



Central States Synod

# TRANSITION PROCESS MANUAL

Revised November 2024

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## When a Pastor or Rostered Leader Resigns or Retires

When a pastor or rostered leader resigns or retires, it can be a stressful and anxious time for the faith community. While it may be an exciting time for the pastor, there can be surprise, confusion, sadness, and even anger for members of the congregation upon hearing the news that their pastor is leaving. The following steps are designed to help both the pastor and the congregation move through this process successfully and experience closure. Many of the following steps also apply if the rostered leader is an associate in ministry or diaconal minister.

1. The first step for the pastor is to inform the synod office of their upcoming retirement or resignation from a call.
2. The pastor is to then submit a letter of resignation to both the synod office AND the congregation's council and inform the congregation. The letter of resignation should include the ending date of the call. As a rule, it is recommended that the pastor's last day be approximately 30 days after submitting the letter of resignation. While it is important to have time to say "goodbye" and have closure, it can be difficult on everyone to prolong this process beyond 30 days.
3. The congregation is to then contact Portico to provide end-of-call information. This can be done in one of two ways:
  - Report end-of-call information online using the congregation's Portico Employer Link (you will need your Portico Employer ID)
  - Call Portico Customer Service at 800-352-2876

If the pastor is NOT accepting another call immediately, they are to contact Portico to make arrangements for ongoing healthcare coverage AND request "on leave from call" status from the synod council. (The form can be requested from the synod office.)

4. A representative from the Synod is to meet with the pastor and the congregation's council to:
  - Do an exit interview with the pastor;
  - Encourage the congregation to conduct an exit interview with the pastor;
  - Review a copy of *Pastoral Ethics: Pastors Relating to Previously Served Parishes* or *Pastoral Ethics: For Pastors Retiring to a Community Where They Have Served* (provided by synod);
  - Review: *Certification of Completion of Financial Obligations, Certification of Church Records, Guidelines for Congregations and Departing Pastors, or Guidelines for Congregation and Retiring Pastor*. *These forms must be signed and returned to the synod office before the pastor leaves;*
  - Talk about the needs of the congregation for interim ministry;
  - Celebrate a *Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call*, which can be done with a representative of the synod office and/or congregational leadership during a worship service or congregational celebration.
5. The congregation may want to plan a farewell celebration for the pastor.



6. The congregation's council is to work with the synod office to arrange transitional ministry support as follows:
  - The congregation's council is to arrange for pulpit supply and pastoral care coverage until an interim pastor can begin (this often will take 6-8 weeks);
  - The synod office will assist in identifying an interim process that best fits the congregational needs and capacity.
    - a. identify a potential interim pastor;
    - b. identify an interim consultant and bridge pastor;
    - c. other process as needed.
  - The council is to interview any potential interim leadership to determine the purpose, duties, mutual expectations, and compensation for the interim ministry;
  - The council president, council secretary, interim pastor, and bishop or bishop's representative are to sign a Covenant Agreement.

# END OF CALL POLICIES & FORMS

## Certification of Completion of Financial Obligations

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

**S14.16.** The pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before:

- a. installation in another field of labor, or
- b. the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.

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

Date:

This is to certify:

1. That all financial obligations, salary, pension, health benefits, and allowances, together with continuing education funds, have been met and paid by \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church to \_\_\_\_\_ up to the effective date of the end of the call.
2. That satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations has been made by \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church located in \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer of the Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

This form should be completed before the pastor leaves. Please return to:

Central States Synod  
420 W. 14<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 101  
Kansas City, MO 64105

## Certification of Church Records

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

**S14.15** The parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members transferred or dismissed, members who have become inactive or members excluded from the congregation shall be kept accurately and permanently. They shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before:

- a. installation in another field of labor, or
- b. the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.

Before the pastor leaves, they should meet with the secretary of the congregation to examine the church records. Upon finding the church records in good order, the secretary of the congregation shall complete the form below and forward it to the synod bishop.

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

This is to certify that I have examined the parochial records of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church located in \_\_\_\_\_ and find them in good order.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to:

Central States Synod  
420 W. 14<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 101  
Kansas City, MO 64105



## Exit Interview for Pastor

1. What was your assessment of the congregation when you arrived? How has that assessment changed over time?
2. How has the congregation changed during your tenure?
3. Describe your greatest accomplishments. What are your greatest satisfactions about your ministry?
4. What frustrations did you experience? What blocked your effectiveness?
5. Describe the congregation's greatest weaknesses. What are the congregation's greatest strengths?
6. What ministry goals seem the most important for the congregation in the next five years?
7. What changes would you suggest being made to the current expectations of the pastor?
8. Are all congregational records up to date? (This needs to be attested to by the secretary of the congregation.) Is the Constitution current? Are there lists of homebound and/or prospective members? How will the new pastor know of specific pastoral care concerns?
9. What other information about your ministry and the congregation would be helpful to the synod office? *(This last question is used in the interview between the pastor and representative of the synod office.)*



## Policy of Pastoral Ethics and Covenant of Departure for Departing Pastors

This policy on pastoral ethics and Covenant of Departure is shared for the sake of the Church and the ongoing ministry of the congregation, to enable us to act wisely in difficult circumstances. It is provided to help rostered leaders and congregations understand S14.19 of the Synod Constitution: ***Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.***

[approved by Synod Council, March 2021]

### Guidelines for Congregation and Departing Pastors

When a pastor is called to serve a congregation, we profess that the Holy Spirit is acting in this process and we also profess that when it is time for that pastor to leave a congregation that the Holy Spirit is at work in this process, as well. When we speak of a “call,” we believe that the Holy Spirit is at work guiding both the pastor and the congregation.

A healthy relationship between a pastor and the congregation is often mutually enriching and joyous. While serving a congregation, a pastor is often deeply involved in the lives of the congregation, and it is appropriate that strong bonds of trust, friendship, commitment, and interdependence develop.

However, when the Holy Spirit leads the pastor to a new call or into retirement, those relationships, however strong, must change for the future health of both the congregation and the pastor. For the congregation to move forward, its members need to accept fully the authority and guidance of succeeding pastors, both interim and called, even as they cherish the memory and leadership of the former pastor. For former pastors to live into their new lives of service or retirement, they need to surrender pastoral authority and sever pastoral ties with their former congregations and their people.

The following expectations will help clarify the new relationship between former pastors and congregations:

### Congregations and Members:

- Will not reach out to former pastors for professional pastoral care in times of emotional, spiritual, or physical need, but rather exclusively to their current pastor.
- Will not invite or approach former pastors to perform or participate in pastoral acts, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, home communions, etc.
- Will not seek the counsel of former pastors (or their family members) on matters relating to the congregation, including its worship life, finance, administration, leadership, or issues. Members will avoid talking with former pastors (and family members) about congregational matters.
- Will not expect former pastors (or their family members) to retain membership in the church, to attend worship, or to participate in activities or events in the life of the congregation.
- Will speak positively of former pastors (and their family members). As Martin Luther explains in the *Small Catechism*, the Eighth Commandment compels us to do so: “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead, we are to come to their defense, speak well of them and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.”
- Will, in continuing personal relationships, regard former pastors as friends only. Although it is common to address any ordained minister as “pastor,” in light of the new relationship members will remember that the former leader is no longer serving as *their* pastor.

**Former Pastors:**

- Will politely but firmly refuse requests to provide ministerial care to former congregational members, instead referring them to the current pastor. For the health of the congregation and the integrity of the ministry of the current pastor, this rule will be without exception.
- Will politely but firmly refuse all requests to perform or participate in pastoral acts, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, home communions, etc., instead referring them to the current pastor. (Former pastors will respond to all such requests with an unequivocal “no” and not suggest that members ask the current pastor if it is okay. Such a request puts the current pastor in a very difficult position, creates an unhealthy triangle, and can set a dangerous precedent.)
- Will decline to comment on matters relating to the former congregation, including worship life, finance, administration, interpersonal relationships, conflicts, or politics. Former pastors will counsel their family members similarly to decline. It is wise for former pastors to discourage members even from talking with them about congregational affairs.
- Should move the official membership for themselves and all family members to another congregation. Former pastors and family members should refrain from attending worship or participating in regular events and activities in the life of the congregation.
- Will speak well of the former congregation, its leaders, and its members. As Martin Luther explains in the *Small Catechism*, the Eighth Commandment instructs us to do so: “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray, or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead, we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.”
- Will, in continuing personal relationships, regard members of the former congregation as friends only. In light of this new relationship, former pastors will encourage former congregation members to address them by their given name. When they are addressed with the honorific of “Pastor,” ministers will remind, as appropriate, former members that they no longer serve as *their* pastor.
- While the above statements are addressed to pastors, **spouses of pastors** must consider the same factors, and also respect the above recommendations. Spouses share a pastoral identity and, as a result, can become hindrances as easily as a pastor can.

