This section of the Call Process Manual addresses the formation, structure and expectations of the call committee. 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.

☐ Congregation council provides for selection of the call committee in accord with congregation’s constitution.

☐ Church leadership installs call committee during worship service(s).

☐ Synod staff orients call committee at the committee’s first meeting.

☐ Call committee chooses leadership roles including: chair, communicator and chaplain.

☐ Call committee communicates with the congregation and council about their progress throughout the process.

☐ Call committee reviews Ministry Site Profile and invites conversation with other congregation leaders to understand the needs and story of the congregation.

☐ Call committee invites pastor candidate nominations from the congregation and shares them confidentially with the synod staff person.

☐ Call Committee prepares interview questions and process.

☐ Synod staff meets with call committee to share candidate names.

☐ Call committee conducts interviews and gathers other information (observing preaching, calling references, etc.).

☐ Call committee continues to communicate with the congregation and council about their progress (without details about the candidates).

☐ Call committee communicates progress updates with synod staff and candidates.

☐ Call committee discerns final candidate through a process of consensus decision-making.

☐ Call committee informs council and synod staff that a decision has been made and the candidate has agreed to move forward in the process.
Formation of the Call Committee

Timing
The call committee may be formed at the very beginning of the transition period and then given the task of overseeing the transition process and writing of the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). However, most congregations form the call committee as the MSP is being completed. The call committee should be formed before the town hall meeting is held to debrief the MSP, since this profile is an important basis for the call committee’s work.

Membership
The size, makeup and appointment of the call committee is provided for by the constitution of the congregation. Typically, the size of the committee is about six with no more than nine since it is difficult for larger committees to get the work done efficiently and to consistently have 100% attendance for meetings. It is crucial that the call committee meet when all members can be present especially when interviewing or deliberating on candidates.

The call committee as a whole should be as diverse in age, gender, ethnicity and interests as the congregation is at-large, (i.e., “look like the congregation in miniature”). It is good practice to invite nominations for the call committee rather than to ask for volunteers. After these persons accept the appointment or election, the leadership should demonstrate pride and confidence in them, pray for and support them.

The council may choose one council member and/or one member of the transition team to sit on the call committee as a natural liaison to these various groups. While they may have a dual role, they may not violate the confidentiality of the call committee.

Serving on a call committee is a great opportunity to see how the local church is connected to the whole church, and to participate in opening a new chapter in the life and ministry of their congregation.

Qualities of Call Committee Members
When identifying candidates for the call committee, it is important to seek persons who:

• will prioritize this work and have the ability to meet regularly
• can maintain confidentiality
• can both listen deeply and also speak up
• will act in faith and prayerfulness
• enjoy the trust and respect of the whole congregation
• can think and decide for the good of the whole congregation rather than their own personal desires or that of any faction or subgroup
• do not have any personal agendas, grievances, or power issues within the congregation
• are not employed by the congregation or are past pastors of the congregation (or their spouses)
• are not from the same family (i.e., spouse or parent/child) as others on the call committee.

Commissioning/Blessings 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 congregation may use the “Commissioning of the Call Committee” liturgy that follows as a way of gathering the whole congregation in blessing and supporting the members of the call committee.
Commissioning 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 reassure us when we are anxious or impatient. 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 ________________ 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: (Addressing the call committee) You have been prayerfully 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 Structure
There are many ways you might structure the work of the committee. Here’s one idea that covers the tasks to be completed:

- **Chair/Convenor.** Unless otherwise designated or specified by the constitution, the committee should designate a chair at its first meeting to oversee the committee’s work. The chairperson will convene meetings, set meeting agendas, and be the primary point of contact with pastoral candidates and the synod staff.

- **Communicator.** The communicator keeps the notes of committee’s work, especially assignments and interview questions/process. The communicator may also be responsible for written communications between candidates and the committee, as well as keeping the congregation apprised of the progress of the committee through newsletter articles, Sunday bulletin announcements, etc.

