



Southwestern Washington Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America

2020 Call Manual

For all Ministers of Word and Sacrament
and
Ministers of Word and Service

God's Beloved People:

Those of you who find this call manual in your hands are, most likely, about to begin the frightening and exhilarating process of calling a new minister.

Many thoughts might occupy your minds:

- How, when the grieving is still so real, can we even think of calling a new Minister?
- How, given the variety of folk in our parish, can we ever find a leader for all of us?
- How will God's Holy Spirit work among us?
- How will we stay vital and mission-minded during the interim?

Those of us who will be working with you in your call process know your questions are many and your expectations high.

We would have you think of this process as one in which your community draws together--aided by the larger church--to fulfill one of its essential functions. The church has been doing this for centuries. The advisor and helper is God's Spirit, promised to the gathered church (Matthew 18:20) and now ready to empower you for your task.

Elsewhere in this manual you will find some resources available for your use. They are provided because your church thinks they are helpful. We hope you will take advantage of them.

Although we cannot tell you how long your process will take, (probably somewhere between 6 and 12 months), we can promise to aid you in the timeliest way possible. The process you are entering is broad and deep, something more than hiring staff. During the process you will have ministerial care and worship leadership. True ministry will be done among you during this process. We invite you to take advantage of this interim ministry and relax into the process of calling, letting your best thoughts and prayers of your common future dominate. "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7)

Sincerely in Christ



Richard E. Jaech
Bishop

**“Many are called but
few are chosen.”**

- Matthew 22:14

What is a Call?

While there are aspects of your task that look much like “hiring an employee,” rostered leaders in the Church are not “hired” but “Called” after prayerful deliberation.

This distinction is more than simple semantics. Those called to ministerial leadership positions in the Church are gifted with a relationship with the people of God that allows them to be a part of people’s lives at the most sacred and precious events of life.

Lutherans understand leadership to be a call to proclaim both Law and Gospel. Leaders are called to comfort and console, support and care for God’s people.

They are also called to proclaim and live a corrective and challenging Word from God that may at times cause discomfort. If the relationship between minister and congregation is seen simply as an employer-employee arrangement, the latter responsibility would be difficult to carry out.

When this manual talks about the call process for a **minister** we are referring to all Ministers of Word and Sacrament which means all full or part-time, Pastor or Associate Pastor, and also all Ministers of Word and Service, which means all full or part-time Deacon.

Brief Overview of the Four Phases of Rostered Minister Transition

Phase One:

When a Minister Resigns or Retires

The first phase of the interim process begins when a minister resigns, retires or departs for any reason. As a rostered minister leaves, it is important to find a way to say good-bye and to begin to define appropriate boundaries so that the congregation is able to receive another individual as their minister. The Synod Bishop's Associate has a process for meeting with your congregation council Executive Committee members and your minister who is leaving to set the boundaries for the future.

If you are a congregation president, this process should be started in consultation with the Synod Bishop's office in order to begin the process of selecting your next minister. Phase One ends in the selection of a qualified Interim minister as presented by the Synod Office and as specified in the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations (Section C9.06). The Bishop's Associate will meet with your congregation to help them to understand the process that lays before them.

Phase Two:

Self-Study and Visioning Process, Congregational Profile

Phase Two of the interim/transition process begins with the welcoming of the Interim Minister. The minister will carry out the work of interim/transition ministry by following a widely accepted process for congregational transition.

This is also the time for appointing a Transition Team. The purpose of this team is to help the congregation conduct a study of itself and its situation, to develop a vision of their future shared ministry to which God is calling this congregation, and to discern the type of rostered minister and the characteristics needed to lead the congregation to fulfill that vision. Phase Two concludes with the preparation of a package of material called the Ministry Site Profile, and its online submission to the ELCA portal and approval by the Synod Office.

Phase Three:

The Call Process

Phase Three of the transition process is the Call Process. The Call Process begins when the Ministry Site Profile has been approved and submitted on the ELCA portal. At this point, the congregation selects a Call Committee. The Call Committee receives the names of possible ministerial candidates from the Synod Office in a highly confidential process. After the Call Committee interviews ministerial candidates, it eventually recommends one ministerial candidate to the Council. The Synod Office will help you figure out the compensation package according to Synod guidelines and Portico benefits. The Interim Minister does not play a role on the Call Committee. However, if a minister is currently called to a congregation that desires to call an associate minister or deacon position to add to their staff, the minister would be involved in the process, since they will need to work with the individual.

If the Council agrees, the Council calls a special congregational meeting following their constitution and done in coordination with the Synod Office at which the Bishop appoints someone to attest the call vote. Normally, the candidate has a Meet and Greet Session with the congregation. Following this (anywhere from same day to weeks later), the congregational meeting is held to vote on the call and the compensation package, as described in the church constitution with help from the Synod Office. If the congregation decides to issue a call to the ministerial

candidate, and the ministerial candidate accepts, then he or she becomes the next regularly-called minister of the congregation.

Phase Four:

Implementation with Called Minister

Phase Four is the final phase. Throughout the process the congregation has worked to develop its vision of the future to which God is calling it and has called the minister that members believe will lead in pursuing this vision. Now the congregation welcomes this new Minister of Word and Sacrament or Minister of Word and Service. This new partnership is celebrated with a formal installation service, arranged in tandem with the Synod Office.

Rather than set aside the work of the transition process, it is important for the new minister and congregation to work on implementation together. The arrival of the new minister, associate minister or deacon is not a time when "things return to normal," but is a continuing part of transition as the minister and congregation continue to live into the future to which God is calling them together.

Glossary of Terms

Minister

Although the majority of Call Committees are formed to call a minister to their church, this manual uses the term "Minister of Word and Sacrament" for "minister" and "Minister of Word and Service" for "deacon". In the ELCA, rostered leader status is granted to Ministers ordained to Word and Sacrament Ministry and to the lay roster commissioned to Word and Service Ministry. The Call process for each of these rosters is the same.

Ministry Site Profile

In short, this is the profile of the Congregation that shares congregational history, current structures and staffing patterns, hopes for future mission directions, demographic data about the community, as well as the gifts for leadership being sought by the congregation. The Ministry Site Profile is written by the Transition Team with input from the congregational members. The congregational members need to have a say as to where they want to go. The Ministry Site Profile is the instrument that all ministers selected as a candidate for call at your church will read.

Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)

This form, completed by the rostered minister candidates, includes responses to a number of questions about their theology, their understandings of their gifts for ministry, personal information, employment and educational history, and references that the Synod Office and the Call Committee use in the call process to select a rostered leader that is a good match for the congregation.

Compensation

This is the compensation package that actually impacts the congregation's financial budget and time that supports the rostered leader called to your congregation. This includes salary and housing allowance (the council will officially vote to affirm the clergy persons' housing allowance to satisfy IRS guide- lines), Social Security offset, pension, health benefits, car allowance, vacation, continuing education and professional expenses, etc. It is helpful to candidates when there is clarity as to what is actually available to them to cover their day-to-day living expenses, and what their other benefits are. The Synod Office and Portico Benefits have easy ways to make this all clear. A percentage of the "Defined Compensation" (salary+ housing+ social security offset) is how all Portico benefits are calculated.

Letter of Call

The official letter (certificate) and supporting documents extending the congregation's call to the rostered leader. This form will be provided to the congregation's Council President for signatures by the Synod Office once a call vote is scheduled by the congregation. The forms require the signatures of the Council President, Council Secretary and Synod Bishop.

The Call Process Timeline

While it is difficult to predict how long the call process will take, this timeline attempts to illustrate the phases of the process. It is important to realize that there are many variables which need to be factored into each congregation's situation.