**Covenant of Departure**

In order to promote a healthy closure to the ministry tenure of our departing pastor and a healthy beginning to the tenure of successor pastors, we the undersigned agree to do our best to abide by the conditions of this covenant. We will encourage others in our congregation and our families to do the same by making this covenant a public and living document.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Congregation Council President

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

**Adopted by**

**Date:**



## Policy of Pastoral Ethics and Covenant of Departure for Retiring Pastors

This policy on pastoral ethics and Covenant of Departure is shared for the sake of the Church and the ongoing ministry of the congregation, to enable us to act wisely in difficult circumstances. It is provided to help rostered leaders and congregations understand S14.19 of the Synod Constitution: ***Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.***

[Approved by Synod Council, March 2021]

### **Guidelines for Congregation and Retiring Pastors**

When a pastor is called to serve a congregation, or to leave a congregation to accept a new call or retire, we profess that the Holy Spirit is acting in this process. When we speak of a “call,” we believe that the Holy Spirit is at work guiding both the pastor and the congregation.

A healthy relationship between a pastor and the congregation is often mutually enriching and joyous. While serving a congregation, a pastor is often deeply involved in the lives of congregation, and it is appropriate that strong bonds of trust, friendship, commitment and interdependence develop.

However, when the Holy Spirit leads the pastor to a new call or into retirement, those relationships, however strong, must change for the future health of both the congregation and the pastor. For the congregation to move forward, its members need to accept fully the authority and guidance of succeeding pastors, both interim and called, even as they cherish the memory and leadership of the former pastor. For former pastors to live into their new lives of service or retirement, they need to surrender pastoral authority and sever pastoral ties with their former congregations and their people.

The following expectations will help clarify the new relationship between former pastors and congregations:

### **Congregations and Members:**

- Will not reach out to former pastors for professional pastoral care in times of emotional, spiritual, or physical need, but rather exclusively to their current pastor.
- Will not invite or approach former pastors to perform or participate in pastoral acts, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, home communions, etc.
- Will not seek the counsel of former pastors (or their family members) on matters relating to the congregation, including its worship life, finance, administration, leadership, or issues. Members will avoid talking with former pastors (and family members) about congregational matters.
- Will not expect former pastors (or their family members) to retain membership in the church, to attend worship, or to participate in activities or events in the life of the congregation.
- Will speak positively of former pastors (and their family members). As Martin Luther explains in the *Small Catechism*, the Eighth Commandment compels us to do so: “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead, we are to come to their defense, speak well of them and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.”
- Will, in continuing personal relationships, regard former pastors as friends only. Although it is common to address any ordained minister as “pastor,” in light of the new relationship members will remember that the former leader is no longer serving as *their* pastor.



### Retiring Pastors:

- Whenever possible, will plan their retirement so that they will not be retiring in the parish where they have served as pastor.
  - If they are seriously considering remaining in the same community, please consult with the Bishop before any firm decisions are made.
  - Consider retirement as a “call to the ministry of the baptized.” Retirement does not mean being uninvolved as an active church member; it means to be involved in ministry as we have encouraged members to be involved throughout our ministries. Belonging to the same congregation that they served as pastor may not allow them to function actively, sharing their many gifts and insights, without creating problems for the congregation, which now has a covenant with a new pastor. Therefore, if there is any other ELCA congregation within commuting distance, they should transfer.
- Will politely but firmly refuse requests to provide ministerial care to former congregational members, instead referring them to the current pastor. For the health of the congregation and the integrity of the ministry of the current pastor, this rule will be without exception.
- Will politely but firmly refuse all requests to perform or participate in pastoral acts, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, home communions, etc., instead referring them to the current pastor. (Former pastors will respond to all such requests with an unequivocal “no” and not suggest that members ask the current pastor if it is okay. Such a request puts the current pastor in a very difficult position, creates an unhealthy triangle, and can set a dangerous precedent.)
- Will decline to comment on matters relating to the former congregation, including worship life, finance, administration, interpersonal relationships, conflicts, or politics. Former pastors will counsel their family members similarly to decline. It is wise for former pastors to discourage members even from talking with them about congregational affairs.
- If possible, should move the official membership for themselves and all family members to another congregation. If possible, retiring pastors and family members will refrain from attending worship or participating in regular events and activities in the life of the congregation.
- Will speak well of the former congregation, its leaders, and its members. As Martin Luther explains in the *Small Catechism*, the Eighth Commandment instructs us to do so: “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray, or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead, we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.”
- Will, in continuing personal relationships, regard members of the former congregation as friends only. In light of this new relationship, former pastors will encourage former congregation members to address them by their given name. When they are addressed with the honorific of “Pastor,” ministers will remind, as appropriate, former members that they no longer serve as *their* pastor.
- While the above statements are addressed to pastors, **spouses of pastors** must consider the same factors, and also respect the above recommendations. Spouses share a pastoral identity and, as a result, can become hindrances as easily as a pastor can.
- It is your responsibility as a former pastor to be supportive of your successor, even when that is difficult to do. If it is not possible to be supportive of the pastor’s ministry, it is extremely important that you remove yourself from that congregation, in order to not become a hindrance to its ministry.



**Covenant of Departure**

In order to promote a healthy closure to the ministry tenure of our departing pastor and a healthy beginning to the tenure of successor pastors, we the undersigned agree to do our best to abide by the conditions of this covenant. We will encourage others in our congregation and our families to do the same by making this covenant a public and living document.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Congregation Council President

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Retiring Pastor

**Adopted by**  
**Date:**



## Letter to Congregation Concerning Covenant for Departing Pastor

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Pastor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ and the congregation’s council have signed a covenant, which helps us understand our relationship with one another as we move forward without them/her/him.

When a pastor leaves a congregation or retires, it is not appropriate for them/her/him to continue to function in a pastoral role. This is difficult and sometimes painful for us to understand. However, if we remember that part of our call as people of God is to care for the body of Christ and not injure different members of it, we might find it easier to accept. For instance, if a pastor does a funeral for one family because they were so special, why won’t the pastor perform a baptism for a different family? It is easy to see how hurt feelings would not only affect one family’s feelings toward the former pastor, but perhaps also feelings within the Body of Christ between the two families.

It is important for us to understand that as of \_\_\_\_\_, Pastor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are no longer our pastor, but they/she/he will pray for our continued and future mission and ministry, and for a strong and fruitful partnership with our future pastoral leader. Therefore Pastor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**cannot:**

- Come back to perform weddings, funerals, or baptisms;
- Visit the sick and the homebound;
- Continue in any counseling relationship with a parishioner;
- Be involved in any way in the call process (helping with the profile, recommending candidates, commenting on a particular candidate);
- Support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement;
- Return to lead worship services (unless down the road they/she/he is invited back as a “former pastor” to participate in a special event, such as a church anniversary).

We give thanks to God for the time Pastor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ was with us, and we pray for them/her/him as they/she/he now goes forth to serve God and the church in new ways. We are working with the synod office to find an interim pastor and hope to eventually enter into the call process for a new pastor. We trust that God will send us a new leader who will be called to serve God and the ministry of this congregation during the next stage of our ministry.

In Christ,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Council President



## Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call (1)

*(This Thanksgiving can be done by the Bishop or Representative of the synod office.)*

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_ you began your call to serve as pastor here at \_\_\_\_\_. As pastor, you were called to proclaim God's word, to baptize and teach, to announce God's forgiveness, and to preside at the Lord's Table. With the gospel, you have comforted the people of \_\_\_\_\_ in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of loved ones. Sharing joys and sorrows, you have been important to the life of this community within the church of Jesus Christ, in their service to this community, and in God's mission to the whole world.