- **Chaplain.** The Holy Spirit guides the entire call process through open and honest prayer, study and conversation. The goal is to discern the particular rostered minister whom the committee should recommend to the congregation for issuing a call. The chaplain makes sure that the committee develops devotional or prayer practices to ground their work together. The call committee should pray often throughout the call process and encourage the congregation to also pray for the call committee members, the candidates, and the congregation, that all may sincerely seek to discern God’s will for the congregation.

- **Synod Staff.** A synod staff person will be assigned to work with the call committee throughout the process to guide, coach and assist as requested. The designated synod staff person will orient the call committee at the committee’s first meeting, bring candidate names, pray and advise throughout the process.

Note: There is no role for the interim pastor. The interim pastor is not involved in the call process as interim pastors are forbidden by synod constitutions and interim covenants from influencing the selection process.

Initial Call Committee Tasks

**Learn About the Congregation.** The call committee needs to fully understand the needs and desires of the congregation as expressed in the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) and job description, and carry out its search in a manner consistent with those needs and desires. The committee may wish to invite the transition team or other congregation leaders for conversation to better understand the congregation and all that led to the expression of these particular pastoral needs.

**Build the Team.** It is important for the call committee to take time at the beginning of the process to work on team development. As a cohesive team, the work of the committee will be smoother, the understanding of the whole congregation will be better, and confidence in the committee will be greater. In addition, the committee will provide a better impression for the candidate and a better witness to the final decision for the congregation.

**Maintain Confidentiality.** It is vital that the committee maintain strict confidentiality as to any information regarding specific candidates, and boundaries of confidentiality should be clearly agreed upon at the first meeting. Verbal and written information about prospective candidates must be kept within the confines of the committee.

**Communicate.** The call process itself is not secret. In fact, communication with the council and the congregation about the progress of the call process is vital. Frequent and consistent communication about the process builds trust in the call committee and helps to gain the consent and commitment of the congregation to the recommendations ultimately produced. This communication may include:

- Newsletter articles explaining the call process to the congregation, with follow-up articles each time another stage in the process is reached
- Notes in the Sunday morning bulletins
- Temple Talk updates by members of the call committee
• Q&A forums during education hours where members can be invited to ask questions of the call committee and learn about the progress of their work.
• Maintenance of a chart/timeline describing the call process displayed in a public place and modified as the call process unfolds.

- **Invite Nominations From Congregation Members.** The call committee may solicit names of potential pastoral candidates from congregation members defining a specified time (no more than two weeks), using a confidential process such as submission of the form found on the next page. Without review, the call committee shares those names with the designated synod staff person. The synod staff will connect with the candidate’s bishop and will take into account factors such as the nominated candidate's openness to call, suitability of the match, etc.
Call Candidate Nomination Form

The task of calling a pastor belongs to the congregation. The pastoral call is God’s activity, but God works through the congregation, committees, pastors, and synod staff to call pastors to serve the church.

As members of the call committee, we want to invite all members to participate to some degree in the process of calling our next pastor. If, as you visit other congregations or talk with your friends and relatives, you become aware of a pastor whom you think may fit the ministry of our congregation as described in our Ministry Site Profile, let us know by completing this brief form. This nomination will be shared with and vetted by our synod staff, so contact with this person is neither necessary nor encouraged.

Please remember that all information regarding candidates is confidential, except for the final candidate recommended by the call committee.

Thank you for participating in this important task. - Your Call Committee

Submission Deadline: _______________________________

I wish to lift up the following ELCA pastor for consideration in the call process for this congregation:

Candidate’s Name ____________________________________________________________________________
Candidate’s Current Role/Call Placement ____________________________________________________________________________
City & State ________________________________________________________________________________

Reasons for Recommending This Candidate for Consideration:

Other Information

Submitted By _________________________________________________________________________________
Phone Number ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Candidate Pool

Nominations from the Synod
Synod staff spend a great deal of their time and effort in being aware of potential candidates who are open to a new call, including review of the ELCA database of Rostered Minister Profiles (RMPs) and other means. Synod staff meet weekly to discuss “mobility” of potential candidates serving in the synod or elsewhere as to their suitability for specific congregations. These conversations are always guided by deep consideration of how the skills and interests of the pastor will match the needs of the congregation. Other considerations include: readiness to move, family considerations, housing, financial considerations and geographic restrictions.