1-4 months	4-6 weeks	2-3 months	1-2 months	30 days	30-90 days
Ministry Site Profile completed. Call Comm formed	Receive and process candidates	Candidate Interviews	Call Vote scheduled	Minister discerns call	Minister accepts call and
1 – 4 months	Ministry Site Profile prepared by Transition Team for submission online to the ELCA. This phase lays the foundation for the entire process and should not be hurried. Adequate time must be allowed to hear from the entire membership of the congregation.				
4—6 weeks	The bishop's office reviews possible candidates (those forwarded by the congregation as well as ministers asked by the bishop to consider interviewing with your congregation), decides which candidates will be recommended to the Call Committee, and processes each candidate's Rostered Minister Profile for submission to the Call Committee.				
2—3 months	The Call Committee contacts candidate and arranges and conducts interviews. The logistics of inviting a candidate for a visit may take time since several calendars are involved.				
1 - 2 months	The congregation Council receives the Call Committee's recommendation and schedules a special congregation meeting to vote on issuing a call according to their constitution. Most congregation constitutions require a two-week notice to its members before such a meeting to call can take place.				
30 days	Constitutionally, ministers are usually allowed 30 days to respond to a call.				
30 - 60 days	Most congregation constitutions provide for a minimum 30 days period between the time a minister resigns and concludes his or her present ministry. This time allows for a proper and orderly transition.				

The Work of the Transition Team and the Ministry Site Profile

The work of the Transition Team depends upon congregational input. This team works with the congregation members to help them through the transition while assessing the congregation members' needs and interests for the future of the congregation. They also write the final version of the Ministry Site Profile with input from the congregation.

The Synod recommends that the Transition Team includes a maximum of one member from the Council and this council member does not chair the team. This allows for more people from the congregation to be involved with lay leadership and the transition/call process, and also helps congregational members to view this as a congregational document, not just one that elected leadership is pushing through.

The Ministry Site Profile document is on the ELCA website at <http://elca.org/en/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites>. You will need to open a Community Account with the ELCA in order to progress any further. This account allows you to access all congregational call documents, and any other ELCA congregational forms that you may need in the future. Be sure that several people in leadership and your church office have the user ID and password for this congregational account.



Do not hesitate to contact the Synod Office at 253-535-8300 or swwsynod@plu.edu with any questions or concerns that arise.

Ministry Site Profile Process

A Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is the instrument which summarizes the identity and direction of the congregation and is prepared by the Transition Team. It is especially useful to the Call Committee as it interviews prospective candidates. The Synod Staff finds it useful as they attempt to best match rostered minister candidates with your congregation. The Synod staff will send the Ministry Site Profile to prospective candidates, as the rostered ministers also find it useful to know if they discern a fit between themselves and the congregation. While not everything on the Ministry Site Profile is essential, care should be taken to provide the basic information. Some congregations have added even more information as longer explanations on the form, or as additional attachments. That's all good.

The Ministry Site Profile will need the review of the church council when it is completed. Of special concern is the information regarding compensation. The Call Committee and the Bishop's Office need that information before candidates are nominated and interviewed. The actual compensation package is completed by the Council, or Executive Committee, prior to the congregation's call vote meeting.

Go to the ELCA web site for the form elca.org/en/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites

Much of the needed information is available from current church records. Information regarding the community can be drawn from several sources, including the school district(s), the chamber of commerce, census records, your congregation trend report (log in here <https://bit.ly/2RhHnGK>) and ELCA demographics at <https://bit.ly/2EOzmYN>. The rest of the information comes from interviewing congregation members, member surveys, and maybe even work with an outside consultant to assist the congregation in looking toward a new future.

After you submit the Ministry Site Profile online, the Synod Office will receive a notice from the ELCA online portal that the document is completed and will access it from their office. Potential candidates for this position want to learn about the congregation as soon as possible, so the Synod Office sends a copy to them. If the Transition Team like to email a copy to the Synod Office AFTER submitting in on the ELCA portal, please do so to swwsynod@plu.edu. Please email the synod office any additional documents that you'd like candidates to review (ie, congregation annual report, newsletter, etc). ***Please note that there is only one copy of the Ministry Site Profile online. Every time you take it down to update some information, or maybe to fix a typo, it is no longer visible to anyone. You MUST resubmit it every time you make a change to the document!***

The Work of the Call Committee

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people"

And immediately, they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little further, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority.

Mark 1: 14-22



The work of a Call Committee that culminates in a congregational vote to call any Roster Leader is a Holy Calling in and of itself. A Call Committee is entrusted with an incredibly important responsibility. This manual offers assistance to that call process so that it can be executed faithfully and effectively. One Council member may serve on the Call Committee, but may never chair the committee.

**Discerning God's Will:
The Basics of Discernment
For Call Committees and Church Councils
by the Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel**

The Call Process: Discerning God's Will

The process of seeking and calling a minister to serve a congregation is one of discernment. For Christians, the goal of all discernment is seeking the will of God in each situation. The call process therefore seeks to know God's will for the future mission and ministry of a congregation and who God chooses as minister and shepherd for that ministry. It is God who chooses. It is the work of the Call Committee, the Congregation Council, the congregation, the ministers interviewed and the Office of the Bishop to discern God's choice and the Spirit's leading.

When a congregation enters into the call process, they enter into a process of discernment that has its roots in the New Testament community described in the book of Acts. In Acts 1, when it was time to fill the vacancy left by Judas among the Twelve Apostles, the disciples all prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry..." (Acts 1.25-26). It was a prayer of discernment.

In Acts 6, when it was time to expand the ministry of the local church in Jerusalem, the leaders called the membership together and asked them to nominate seven men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" for this new task of ministry. And when the seven were chosen, the Apostles then prayed and laid hands upon them. The seeking of candidates "full of the Spirit" was a seeking of the Spirit's leading and calling, and seeking of God's will. It was a process of discernment. (Acts 6.1-6)

Throughout Acts, at every point of development of the new Christian Church, the Spirit was there doing the leading with the church members seeking the leading and following the Spirit's bidding. The Spirit led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch to interpret God's word and baptize him (Acts 8.29). The Spirit led Paul and his companions to each and every city of his missionary journeys, even forbidding entry to some (Acts 19.21; 16.6-7).

Even at a crucial point in the development of the Church, when the earliest leaders and members had thought that God had only given salvation to the children of Israel, it was the Spirit who made it known to them through a careful process of examination of evidence and conversations and deliberations and reports that "God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11.1-18). This led to further discoveries of God's will for the Gentiles that did not require their observance of Jewish laws regarding food and circumcision (Acts 15). A decision by church leaders was made about this and a report of that decision sent to Gentile Christians in Antioch that stated very clearly how that decision was reached: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials..." (Acts 15.28).

The Church lived its life as a life of discernment. And as a result, "Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, *the church* increased in numbers" (Acts 9.31).

How did the Spirit lead? How was God's will known? From Acts we see the Spirit coming to both individuals (11.12) and groups (2.1-4; 21.4). In Acts, the Spirit comes during worship and fasting (13.2), during prayer (10.9-16), in answered prayer (10.31), during the preaching of God's word (10.44), at baptism (19.1-6), in the *con. nued*

laying of hands (8.14-17), in visions (9.10-12; 10.3-6), as a voice heard (8.29; 10.19), as an insight (11.28), as a matter of reading the signs and interpreting events (11.1-18; 16.6-7; 20.22-23), and as reported above, within group processes of deliberation and conversation (Acts 11 and 15).

As it was for these first Christians, so it is for those in the Church today, whether seeking God's vision and will for ministry or seeking a minister for that ministry. And just as God came to a variety of members in a variety of ways, so also the Spirit will continue to come to those who believe and trust in God and listen for God's voice.

Some Basics about Discernment

Through Holy Scripture and faith experience, all Christians have come to realize that knowing and doing God's will is the best possible thing that can happen to them. And so Christians pray to God frequently, even daily, "Your kingdom come, your will be done," as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer.