On \_\_\_\_\_, the congregation's call to you comes to an end. As you leave this community of faith and say "farewell" to one another, we give thanks for your ministry and pray for God's blessing.

**PULPIT:** You were invited into this pulpit. From this place, you have proclaimed the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ countless times throughout these past years. This pulpit has not belonged to you; the saving message of Christ is not something one can possess, but only bear witness to. You have been a faithful occupant of this church's pulpit and messenger of the good news of God's love in Christ. As you leave this pulpit, we thank God for your preaching ministry.

### **Thanks be to God!**

**FONT:** At this font, you have presided at the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Through the cleansing waters of baptism, we welcome new members into the family of Christ. The gift of new life in Christ belongs to God. The church is the custodian of this rite of welcome, and you have introduced this congregation to many new siblings in the faith. You have presided as confirmands affirmed their baptismal promises. As you leave this font, we thank you for your ministry surrounding baptismal promises.

### **Thanks be to God!**

**ALTAR:** At this altar you have presided at the Sacrament of Holy Communion. You have reminded the members here of how Jesus began this meal with his disciples. You have provided instruction to those who would receive it for the first time. The meal is the Lord's, and this congregation has offered this meal to all who seek to be fed with the living presence of Christ. You have presided over this meal so that it could be served in an orderly fashion. As you leave this table, we thank you for presiding at the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

### **Thanks be to God!**

**CHANCEL STEP:** Standing in front of this congregation, you have led services of thankfulness to God for people who have died. You have led this community in the midst of grief while expressing gratitude for God's gift of life. You have proclaimed the Good News of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and have encouraged the community with the comfort of the gospel. As you leave this sanctuary, we thank you for your presence in times of loss.

### **Thanks be to God!**



CHANCEL: It is here that you presided at services where couples were married. You were present to rejoice with those who rejoiced. Thank you for sharing those and other great times of joy.

**Thanks be to God!**

People of God, as representatives of the members of \_\_\_\_\_ and with thanks to God for the ministry of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ among you, do you now release them/her/him from their/her/his call as your pastor?

**We do, and we give thanks to God.**

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, with thanks to God for the members of this community and for their ministry with you, do you recognize and accept the completion of your ministry with \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**I do, and I give thanks to God.**

Let us pray. Almighty God, through your Son, Jesus Christ, you gave the holy apostles many gifts and commanded them to feed your flock. We give you thanks for the ministry of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ among the people of God in this place. You watch over our going out and our coming in: Bless this time of ending and beginning. You surround your people in every time and place: Keep us close in your love. You accompany your people in times of joy and in times of trial: Prosper all that has been done to your glory in this time together and heal and forgive all that has fallen short of your will for us. Help Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ as well as the people of this congregation to live with courage and gladness in the future you give to us. As they/she/he has been a blessing to this congregation, so now send them/her/him forth to be a blessing to others; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Rejoicing in the blessings of God in this congregation and in the ministry of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, with hope in God's abundant grace in years to come, I announce that this pastoral relationship is ended effective \_\_\_\_\_.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Go in peace; serve the Lord!

**Thanks be to God.**





## Thanksgiving at the Conclusion of a Call (2)

*(This liturgy is from the ELW Occasional Services for the Assembly.)*

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ we called you to be our pastor: To proclaim God's Word, to baptize and teach, to announce God's forgiveness, and to preside at the Lord's Supper. With the gospel, you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble, and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you have been important to our life together in the church of Jesus Christ, in our service to this community, and in God's mission to the whole world. As you leave this community of faith, we say "farewell" and we pray for God's blessing.

People of God, members of \_\_\_\_\_, do you release \_\_\_\_\_ from service as your pastor?

**We do, and we give thanks to God for our ministry together.**

\_\_\_\_\_, do you recognize and accept the completion of your ministry with \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**I do and I give thanks to God for our ministry together.**

Let us pray. Almighty, God, through your Son, Jesus Christ, you gave the holy apostles many gifts and commanded them to feed your flock. You equip your people with abilities that differ according to the grace given to them, and you call them to various avenues of service. We give you thanks for the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ among the people of God in this place.

You watch over our going out and our coming in: Bless this time of ending and beginning. You surround your people in every time and place: Keep us close in your love. You accompany your people in times of joy and times of trial: Prosper all that has been done to your glory in this time together; heal and forgive all that has fallen short of your will for us. Help \_\_\_\_\_ and all of us to live with courage and gladness in the future you give to us.

As they/she/he have/has been a blessing to us, so now send them/her/him forth to be a blessing to others; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

*(Pastor whose call has concluded may proclaim God's blessing)*

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

**Amen**

*(A sending song may be sung)*

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

# INTERIM MINISTRY

## Interim Ministry:

*A Partnership between the Congregation, the Synod Office,  
and an Interim Pastor in the Time of Transition between Pastors*

In this fast-paced world, we often neglect to take a breath, reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and imagine a new future engaged in God's work. In Scripture, that rich time is often a wilderness time/experience. The interim period between the time when a pastor leaves and a new pastor is called can be such a time in the life of the congregation. The interim period:

- takes an intentional look at the past and how God has guided the mission of the community;
- allows space for celebration of the present as members examine the gifts of the community;
- utilizes intentional conversation and prayer to imagine a new future of mission and ministry;
- works directly with the call process to identify gifts needed in the next pastor so the congregation can be faithful and strong.

An interim period can last nine to eighteen months, depending on the needs of the congregation and the work that needs to be done during the interim. Depending on the needs of the congregation, this interim period may include the need to have an outside consultant work with leadership and a transition team to assist in identifying the purpose and the mission of the congregation. Rushing the process or having the wrong people guide you through the process can be detrimental in seeking to call a new pastor, rather than just attempting to "replace" a former pastor.

## Finding an Interim Pastor

- If an interim pastor is needed, the synod office will identify potential interim candidates who may be pastors who have been trained as "intentional" interim pastors, pastors who are retired or on leave from call, or Synod Authorized Minister. Different situations call for different skill sets.
- The council of the congregation interviews the potential interim, discusses needs and expectations, and works out a compensation package. The compensation package can be based upon the synod's compensation guidelines as well as the congregation's current budget.
- Once an agreement has been reached, a *Covenant Agreement for an Interim Ministry* is signed by the president and secretary of the congregation, the interim pastor, and a representative of the synod office.

The following is a provision in the Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA and pertains to interim pastors.

**\*C9.07** *During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.*



## Liturgy of Beginning for an Interim Ministry

**L:** In Holy Baptism, we are called by the promise of God into a relationship of faith toward God and love toward one another. This relationship finds expression in our gathering as congregations of the church to hear God's Word, eat and drink at the Lord's Table, and minister to the needs of our community and God's world. As Lutheran congregations, we call pastors to leave and assist us in our ministry; to teach, challenge, and admonish us according to the gospel; to counsel, comfort, and guide us in the love of God; and to oversee the events and activities of our common life. The interim period between a former pastor leaving and a new pastor coming affords us an opportunity to reflect on our past, evaluate our present, and dream toward our future as God's people.

**L:** In partnership with the Central States Synod and congregational council, Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ has agreed to be the interim pastor at \_\_\_\_\_ .

**P:** I commit myself to this new trust and responsibility. I promise to fulfill my responsibilities to the best of my ability in accordance with scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and Constitution of this congregation. Will you, as a congregation, receive me as your pastor and partner in ministry as we seek God's call for us in this interim period?

**C: We will.**

**L:** As a member and leader of this congregation, I ask you to join me in support of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ ; to pray for them/her/him, to help and honor them/her/him for their/her/his work's sake, and in all things to strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ. Will you join me in this support?

**C: We will.**

**L:** Welcome, Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. We now officially begin our partnership in this interim ministry in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

**P:** Let us pray. Almighty God, you call your people in baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. May we be renewed daily by the gift of your Holy Spirit and may we be especially aware of your leading during this interim period. Grant us faithfulness and peace in all that we do so that you may be glorified among us. We pray through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

# CALL PROCESS

## Calling a New Pastor - What is a “Call”?

“Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America rostered leaders may serve as pastors, associate pastors, or deacons. The process of calling rostered leaders within the life of the church is therefore primarily about discerning God’s will for and God’s call upon the congregation or ministry in which they will serve. Prayerfully, the church calls forth those they believe God can best use to help them carry out their mission together.

