation and planning. These are shared here as resources that the transition team may employ as it takes on the task of listening to the community and making recommendations for the congregation's future mission and ministry. Further details are provided through the interim pastor.



STEP 1: Internal Assessment - Who We Are

The goal of the internal assessment is to name where the congregation has been, where it sees itself now, and identify possible directions for its mission and ministry. 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. Members are invited into reflection and discernment to share their hopes and concerns for their future together.

- **Questions include:**
 - Identity: Who are we? What is our history? (Look at vision documents, annual reports, capital campaigns, anniversary booklets, etc.)
 - What do we say about ourselves? Are we who we say we are?
 - How do others describe us?
 - What are the gifts of this congregation?
 - What is important that we continue?
 - What are our core values? What is our purpose?
 - What are we willing to give up to better carry out our key purpose?
- Here's an idea for carrying out this work:
 - **Wall of History.** To help visualize the history of the congregation, cover a large wall in paper and create a timeline from the beginning of the congregation to today with space for dreams for the future. Have people write important events and people in the life of the congregation or society at large on the wall. Explore your congregation's history by gathering in small groups to analyze what appeared on the timeline. "What do you see? What is missing?" Have each group describe the congregation based on these insights.

STEP 2: External Assessment - Mission Possibilities

The goal of this step is to better understand the community you serve. You will take under consideration the needs in the surrounding community and mission opportunities in the wider church. You may wish to gather input from the congregation in small group cottage meetings.

- **Questions include:**
 - Context: Where are we? What are the assets and needs of our community?
 - Who are the invisible people? (poor, lonely, homeless, hungry, angry, etc.)
 - What services are needed and what services are available?
 - What is God up to in our community?
 - What is our outreach?
 - What opportunities for partnership are available to our congregation: locally, synod-wide, nationally and globally?
- **Ideas for carrying out this work may include:**
 - **Community map.** Create a community map of the neighborhood surrounding the church. What resources, needs do you see close by? Invite organizations and other groups in the community to come and share their assessment of the needs in the community.
 - **Community Interviews.** Interview community leaders on what they see are some needs, people such as school social workers, assistant principals, school nurses, local police, business owners, social service agencies, local politicians.
 - **Community Development Reports.** Read and summarize key points from community development reports from county or city or regional government agencies, which often indicate trends and the government's plans for addressing them, such as housing policies and economic policies.



- **Demographic Information.** Contact the synod staff about using the Map Dash tool. This software mapping tool draws on detailed demographic information of the community that is more detailed and multifaceted than census data. Less detailed demographic data can be found at elca.org/research. Click “View Now” under “Demographic Reports.” Type in the Synod ID (3H) and your congregation ID. If you do not know your congregation ID, the synod office can look it up for you. Additional information on community characteristics is also available at census.gov.
- **Small Group Exploration.** Walk or drive through the community in small groups. Look for signs of hope and signs of despair in the community. Have conversations with people you encounter and ask:
 - What are the best things about living here?
 - What could be improved about life here? What are the challenges?
 - What could the church do to help make life better?
 - Consider how your congregation is in partnership with the neighborhood and other organizations — how is your relationship with your community multi-directional (or how could it be)?
 - Share observations and wonderings about what the congregation might be able to address. Pray for your neighborhood/community.
- **Outreach List and Event.** List current outreach efforts and intentions of the congregation. Evaluate the church budget as a way of assessing the congregation’s commitment to outreach. Have a “mission day” to highlight your partnerships with the ELCA, synod and community.

STEP 3: Assessment

The goal of this step is to assess the information gathered in Steps 1 and 2. As you seek to define the top mission priorities of the congregation, do not only consider the needs and desires of the existing membership; think also about the people who are not yet a part of the congregation.