While realizing that the Spirit will come and lead as the Spirit chooses, Christians over the centuries have come to know that there are some basics that can help in the discernment process:

1. **Knowing our identity and calling** will provide a foundation for being open to the Spirit's leading. We are Christians, called into relationship with God and fellow believers and living in the unity of Spirit by the grace of Jesus Christ. Our identity and name not only says who we are, but whose we are as well. We are Christ's, and therefore children of God.

2. **Knowing our mission and purpose** will also provide grounding and focus for the task of calling a minister. The preparing of the *Congregational Mission Profile* will help to detail both this congregation's identity and purpose.

3. **Shedding** is a most important step for the success of discernment. Shedding leaves behind personal gain or agenda for the sake of God's will and the common good. The goal of discernment is to seek God's will, not the will of any one person or group. Therefore, shedding occurs in faith and trust and asks each participant to lay aside those things that would hinder the following of the Spirit's leading. Shedding does not mean leaving behind one's gifts, but rather allowing those gifts to be used by the Spirit.

4. **Rooting** is important to discernment as it connects everyone with the word and activity of God. Rooting asks, "How does the Bible inform us regarding our mission and ministry and the calling of a minister and shepherd? How does our tradition and history also inform us?" Rooting connects us with God and God's work among us at the beginning of our task.

5. **Listening** is a premium in discerning God's will. Listening hears the prompting of the Spirit, as well as the voices of all in the discerning community. Listening hears those who might be affected by decisions made. God will speak through these voices. But in order to hear them, one's own voice may need to be silent more than heard. Listening is not confined simply to call-related meetings and conversations. As was witnessed above in the book of Acts, the Spirit came at many times and in many ways and to many people, even at unexpected times. Therefore a whole posture of listening becomes important during the discernment and call process – in worship, in prayer, in conversation, in deliberation, in private devotions, in group Bible study, in preaching and teaching. Listening is a premium in discerning the leading of the Spirit.

6. **Exploring** is what will occur within the call process itself, especially at the time of the interviews by the Call Committee, the council and eventually the congregation. Exploring is how Christians come to know God's
Continued next page

leading and includes sorting through options. As exemplified in Acts 6, exploring goes beyond skills and gifts to seek the spiritual. During an interview, exploring will ask, "Is the Spirit clearly evident in this candidate? Is this minister's inner call and personal faith evident as well? Is the hand of God evident in the life and past ministry of this candidate? Is the Spirit leading this candidate to minister in this congregation and setting?"

7. **Weighing** is what comes after the interviews. In addition to the normal positives and negatives, pros and cons, that are identified, the Call Committee, the council and congregation seeks foremost to know what comes from God. What here leads toward God and not away from God? What is filled with human novelty or invention? Does the Spirit seem to rest on a particular individual or path? Weighing is the spiritual process of identifying the Spirit's leading.

8. **Deciding** moves the process to the final test: is this choice the choice of God? Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the monastic order of the Society of Jesus in the 16th century and wrote a great deal about discernment, suggested that a decision based upon discernment will be filled with one of two things. Either it will be filled with **consolation** and movement toward God, assisting in loving God more. Or it will be filled with **desolation** and movement away from God, pulling people toward things that are other than Godly.

In the end, the goal of discernment and the goal of the Call Process will be much as it was for those first Christians in the book of Acts. A Call Committee, council and congregation will want to be able to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..."

Resources persons are available through the Office of the Bishop to assist congregations, Call Committees and congregation councils to learn more about discernment in scripture and in Christian practice.

Leaders of the congregation might ask the interim minister to lead a study of the book of Acts during the early part of the interim period.

The Importance of Healthy Boundaries

Many congregation members do not understand how a continuing ministerial relationship with the previous minister (either a departing regularly called minister or the Interim/Transition Minister) can have a negative effect on the next minister and the congregation's relationship with him/her. When a previous minister continues to perform ministerial functions, it interferes with the new minister's ability to develop a ministerial relationship with the congregation members. Furthermore, any new minister will necessarily and naturally make changes within the congregation. It may be very difficult for the previous minister to avoid commentary by word or even facial expression on the actions of a new minister. Such commentary will often be viewed as "interference", whether it is intended as such or not.

In most cases, the departing minister understands the need to relinquish **any ministerial** relationship with members of the congregation previously served. The church council and church leadership would assist the previous minister and the next minister in this transition by understanding the need for establishing and maintaining proper boundaries.

Congregation members can assist the transition by not making requests of the previous minister that create awkward situations, such as asking the previous minister to officiate at a baptism, wedding or funeral. The departing minister can help to clarify the situation by sending a letter to congregation members describing the boundaries that will be maintained. The Synod Bishop or Bishop's Associate will be able to work with the congregation Executive Committee and the departing minister on setting these boundaries.

While some may feel such boundaries are insensitive or even harsh, experience has shown that problems inevitably arise when the congregation and the former minister continue their ministerial relationship in any way. The involvement of the former minister after the next minister has been called undermines and prevents the new relationship from forming. In particular, the trust that is essential to the minister-congregation relationship cannot fully develop. This, in turn, negatively affects the ability of the congregation and the next minister to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ.

Communicating with the Congregation

A critical part of the process is making sure that everyone knows what is going on with the call process for their new rostered minister. Newsletter articles about the process are very helpful. A very simple way to communicate with the congregation is to have the information posted on a special Call Process bulletin board, or a specific space within your weekly or monthly newsletters, or in emails to members or posted on your congregation's social media- or all of these ways. Whichever method(s) are read by most of the members.

Sample Information Posts

We are progressing toward the Call of a new rostered minister.

Our Representative from the Synod Office is:

Our Interim Minister is:

Office Phone:

Cell Phone:

We Are Working on a Ministry Site Profile

Our Transition Team Members are:

Our Call Committee Chairperson is:

Call Committee Members are:

At the recommendation of the Call Committee, our Church Council nominates _____ to be our New Minister.

We will have a Meet and Greet so you can meet Minister _____ and their family _____ on:

Date

Time

Location

We will vote on this nomination and the compensation at a congregational meeting set for

Date

Time

Location

Call Process Checklist

- ___ Council notifies Synod Office of the vacancy or new position. Telephone or email the Synod Office to arrange a meeting with the Bishop's Associate to review the process and ministry needs.
- ___ Transition Team selected. After feedback from congregation members, this team completes and submits the Ministry Site Profile on the ELCA portal for use by the Synod Office and candidates.
- ___ Council communicates with the congregation regarding the process regularly. Designated bulletin board space and reports during worship, in the bulletin, on social media, in email notices are goodstarts.
- ___ Call Committee Distribute Nomination Forms for Potential Ministers. Give any received back to Bishop's Associate.(See pages 21-22)
- ___ Receive Rostered Minister Profiles of potential candidates from the Synod Bishop's Associate.
- ___ Prepare for interviews and notify the committee members and Synod Bishop's Associate of the schedule for interviews.
- ___ Conduct candidate Interviews:
Evaluate candidates for recommendation, requesting and interviewing additional candidates if necessary. Multiple interviews of the top candidates are common. Be prepared for an online teleconference interview, as well as on- or off-site. Know that the congregation is responsible for travel costs when bringing in candidates for interviewing. Off-site meetings may be done to maintain confidentiality. If you'd like to use the Synod's Zoom account for an interview just request at 253-535-8300 or swwsynod@plu.edu at least 1 week in advance of interview date.
- ___ Inform candidates by telephone or email what is happening in the process. Let them know the planned length of time it will take and then follow up in writing with each candidate.
- ___ Promptly notify candidates not selected.
- ___ Notify synod staff of Candidates selected or not selected for further consideration to Council and any materials needed for Congregational Call Meeting
- ___ Consult with synod staff regarding completion of the Letter of Call and the Definition of Compensation. These formal documents are provided by Synod Office to Council President before call vote meeting.
- ___ Prepare materials regarding recommended candidate and meet with the Council
- ___ Notify congregation of candidate, including opportunities to get acquainted.
- ___ Ensure that Council calls congregational meeting and notifies synod staff of date, time and place.
- ___ Prepare, with the Church Council, materials for congregational meeting: motions, rationale for the nominee being selected, and two written ballots. The first is for the call; the second is for compensation.
- ___ Prepare to speak in support of the recommended candidate at the congregational meeting.
- ___ Telephone the ministerial candidate after the meeting regarding the results.