Rostered leadership is not a self-called vocation but a unique calling from God through the church to serve and equip the whole people of God. This is so that the church can live together faithfully as the body of Christ, equip the baptized for their work, and fulfill its purpose to proclaim and embody the redemptive intentions of God in the world.”

### “A Theology of Call” - ELCA Website

The Lutheran call process is unique because it is an effort to discern what God wants for the local church and for the whole Church in order that the Gospel may be proclaimed, and the sacraments administered in accordance with the Gospel. Below are the steps to be followed in this important process:

1. The interim pastor is to work with the council to determine the appropriate time to begin the process of gathering the information that will be used in the call process to develop the Ministry Site Profile (MSP).
2. The congregation council may choose to set up a transition team to assist with the gathering of information. The congregation’s Constitution gives guidelines for selecting a call committee, but usually not a transition team, so the appointment of such a team is determined by the council. In smaller congregations, the transition team may be the same as the call committee, but, if possible, the two committees should be separate. The transition team’s responsibilities involve research and analysis, documentation, and study. The call committee will have strengths in relationships and discernment. Both should have good communication skills so that the whole congregation is aware of the important work that they are both doing. Responsibilities of the transition team include:

#### Review of the Congregation’s History

- Review of the current makeup of membership with input from congregational members regarding leadership needs;
- Review of the congregation’s Constitution;
- Review of core values, mission and vision statements;
- Review of staffing needs and resources;
- Review of property and other physical resources.

**Sample surveys and questionnaires that can assist in gathering some of this information can be found on [Pages 30 and 31](#).** After gathering the information provided by the congregation, the transition team is to make a final report to the council.



3. The council is to create a position description and summary and range for a compensation package. **These forms are found on [pages 32 and 33](#).** The actual definition of compensation and benefits will be finalized at a later date with the final candidate. The council is to provide a budget and procedures that will be used to reimburse candidates' expenses so that the call committee will know the budget they have to work with during the interview process. This budget should include reimbursement for travel, lodging and meal costs for candidates who come to interview with the call committee, and for the final candidate (and family) to meet the congregation.
4. The call committee is appointed by the congregation council or elected by the congregation. The congregation's Constitution should be consulted for any provisions regarding the call committee's composition and formation. If no provisions exist, the following guidelines are recommended:
  - The model Constitution for congregations (C13.05) provides that the council appoint a call committee of six members whose term of office ends upon the installation of the newly called pastor/lay rostered leader. The more members on the committee, the longer the call process will likely take. Every member of the call committee is expected to be at EVERY meeting of the committee.
  - The council invites congregation members (both verbally and in written communications) to nominate persons for the call committee. Members are free to nominate themselves. The council needs to be clear that not every person nominated will be asked to serve.
  - The council determines some general criteria for the composition of the call committee. Members should demonstrate Christian maturity and be concerned for the welfare of the whole congregation, rather than their own personal preferences. Members should work well with others. They should be diverse in age, gender, and length of membership in the congregation. The same qualifications that are needed for council service, such as voting member, regular worship attendee, regular giver, and participant in congregational ministry apply here, as well. It is strongly advised that council members not be on the call committee. It is the responsibility of the call committee chair to maintain regular communication with the congregation's council.
  - *In congregations that have a strong vision for mission and a ministry plan that will be the foundation for the new leader's ministry, an additional step is desirable. Invite those who are interested in serving on the call committee for a gathering. Ask them to briefly introduce themselves, to indicate why they are interested in serving on the call committee, and about their commitment to God's mission and the ways it is being followed in the congregation. Only members who attend this gathering will be eligible to serve on the call committee. A council member records the information for the council deliberations.*
  - The council selects the call committee from all nominations (including those made by council members), on the basis of its criteria. It informs the call committee members of their selection and thanks all who have offered their services.
  - The call committee appoints the chairperson of the call committee. Gifts needed for this ministry are spiritual maturity, organizational ability, conscientiousness, and a sense of partnership with the council. The chairperson is responsible for regular communication with the congregation council. Because documents will be sent electronically from the synod office, it is important that the chairperson or others have access to email.
  - The call committee should be installed during a regular worship service of the congregation. **The rite of installation is found on [pages 34 and 35](#).**



5. Once the call committee is in place, the chair of the committee contacts the synod office, and a Call Process Minister (CPM) is assigned to assist the call committee through the call process. The CPM meets with **the call committee and the council together** to provide an orientation to the process on how to fill out an MSP, receive names of candidates, how to interview, and the importance of confidentiality. **While it is important to keep the council and congregation informed regarding the process, the names of potential candidates are to be kept confidential by the call committee until the council approves the recommendation of a final candidate.**
  
6. At this point, the call committee begins the process of creating their call documents. This will be done by going to the ELCA website ([www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)) and clicking on **Call Process** at the top of the front page. This will take you to a page to create a username and password to complete the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) and other forms. The committee is encouraged to fill out all seven questions in the reflections document, but at least Questions 1 & 3. For a recommendation, enter the name and email address of the individual on the congregation's status page, the link will say Reference Recommendation, and you will receive a notice that it has been successfully sent.
  - Committee reviews data submitted to the transition team.
  - Committee fills out MSP form using data provided by transition team.
  - Call Process Minister and synod staff review MSP.
  - Finalized MSP is approved by the council before it is submitted electronically.
  - Once the MSP is submitted, the synod office is notified by email and will activate the MSP on the churchwide website.

**NOTE:** If this is a multiple-point parish, only one MSP should be submitted. Under Question 1, "Name and Location," please list the parish name in the line that asks for CONGREGATION/MULTIPLE POINT PARISH/ORGANIZATION and list all congregational names under NAME. Leave the Congregational ID number blank. List all cities under CITY, STATE, ZIP COUNTRY, all years organized under SYNOD TYPE OF MINISTRY SITE YEAR ORGANIZED. Once the MSP has been completed, each individual congregation can develop their own document that includes information about their own congregation, which will be sent to potential candidates.

7. Synod office gathers names of potential candidates. This group of candidates come from several sources:
  - Rostered Leaders within the synod. The synod staff identifies potential candidates or those candidates who indicate their interest in the ministry. Sometimes leaders in the synod will recommend others.
  - Candidates from other synods. These are candidates who submit a Rostered Leader's Profile (RLP) indicating interest in the Central States Synod.
  - Candidates suggested by the congregation. The call committee invites congregation members to submit names. **This should be done as soon as the MSP has been activated.** In submitting names, congregation members need to first understand that these names may NOT be considered under certain circumstances (e.g., if there are serious ethical problems), and secondly, that they should refrain from being in contact with the pastor once the name is submitted. **A referral form and sample cover letter are provided on [pages 36 and 37](#).**





- All rostered leaders will be able to learn about your pastoral vacancy by going online to the ELCA Ministry Opportunities webpage, and they will be able to read your 75-word description. It is helpful to include a link to your congregation's website when you compose your 75-word narrative, as that webpage will reach potential pastors and rostered leaders.

**NOTE: If there is an agreement between the synod office and the call committee that the call is suitable for a first-call candidate, no other candidates will be given to the committee until it has decided about the first-call candidate.** This is a matter of fairness to a person who has had no previous call to ordained ministry. If the call committee decides not to continue the process with this candidate, they/she/he will be released to consider other call opportunities and the committee will receive other names.

Potential candidates who are willing to be interviewed by congregations in the synod are encouraged to go to the synod website to familiarize themselves with the Call Process handbook, as well as access the Synod Compensation Guidelines.