- **Questions include:**
 - What have we learned about our mission and ourselves?
 - What is the relationship of the congregation with the community?
 - Has our (God’s) mission changed?
 - What new people is God calling us to reach, and how might we begin to connect with them?
 - With the Spirit’s leading, how will the congregation look in several years?
- **Ideas for carrying out this work under the guidance of the interim may include:**
 - **Guided Discussion.** Create a small task force to condense information into three or four realistic potential themes. Then hold a series of table conversations guided by trained table leaders, with the goal of identifying the one main theme or direction.
 - **Vision Summit.** Hold a one-day event of highly structured conversation around key themes that democratically narrow and focus the congregation’s purpose and direction.
 - **Survey.** Survey ideas and attitudes regarding the congregation’s future, using a validated research tool, such as the Vitality Survey available through the synod’s Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM).
 - **Agape Meal.** Hold a Lenten or other special mid-week series focused on specific issues facing the congregation’s future, embedded in worship, prayer and holy conversation. Make this a comfortable atmosphere with food and spiritual conversation about God’s calling for the congregation.
 - **One-on-One Interviews.** Train a small team to use identical scripts to interview other members one-on-one, focusing on a carefully designed research question.
 - **Work Session.** Hold a work session to look at church bulletins, newsletters, annual reports and financial reports to answer questions like: *What do these say about how we have been living out our mission? What is missing based on what we learned about our community?*



STEP 4: Mission Plan

Develop a clear definition of mission and ministry on behalf of the congregation, including a vision and a specific strategy for working toward it.

- **Questions include:**
 - Who are our mission partners?
 - What is our mission focus now?
 - Where is God leading us into the future?
- **Ideas for carrying out this work may include:**
 - **Position Paper.** Based on the discernment and listening phase, write a brief, one-page “position paper” that is presented to members and interested parties for comment. Set up a formal process, such as a town forum, for receiving feedback.
 - **Ministry Development Plan.** Under the guidance of the interim pastor, create a ministry development plan to be publicly reviewed and adopted at a congregational meeting.

STEP 5: Leadership Needs

The goal of this step is to take what is learned through listening to God, one another and the community, to identify the characteristics and gifts for ministry sought in the next pastoral leader. Keep in mind that most people will think primarily in terms of worship and their own personal relationship with the pastor. Think of a leader not only ministering to the needs of the existing congregation; consider where God is calling you and what kind of a leader can help you get there. Such a candidate may not look or behave like previous pastors, but may look or behave more like the people you are trying to reach. Ideas for carrying out this work may include:

- **Job Description.** Using the congregation council and/or personnel committee, create a job description for the pastor position, with specifics unique to the congregation (i.e., expectations, responsibilities and relationships beyond what is found in the congregation’s constitution and standard form letter of call).
- **Survey.** Survey the congregation to identify the characteristics of the pastor they seek using the “Ministry Tasks and Gifts for Ministry” section of the MSP form. Be sure to identify the congregation’s calling/direction for the next years before identifying pastoral qualities to lead there.

STEP 6: The Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

The goal of this step is to write and submit the Ministry Site Profile for the congregation. This document is used throughout the ELCA by congregations who are seeking a new rostered minister.

- To access the MSP form, visit elca.org/call-process/ministry-sites.
 - Explore the resources available here for creating the profile, including a sample version of the MSP
 - To access the online MSP to submit to the ELCA database, you will need to create an account including an email address and password
 - Keep a record of the email and password, share with all who will be working on the online MSP, and track for future reference.



Creating the Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

elca.org/call-process/ministry-sites

This document has five sections, divided into smaller parts:

- a. **Who We Are** (items 1-5). *This section tells the story of your congregation and community through data and commentary.* Congregation Statistics are available at elca.org/tools/FindACongregation. Search for your congregation, click on the name under the results. Be mindful of your congregation's process for 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? Does the congregation file a parochial report annually? (Remember, the ELCA report is only as good as the data reported to it by the congregation.) What is the policy for maintaining accurate records? An interim pastor can help if work needs to be done in this area.
- b. **Our Vision for Mission** (items 6-9). *This section describes the characteristics of your congregation and your purpose, giftedness and mission.* Note that the congregation's response to Item 8 will be publicized on the ELCA Call Process website among descriptions of call openings in the synod, so this should be prepared with great care.
- c. **Leadership Needs** (items 10-17). *This section presents the gifts and skills needed in your next ministry leader.* The MSP also needs to address compensation, benefits and pastoral expenses (including moving expenses) that the congregation can offer. Salary and benefit considerations are matters that will need to be negotiated between the recommended candidate and representatives of the congregation council with input from the call committee chair, recognizing that the ultimate responsibility for the budget lies with the congregation. The synod's annual compensation guidelines, posted on www.spas-elca.org/forms, should inform these conversations.
- d. **Commentary** (item 18). *This section allows you to add any additional information that will help communicate who you are and where you believe God is calling you.* Remember, the call process is one of mutual discernment, and this section helps you complete the story. The optional "Seven Reflections" are another helpful way for you to portray the congregation fully.
- e. **Completion of Profile** (items 19-21). *This section provides details for the next steps in the process, forms for references, and contact information for your call committee.*
 - Item 19: Describes the discernment process of the congregation including how this profile was reviewed and adopted by the congregation.
 - Item 20: Call Process Contact Person is the name of the synod staff person who is working with your congregation's call process.
 - Item 21: Reference's Recommendation. Choose someone outside your congregation who can speak to your mission and ministry. Consider asking former pastors, neighboring pastors, or people who used to work for or belong to the congregation but are no longer involved.

Once you have completed the form, save a copy for your records and "Submit" it for activation by the synod staff.



Communication to Congregation

All through the transition process, the congregation should be fully informed in multiple ways, perhaps including a highly visible timeline that can track progress through each step. As the mission exploration process is completed, a report is shared with the congregation in advance of the town hall meeting. The report contains a summary of the material collected in the exploration process, a copy of the Ministry Site Profile, and copies of any other documents or materials that will be illustrative of the conclusions. The congregation is invited to come together for a town hall discussion of the MSP. Date and time for this meeting is determined in collaboration with the synod staff working with the congregation through the call process.

Congregational Town Hall

At the town hall meeting, the team responsible for the development of the MSP presents their work. The purpose of this meeting is to gain clear congregational buy-in, and ensure a common ground of understanding between congregation, synod and call committee. The call committee's presence at this meeting is vital so they can understand the background and context of the MSP. The meeting ends with an affirmation of the MSP and description of the needed skills and abilities contained therein. See a sample agenda for the town hall meeting on the next page.

Multiple Pastor Situations

The call process may differ when there is more than one pastor, as the remaining pastor(s) responsibilities may change dramatically during the interim. In a case where there is an associate pastor or deacon, the matter of their continuation after the departure of a lead pastor is discussed in their call package. For example, an associate pastor's call may be co-terminus with a lead pastor's call, perhaps including some fixed period thereafter. If there are no termination provisions, it is still advisable for the associate pastor to prayerfully consider whether it is best for the congregation for the associate pastor to seek another call.



Sample Agenda for Town Hall Meeting

The Town Meeting is held after the completion of the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). With the bishop and/or synod staff present, the congregation is invited to come and hear the results of the profile, pose questions and have discussion. The time is most productive if people are given opportunity to receive copies and review the MSP before the meeting.

<u>AGENDA</u>		
Call to Order	Congregational President	5 minutes
Devotions/Prayer (Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:6-16)	(Interim) Pastor	5 minutes
Presentation of Ministry Site Profile highlights		20 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief overview of process Special considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent factors that shape current congregational dynamics Description of our community/context What is God calling us to in the next 5-10 years? Given the above, how do we describe the leader we seek? Other comments by transition team, or call committee 		
Discussion		30-45 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions of Clarification Discussion starters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the particularly important portions of the profile? Are there points or observations that you take issue with? What does the synod staff or candidate need to clearly understand from this profile? Conversation with synod bishop and/or staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observations/comments/questions about the profile Next steps 		
Final Announcements		5-10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nomination of pastoral candidates for consideration Other 		
Adjourn		



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