HELP IN APPOINTING OR ELECTING A CALL COMMITTEE

First refer to your congregation's constitution C13.05 for the process your congregation uses for assembling your Call Committee. It is either by congregation or council vote.

One method is to allow congregation members to nominate themselves or others and then hold an election.

Whatever the method, operate openly, communicate, encourage questions, and resist the temptation to "stack the deck" in favor of one interest group or age group over all others.

Installation service for Call Committee is on page 19-20.

THE WORKING RULES OF YOUR CALL COMMITTEE

No matter how solid your congregation, a call process is likely to provoke big questions and fears. The best favor your Call Committee can do for itself is to set its working rules in place before it begins making decisions.

ISSUES TO RESOLVE

- How will you choose your leaders?
- How many will be alternate members of the Call Committee? How and when will they "have voice" and vote? Are you going to operate by Robert's Rules or by some form of consensus decision-making?
- What vote percentage in committee will be necessary to nominate a candidate to the congregation? How will you keep the congregation informed in a timely manner?
- Do you have the authority to take a nomination to the council, or the congregation?
- Are you strong enough as a committee to face the possibility that the council or congregation may reject your nominee?
- Do you have a solid sense from council as to the salary and benefit range that can be offered by the congregation? Do you have this information in writing before interviewing?
- Do you have your own budget? What money is available to bring candidates in for interviewing or the Meet and Greet?
- How do we know which members are legal Voting Members and get to vote?

Prayer is an integral part of the call process.

It is helpful to have a group of members “on call” to pray for the committee whenever it is in sessions. The Call Committee will want to pray as it begins and ends each session, including meetings and interviews. At the time of making decisions, allow plenty of time for individual and group prayer. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit.

Meeting times can fluctuate, but it is best to set a pattern of specific days or evenings. Once a chair has been selected, an agenda can be set up. Each member of the Call Committee will recognize the importance of candor, openness, and a willingness to examine and discuss all the issues and candidates.

Interim Ministers are normally not involved in the Call Process, except on those rare occasions when requested by the Bishop. It is not usually recommended for an Interim/Transition Minister to be considered as a possible ministerial candidate for your congregation.

Continuing staff (paid) are normally not involved in interviews. However, most candidates will want to meet them, and staff will want to know at least the finalist. Arrangements can be made for candidates to meet with staff as appropriate in each situation.

Match-Making

The process continues at the Synod level through the Bishop’s Associate’s work, with the following:

The synod Bishop maintains a list of ELCA ministers who have submitted their name for consideration in call processes within our Synod.

The Synod Office contacts those candidates and the candidate names nominated by congregational members (and their respective synodical bishops) and clears their names for submission to the congregation.

The Synod Office selects up to five of the best candidates that match the needs of the congregation (based on the Ministry Site Profile) for presentation to the congregation's call committee.

The Synod Office presents the names of these best candidates for presentation to the call committee.

READY--SET--INTERVIEW!

The Congregational Call Committee:

- Reviews names submitted by the Synod Office.
- Sends names of people nominated by congregational members to the Synod Office for review.
- Releases names of candidates they decide not to interview, shares names with Synod Office & informs each candidate of their decision..
- Arranges dates, times, and other details of interviews, including a preparation session for the interviewers.
- Interviews candidates. A free Zoom tele-conference can be set up with the Synod Office for the initial interview with your candidates, if desired. Call Allison at 253-535-8300.

ISSUING THE CALL

- The Congregational Call Committee, after deliberation, presents for congregational vote a recommendation for call. Ideally the candidate will have been presented to the congregation in a social setting prior to the vote.
- The names of interviewed candidates not recommended for call are released. The Congregational Call Committee informs these candidates and the Synod Office of their being released.
- At an officially called special congregational meeting attended by a representative of the Synod Office, a call vote is taken.
- If the vote to call is successful (2/3), the congregation notifies the Bishop, who attests the call. The Letter of Call is created by the Synod Office and signed by the Council President and Secretary. It is forwarded to the Synod Office for the Bishop's signature and seal, and they send to the candidate for call.
- If the vote to call is not successful, the process is repeated beginning with a review of the Ministry Site Profile.

LAST THINGS

- The candidate receiving a letter of call/appointment has 30 days to accept or decline. If the call is accepted, the process continues.
- If the call is declined, the process begins again with a review of the Ministry Site Profile.
- Once the call/appointment is accepted and filled, the interim ministry is concluded with thanksgiving & the action is noted by the Bishop's Office.
- Time for Celebration! Ordination (if applicable) and installation services are planned and carried out with the assistance of the Synod Office. The synod bishop or his designee needs to conduct the ordination and installation of all rostered persons in this synod.

CALL COMMITTEE ROSTER

Name of Congregation

Address

City, State and Zip

Chairperson

Address

City, State and Zip

Home Phone

Work Phone

Secretary

Address

City, State and Zip

Home Phone

Work Phone

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Order for installation and Affirmation of a Call Committee

Sit

P. Sisters and brothers in Christ, God has called us to a new time in our life as _____ Church. It is a time for reflection and prayer, a time for self-examination and seeking, a time for expectation and hope. We need a shepherd to lead our flock, and God has promised that he will provide a shepherd for us.

A. The following persons have been appointed/elected to serve as the Call Committee of our church.

As the names are read, those persons present come forward to the chancel.

P. Dear friends, you have been duly *appointed/elected* to serve as the Call Committee for this congregation in order to seek a minister to shepherd and lead us.

Sacred scripture guides us in our task, to seek a minister who strives for righteousness and godliness, faith and love, endurance and gentleness -- a minister who is a servant as Christ himself was a servant -- a minister who is not domineering or quarrelsome, but who leads with care and concern for God's flock -- a minister who is filled with the Holy Spirit and a trustworthy steward of the mysteries of God.

Yours is a spiritual endeavor on behalf of this congregation. Are you willing therefore to be open to the Spirit's leading, and, by prayer and holy conversation, to undertake this calling to seek a shepherd for us?

R. Yes, and I ask God to help and guide me.

P. Will you be diligent in your seeking, careful in your listening, purposeful in your questioning, and respectful in all that you do?

R. Yes, and I ask God to help and guide me.

P. Will you seek the Lord's guidance through Holy Scripture and prayer and in your deliberations with your fellow committee members until you are brought to one mind and one will in Christ and have chosen God's shepherd for us?

R. Yes, and I ask God to help and guide me.

All stand.

A. Let us pray for those who are being installed today and for our church as we seek the Lord's guidance during this special time.

Almighty God, you alone are the great Shepherd of the sheep, and we turn to you to lead and guide us in all things. Our trust and our hope is in you.

C. You are the way, the truth and the life.

A. As you have raised up faithful servants of your holy word to tend your flock in each time and place, send us now, we pray, a faithful shepherd to lead our flock.

C. Send us a shepherd, O Lord.

A. Send us a shepherd of goodness and grace, of strength and faith, of righteousness in your sight.

C. Send us a shepherd, O Lord.

Continued next page

A. Send us a shepherd to comfort and care for us, to preach your word, to teach us and our children, to baptize and commune, to marry and counsel, to visit the sick and lay to rest, to guide us and pray for us.

C. Send us a shepherd, O Lord.

A. Give us a holy patience in this time of our seeking, a patience that trusts in you for our present care, knowing that you will bring our good work to fulfillment in your time.

C. O Lord, hear our prayer.

A. Keep us faithful in mission, regular in worship, responsible in stewardship, mindful of the needy, and diligent in prayer.

C. O Lord, hear our prayer.

A. Fill us all with your Holy Spirit and magnify our gifts of discernment, that we might follow your will and leading into a future yet unknown.