8. Call committee receives and studies candidates' materials. The synod office will send a group of candidates to the call committee chair for the group's consideration. All call committee members should receive complete copies of the candidates' materials in order to prepare a final list of questions for the interview process. Important items to remember during this time are:
  - The call committee keeps the names and resumes of all candidates in the strictest confidence throughout the committee's work. The call committee reveals only the name and resume material of the candidate it recommends to the congregation council.
  - As soon as the call committee receives the candidates' materials, the chairperson should immediately contact each candidate by phone to let the candidates know:
    - that the committee has their/her/his materials;
    - when they can anticipate further contact;
    - if the committee is requesting any additional materials from the candidate or if the candidate can expect any additional materials from the committee.
  - Contact candidates and the CPM every two to three weeks throughout the process to keep them informed of progress.
9. The Call Committee schedules and conducts interviews for all candidates as their materials are submitted. It is best if the candidate has a brief biography of each call committee member and the general questions that will be asked before the interview.

**Sample interview questions can be found beginning on [pages 38-41](#).**

  - The first interview can be via conference call or web conference in order to narrow down which candidate(s) to bring for an onsite visit and interview. Telephone interviews should be very carefully structured. Onsite interviews usually include a general introduction to the community, a meal (hosted by one or more of the call committee members), and an interview.
  - The call committee shall release the candidate(s) that are no longer being considered with a phone call and a follow-up letter detailing the committee's decision. **A sample letter can be found on [page 45](#).** Please inform the call process minister and synod office when releasing candidates. It is also helpful for the synod office to know why a candidate is being released.



- If the committee is impressed with two or more candidates, it should be honest with those not selected. Inform them that they made a very favorable impression and ask if they would be willing to be considered if the process with the candidate of choice does not work out. Most candidates are willing to be reconsidered if the call committee is clear.
10. The committee often invites the candidate of choice (and family, if applicable) for a second visit. At this time, a preliminary financial package can be developed by the council and offered to the candidate through the call committee. ([See page 33](#)) The candidate may want to meet with the staff of the congregation at this time. Even though the candidate may be meeting with staff, the name of the candidate remains confidential until the council approves the candidate of choice. Further, staff members are not allowed to influence the discernment process of the call committee. Sometimes this step is not financially feasible and any issues which might preclude the candidate's agreeing to go further in the process will need to be addressed by phone.
  11. Call committee members sometimes want to visit a *final* candidate's congregation on a Sunday morning to experience worship and preaching. Such visits are not encouraged. If done at all, they should be conducted with the knowledge and consent of the candidate. Keep in mind that the candidate is currently a worship leader and preacher for a specific congregation, and their style may be adapted to fit that situation. What is experienced in another congregation may not be what that leader chooses to do in your congregation.
  12. When the call committee has agreed on a candidate, the call committee chairperson informs the CPM that they are ready to present the candidate to the council. The committee then makes their report to the council. It provides the council with all the information it has about the candidate, along with the committee's reasons for recommending that particular pastor. Under no circumstances is the call committee to reveal the names or resumés of the other candidates it considered.
  13. Council votes on recommending the candidate to the congregation. If the decision is positive, the council president informs the CPM and the synod staff and moves on to Step 14. If the decision is not positive, the council president informs the CPM and the synod staff, and the process goes back to either Step 7 or the third bullet point of Step 9.
  14. Council arranges for the congregation to meet the candidate. The council president contacts the candidate to negotiate a date for the candidate (and family, if applicable) to meet the congregation. The council:
    - sets a date for the congregation to meet the candidate;
    - provides information about the candidate to congregation members;
    - affirms the date for a special congregational meeting to vote on the call, observing the congregation's constitutional requirements for such a meeting;
    - The executive committee or other appropriate body from the council works out the financial package to be offered to the candidate.

**(Definition of Compensation found on [pages 46-49](#)).**



- Council and call committee make plans to provide hospitality to the candidate and their/her/his family during the visit. It is recommended that the candidate be introduced at an informal congregational gathering, such as an afternoon coffee or evening dessert event. It is appropriate to ask the candidate to lead a Bible study or devotion during the event, giving the congregation an opportunity to observe the candidate's public presence. Sometimes a brief question-answer session is desirable. **“Trial sermons” are discouraged.**

15. The call process minister calls the candidate to make sure everything is in place and asks if the candidate is ready to accept the call if issued or if the candidate has any reservations. The candidate is also asked to remove their name from consideration by other congregations.

16. The president calls the Bishop’s office to report the date of the congregational meeting. In response, the synod office sends a blank **Letter of Call** document, a blank copy of the **Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities form**, and the **Vote Verification Form** to the president and appoints a synod representative to attend the congregational call meeting. This person’s sole role will be to observe the meeting, make sure a quorum is present (as defined by the congregation’s Constitution), and make sure the vote is properly conducted. The representative completes the **Vote Verification Form** and reports the results of the vote to synod staff.

17. Council prepares for the congregational meeting and moves two resolutions for the congregation to consider. The congregation should receive materials about the candidate well before the meeting.

(When the call is to a parish, each congregation of the parish arranges for its own meeting. Resolution 1 must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote in each congregation.)

**RESOLUTION 1:** "Shall \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_, be called to serve as pastor/deacon of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church?"

[This resolution shall be by written ballot and requires a two-thirds majority for approval.]

**RESOLUTION 2:** "Shall the initial annual compensation of the leader be: [an itemized list of compensation]?" or "Shall the congregation council be authorized to negotiate the compensation package with \_\_\_\_\_?"

[Voting on Resolution Two may be by voice vote and requires a simple majority for approval.]

**NOTE:**

- If both resolutions are approved, the congregation president informs the candidate and the synod office of the vote by telephone and proceeds to Step 18. The congregation president shall supply the candidate with the vote count if requested.
- If the first resolution fails to be approved, the congregation president contacts the Bishop's office for consultation about the next steps. The president informs the candidate of the vote by telephone.
- If the first resolution is approved but the second resolution fails to be approved, the council president informs the candidate and the synod office of the vote by telephone and then arranges for the candidate to renegotiate the compensation package with council. A second congregational meeting is then held to act upon the renegotiated compensation package.



18. Complete and send the Letter of Call to the Bishop.

- When the congregation approves both resolutions, the president and council secretary sign the Letter of Call and the Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities documents and send them to the Bishop for review and attestation along with the signed Vote Verification Form.
- The Bishop then attests the Letter of Call and sends the Letter of Call, and the Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities form to the candidate, who has up to thirty (30) days to respond in writing to the congregation's call.
- Usually, a candidate who has allowed their/her/his name to be presented to a congregation is prepared to accept the call immediately. When the candidate has received the Letter of Call from the synod office, they/she/he sends a written acceptance of the call to the congregation, along with a copy to the synod office.

19. Candidate notifies Bishop and congregation.

- The candidate first informs the Bishop of their acceptance of the call.
- The council receives the candidate's written response, and the president notifies the congregation.
- In the rare occurrence that a call has been declined, the candidate should inform the council president and the bishop, at which time the process goes back to either Step 7 or the third bullet point of Step 9.

20. When the call has been accepted, plan for the candidate's move (if applicable) and installation.

- The council begins to plan hospitality for the new candidate (and family) and to work with them/her/him to arrange for moving their household, if applicable. The congregation is responsible to pay usual costs for a move.
- The council also works with the candidate in consultation with the bishop to arrange an agreed-upon date for a Service of Installation.

21. The council ought to plan a service of closure and/or other appropriate acknowledgements of thank-you for those who have offered ministry support (interim pastor, transition consultants, Transition Team, Call Committee, etc.) during the pastoral transition. Such acknowledgements should be completed before the candidate arrives to begin ministry.

22. Establish a mutual ministry committee. To get the ministry started, oftentimes three or four members of the call committee are to serve in this capacity for the first several months of the pastor's call. During that time, the pastor can be involved in selecting the committee's new members. The mutual ministry committee provides feedback and can be a sounding board for the pastor as they/she/he acclimates to the new culture of the congregation.

# CALL PROCESS DOCUMENTS & HANDOUTS



### Gifts for Ministry – Sample Congregational Survey

Every rostered leader offers a variety of gifts, skills and personality characteristics that would be helpful in a ministry setting. In the left column, identify a maximum of five gifts for ministry that the leader must bring to your setting. In the right column, identify five more gifts that would be helpful in your setting. (If your setting is a congregation and your search is for a pastor, this survey of gifts assumes that the pastor is able to offer worship leadership and preaching.)