Presenting Rostered Minister Profiles (RMPs)
Synod staff strive to present for the call committee’s consideration two to four names of leaders who are available and whose RMPs fit with the needs identified in the MSP. In all cases, the synod staff will have spoken with the candidates, shared the MSP, and determined that the pastor is open to considering this call. The RMP includes information about the pastor’s education and work experience, a self-description of their particular areas of interest and skill, and responses to a few questions about their style, convictions, preferences, etc. The RMP also includes the names of references.

Maintaining Confidentiality of RMPs
The synod staff will meet with the call committee to present RMPs for each candidate. No additional copies of these documents are to be made and all content and deliberations about candidates are to be held in strictest confidence.

Contacting Candidates
Prior to receiving names, the call committee should identify several potential interview/meeting dates. As soon as the committee receives names, the chair or other designated person makes contact with the candidates informing them that their names have been received, and arranging a time for the first interview. Call committees are expected to give at least a first interview to all candidates whose names are presented.

Interviews & Visits

The Pastoral Candidate Interview and Visit.
The conversation between the pastoral candidate(s) and the call committee is the heart of the call process. Careful attention should be given to thorough preparation and exchange of information ahead of time, wise use of time during the interview, 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. In advance of interviews, the call committee should consider the following:

• Further Exchange of Information. You may wish to share more about the congregation, such as:
  • Copies of your last several annual reports
  • Recent newsletters, communications, brochures
  • Information about the surrounding community
  • Topics/questions you plan to explore in the interview and visit
  • Bulletins from recent worship services
  • A position description
- Or, you may want to know more from a candidate, such as:
  - Annual reports from their current congregation
  - Any other resume or mobility information not already shared
  - Original material such as sermons (including video), class outlines, continuing education projects
  - Bulletins from recent worship services

- **Format of the Interview(s).** Generally, two rounds of interviews take place. The first interview is a conversation with each candidate whose name the synod staff provides. This initial interview may take place in person, via Zoom or over the phone. Best practice dictates that the same mode should be used for all candidates allowing for an even playing field for all candidates. The second, more extensive visit and in-person interview is conducted with one or two final candidates.

- **Location of Interview.** When deciding location and timing for these interviews, confidentiality and hospitality are primary concerns. The congregation’s building may not offer a discreet meeting place. You may wish to use a local business or community space that offers a more confidential space.

- **Interview Questions.** While each committee will develop its own interview process and questions, consider the following points when developing an approach:
  - **Role of the RMP.** Read the RMP and other references (if applicable) the synod has provided about the candidate. Identify any information that may need to be clarified by the candidate. Create questions that help you come to know the candidate as a spiritual person/leader.
  - **Format.** Develop a format to ask a predetermined list of questions of each candidate using your MSP as a guide to the specific needs of your congregation and the pastoral opening to be filled. While you want to ask questions specific to each candidate’s gifts and skills, a structured interview process is important to maintain consistency across interviews.
  - **Behavioral focus.** Create interview questions focused on the ministry behaviors necessary for success in your context. Rather than asking about a candidate’s ideas about certain aspects of congregational leadership, ask for examples of past behaviors which illustrate those qualities. These kinds of questions allow the candidate to share what he/she has done in particular ministry situations which demonstrate specific relevant knowledge or expertise. For example, perhaps one of the factors identified as important to success in your context is working effectively with lay leadership. A sample behavioral interview question addressing this factor might be, “Tell about a time when your views or preferences were at odds with key members of the congregation’s leadership. What did you do and how was the situation resolved?”
  - **Questioners.** Once you have decided the questions to be asked, assign questions to each member of the committee so that all members are involved in the conversation. Discuss briefly the issues to be aware of in the interview itself (see next section), including the extent of follow-up and spontaneous questions.