C. O Lord, hear our prayer.

A. Bless those who are especially called to serve on the Call Committee. Give them the gifts they need to seek and find the minister of your own nurturing, the shepherd of your own choosing, that we might be fed by your holy word and sacraments and grow in faith and love and ministry.

C. O Lord, hear our prayer.

P. All these things we ask, O God, with whatever else we need, in the name of him who is the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. Amen

The minister addresses the Call Committee.

P. I now declare that you have been installed as the Call Committee of _____ Church. May God bring your good work to fulfillment and grace in Christ's name.

C. Amen

P. The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C. And also with you.

All share the peace of the Lord.

The liturgy continues as is customary after the peace.

PROSPECTIVE MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES SUGGESTED BY THE CONGREGATION

After receiving the Ministry Site Profile, the Synod will recommend ministerial candidates who represent a good match to the needs of the congregation. Review of candidates' Rostered Leader profiles and interviews will be conducted by the Call Committee; the entire congregation has the final decision by election in a Call Vote during a specially called Congregational Meeting.

In some instances, names of possible ministerial candidates surface in the congregations. These names should be directed to the Call Committee Chair using the official **CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATION FOR CALL form** and must be a person on the ELCA clergy roster or an Approved and Available seminary graduate assigned to this Synod. The names will then be submitted to the Synod Office for consideration along with other potential candidates. If the candidate is on the clergy roster of another synod, our Bishop's Associate will need to obtain clearance from the Bishop of that Synod.

Under NO circumstances is it appropriate for a member of the Call Committee to make direct contact with a prospective candidate except to schedule the official interview once the Call Committee selects that candidate for further inquiry. If a possible candidate contacts the congregation directly, please refer them to the Call Committee Chair and the Synod Bishop's Associate.

CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATION FOR CALL

NOMINATION FOR _____ of _____
Position Congregation & City

Please keep the following facts in mind when considering a nomination:

All congregational nominations must be submitted in writing, using this nomination form. **No** nomination may be made from the floor at the call meeting.

- ◆ After a rostered leader has served three years in his/her present call, he/she is eligible for nomination for other positions/congregations.
- ◆ Interim ministers serving our congregation during the next months are not eligible to be considered for our call, unless stated in their Letter of Call or ministry contract.
- ◆ Nominations must be received by the church office no later than _____.

The Synod staff will be able to better evaluate the nominee's qualifications with the information requested below. (Use other side of sheet, if necessary)

NOMINEE

Name of nominee:

Presently serving as _____ of

Position

Congregation(s) & Location

OR as _____ at

Position (Chaplain, Admin., etc.)

Agency/Institution & Location

Known strengths of this nominee:

1.

2.

3.

Reasons why I feel he/she should be nominated for Call to our congregation:

1.

2.

3.

MATERIALS TO SEND EACH CANDIDATE PRIOR TO INTERVIEW

This list is intended to help you put together an excellent packet of materials for the candidates so that they arrive with solid background on the call. Please add items that you think may assist the candidate in getting "The Big Picture" of your congregation, such as:

Congregational Records:

- ✓ Annual Reports for at least the past five years.
- ✓ Copies of the yearly Parochial Report (Churchwide Form A and C) for the past five years.
- ✓ Any congregational history that may have been written.
- ✓ Copies of newspaper articles or other publicity that focus on the congregation.

Community Records:

- ✓ Chamber of Commerce brochures on your community.
- ✓ A map of your community.
- ✓ A sample of the local newspaper.
- ✓ Other promotional materials the community produces.
- ✓ Information on schools and districts in area.
- ✓ Information on vocational possibilities for spouse, if relevant.

The Interview Visit Agenda:

- ✓ Social opportunities.
- ✓ Where will the candidate be housed?
- ✓ If the candidate's family is coming, what will they do during the interview, etc? Hospitality for the spouse, child care, etc?
- ✓ Any questions you would like the candidate to consider before arriving.

INTERVIEW HELP

In your search for a new staff person you may decide to interview one or more candidates. If so, it is wise to begin with the assumption that for each candidate interviewed, two distinct interviews actually take place. Remember that the candidate being interviewed is also interviewing you. This fact points to a definite need for a common agenda. Since both the candidate and your call committee have natural private agendas, you may each be tuned in to different frequencies of concern and response. A common agenda or some basic guidelines for your discussion is very important to both parties in a helpful, candid manner. How can you develop such an agenda? Here are two ways:

1. Build an interview agenda based upon important information about yourselves as a congregation and about the visiting candidate.
 - a. The Ministry Site Profile should provide a careful, updated view of your membership and ministries.
 - b. The candidate's "biographical record" should assist you in pursuing any particulars during the interview.

OR

2. Build an interview agenda with the Ministry Site Profile and candidate's "biographical record" information, as noted above, but supplement this information with existing interview guidelines. **The attachments to this section provide some helpful samples.**

In summary, it is important to consciously build the interview agenda on substantiated information. Failure to do this may project a "good old days" description of the congregation. The prospective candidate may then base his/her response to your call on stereotyped impressions that bear little relation to the present or future of your parish.

SOME SUGGESTED "DO'S AND DON'TS"

1. Feel free to use the Synod's Zoom teleconference meeting for a first interview. Contact the Synod Office to set this up.
2. **Do** begin with prayer. **Don't** feel pressured to undertake this responsibility without adequate support and assistance from the congregation in terms of their prayers for you.
3. **Do** plan time for the guest candidate to present his/her agenda items. **Don't** bypass or soft-pedal his/her concerns. Such questions will tell much about the person being interviewed. Your responses will tell you much about yourselves.
4. **Do** allow the candidate to express any particular personal or family needs. (Example: For a number of understandable reasons the staff person may prefer a housing allowance rather than parsonage housing.)
5. **Do** expect that the interview will give you a good idea of the candidate's interest and availability. **Don't** press the candidate to answer the question as to what he/she would do with the call if you extended it. Don't even ask the question!!
6. **Do** expect God to do great things in these interviews! (Example: You may gain as much or more new insight into your own congregation as into the person(s) you've interviewed.) **Don't** become impatient in the process. Take the time you need. You'll need the time you take.
7. **Do** follow up each interview with a note to the candidate, updating him/her on the status of the interview process, the date of the congregational meeting (once the date is set) and thank him/her for his/her willingness to be interviewed. **Don't** leave him/her dangling with little or no information about your schedule and plans.

8. **Do** keep the congregation informed during the interview process (parish paper, bulletin board, Sunday bulletins, verbal announcements, etc.). **Don't** assume they know what you (church council/call committee) are doing, why, or when. Chances are good they need regular reminders.

9. **REGARDING THE CALL ITSELF: Do** make contact immediately with the Synod Office, if the church council, call committee or congregation has serious questions or misgivings about the compensation package, or about any candidate to whom the call may be extended, or, as in some instances, has already been extended. **Don't** enter into private counsel or individual negotiations with the called person. The synod staff can best assist you in these circumstances.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In a behavioral interview, the candidate will have to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities by giving specific examples from their past experiences. As the interviewer you want to know not that they can do something, but that they have done it. As the committee, prior to the interview, you have determined what you are interested in through the completion of your Ministry Site Profile. Now you develop a series of open-ended questions that will allow you to find out if the candidate possesses the necessary competencies to meet your congregation's needs. The basic premise of the behavioral interview is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance.

USE THESE SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO BUILD YOUR OWN LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. THESE QUESTIONS ARE GENERAL IN NATURE AND DO NOT REPRESENT YOUR CONGREGATION'S UNIQUE INTERESTS OR NEEDS.

A. THE IMAGE OF THE MINISTRY

1. Tell us about your style of ministry.
2. What is the role of the laity in your ministry? How do you view the following: "The purpose of the staff, the lay leaders and the various organizations is to assist the laity to be the Church in worship, nurture, witness, and in service to the world."
3. From your review of our Ministry Site Profile, do you see areas of particular ministry needs for our congregation?
4. How do you see you and laity assisting each other, as a community of faith, for maximum use of abilities and resources in ministry?
5. What functions do you see yourself assuming; the laity assuming?
6. Tell us your process on the decision-making process for the leadership of a congregation.