Top Priority	Our new leader needs to be able to . . .	Very Helpful
	Help congregants develop their spiritual life.	
	Help congregants understand and act upon issues of social justice.	
	Provide congregants pastoral care.	
	Be active in visitation of members and nonmembers.	
	Be effective in working with children.	
	Build a sense of community among the people with they work.	
	Help others develop their leadership abilities and skills for ministry.	
	Be an effective administrator.	
	Be an effective communicator.	
	Be an effective teacher.	
	Encourage support of the Church’s wider mission.	
	Work regularly in the development of stewardship growth.	
	Be active in ecumenical relationships.	
	Be effective in working with youth.	
	Organize people for community action.	
	Be skilled in planning and leading programs.	
	Have a strong commitment and loyalty to the Lutheran Church.	
	Understand and interpret the mission of the Church from a global perspective.	
	Deal effectively with conflict.	
	Bring joy and good humor to relationships.	
	Be able to share leadership and work in a team.	
	Be creative and innovative about their tasks.	
	Be able to use technology and media.	
	Appreciate cultural diversity in language and customs.	
	Have talents in the areas of music, arts, and writing.	

What other considerations do you think are important for the call committee as it enters this process?

Will you commit to daily prayer for the call committee so that it might discern the best candidate to further God’s mission through our congregation?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Who are we this Sunday?

The purpose of this form is to give your leaders and potential candidates a snapshot of the people present in church today. Please answer the following questions and return your form, as directed. Please help your children with their form or fill out the form on their behalf.

1. Mark *one* box to indicate your gender and age group.

Age	Gender		
	female	male	other
4 years or younger			
5 to 9 years			
10 to 14 years			
15 to 19 years			
20 to 24 years			
25 to 34 years			
35 to 44 years			
45 to 54 years			
55 to 64 years			
65 to 74 years			
75 to 84 years			
85 years or older			

2. Are you... (check one)

Caucasian  
  Black  
  Asian or Pacific Islander  
  American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut  
 Another race: which? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you of Spanish/Hispanic origin?     Yes     No

4. What Language do you usually speak at home?

English  
  Spanish  
  Another Language: Which? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How long does it usually take you to get from your home to the church?

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes

6. How long have you been a member of this congregation?

< 1 year  
  1-3 years  
  4-10 years  
  > 10 years  
  Not a member

7. On average, how often are you at the church building other than weekend worship?

Once a week  
  2-3 times a month  
  about once a month  
  less than once a month

8. Of the people (including children) here today, how many are related to you (by marriage or blood)?  
 How many people, not including relatives, would you consider close friends? (please enter "0" if none.)

\_\_\_\_ # of people here today related to me    \_\_\_\_ # people here today who are close friends of mine

*Thank you for providing this information about yourself.*

*You are invited to share your concerns with your call committee or with your congregational council.*



### Position Description

Congregation/Ministry to be served: *(For more than one, please list all.)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation ID code (5 digits) \_\_\_\_\_

Roster status required: (check one)

Ordained Pastor  Deacon

Will the person called be the only rostered person serving the congregation/ministry?

Yes  
 No, the position is one of the following:  
 Senior Pastor  Associate/Assistant Pastor  Deacon

**If this is a multiple-staff situation:** For what particular tasks or areas of the congregation’s life will the person called or appointed be responsible? Please attach a job description.

Is the position full-time?

Yes  
 No, the position is \_\_\_\_\_ % of full-time.

Is this a new or existing position?

New position  
 Existing position

What is the length of term of this position?

Continuous (without limitation)  
 Co-terminus with senior pastor  
 Fixed term, for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years. (requires Bishop’s prior approval)

Does the ministry require skills in any language other than English?

No  
 Yes - Which language(s)? \_\_\_\_\_





### Summary and Range for Compensation and Professional Expense Package

Range of base salary + housing allowance + Social Security offset: \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

(when parsonage is provided)

Range of base salary + utility/furnishing allowance + Social Security offset: \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to base salary and housing, we will provide: *(Please check all that apply.)*

- Housing equity allowance: \_\_\_\_\_ (if applicable)
- Continuing Education of 14 days and ELCA recommended minimum allowance \_\_\_\_\_
- Four weeks vacation, including four Sundays
- Car or mileage allowance
- Healthcare and retirement fund through Portico (ELCA provider)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information for Council President**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone – Day \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information for Call Committee Chairperson**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone – Day \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Council President or Vice-President



## Rite for installation of a call committee

*Immediately following the Hymn of the Day:*

At this time, we install the following persons as the Call Committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Church.  
(As their names are read, the members of the committee shall come forward.)

As we install these leaders, we celebrate the power of the Holy Spirit, as it will reveal itself to us through their work as they discern candidates for the call to be a pastor of this congregation.

*To the members of the Call Committee:*

On behalf of this congregation and with the support of the staff of the Central States Synod, you are being charged with listening faithfully and searching diligently for the person whom God has chosen to shepherd this congregation in the coming years.

Are you now prepared to accept this responsibility and exercise your ministry faithfully and in accordance with the will of the Holy Spirit? If so, answer: We will, with God's help.

**We will, with God's help.**

Will you consistently search the mind of God through prayer and conversation with one another, always seeking to do God's will rather than your own?

**We will, with God's help.**

Will you continue to pray for this community of faith and listen diligently to the people of God as they seek to discern God's will in this process?

**We will, with God's help.**

Will you pledge to work with them in a spirit of joyful anticipation as you look forward to a new partnership in the gospel?

**We will, with God's help.**

*Congregation stands*

People of God, will you support and encourage these people in the ministry for which they are called this day? If so, then answer: We will, with God's help.

**We will, with God's help.**



Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs: Creative and Redeeming God, we will call upon you to empower these leaders for the special ministry upon which they embark this day. Grant them your Holy Spirit; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence. Lord in your mercy...

**Hear our prayer.**

*(Other petitions may be added here.)*

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*A symbol of this ministry such as a lapel pin may be given as each committee member kneels to receive a laying on of hands and blessing.*

I bless you for service, in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray. Almighty God, whose Spirit moved upon the waters and earth was created; who knit us together in our mother's womb, grant that these people of God may be strengthened for their service and empowered with your presence. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**



## Candidate Referral Form

Referrer's Name & Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Current Congregation/Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about this person? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you personally know this individual?  Yes  No

If yes, please summarize why you feel this individual would be a strong candidate for our congregation:

As far as you know, has this individual expressed an interest in the position at our congregation?

Yes  No

Have you or someone you know had discussions with this individual about the position at our congregation?

Yes  No

If yes, please summarize the information shared during your discussion. (optional)

NOTE: Once your referral is made, please support the confidentiality and integrity of the call process by allowing the call committee and synod to have exclusive contact with the candidate for any matters related to our congregational call. Thank you for your support.



## Sample Cover Letter for Referral Form

Dear **“Church Name”** Member,

This call committee has recently completed a significant step in the call process – the completion of our Ministry Site Profile. This profile will be used by the Bishop and staff to identify candidates to refer to the call committee. More importantly, it is used by the candidates themselves to learn about the mission and ministries at **“Church Name.”** A copy of the profile is available in the church office.

Along with information on **“Church Name,”** the profile includes a description of our expectations for a pastor/lay rostered leader. This description was prepared based on the information received from congregational surveys and input from the council and staff. Enclosed, you will find a copy of the description of our expectations for the position.

With these expectations in mind, we are giving you the opportunity to submit names of any ELCA pastors/rostered leaders whom you feel should be contacted by the Bishop and the call committee regarding our congregation. Please use the enclosed Candidate Referral Form to give us your recommendation. To preserve confidentiality, please mail the form to:

Candidate Referral  
Call Committee Chairperson  
Address

Once your referral is made, please support the confidentiality and integrity of the call process by allowing the call committee and synod to have exclusive contact with the candidate for any matters related to our congregational call. Thank you for your continued support and prayers for the call committee. We will continue to keep you updated on our progress toward calling a Pastor/Associate in Ministry/Diaconal Minister/Deaconess.

Sincerely,

## Sample Interview Questions

This list of possible questions is not comprehensive, but merely suggests issues you might want to raise with the candidate in areas connected with parish life. **Select 8-10 questions** that will shape the primary part of the interview.

Before beginning with questions, take the time to get acquainted with the candidate. Have someone from the committee begin with prayer. (You might want to ask the candidate to close the meeting with prayer.) Introduce yourselves and share your roles in the congregation. Ask the candidate to tell you briefly about themselves.

**While a candidate may offer information regarding the following, Call Committee members should refrain from asking questions about a candidate's health, age, sexual orientation, or family members.**

### Preaching/Worship Leadership

1. Describe how you go about preparing for the worship service on Sunday morning.
2. Think back in your ministry and tell me about the most difficult sermon you ever preached.
3. Share some of your thoughts about the worship life of a congregation.
4. Describe your preaching style.
  - a. What themes do you tend to emphasize in preaching?
5. What is the purpose of a sermon?

### Social Ministry

1. Tell us how you evaluate community needs and community strengths.
2. Describe how you have contributed to the quality of life in your community.
3. Describe how you go about motivating members of your congregation to respond to community needs.

### Administration

1. Describe the steps you take normally when working with groups to achieve consensus or cohesiveness.
2. How would you describe your style of leadership in overseeing the work of the congregation?
3. Tell us about a period in your life when you had to manage multiple demands in your work and how you determined priorities.

### Teaching

1. How do you evaluate the faith development of others?
2. Describe your approach to helping adults to grow in their faith.
3. Describe your approach to teaching children and young people about the Christian faith.

### Stewardship

1. Describe how you have helped others grow in their personal stewardship.
2. In what ways have you helped members understand the management of their money and their responsibilities as Christian stewards?
3. Describe the development of your personal sense of Christian stewardship.



### **Evangelism/Mission**

1. Describe God's Mission regarding the Church?
  - a. What is the role of the rostered leader and the congregation in relation to that mission?
2. Describe ways in which you typically become acquainted and associate with unchurched people in your community.
3. How have you kept yourself up to date on evangelical outreach principles and practices?
4. How have you equipped and encouraged others to be engaged in evangelical outreach?
5. Describe how you have achieved a multicultural approach to your ministry.
6. How do you put your finger on the pulse and culture of the community surrounding your church? Or the community in which you live?
7. How have you shifted church priorities to be responsive to needs in the local community?
8. What guidance or training do you provide other Christians for reaching the unchurched?
9. In what areas do you relate best with unchurched? Describe a current relationship you have with an unchurched person.

### **Inter-personal Climate**

1. What steps do you take in helping others feel secure, trusted, and open with you?
2. When pressure mounts, how do you maintain your cool in ministry?
3. Describe an experience where conflict arose between you and another person and how resolution was finally achieved.
4. What are your feelings about inclusivity and welcome, as they relate to the life of the whole congregation?
5. How would you help us involve people of all ages in church activities?

### **Ministry in Crisis**

1. Describe your style of ministry to persons in crisis.
2. Describe how you have used the establishment of boundaries to strengthen your ministry.
3. How do you assess your own professional limitations when ministering to persons in crisis?

### **Interpret Theology**

1. Describe ways in which you communicate the faith.
2. Describe your skills as teacher and preacher.
3. What resources do you use to remain theologically and biblically fresh and current?
4. Describe how you interpret the Bible.

### **Innovation/Creativity**

1. Describe your approach to introducing new ideas in the congregation.
2. Describe your current vision for ministry and how you would help others in the congregation to capture that vision.
3. Think back in your ministry and describe a situation that was stagnant or failing and describe how you stepped in to revitalize it.
4. When was the last time you created an opportunity out of an obstacle? How did you create that opportunity?
5. Describe a situation that was stagnant or failing and you stepped in to revitalize it.



### **Participant in the Larger Church**

1. Describe how you have guided your congregation into understanding their relationship to the greater church.
2. Describe your participation in the work of the church beyond the congregation, including ecumenical relationships, church agencies, and institutions.
3. How does your congregation participate in ministry of the ELCA?
4. What have you done to enable your congregation to become fully a partner with the ELCA?

### **Personal Growth**

1. Describe some of your most important accomplishments and how you went about reaching those goals.
2. How do you work at making yourself more effective in your work?
3. Briefly describe ways in which you care for yourself physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
4. How do you observe Sabbath time?
5. How have you participated in lifelong learning? How have you chosen the areas where you have pursued more growth?
6. Share a recent (or past) experience that challenged your thinking, inspired you, or deepened your understanding of your ministry and/or life (e.g. a book, lecture, movie, event, program, article, travels, etc.).
7. What are your goals for continued personal and professional growth?
8. How would you help us involve people of all ages in church activities?

### **Call to Ministry**

1. Briefly describe the events which led you to prepare for the ministry.
2. Describe the process of deliberation which helps you determine God's call.
3. In what ways has your call to ministry changed over the years?
4. Tell us about the Spirit's work in your life.

### **Personal Faith Practices**

1. Describe your relationship with Jesus.
2. Describe your stewardship and devotional life.
3. Tell us about your personal faith practices.

### **Personal Ministry Practices**

1. What are the top three skills you would bring to our congregation?
  - a. How have you used those skills in your ministry?
2. What are your growth areas?
3. What aspect of ministry is most satisfying to you?
4. What aspect of ministry is most dissatisfying to you?
5. Describe your basic work orientation?
  - a. Where and when do you work best?
  - b. How do you prioritize tasks?
6. Describe your most important accomplishments. How did you go about reaching your goals?
7. How do you include pastoral visitation in your ministry? Crisis Visiting?
8. What has given you the greatest feeling of accomplishment in your ministry? How was that effort initiated and what obstacles did you overcome in carrying it out?





9. Tell us about your best effort in moving people beyond the maintenance mentality of ministry.
10. How do you typically give ministry away?
11. Tell us about a relationship you salvaged after a conflict or falling out with the person.
12. Describe a time when you effectively handled opposition to your calling and responsibilities as pastor and leader.
13. Describe a situation when your ministry expectations were high, but the outcome was unexpectedly disappointing. What was your response to the disappointment?
14. Describe a time when you handled unfounded criticism against you.
15. Are you current in Boundary Training? When is the last time you attended a workshop, and do you have a certificate of completion or letter verifying such? If not within the last three years, what are your plans for meeting the requirements in our synod.
16. What is your concept of Stewardship? Evangelism? Social Ministry?
17. What do you think about fund-raising activities?

### **Leadership**

1. Describe your leadership style.
2. What do you believe is the primary role of a congregation council?
3. Describe how you work with committees?
4. How do you work with other staff?
5. Communication is an important part of parish life. Give us examples of ways that you plan to communicate within our congregation.
6. What do you see as the role of lay members in a congregation, specifically in relation to the functions of worship, learning, witness, service, and support? What functions would belong uniquely to your position?
7. How do you cultivate giftedness in others?
8. Describe a good example of someone you helped to recognize and use spiritual gifts they were unaware they possessed.
9. Describe a time when members of your church were divided over an important issue. What did you do to resolve the conflict?
10. What is your best example of developing a ministry team? How did you develop the team and what was accomplished?

### **Multicultural Ministry**

1. Tell us about significant relationships you have had with someone who is different than yourself. Describe how you learned about their culture. Describe how you shared your culture or understanding with them.
2. How have you overcome some of your own biases and prejudices as you work with people who are unlike you? How have you helped others understand their prejudices? What have you done to help overcome your own prejudices?

### **Financial**

1. The Ministry Profile has provided some information about financial arrangements. You may wish to explore financially related concerns, such as salary, housing, and equity allowance.



## Sample questions that may be asked by candidates.

An effective interview is a two-way street, with the candidate also bringing questions and concerns. Allow time and opportunity for the candidate to ask questions and be prepared to address them. Questions that may be asked of you as a committee: What is the focus of your congregation? Describe your mission.

1. What is the purpose of your congregation?
2. Does your congregation have a mission statement, and can you describe your mission?
3. What is the role of staff and what is the role of the laity in your congregation?
4. How many people are involved in leadership roles? How are lay people involved in worship?
5. In your opinion, how are decisions made in your congregation?
6. What long- and short-term goals has the congregation adopted? When was the last time an in-depth self-study was conducted?
7. What is the congregation's commitment to support of and partnership with the synod and the ELCA?
8. How does the congregation respond to change and how are changes made?
9. What part should family members of staff play in the congregation?
10. What would you display on a highway billboard regarding your congregation?
11. Why did the previous pastor leave?
12. Are there skeletons in the closet that I should know about in considering the call here?
13. Why am I of particular interest to you?
14. What has been the most significant event in the life of this congregation since you have been a member?
15. Aside from the upheaval of looking for a new rostered minister, what has been the most upsetting event in the life of this congregation?
16. In your opinion, what areas of concern need to be addressed by this congregation?
17. What kinds of things did your former rostered minister do particularly well?
18. What were the circumstances surrounding your former rostered minister's departure?
19. In what areas did you wish your former rostered minister(s) had more expertise?
20. What formal and informal methods of support have you used in the past to help you rostered minister become a better minister?
21. How should your rostered minister spend their time? In the course of a week, how much time should be spent in prayer? Personal study? Sermon preparation? Administration? Individual and family counseling? Visiting? With their family?
22. What organizations in the congregation are the most active and/or successful?
23. What are some of the reasons you choose to be a member of this congregation?
24. Describe how you are engaged in God's mission/work in the local community.
25. What is the community's image of this congregation?
26. Tell me about your mission support.
27. What was the last experiment/risk this congregation tried for the sake of God's kingdom?
28. What was the last book or other study that the leadership read together?
29. What did you accomplish during the interim period? How are you different because of that time?



30. Describe your relationship to the other congregations/ministries in the area and your relationship to the rest of the Synod.
31. Who shares responsibility for the visioning for your ministry?
32. What governing structure does this ministry have?
33. How would you prioritize the functions of this position, both in terms of importance and number of hours? What gets deferred if time runs out?
34. What view does the congregation have about continuing education, time off, and financial support? Will I be encouraged to attend conferences and Synod Assemblies? Who will pay those expenses?
35. How will the congregation support me/my family as your called leader? Are there expectations of my family?
36. Who prepares the council and congregational meeting agendas? Who chairs meetings?
37. What are the housing opportunities in the community?
38. Describe the school districts in the community?
39. In the case of multiple-staff ministries: How would you describe the task definitions, lines of authority, conflict management, and reporting methods of the pastoral staff, council, congregation, and committees?
40. What hardships has the congregation experienced? What conflicts have you faced, and what did you learn from them?
41. How many pastors has this parish had in the past twenty years?
42. How is the pastor's leadership viewed by the congregation?
43. What kind of secretarial/administrative support will the congregation provide?
44. What do you see as the role of the lay members in fulfilling the purposes of the congregation, specifically in relation to the functions of worship, learning, witness, service, and support?
45. How do you view my role in relationship to the functions of worship, learning, witness, service, and support?
46. What arrangements have you made for moving myself, my family (if applicable), and my household goods to this area?
47. Does this congregation have a policy regarding weddings and funerals for non-members?
48. Does the congregation have a policy regarding same-sex weddings being performed on church grounds?



## Rostered Minister Interview Expense Voucher

Travel by car to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ return.

Cost of rental car and fuel ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Or \_\_\_\_\_ miles @ \_\_\_\_\_ cents per mile..... \_\_\_\_\_

Travel by air \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and return..... \_\_\_\_\_

Meals..... \_\_\_\_\_

Housing..... \_\_\_\_\_

Miscellaneous..... \_\_\_\_\_

Total..... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Call Committee Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Suggested text for leaders no longer being considered

Date

Name

Address

City State Zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with our Call Committee at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church. It was a privilege to learn more about your skills, accomplishments, and ministry.

After prayerful consideration and in light of the current needs and vision of this congregation, unfortunately, our team did not select you for further consideration.

I am happy to answer your questions if you would like any specific feedback about your application or interviews.

Thank you for your courtesy to our committee. We wish to extend to you our best wishes in your ministry and blessings to you as you continue your search for a new call.

Sincerely,

Call Committee Chairperson

cc: Synod Bishop



## Definition of Compensation, Benefits and Responsibilities Covenant

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_

for \_\_\_\_\_

for the period: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

### DEFINED COMPENSATION

The congregation will provide the following annual compensation.

Total Defined Compensation (*Line 56 of Compensation Worksheet*): \_\_\_\_\_

The section below should be completed after the pastor identifies what portion of Defined Compensation will be for Housing Allowance. The sum of the three figures below should equal the Total Defined Compensation.

a. Base cash salary (*Line 65 of Compensation worksheet.*)

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Housing allowance (*Line 64 of Compensation Worksheet. Pastor will provide this amt.*)

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Self-employed Social Security allowance (*Line 54 of Compensation worksheet*)

\_\_\_\_\_

If a parsonage or other housing is provided:

Utilities allowance \_\_\_\_\_

Furnishings allowance \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### RETIREMENT AND OTHER BENEFITS

*The congregation will sponsor the minister in the Retirement and Other Benefits Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Portico) which provides retirement, disability, survivor, and medical-dental coverage. Sponsorship will include medical-dental coverage for the minister's spouse and children unless they have other employer-provided group medical insurance coverage and the pastor consents to waiving medical-dental coverage for them under Portico.*

1. ELCA Retirement at \_\_\_\_\_ % of defined compensation

2. ELCA Medical and Dental Insurance (check one below):

Member only       Member and spouse       Member and children

Member, spouse & children       Coverage waived

3. Housing Equity Retirement Contribution (if parsonage is provided) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Other insurance or benefits \_\_\_\_\_



**EXPENSES**

The congregation will provide for the following expenses related to this minister’s ministry.

Automobile and travel allowance \_\_\_\_\_

Other professional expenses (Boundary Education, professional associations...) \_\_\_\_\_

Expenses for official meetings of the synod (Theological Conference, Synod education offerings, ... ) as reimbursed \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing education (*\$1,000 recommended; minimum \$800 from calling source*) \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Moving Expenses to be covered, if applicable:**

1. Vacation time of \_\_\_\_\_ days per year, including \_\_\_\_\_ Sundays;

*(recommended minimum of four weeks/20 days total)*

**AGREEMENT**

2. Continuing education time of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks per year

*(recommended minimum of two weeks per year that may be accumulated up to three years, as reflected in a continuing-education agreement developed by the pastor and congregation’s council);*

3. Participation in a First-Call Theological Education Program, where applicable;

4. Ongoing care through a Mutual Ministry Committee;

5. Up to two months of continued salary, housing and contributions to the Portico Health benefits, Retirement and Other Benefits Program in the event that the minister is physically or mentally disabled *(see Compensation Guidelines, Page 11, Temporary Disability);*

6. Family and Medical Leave of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks with full salary, housing, and benefits

*(Synod Guidelines recommend a minimum of eight weeks paid Family and Medical Leave shall be granted to a rostered leader, with the option to extend that leave without repercussion an additional four weeks by use of vacation time and/or unpaid leave.)*

7. Other:



**SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR PART-TIME MINISTRY (if applicable)**

The minister will devote approximately \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week to the fulfillment of pastoral duties. In the section below, detail specific duties of the part-time minister, prioritizing such duties, and in the second part, note ministry tasks to be shared or wholly done by congregation members or attach a separate document.

*A description of the specific responsibilities of this position may be attached to this “Definition of Compensations, Benefits, and Responsibilities” or the following may be completed:*

**OTHER PROVISIONS**

Special emphases on the minister and special encouragement by the congregation:

During this time period, the minister will give special attention to ministry to the following:

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) \_\_\_\_\_

The congregation will encourage this minister’s pastoral duties in the following ways:

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER MATTERS**

(Such as accountabilities, service on synodical or churchwide boards and committees, work in church-camp programs, or other such details)



We, the undersigned, certify that the necessary approvals of the congregation and congregational council have been granted for the provisions set forth above.

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Congregational President

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Council Secretary

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

I certify that I accept the above statement:

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Minister

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Date

NOTE: Retain original in records of the congregation. Make a copy for the pastor. As a matter of information, send a copy to the synodical office. A description of the specific responsibilities of this position may be attached to this "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities."

**This document should be reviewed and updated annually.**