- **Practice Interview.** You may find it helpful to conduct a practice interview with a pastor who is not a candidate for the call. If this is desired, synod staff will help you set up such an interview.

- **Interview Tips:**
  - Seek to set a tone where the conversation goes two ways, so that both the candidate and committee can ask questions and get a sense of one another
  - Be patient, allowing the candidate time to formulate responses
  - Listen actively, showing interest and respect for their answers
  - Be alert, listening for key words or phrases
  - Concentrate, listening for main ideas, not just facts and figures
  - Be deliberate. Avoid hasty decisions based on an answer to one question
  - Be aware of your body language; convey openness and non-defensiveness.
Sample Interview Questions for a Candidate

**Preaching**
How do you characterize yourself as a preacher? Tell us about your process for preparing to preach. What is the goal of your preaching? How would you describe your preaching style? Tell us about a sermon you gave that addressed a particular situation happening in the congregation or community.

**Stewardship**
Tell about a stewardship effort you led in a congregation. What are some of the core principles of your theology of stewardship? How is a person’s giving an expression of their faith? What are your giving habits?

**Evangelism**
Tell about how you have equipped people in a congregation to invite others to join them at church or to share their faith story.

**Leadership**
Describe your leadership style. Describe how you work with committees, councils and other lay leaders in a congregation. Tell about a time you inspired lay ministers to explore and use their gifts in ministry to the congregation and community? How do you engender trust in your leadership? What do you do to inspire confidence in others to follow you? How have you gotten to know members personally in a new call? How do you understand collaborative leadership? What are your priorities for ministry?

**Pastoral Care**
Tell about a time when you responded to a crisis in the community. Share your strategy for covering pastoral care needs in the congregation.

**Education**
Tell about a time when you led the design of an educational strategy for all ages in the congregation. Describe how you lead and teach Confirmation. What is your preferred style of teaching adults? What are your own topics of interest in education? What have you read lately?

**Youth**
Tell us about your most impactful interaction with youth in a congregation.

**Community Life**
Describe a time you connected with the community outside the congregation. What drove the interaction and what was the result? Tell us how you promote community interaction and growth within the congregation. Tell about a time when your views or
preferences were at odds with key members of the congregation’s leadership. What did you do and how was the situation resolved?”

**Worship**
Tell about a time your worship planning and leadership was at its best. What are some of your values about worship?

**Ministry**
What is your guiding imagery of yourself as a pastor? What keeps you connected to being a Lutheran pastor and the ministry of the ELCA?

**Personal**
Tell about your strengths and growing edges as a ministry leader. What life events/people aided your discernment to prepare for ministry? Tell about your guiding theological ideas. How has God been active in your life? Describe your spiritual practices that keep you connected to the Holy One. What are your hobbies and how do they contribute to your personal well-being? What are your vacation habits; how do you take vacations? How do you attend to your physical and mental health?
Potential Interview Questions From a Candidate

Be sure to include time in each interview to receive questions from the candidates. Here are some questions you may want to be prepared to answer for them:

**Congregation’s Story**
Tell me about how this congregation got started. What are your congregation’s strengths and challenges? Tell me about the community where the congregation is located: what is the ethnic and socio-economic make-up of the community? What are some favorite traditions of this congregation?

**Financial Situation**
What is the debt load of the congregation? Have the members been able to consistently make their budget and cash flow? What is the mission support to the synod? If you have an endowment, how is it used?

**Worship Practices**
What is important about the worship life of the congregation? What are your communion practices? What worship resources do you use?

**Greater Church Involvement**
What sort of relationship does the congregation have with the Saint Paul Area Synod, other ELCA congregations, and congregations in the community?