B. THE PLACE OF WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH

1. Tell us about your concepts of worship
2. What is your chief function in worship?
3. Tell us your views on traditional, contemporary and innovative worship.
4. Tell us what role you view the sermon having in worship
5. Tell us about a time when your sermon really got the intended message across to your congregation members. Tell us a time when your sermon did NOT get your intended message across to your congregation. What happened? What did you do?
6. How can the laity help the staff person maintain a high level of sermon quality?

C. EVANGELISM

1. Tell us about your concept of evangelism.
2. What is your vision for preparing children, youth, and adults for church membership? Do you see this as a (*pastor, deacon, associate pastor*) responsibility?
3. How qualified do you feel to train the laity for organized programs of evangelism "outreach" in the community or "inreach" to nominal members? Please explain.

D. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

1. What do you see as the role of Christian Education in the parish program?
2. Tell us about any special emphasis - areas or ages – you have for Christian Education.
3. Tell us about some fresh patterns that you have employed in a Christian Education program.
4. What are your views on training and supervising the teaching staff?
5. Tell us about your preferred curriculum and practices for Christian Education.

E. THEIR PLACE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. Tell us about how you would work with laity members in our congregation.
2. What do you view as your strengths and weaknesses?
3. What makes you interested in accepting a call to our congregation?
4. What would you see as your role in visitation, to persons in distress; to persons with marital problems; for social purposes.
5. Tell us about a time when you were disappointed in your performance?

6. Tell us your views of the responsibility for visitation. Which areas should be your sole responsibility? Trained lay leaders' responsibility?
7. What are your concepts for premarital, pre-baptismal, and pre-confirmation counseling? General pastoral counseling? Do you have any curriculum you like to use for any of these?
8. What do you see as your role and the laity's role at the time of death in the congregation?
9. What are your preferences regarding your teaching role in the congregation? Which classes do you prefer to teach and why?
10. Tell us about a time that you made a major sacrifice to achieve an important goal.

F. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

1. Tell us about a time when you encouraged people to support ideas that they had had the opportunity to formulate? How did you accomplish this?
2. Tell us about a time when you achieved a great deal in a short period of time.
3. What is your view of establishing a congregational vision to focus attention on, and participation in, high priority programs? How would you measure progress?
4. Tell us about a time that you were able to sell your idea to a key person/group. Tell us about a time that you were unable to sell your idea to a key person/group.
5. Tell us your views on annual reviews and evaluations of minister, church council, and committee ministries? How would you best like to see this happen?
6. Tell us about a time that you were able to build team spirit in a time of low morale.
7. Tell us your views on congregational self-study once every two or three years, including such items as: goal attainment, major ongoing ministries, areas of need, expectations of parishioners, etc.?
8. Tell us about a time that you supported the establishment of goals by the council and committees with an annual evaluation of the goals?
9. Tell us about a time when you were very effective in your problem-solving ability.
10. What are your views on an annual council retreat? What purpose do you see it fulfilling?
11. Tell us your relationship with your church council at your last call.
12. What is your response to this statement? "In the context of congregational life, church members (including the leaders) quickly learn to avoid conflict and often seek peace at most any price."
13. What is your response to this statement? "To lead you must let go. You must delegate responsibility."
14. Tell us about a time when you found it necessary to tactfully but forcefully say things that others did not want to hear. What happened? What did you do?

G. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ACTION

1. What is your concept of your role in community betterment activities?
2. Tell us about a time that you spoke on social justice issues?
3. What is your place in social action?
4. Tell us about a time when you made an intentional effort to get to know someone from another culture.

H. WIDER CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

1. What will be your role in the Conference, Synod, Region, and ELCA?
2. What are your thoughts about local, synod, regional, and ELCA benevolences?

I. GENERAL

1. Tell us your views on having a Mutual Ministry Committee to work with the staff in the parish? How would you like members to be chosen?

A Mutual Ministry Committee is most often a small group of carefully chosen persons who relate to the pastor and the entire church staff. They meet periodically with the staff and with individual staff members, as requested, to talk over matters of mutual interest and concern. More specifically, this committee normally functions to develop harmonious interpersonal staff relationships and to offer their counsel in ironing out difficulties and conflicts that may arise.

2. What methods do you use to balance your personal and parish life?
3. Are there any significant needs concerning the parsonage (if offered), its condition or use?
4. Should we consider the possibility of a housing allowance instead of a parsonage?
5. What do you want to do for continuing education?

What other items would you wish to discuss? Any special potentials or problems in the parish? Make sure that this interview is not a time when you complain about other staff or members of the congregation, or complications, if any, with your former rostered ministers. Make sure you are not hiding major issues either.

QUESTIONS THE CANDIDATE MAY WISH TO ASK YOU

1. What is the focus of the congregation's ministry?
2. What is the rostered staff person's role, the lay staff person's role and what is the laity's role?
3. What is the congregation's history: stewardship, age levels, leadership?
4. How many interest groups and organizations are there?
5. How many innovative worship services have you had during the year, and what was the response?
6. How many people are involved in leadership roles? How are lay people involved in worship?
7. How involved do you like your staff person to be in the community?
8. Describe your administrative structure.
9. What has been done in:
 - a. Evangelism?
 - b. Finance?
 - c. Social Ministry?
 - d. Christian Education?
 - e. Stewardship?
 - f. Outreach?
10. Is there a need for a building program? How do you rate your facilities?
11. Details of Call: salary, housing, benefits, and what will be done in the future?
12. What long- and short-term goals has the congregation adopted? When was the last in-depth self-analysis of the congregation's program/function done?
13. What are the links between this congregation and the community; other churches?
14. Describe the "personality" of your congregation.
15. What does the congregation provide for my continuing education?
16. What other staff is employed? Are changes in these positions expected?
17. How does the congregation respond to change?
18. What is the congregation's benevolence record for the last three years?
19. What part should my spouse and family take in the parish? What are your expectations for my family's involvement in the parish?

INTERVIEW EXPENSE VOUCHER

Congregation _____ City _____

Call Committee Chair _____

Travel by air from _____ to _____

Travel by car from _____ to _____

_____ miles at _____ cents/mile

Meals: _____

Taxi/limousine/bus/parking: _____

Miscellaneous: _____

TOTAL _____

Please attach all receipts.

Signed: _____

Candidate Date

Address

City, State, Zip

Approved: _____

Call Committee Chair Date

Check sent to candidate on _____

REPORT OF NOMINATION AND RELEASE OF CANDIDATES

Congregation _____ City _____

Call/Appointment Committee Chair _____

By action of the _____ Lutheran Church Call Committee on _____
Date

The following candidate will be recommended to the congregation for call

A Congregational Meeting has been called on _____ at _____ AM/PM.

Our vote will be taken at that time.

The following candidates who were interviewed are released from our consideration:

**WE HAVE CONTACTED EACH OF THESE CANDIDATES
TO INFORM THEM OF OUR ACTION.**

Please return this form to the Synod Office:
Southwestern Washington Synod
420 121st Street South
Tacoma, WA 98444-5218
Email: swwsynod@plu.edu

Sample letter of thanks to those candidates interviewed but not recommended to the congregation. *Print on church letterhead.*

Dear _____,

By action of the Call Committee at _____ Lutheran Church, we are recommending another candidate for the call to ministry with us. In doing so, we have released your name to the Southwestern Washington Synod for consideration by other congregations.

We thank you for the opportunity to interview you and get to know you. We wish you God's peace and ask that you keep our congregation in your prayers during this call period.

Thank you again for being with us. If you have not yet received reimbursement for expenses related to the interview, please let us know by calling our Call Committee Chair _____ at phone _____ or email _____.

In Mission With You,

Secretary

_____ Lutheran Church Call Committee

HOW TO CONDUCT A CALL MEETING

1. It is the responsibility of the Church Council to conduct the call meeting. The president of the congregation or an appointee of the council should conduct the meeting.
2. **NOTICES:**
 - ✓ Verify that the congregation has been properly notified of the meeting according to the constitution.
 - ✓ Verify that the Synod Office has been properly notified of the meeting time and place and that a representative of the Bishop's Office will be present.
 - ✓ Verify that a quorum exists according to the requirements of your church constitution.
3. Tellers should be appointed for counting the vote. You may choose to do written ballots, or have some of your people call in on a teleconference. If you have teleconference voters, they will tell their vote decision privately to the Council President who will record the vote and add it to the tally. Congregational meetings in person all together help to provide a common sense of community and support of your shared ministry.
4. Open the meeting with prayer followed by introductions of any visitors attending the meeting. Explain that this is a special meeting of the congregation and that the only business before the congregation is the call. No other business may be transacted at this meeting. Ensure a quorum is met. (In your constitution C10.04)
5. Explain what will happen at the meeting:
 - ✓ a nomination will be brought by the call committee;
 - ✓ discussion of the merits of the candidate;
Two votes will be taken: one to call the minister (*requires at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose -Model Constitution for Congregations *C9.0*) and one to approve the salary and benefits package (*vote may be written, by show of hands, or voice. It requires a simple majority vote.*) **The ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations does not permit voting by proxy or absentee ballot (C10.50).**
6. A representative of the call committee presents the candidate for nomination and introduces the merits of the candidate. Discussion and clarification follow.
7. A vote to call is taken. If successful, the meeting proceeds with presentation, discussion, and vote on the salary package. If the vote to call is not successful, the meeting is adjourned with an explanation of the process to follow.
8. Following the meeting, the council is responsible for: Reporting the vote of the congregation to the Bishop's Office. If the vote was successful, complete the Definition of Compensation forms and sign the original Letter of Call sent from the Synod Office.

**CONGREGATION REPORT TO SYNOD OFFICE ON
CALL VOTE MEETING**

Date _____

A congregational meeting was held by _____
Congregation Name

at _____ at _____.
Address/ City Time

A quorum of _____ was present to vote on the recommendation
List number in attendance

of the Church Council/ Call Committee to extend a Letter of Call/Appointment to

_____,
Name of Candidate

to serve as _____.
Title of Position to be Filled

In a secret ballot _____ votes were cast to call and _____ votes
Votes in Favor Votes Against

were cast against this call. _____ chose to abstain.
Abstaining

Respectfully submitted,

President of Church Council

Secretary of Church Council

Sample Voting Ballots

(date vote held)

Vote to Call _____ **(name)** _____ as _____ **(position title)** _____.

Yes _____

No _____

Abstain _____

(date vote held)

Vote to approve compensation package for _____ **(name)** _____ **as outlined in supporting documentation.**

Yes _____

No _____

Abstain _____

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS — AN OVERVIEW OF THE CALL PROCESS

Who is responsible for keeping the congregation going until we have a new minister? *Your church council, in consultation with the synod bishop, will decide how to best provide for ministerial leadership and care during the call process.*

Will we be able to save a little on the budget while we don't have a "real" minister? *Probably not. The interim minister will be asked to do the same tasks your former minister did and will be paid on the same scale as your former minister. In addition, there will be some additional expenses related to the call process. It's also a realistic fact that during a ministerial change some sense of loyalty to the parish is lost. This is a good time for each member to reaffirm their pledge to the common ministry and stay consistent in their giving.*

Will we have a "real ministry" during the interim process? *Absolutely! Used well, the period of transition between permanent ministers can be intensely rewarding.*

How long will it take before we have a new minister? *Each congregation will be unique. Factors include the length of the previous minister's tenure, any problems there may have been during that tenure, the clarity of mission among the membership, etc. Even the time of year can make some difference as committee meetings are more difficult around holidays and summer vacations. In an average congregation and under the best circumstances, the call process will take 6- 12 months.*

My daughter was going to be married this summer. Can our old minister come back and do the wedding? *You and your new minister will have to settle these ticklish questions. As a rule it is usually better for there to be a clean break in the former relationships. Just plain common sense is the key.*

Can we trust the Synod Office? In my old congregation they really dumped a "loser" on us! *It is very important that the congregation find a way to ferret out strong feelings like these. In all likelihood more than one member will have misgivings about "interference" from the synod, memories of a difficult call process, or a story to tell about a minister that didn't work out. **Trust is the most important word in the process.** Open communication is the avenue to trust. Ask your questions, encourage the call committee and council to post their meeting minutes, be involved, and pray for one another and the call process. The Synod's goals are the same as yours: A vital ministry of proclamation, sacramental depth, and service.*

Who selects the congregation's Transition Team? *Refer to your congregation's constitution for this information. In most cases it is the church council after receiving nominations from congregation members. The Call Committee is usually elected by congregational vote.*

Is there any collected wisdom about the make-up of the congregation's call committee? *It's usually wise to find a way for the diverse interests and ages of the congregation to be represented on the call committee. Some councils ask for representatives of the various groups and committees. If there is any wisdom, it is to operate openly, encourage questions, and don't "stack the deck" in favor of one interest group over all others. 5-7 members is a manageable size and permits inclusive (male/female, different ethnicities, different ages, etc.) representation. It is recommended that no more than one council member and one transition committee member, if any, serve on the call committee- never as the Chair.*

Some of us are not familiar with this language about "calling." Aren't we simply hiring church staff? *In Luther's understanding a Calling was that which the believer did in response to the Holy Spirit, the gift of Grace, the forgiveness of sins. There are many motivations in a hiring process. To respond to a call is different and involves very different factors. A congregation should feel a great confidence in its prayerful decision to call, even if traditional "hiring" motivations don't seem to be present. A good example of this is the assumption that because a minister has had a certain salary level in the past, he or she is unavailable where the salary is less. While this may be true in a hiring situation, it should not be a bar to the issuance of a call, nor will it be an automatic bar to prayerful discernment by a Lutheran minister. If salary is less than Synod Compensation Guidelines, the possibility of a part-time call will be discussed.*

It says here that we're supposed to "study" ourselves. Good Grief! Our congregation is so diverse this seems impossible! Who is supposed to lead us in this process? *This is the responsibility of your Council. In most cases it will be assigned to the Transition Team. Though the task may seem impossible it can also be very satisfying because it results in a clearer sense of mission. Look forward to it as an opportunity to gain focus on the future and take pride in the diverse gifts of your church family.*

We did a "self-study" just four years ago. Do we really have to do another one? *At the very least it should be reviewed and updated with some deliberateness. You may look much the same but the need in your neighborhood may have significantly changed. There is a Ministry Site Profile form that needs to be completed and submitted to the ELCA portal for use by the synod and candidates for your call.*

How is our interim minister related to our call process? *Officially, not at all. Interim ministers have a limited call and will have been asked by the Bishop to refrain from "assisting" in your process. The interim's task is to provide regular continuity in the essential tasks of your parish life. They will have experience and/or special training in the particular challenges of interim ministry, but the future ministry of your parish is your responsibility, working in concert with the Bishop's Associate.*

Speaking of rules, somebody is going to pull out the "rule-book" sooner or later. Can you give it to us briefly? What are the rules of the church we have to follow? *They are very straightforward. The calling process is to be conducted in consultation with the Synod Bishop. You need to call a minister on the roster of the ELCA. Your vote must be by secret, written ballot at a properly called meeting of the congregation. It takes a 2/3's vote to call. For a complete run-down, see your church constitution and the information in this Call Manual.*

My brother-in-law's son from his first marriage is a minister in Atlanta. Could he be our new minister? *Yes. Any minister on the ELCA clergy roster is open to your call. Any congregation member may nominate a minister to the congregation's call committee. Since there may be an initial nomination of several candidates from various parts of the church, it is the task of the synod and the Bishop's staff to produce a manageable list of up to five qualified candidates for you.*

We would like to consider our Associate Minister for the lead minister position. Do you have any concerns about that? *Generally speaking, it can be difficult for an associate to make the transition from a limited job description as associate to the overall responsibility of a lead position. The situation may still call for an interim ministry period in order to clarify the mission priorities of the parish. In such a case the associate might be among those interviewed for the new phase of mission in the congregation.*

What happens after we find some ministers on our own that we think we would like to know more about? *Use the Congregational Nomination For Call form found in the call manual and forward it to your call committee or council. They will submit their list to the Synod Office to be reviewed along with all other nominees. The Bishop's Office will then present up to five of the strongest candidates that match your congregation's needs and the Ministry Site Profile specifics to your Call Committee.*

In our last call process we had a great candidate from Minnesota but it was too expensive to fly her out. Aren't we practically limited to ministers in this area? *It probably will be more expensive to interview out of state candidates but this should not prohibit you from doing so. This is one of the big reasons to covenant to hold your church budget together during the change--so you can cover these important expenses. You will be pleased to discover that ways can often be found to interview candidates who want to interview. Remember, it is in the best interests of the ELCA to have some movement of ministers across synod lines. You are the party with primary responsibility for call expenses.*

We're pretty sure we need a 25-30 year old man with a young family and a wife at home. Do you have any candidates like that? *Of course! But you would be misinterpreting the heart of "calling" to limit yourself to such a candidate. A wide variety of candidates will be available to you and interested in your position. It would be a grave mistake to let one factor (like age or sex) predetermine who can respond to God's calling to do ministry in your midst. And remember, our culture is not nearly so homogeneous as it has been in the past. For example, if you live in an urban area with a high concentration of singles as your mission field, a "classic" clergy family like that described above may be a serious mistake. Remember- Let your **Mission** determine your ministerial choice!*

Can we send a delegation to visit at the church of a minister we're interested in? Yes. Good manners suggest you call ahead and inform the minister of your intention to do so. You may also want to be sure the minister is leading worship, etc. that day.

If the minister comes to the congregation for an interview, will the rest of us get a chance to meet him or her? Out of consideration for those being interviewed as well as for the congregations where they presently serve, the names of the candidates you are interviewing need to remain confidential. When you have selected the candidate you will recommend to your congregation for call, you may provide an opportunity for the congregation to meet this candidate prior to the call vote.

After we've seen some candidates, what if we would really like to call our Interim/Transition Minister? The possibility of that will be determined by the interim/transition contract signed by your congregation, the Interim Minister, and the Synod Bishop. In almost all cases it will not be possible to call the Interim/Transition. Think about it this way. When a woman is pregnant it is often wise to seek the medical assistance of a specialist, an obstetrician/gynecologist. But once the baby is born the need is for a pediatrician. The interim minister will come to you with specific goals and objectives for ministry in your midst during the interim period. The best chance for accomplishing those goals will be if they are the sole concern of the interim. Otherwise interim ministry simply becomes a months-long "interview" and the special goals of the interim period are sacrificed for other interests.

So when it comes down to it, who makes the decision to call? Do we take a vote or something? Does anyone have veto power? When the call committee has reached a careful decision they will forward this information to the council. (REMEMBER: At the beginning of the call committee's work it must be determined what percentage vote of the Call Committee is necessary to take a nomination to the congregation!) The council then calls a special congregational meeting, according to the congregation's constitutional bylaws, at which time the sole item of business (along with the salary package) will be the issuance of a call and the approval of the definition of compensation. The call requires a 2/3 vote by secret ballot and the Bishop must be represented at the meeting to attest the call. Assuming all goes well, the only remaining requirement is the signature of the Bishop on the Letter of Call. If the Bishop has been a part of the process all along, there is little reason to doubt the letter will be signed.

Who, how, when is the financial package negotiated? Do we dare offer a minister less money than the minister is making now? Details of the salary package are the responsibility of the congregation council. Some details will be known before the call committee selects a nominee. Other details must be worked out in cooperation with the candidate to be nominated, the Synod Office, and the council before the call meeting. As was previously stated, the salary is only one component of a call. When you issue a call, the candidate will prayerfully consider all the factors. It would be wrong to allow one factor, like salary, to derail what the congregation felt was a genuine call. Each circumstance is unique, of course. For example, a minister who is 55 years old may seem out of reach for a smaller congregation because of salary considerations. Again, if salary is less than Synod guidelines, the possibility of a part-time call remains.

After we issue the Letter of Call, what happens? What if we are turned down? Once the Letter has been received by the minister, they have 30 days to discern the call and respond. Your other candidates should be informed that a call has been issued and that they will be notified of the result. Only one call can be issued at a time. The called minister has responsibility to respond in a timely manner. Occasionally there will be contact with the minister to clarify details of the call. If the call is accepted, the call committee's task is over and the council handles the details. If the call is "returned" (not accepted) then the call committee reconvenes and reviews its work and the Ministry Site Profile, asks for new candidates from the Synod Office, holds new interviews, and nominates another minister to the council to take to the congregation for a call vote.

What is that question you are burning to ask? Everyone in the process must constantly remember that a lack of information breeds suspicion and mistrust. Every question is an important question. Try to find ways to give your congregation members an opportunity to ask their special questions. Regular reporting helps even (especially!) if you don't think much progress has been made since the last meeting. Some ideas:

A DOZEN QUESTIONS FOR THE EXIT INTERVIEW
(These are questions you ask of the current rostered staff that is leaving this position)

1. _____ , you came to us ___years ago. If you can remember, what were the compelling reasons for coming here? What made this parish so attractive?
2. In your ministry here, did you find what you expected?
3. What five things have given you the greatest sense of fulfillment? What has given you the greatest frustration?
4. Was there a climax in your ministry here? When was this, and when did you first consider making a change?
5. What elements are present in the new call that caused you to make the change?
6. How do you view our strengths and our weaknesses as you leave us?
7. In the light of what you have said, what type of ministry do you feel we need? Where should we place our emphasis for the future? What are the important areas to maintain?
8. What do you think the laity might do to strengthen the incoming rostered person? Where do you think we should take a look at ourselves in order that we might break through some of our barriers?
9. If you were to "dream" the future for this parish, with no restraints, how would you picture our parish ten years from now?
10. What are the restraints, as you see it, which would keep us from reaching these goals?
11. As you see us, what attributes and capabilities in a future rostered leader would best serve this congregation during the next several years?
12. Is there anything we can do to assist you and your family in the transition that is about to take place?

Maximum Tenure Length of an Associate Minister Following the Call of a Senior/Lead Minister

Congregations extending a call to a new senior/lead minister have, in that call, expressed a new direction and mission for the congregation. The Synod wants to encourage congregations in their pursuit of that mission as servants of the living Jesus Christ.

With regard to Associate Ministers and Associates in Ministry:

- ✓ We assume that all other calls and appointments in the congregation were intended to be co-terminus with the resignation of the lead minister unless specific, intentional exceptions were noted in the letters of call and appointment to those staff persons.
- ✓ We encourage the new senior/lead minister and council to act deliberately within six months of installation to call the associate staff members to new ministry in the congregation or to encourage them to consider ministry beyond that congregation.
- ✓ If associate staff members are not called to new service in the congregation, the synod office will do everything possible to assist in securing new calls or appointments in this Synod or in other appropriate fields of ministry.
- ✓ If the associates have not secured new calls within six months of the new senior/lead minister's installation, we recommend that the church council and staff support committees engage in an internal consultation concerning the future process of disengagement by the associate(s). After a process has been determined, there should be consultation with the Synod Office concerning the conclusion of that individual's ministry in that setting. It is our normal recommendation that the associate(s) be given 3 months severance pay and be encouraged to move on to some other ministry in order that the congregation may pursue its mission, ministry and staffing needs.