**Staff**
Describe the current staff model and the history of staffing resources.

**Programs**
Describe current programs for stewardship and evangelism. What is the history of these programs? What resources are available for lifelong faith formation?

**Personal Health Environment**
What resources are in place to support the pastor in ministry such as a mutual ministry committee? Describe the benefits offered by the congregation. What is the pastor expected to do on a weekly/monthly/annual basis?

**Call Committee**
How are each of you involved in the life of this congregation? What brings you the most hope about the future of this congregation?

**Mission and Vision**
Tell me about the current mission/vision statement of the congregation. When was it written and does it still tell your congregation’s story? What have you learned in the interim process about the congregation and its future and how does that relate to mission? What are the core values of this congregation? How is this congregation an integral part of the surrounding community? What is essentially important about this church?
First Round Interviews (60-90 minutes)
The first round interview can be by Zoom, conference call, or in person. The limited timeframe may mean you need to be selective with the questions that are most important to you. Considerations for the first interview:

- **Parity.** Interviews with all candidates should be conducted in the same mode (on Zoom, in person, etc.) to ensure as similar an experience with each candidate as possible.
- **Principal Contact.** Designate a committee member to welcome the candidate to the interview site and accompany them to the interview room.

### Sample Interview Agenda

**Welcome.** Welcome the candidate and introduce each committee member and their role(s) in the congregation.

**Process.** Outline the anticipated process for the interview.

**Prayer/Devotion.** Led by someone on the committee or by the candidate if asked ahead of time.

**Introductions.** Begin with questions which allow the candidate to introduce themselves (e.g. “Share with us briefly about your background and your call to ministry”).

**Predetermined Questions.** Continue with the predetermined list of questions assigned to each committee member.

**Candidate questions.** Allow time for specific questions posed by the candidate.

**Wrap up.** Thank the candidate for talking with you and designate the method and contact person for any follow up questions the candidate might have. Outline future steps, including the anticipated timeline for hearing from the call committee.

Following First Round Interviews

- While the interview is still fresh in the minds of committee members, each person should write down initial impressions of strengths of candidates and any further questions on their mind. Convene as a committee after all first interviews are complete to determine who will be invited for a second interview and visit.
  - 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 committee member to speak and be heard
  - Come to a decision measured against the leadership needs of the congregation
  - Choose the most suitable candidate(s), 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?”
- **Contact all Candidates.** Once a decision is made, contact all candidates either inviting them for a second interview or releasing them from further consideration by the committee.
- **Contact Synod Staff.** Contact the synod staff person working with you to update them on the decisions of the committee.
Second Round Interviews

- **Preparation for the candidate second visit.**
  - Arrange for any necessary travel, housing at a local hotel, and meals (covering any expenses)
  - Determine who will meet and welcome the candidate and/or spouse
  - Determine visit schedule and location(s)
  - Invite candidate to prepare devotion or bible study or other ministry-related task to share with the call committee in the interview
  - If a candidate’s partner accompanies them for the visit, coordinate with the couple to provide hospitality for the partner, if desired, while the candidate is in the interview
  - Allow for downtime for the candidate away from the call committee and the parish.

- **Possible elements of the second candidate visit:**
  - A tour of the church at a time when staff and members are not present
  - Informal time for the committee and candidate to experience unstructured conversation over a meal at a restaurant or home of call committee member
  - A walking or driving tour of the neighborhood around the church including a look at housing, educational facilities, library and other places of interest
  - The formal second interview follows the same pattern as the first interview, but with additional time for a more in-depth conversation (2+ hours), allowing the call committee more time for questions or follow-up you may not have had time for in the first interview.

Other Committee Tasks

Either before or after the second interview, and before making a final determination, the committee should do the following:

- Contact references for final candidates
- Arrange to see the pastoral candidates preach and lead worship. This can be done: a) via video; b) in the pastor’s current context (with their permission); or c) at a local congregation, which synod staff can help you to arrange.

Discernment of Final Candidate

Once interviews are complete and references are checked, it is time to convene and seek to reach consensus on a final recommendation. As in each step in this process, this conversation begins and is surrounded with prayer. Consensus does not mean unanimity as to each person’s preferred candidate, but rather agreement that the final candidate meets the needs of the congregation as expressed in the MSP and no one objects to the decision to move forward with that candidate.

- **Questions.** It is important to keep God’s leading and the congregation’s mission central, rather than personality or expected popularity. Keep asking questions like:
  - Is this who the Holy Spirit is leading us to call to this place at this time?
  - What gifts does each candidate bring to ministry?
  - What areas of ministry are not strengths for each candidate?
  - Which candidate fits best with our congregational needs?

  *Avoid questions like:*
  - How does this candidate compare to others?
  - Who will feel good (or bad) about this choice?
  - Will this person do until someone better comes along?

- **Further Conversation.** If you feel further input is needed, you may ask to talk with the candidates again or ask for more references.
• Decision process.
  • If a consensus is reached:
    • Each member of the call committee should specifically state their support for the decision regarding
      the recommended candidate
    • Invite the chosen candidate to be the final candidate. If the candidate agrees, that candidate will with-
      draw from any other call process until this process is finished.
    • Inform the council president that the committee has reached a decision
    • The call committee should also promptly inform all other candidates and the synod staff of the deci-
      sion regarding a final candidate. The synod staff will then connect with the president about next steps
      for the call.

  • If no consensus is reached:
    • If the committee determines that no candidate can be recommended, then a meeting with the synod
      staff is held to debrief the experience. This conversation serves to clarify the committee’s expectations,
      answer process questions, and determine how to proceed. The synod staff will then work to generate a
      list of new names for consideration. The call committee is not allowed to “hold on” to a candidate while
      asking for more names, as this is unfair to both the candidate and congregation, and rarely results in a
      call.

Special Circumstances

Calling an Associate Pastor
• Job Description. When an associate pastor is being called, the MSP should be prepared as usual, tailored
  for the associate role. A job description should also be prepared with responsibilities, ministry skills and oth-
  er qualifications.
• Lead Pastor Role. The lead pastor plays an important role, speaking with candidates and providing feedback
  to the synod staff before synod staff presents names to the call committee. The lead pastor’s role in the call
  committee should be determined at the beginning of the process.
• Stipulations in Call. Prior to the call process for an associate pastor, the lead pastor and the council in
  consultation with the congregation’s constitution should consider stipulations to include in the Letter of Call
  (such as whether the associate pastor’s call is co-terminus with the lead pastor).

Calling Co-Pastors
Some congregations have called their pastors to serve as co-pastors. The congregation’s constitution outlines if this
arrangement is allowable. Ask your synod staff contact for direction about navigating a call process for a co-pastor
model.

Calling an Internal Candidate (such as an associate pastor for a new role or an intern for a called position)
• First consideration. The MSP should be prepared thoroughly, and the call committee formed and briefed
  as usual. The call committee will interview the candidate and make a decision about their candidacy before
  considering any other candidates. The interview and review should be as thorough as would be the case with
  any other candidates.
• When an internal candidate is not recommended. If the call committee’s decision is not to recommend
  this candidate, or the person withdraws from or otherwise is not available for consideration, then the normal
  call process with other candidates will commence.
Using the areas of pastoral gifts and skills identified in the MSP and the interview questions, you may wish to develop a ranking system for the candidates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Candidate</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Ministry in Crisis</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Equipping/Recruiting</th>
<th>Interpersonal Skills</th>
<th>Preaching</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Worship</th>
<th>Family Life/Self-Care</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This may be as simple as a grid on which each committee member gives each candidate a ranking in each identified category. For example, if the category is “pastoral care,” each person would rank their impression of this area from the conversation 1-5, with 1 as lowest and 5 as highest. This process reduces the subjectivity of the interview by helping committee members listen for responses which correspond with the specific ministry areas identified as important. Consider the sample grid below: