

Congregations in Transition

Moving Boldly into the Future



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God's work. Our hands.

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Letter from the Bishops of the Grand Canyon and Rocky Mountain Synods

Grace and peace to you from the Triune God!

Transitions are a part of life, filled with both challenge and opportunity. For communities of faith, transitions are fertile ground for God's transformational work.

As your congregation begins this journey of transformation, we want to assure you that the Rocky Mountain Synod Office of the Bishop and the Grand Canyon Synod Office of the Bishop are here to accompany you along the way. Congregation transitions are incredibly significant in the life of the whole church. They offer a rare opportunity for renewal and a time to reflect on the ministry and future of your congregation in unique ways. Entering the transition process intentionally and thoughtfully allows the Holy Spirit to move and breathe new life into the ministry of your congregation.

Your community of faith may have been through a pastoral leadership change before; perhaps you have served on a "call committee." Our current transition process represents a two-fold approach that includes intentional transition work guided by a trained interim pastor (as available) before moving into the call process and a trained Transition Coach. This intentional transition process, already used extensively in other parts of the ELCA, provides time and space for the whole congregation to come together to remember and celebrate the past, assess the needs and gifts of the congregation, and explore opportunities for the future. A successful interim process not only prepares the way for the next chapter of your congregation's history, but also allows individuals and the whole community to practice healthy leave-taking, heal old wounds, and imagine creative ministry that can bless the wider community for future generations.

This "Moving into the Future" manual will help you move into God's future for you and will provide you with the necessary steps and resources for both the intentional transition work as well as the call process. In the midst your transition, the Office of the Bishop and the congregation will work closely together toward the goal of finding the next right pastor or deacon who can participate with you in the mission to which the Spirit is calling you.

May God bless you and guide you—and the Holy Spirit surround you—during this journey of transformation.

Yours in Faith,

Bishop Deborah Hutterer
Grand Canyon Synod

Bishop James Gonia
Rocky Mountain Synod

Introduction to the Transition and Call Process

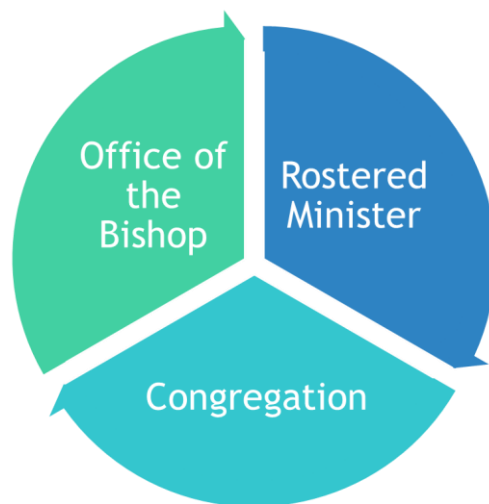
This manual walks through the four phases of the transition process, gives forms and procedures for how to navigate the process well, and strives to challenge congregations to continue engaging in the process with spirituality at the forefront. This is a manual – not a hard and fast rule of how everything will progress. Use this guide as a model, and consult with your Transition Coach whenever you have questions.

Periods of transition are holy times. They are moments when deep work can be done, inspiration can appear, and renewal can be leveraged to propel us into the future. Transitions are not wasted time. “Without transition, the change changes nothing,” William Bridges notes in his book *Managing Transitions*. During a transition, congregations take time to feel (grief, joy, anticipation), to think (reflect on the past, dream of the future) and connect spiritually (through prayer and study). These are whole-self moments, when the Holy Spirit breathes new life into a congregation and grows something new for the sake of humanity. After transitions, congregations and individuals are never the same, but God is constantly with us, re-creating us into the body of Christ that the world needs today.

During the process, congregations in transition are in partnership with the Office of the Bishop, supporting one another and holding one another accountable to be who God is creating each to be: the Body of Christ.

“Without transition, the change changes nothing.”

Our ministry is a three-part circle. Rostered ministers, congregations, and the Office of the Bishop all support each other so that the Good News about Jesus can reach more people. When a pastor or deacon (rostered minister) leaves a congregation, the congregation and Office of the Bishop work closely together with the goal of finding the right rostered minister for the next phase of the congregation’s life.



Everyday ministry continues during the transition process, usually led by the intentional interim pastor and the Congregation Council. During this in-between time, a transition team of the congregation will find engaging ways to guide the faith community through a self-study that will embrace the past, name the present, and prayerfully discern God’s call into the future. To do this, the whole community will need to communicate well and often so that everyone stays committed to moving forward in this process.

What is a “Call”?

The Lutheran call process empowers congregations and rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) 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.

The call process is not the same as the hiring process in other parts of society. A pastor is called — not hired — to serve a congregation. Any process that seems to focus on headhunting, resume shuffling, or high anxiety interviews is missing the point in the calling of a pastor. The call process is not a pageant, in which contestants present themselves to their best advantage so they will be the winners. A call is one element in the church’s seeking and following God’s movement into the future. A call is about discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit in the work of ministry.

In 1 Samuel 3, Samuel was called by God when he was a young boy. It was not a time for God to say, “Samuel, if you want to sometime in the future, serve me a bit, that’d be great!” It was a call to a lifetime of putting God first, of listening to God’s Word and then proclaiming it (even when it was difficult and scary) to the people, one that could not be avoided.

In Luke 1, Mary was called by God through the angel named Gabriel to be the bearer of God on Earth. She was chosen so that God could show up in a most real and tangible way for humanity. She carried out the will of God to the best of her abilities, always with God’s help.

All Christians are called to the ministry of serving God and neighbor, but for the sake of good order in the church, certain Christians are specially called to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament or Word and Service. A core Lutheran document is the Augsburg Confession. Written in 1530, it outlines much of our Lutheran understanding of theology and ministry.

The call process is not the same as the hiring process...A call is about discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit in the work of ministry.

Calling a pastor or deacon offers a remarkable opportunity for reflection and prayer in the life of a congregation. This time of transition is an opportunity for the congregation’s leadership to place trust in God, to model unity, and to provide encouragement and opportunities for spiritual growth.

Calling a pastor or deacon is not a time to say “well, let’s hire the best candidate” — in a called position, we discern who God thinks is the *right* candidate. Calling a rostered minister is not just a pro-con list, and whoever ekes further on the former side of the scale gets the nod. It is a time of prayerful conversation with God — talking, questioning, pondering. And since conversations are much less interesting when only one side is talking, remember that the conversations with God need times for listening, as well.

Discernment is not just for the congregation, but for the rostered minister, too. This continual discernment is not about what we want, but about what God sees we each need.

*Lord God,
you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only
that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
(The Lutheran Prayer of Good Courage, from the community of Holden Village)

Glossary

Bridge Pastor

The bridge pastor position is a short-term relationship between a pastor and congregation in instances when an intentional interim cannot be placed immediately or must leave before the next settled pastor is in place. During these times a bridge pastor may be recommended to a congregation so that ministry and vitality may be maintained.

Call Committee

The committee is appointed or elected according to the congregation's constitution for the purpose of searching for the next pastor or deacon to be called by the congregation. This committee works with the transition team to complete the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) based on the self-study of the congregation and the work of the transition team. The Call Committee is then charged with interviewing candidates for a pastor or deacon to lead the congregation into the future. Candidates are first vetted by the Office of the Bishop and then given to the congregation. The Call Committee can ask for more candidates until they feel the right candidate is identified.

Call Packet

Once the Call Committee has selected and presented a candidate to the Congregation Council, the Call Committee will notify the Office of the Bishop. The Office of the Bishop will then send a call packet to the president of the congregation. This packet will include information and forms on compensation and benefits and other document related to the Call.

Compensation Package

The Compensation Package reflects the actual financial impact on the congregation's budget of supporting the leader who has been called by the congregation. This includes salary, housing allowance, pension and health benefits, car allowance, continuing education and professional expenses, Social Security assistance, etc. It is helpful for candidates to have clarity as to what is actually available for them to cover living expenses, as well as the benefits that the called leader does not receive directly, such as pension and health benefits. Synod Compensation Guidelines are available on the Synod's website to help congregations meet fair financial expectations.

Consensus Decision

When a Call Committee is deciding on a candidate to recommend to the Council and congregation, consensus decision making is preferred. This is different than a unanimous decision. A consensus decision works toward the best interest of the community of faith, where all can live with the decision even if it is not their first choice.

Co-terminus Call

In a context where two or more rostered ministers have a call to one ministry, a co-terminus call specifically stipulates that when one call is ending, the other call will end as well. For example, in the situation of a senior/associate pastor relationship, a co-terminus call would require that the associate hand in their resignation when the senior pastor steps down. With this agreement articulated at the beginning of a call, the leadership does not have to accept the resignation, but it allows for thoughtful reflection from the leadership about how best to staff in the most life-giving way for the whole community.

Excellence in Leadership

Excellence in Leadership is a ministry working to make leadership more resilient, courageous, and faithful. This initiative is a two-year commitment, and is designed for both lay and rostered leaders.

Grand Canyon Synod (GCS)

The Grand Canyon Synod is made up of congregations in Arizona and the southern part of Nevada, as well as one congregation in Utah. The Grand Canyon Synod's mission is "Communicate Jesus. Connect People. Create Possibilities."

Intentional Interim Pastor:

A pastor who is chosen by the Congregation Council, whose letter of call comes from the Synod Council. This pastor has specific training to guide congregations through the transition process during a pastoral vacancy.

Letter of Call

The Letter of Call is the official document, signed by the Bishop and the congregation or board president, authorizing that a call is extended to a pastor or deacon in ministry at a particular congregation or specialized ministry setting.

Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

The Ministry Site Profile is a document completed by the transition team and/or Call Committee which reflects the congregation's history, current structures and staffing patterns, hopes for the future, mission direction, demographic data about the community, and the gifts for leadership being sought by the congregation. This document is then used by the Office of the Bishop in finding a good match between a rostered minister and a congregation.

Office of the Bishop

The Office of the Bishop and its staff supports the work of the Bishop of the Synod. See the inside cover of this document for contact information. Since the "Synod" is made up of all the congregations in that geographic area, we use "Office of the Bishop" to refer to the Bishop and the staff who work on behalf of the Bishop.

Rocky Mountain Synod (RMS)

The Rocky Mountain Synod is made up of congregations and ministries in Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and El Paso, Texas. The Rocky Mountain Synod's mission is: "Together we proclaim and embody God's unconditional love for the sake of the world."

Rostered Minister

The ELCA maintains two rosters (or lists) of credentialed and approved pastors and deacons. In this denomination, we refer to these pastors and deacons as Rostered Ministers. While equal in authority, they serve different purposes. A pastor is a "Minister of Word and Sacrament", and a deacon is a "Minister of Word and Service."

Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)

The Rostered Minister Profile is a form completed by rostered candidates. It includes questions about theology, gifts for ministry, personal information, employment and educational history and references. This document is used by the Office of the Bishop in finding good matches between rostered ministers and congregations.

Settled Pastor or Deacon (sometimes referred to as "Placed" or "Called" Pastor or Deacon)

This term refers to the pastor or deacon selected by the Call Committee, recommended by the Congregation Council or ministry board, and voted on by the congregation or ministry to be called to a particular congregation or ministry. This rostered minister is called to the congregation for an indefinite period of time.

Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS)

This ministry encourages congregations and rostered ministers to build a culture of generosity, envisioning stewardship as a year-round activity. SAS is a two-year process of working with consultants to learn how to counter a culture of scarcity and renew spiritual generosity.

Synod Representative

Every call process is a partnership among the congregation, the Office of the Bishop, and the entire Synod. In order to symbolize this partnership, a representative from the Synod will be present at congregation votes. The representative will read a statement on behalf of the Bishop of the Synod and will share the results of the congregation vote with the Office of the Bishop.

Term Call

A term call is a call that lasts for a specified length of time. In a settled call, the rostered minister is in place until the rostered minister and/or the congregation decide to end the call. A term call begins with an agreement of the rostered minister and congregation to engage in ministry together for a finite time period. In some instances, a term can be converted to a settled call. A term call can come from either the Synod Council or a congregation.

Transition Coach

Transition Coaches are leaders trained to work with congregations in the transition process. They work with a few congregations at a time, and act as the main liaison between the Office of the Bishop and the congregations.

Transition Team

This team of congregation leaders works to engage the congregation in the self-study process, listening deeply and then providing the Council and Call Committee the framework of what is needed in the next rostered minister. The Transition team is not constitutionally mandated and can be formed and utilized in ways that fit the needs of the congregation.

Tri-Transition Meeting

When the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is nearly done, the transition team, Call Committee, and Congregation Council meet with the Transition Coach to discuss the MSP, its contents, and the next steps in the call process.

Supply Pastor:

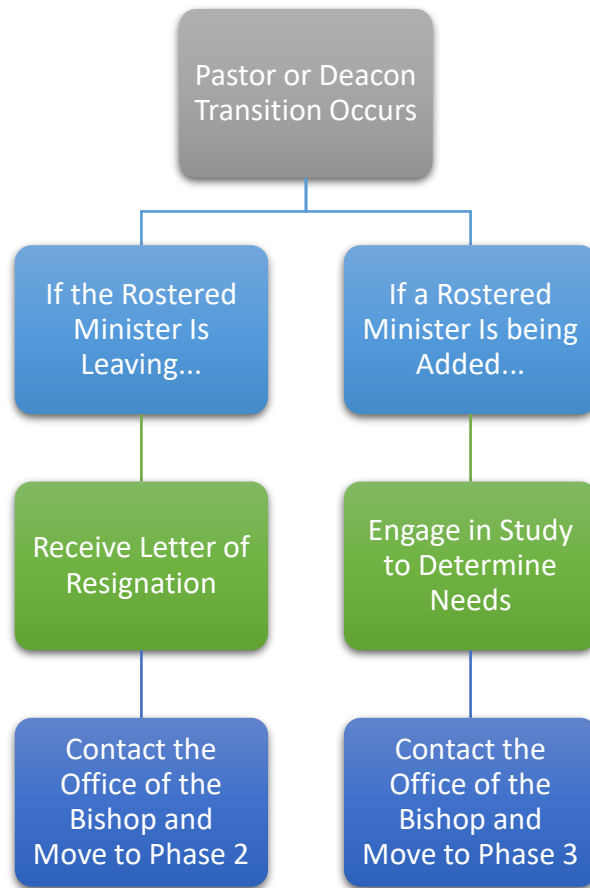
A supply pastor is usually contracted on a short-term basis to provide Word and Sacrament ministry through weekly Sunday worship services. The contract may also include pastoral care throughout the week.

Vital Right-Shaped Ministry (VRSM)

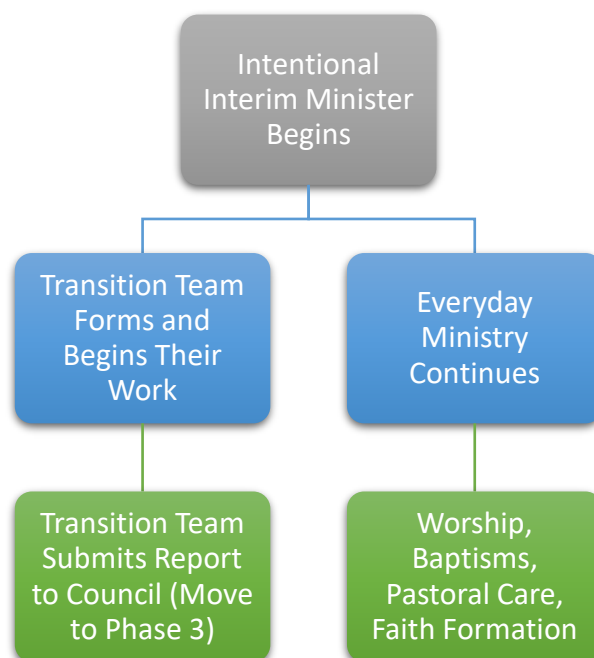
This ministry invites congregations to reflect on who they are, how they operate, and empowers the congregation to adapt for the present and future. VRSM provides a framework to engage change in a healthy way. It also gives congregations tools to imagine who they can be in their community, and charts a future that has yet to be realized.

Flow Chart of the Transition Process

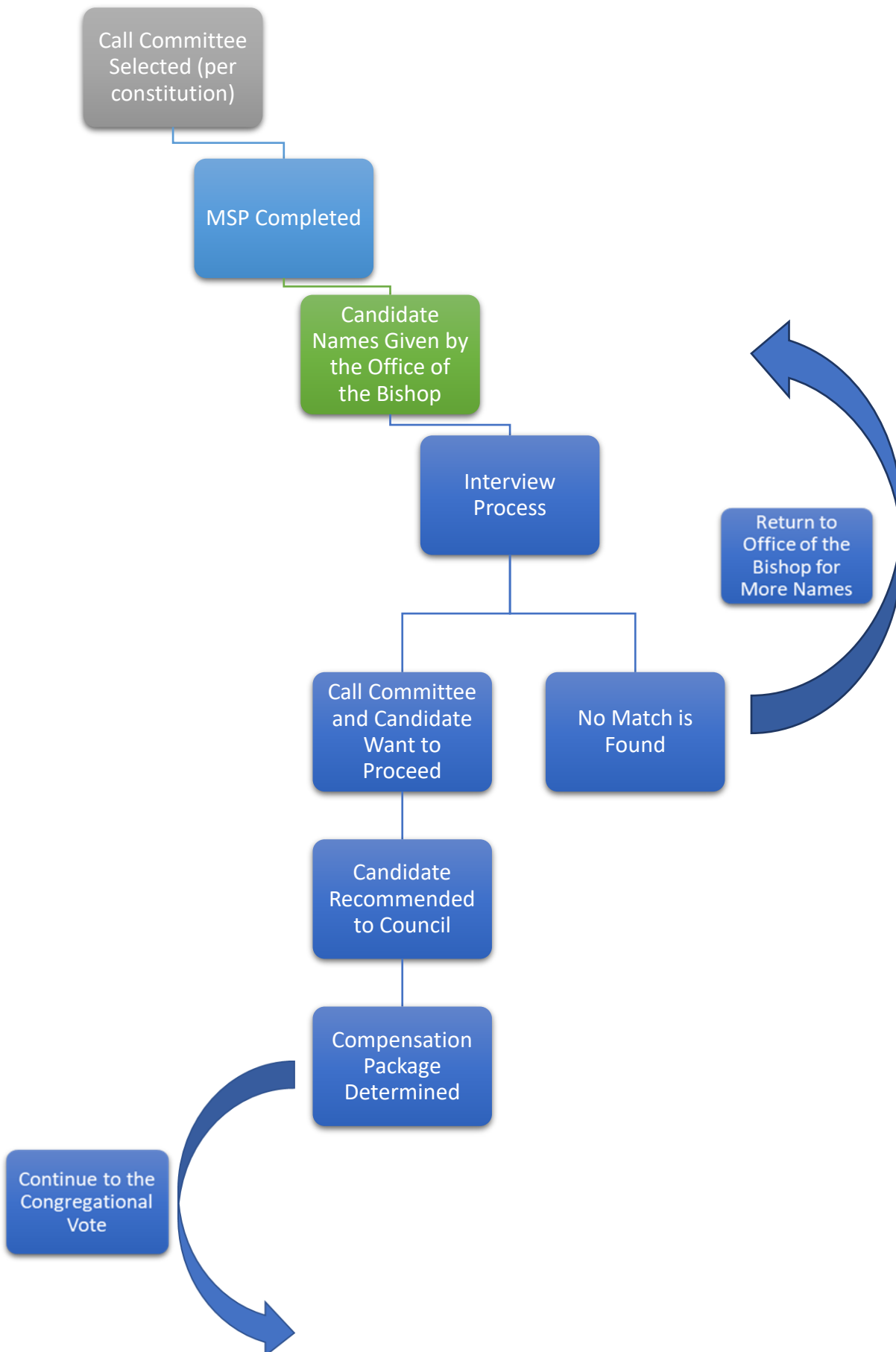
Phase 1 – We Are Experiencing a Rostered Minister Transition. What Do We Do?

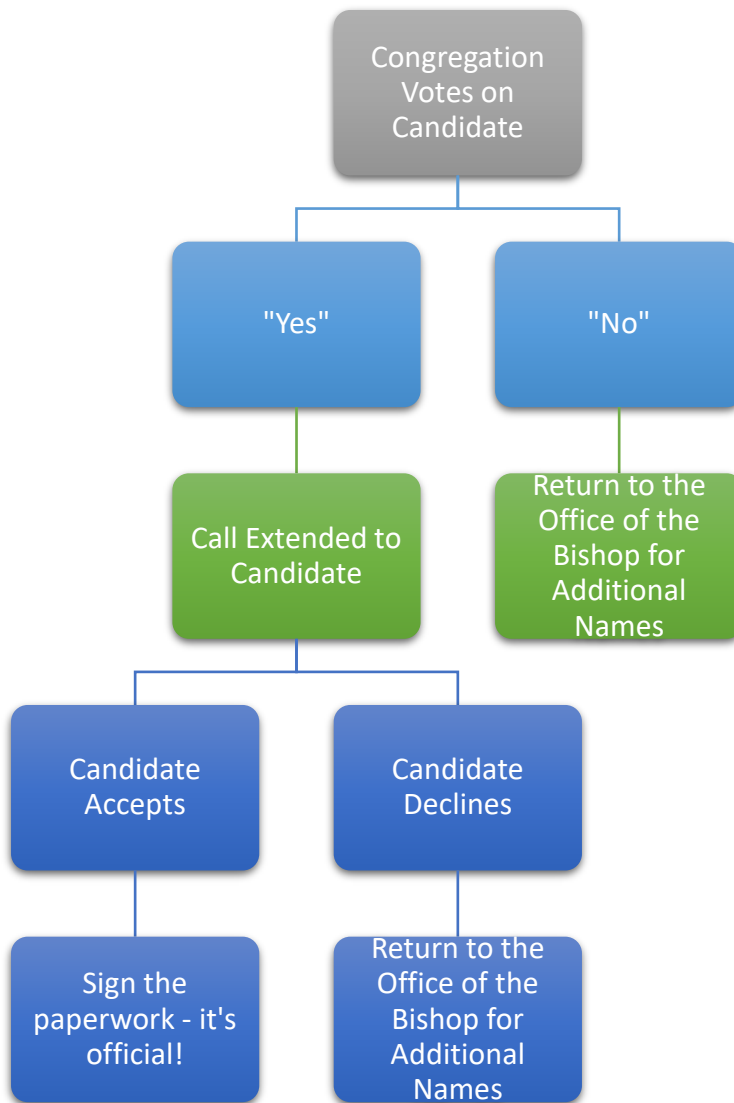


Phase 2 – Intentional Interim and Self-Study

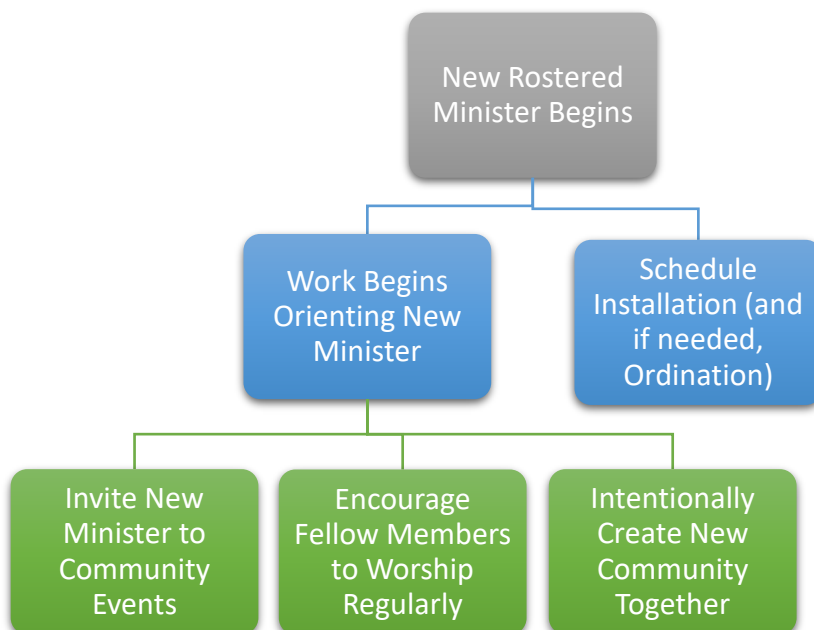


Phase 3 – The Call Process





Phase 4 – Now You Have a New Rostered Minister!



Overview of Steps

Phase 1 – We Are Experiencing a Rostered Minister Transition. What Do We Do?

- When a rostered minister resigns, a letter of resignation is submitted to the Congregation Council at a Council meeting.
- The letter of resignation is copied and distributed to the Office of the Bishop and to the congregation, along with a letter from the council accepting the resignation and detailing any plans being made for a farewell event (if known).
- The Congregation Council contacts the Office of the Bishop to begin deciding a path forward during the transition process. Please see contact information on the inside of the cover page.
- The minister and Council complete any obligations to one another (i.e., updating parochial records, completing any financial obligations between the minister and the congregation, etc.). **See Appendices 6 and 7.**
- The Council clarifies the new relationship and expectations of the departing pastor or deacon, completes the Letter of Agreement between a Former Rostered Minister and the Congregation, and notifies the congregation. **See Appendix 4.**
- An exit interview is scheduled between the pastor/deacon and the Office of the Bishop. **See Appendix 3.**
- The congregation holds a farewell event for the pastor or deacon.
- A Transition Coach contact the Council President during this phase to prepare for the future.

Phase 2 – Intentional Interim and Self-Study

- The Office of the Bishop will recommend one or two intentional interim pastor options to the Congregation Council.
- The Council interviews the candidates and makes a decision on behalf of the whole congregation.
- The Council negotiates with the candidate regarding timing, compensation, and the terms of the call including length, hours, and housing options if applicable. **See Appendix 10.**
- A copy of the compensation documents and appropriate forms are sent to the Office of the Bishop.
- The Synod Council issues the Letter of Call to the Intentional Interim.
- The intentional interim pastor begins ministry.
- A transition team is selected by the Congregation Council in consultation with the intentional interim pastor to lead the congregation through the transition and self-study process.
- At the end of the self-study process, the transition team creates a transition report and presents it to the Congregation Council.
- In consultation with the Intentional Interim Pastor, the transition team may begin the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). The MSP is critical to the work of calling a new pastor or deacon. The transition team and the Call Committee may work together to complete the document. The transition team brings the knowledge of the self-study process while the Call Committee needs to internalize the document that is so instrumental to the interviewing process.

Phase 3 – The Call Process

- The Call Committee is established according to the congregation's constitution.
- A representative from the Office of Bishop meets with the Congregation Council, transition team, and Call Committee. This meeting is called the Tri-Transition meeting because all three critical leadership groups are part of the discussion to finalize the Ministry Site Profile (MSP).
- After the final edits are made, the completed Ministry Site Profile is electronically submitted to the ELCA database. (Note: Be sure to send the electronic copy of the reference recommendation to the person designated to complete this document.)

- The Office of the Bishop enters into a time of intentional prayer and discernment to identify potential candidates to offer the Call Committee for interviews.
- The Call Committee receives the names of candidates. The Call Committee interviews all the candidates officially recommended by the Office of the Bishop. After the initial interview, the Call Committee releases the candidates who do not feel like a good fit for the congregation.
- The Call Committee can design future interviews in ways that fit the particular needs of the community. As this process is mutual discernment between the Call Committee and the rostered ministers, it is important that respect and honesty be maintained throughout the process.
- When the Call Committee has a primary candidate of choice, the candidate's name is recommended to the Congregation Council. The Call Committee's work here is to explain to the Council why this person is their candidate of choice.
- The Council listens, reviews the RMP and may choose to have a conversation with the candidate. The Council votes on the recommended candidate (requiring a two-thirds majority for approval) and on a compensation package (requiring a simple majority for approval). When approved, the Council recommends the candidate to the congregation and sets a congregation meeting date.
- The Office of the Bishop will send a representative for the congregation vote.
- The congregation votes on whether to extend a call to the pastor or deacon (requiring a two-thirds majority vote). If approved, the congregation votes on the compensation package (requiring a simple majority).
- The Council President should communicate the results of the vote to the candidate.
- If the call is approved, the candidate has thirty (30) days to accept or decline the call.
- The candidate communicates the decision to both the Council President and the Office of the Bishop.
- The new pastor or deacon is installed by a representative of the Office of Bishop at an agreed-upon time.

Phase 4 – Now You Have a New Rostered Minister!

- The new rostered minister cannot do their ministry without you – continue to attend worship, participate in the community of faith outside of worship, and deepen your spiritual life.
- Invite the new rostered minister to events in the community.
- Help the new rostered minister to understand the real expectations in this place. Creating a list of what has happened each month in the past, the important holidays for the community, and remembrances that need to take place will be helpful.
- If the rostered minister is new to the synod, connect them with the Synod newsletter, local colleagues, and make sure they know the dates of Synod Assembly, Theological Education, and when forms are due (such as Parochial Reports).
- Connect the new minister to the homebound members of the community.
- Send a mailing to local congregations when the new rostered minister's installation is set, inviting parishioners and clergy to share in this celebration.
- Schedule a longer Council meeting for the first one the new minister will attend. A meal or fellowship time will allow the Council to get to know the minister, and vice versa, before the ongoing to-do list of congregation business kicks off.
- Engage in mutual learning and intentional community building, such as
 - Excellence in Leadership
 - Stewardship for All Seasons

General Congregation Council Checklist

Phase 1 – We Are Experiencing a Rostered Minister Transition. What Do We Do?

- ___ Accept minister's letter of resignation and notify the congregation in writing.
- ___ Contact the Office of the Bishop to set up an exit interview. *See Appendix 3.*
- ___ Schedule a farewell event for the pastor or deacon.
- ___ Congregation Council and pastor/deacon fulfill all obligations.
- ___ Certification of financial records and obligations between minister and congregation.
- ___ Clarify new relationship with departing minister, complete Letter of Agreement, notify congregation. *See Appendices 4 and 5.*
- ___ Council facilitates an internal review of Parochial Records. *See Appendices 6 and 7.*
- ___ Conduct an exit interview with minister and the Office of the Bishop. *See Appendix 3.*
- ___ Meet with the Office of the Bishop to talk about transition.

Phase 2 – Intentional Interim and Self-Study

- ___ Office of the Bishop will recommend an intentional interim pastor. *See Appendix 9.*
- ___ Agree on recommended interim pastor and compensation package. *See Appendix 10.*
- ___ Complete Intentional Interim Agreement. *See Appendix 10.*
- ___ Welcome interim pastor. *See Appendix 11.*
- ___ Select a transition team, and install this team in a regular Sunday worship service. *See Appendix 12.*
- ___ Support the work of the transition team during the self-study process. *See Appendix 13 and 14.*

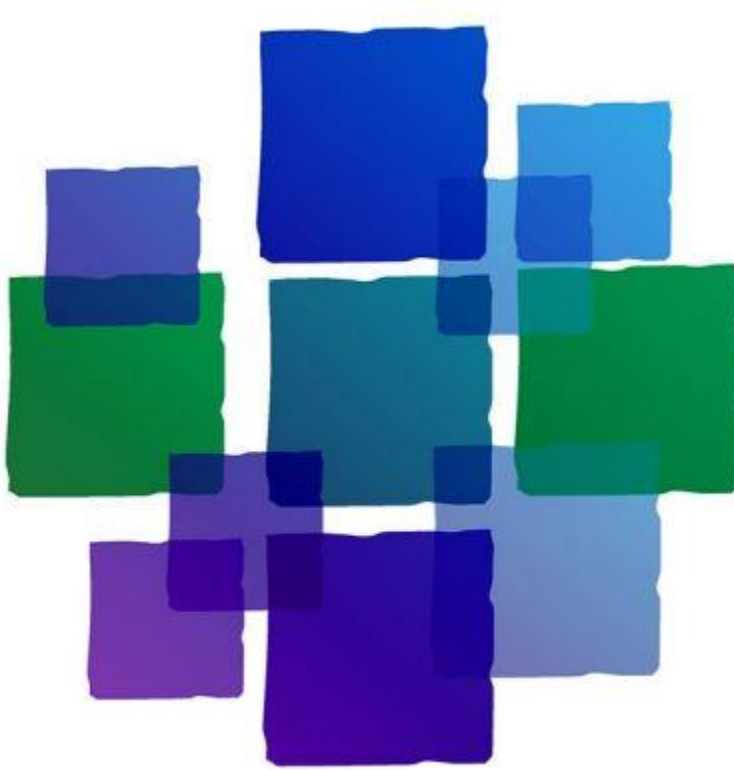
Phase 3 – The Call Process

- ___ Elect/Appoint Call Committee. *See Appendix 15.*
- ___ Install Call Committee in a regular Sunday worship service. *See Appendix 16.*
- ___ Call Committee completes and submits the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). *See Appendix 17.*
- ___ Call Committee researches and interviews candidates provided by the Office of the Bishop.
See Appendix 18, 19, and 20.
- ___ Congregation Council receives primary candidate's name from Call Committee. *See Appendix 22.*
- ___ Call Committee Chair, Council President and candidate discuss and agree on compensation package.
- ___ Council votes to accept candidate (2/3 majority).
- ___ Set date for congregation vote, using the timeline and method in the congregation's constitution
- ___ Office of the Bishop mails official call documents to Council President.
- ___ Contact Office of the Bishop for a synod representative to be present at the congregation vote.
- ___ Immediately contact candidate with results of the congregation vote.
- ___ Mail signed call papers to the Office of the Bishop.
- ___ Receive acceptance/rejection of call from candidate (up to 30 days).
- ___ Upon acceptance of a call, contact Office of the Bishop to set up a date/time for installation.

Phase 4 – Now You Have a New Rostered Minister!

- ___ Sign up leaders for Excellence in Leadership (EIL) and Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS).
- ___ After receiving the official acceptance, keep in contact with the new rostered minister.
- ___ For the new rostered minister's first Council meeting, plan extra time for fellowship or a meal.
- ___ Plan a welcome event for the new rostered minister and invite the entire congregation.

Phase 1



We Are Experiencing a Rostered Minister Transition. What Do We Do?

Phase 1 – We Are Experiencing a Rostered Minister Transition. What Do We Do?

There are many reasons for a minister to leave a congregation: retirement, another call, or personal reasons. Whatever the reason, there will be a period of adjustment for the congregation. Some members of the congregation might feel sad, abandoned, or betrayed, while others might feel relief or even joy at a minister's departure.

From all parts of the emotional spectrum, there will be some who want to move ahead quickly, often ignoring the emotional work that is critical in transition time. Congregation members must be allowed to process their feelings in order to prepare for the next minister. Processing emotions takes time and should not be minimized. Transitions are an opportunity to develop new ways of being that offer revitalization. Saying good-bye well paves the way for a healthy relationship with the new minister.

When the pastor or deacon resigns or retires, the primary concern for many congregations is to find a new pastor quickly. Most congregations greatly underestimate the time needed for completion of the call process. While a specific timeline cannot be guaranteed, the process is important, and when followed, makes the transition time healthier.

Congregations are not alone during these times of transition. The Office of the Bishop is always in partnership with congregations and the rostered minister, and will walk even more closely with congregations during pastoral transitions. As one minister is leaving and the congregation prepares to welcome a new minister into the future ministry, the Office of the Bishop offers specific and constitutionally-mandated recommendations for congregations. The relationship among the Office of the Bishop, the congregation, and the minister is a partnership where each one holds the other accountable to be who God is creating us to be: the body of Christ.

Each of the steps in this Phase can be emotionally difficult. Lean into that which unifies us as the body of Christ – worship, love for others, and spiritual practices. The beginning of transition is the time to engage deeply in spirituality. For Spirituality Resources, **see Appendix 1.**

Transitions are an opportunity to develop new ways of being that offer revitalization.

Step 1 – Initial Transition Actions

- The current outgoing minister indicates to the Bishop and to the Congregation Council that he/she/they will be leaving. (If the minister is going to "On Leave from Call" status, they must send a formal written letter to the Synod Council.)
- When a minister resigns, the Congregation Council shall receive the letter of resignation at a called meeting of the Council. The date of departure should also be reflected in the minutes of the Congregation Council. The formal letter is also shared with the Council and sent to the Office of the Bishop and then the congregation.
- The rostered minister will consult with the Bishop as to the date of departure. Often this is thirty days from the date of resignation.
- The council president contacts the Office of the Bishop to begin the transition process and sets up a meeting with the Congregation Council. A representative of the Office of the Bishop visits with the Council to answer questions, to get to know the particular needs of the congregation, and to begin to build a stronger partnership with the congregation. For Frequently Asked Questions about the Transition Process, **see Appendix 2.**
- The Council president schedules an exit interview with the Office of the Bishop, Church Council, and exiting minister.

Step 2 – Announcing the Rostered Minister has Resigned

The Congregation Council promptly informs all members of the congregation of the minister's resignation. This is done in a written letter mailed to all members of the congregation. It can also be sent electronically to all congregation members. The announcement includes:

- Notice that the Congregation Council has accepted the minister's letter of resignation;
- The last date the minister will serve the congregation and any plans for a farewell event;
- Expressions of gratitude to the minister and his/her/their family;
- A copy of the minister's letter of resignation.

The announcement should also be made orally in the next worship service.

Step 3 – Exit Interview

The rostered minister knows the congregation in ways that members and the leadership do not. The congregation and the Office of the Bishop can serve the future of the congregation better by listening to the reflections and insights of the rostered minister before the minister leaves.

To capture those insights, the council president schedules an exit interview with the Office of the Bishop. The initial conversation between the Bishop (or a representative of the Office of the Bishop) and the minister allows for reflection on the ministry and identifying areas of potential growth for the minister and congregation. The Congregation Council and staff members are invited to the second part of the conversation, to reflect on the shared ministry and celebrate all that has been accomplished. For the Exit Interview format for a congregation, *see Appendix 3*.

Step 4 – Saying Goodbye Well

Saying "goodbye" to the departing rostered minister is integral to saying "welcome" well to the next rostered minister. Ending one relationship well gives possibility to the next. When congregations do not invest adequate time and energy in saying "farewell," the transition process becomes more difficult and the welcoming of the new minister less healthy.

Articulating appropriate boundaries and establishing a covenant of behavior between the minister and the congregation enhances the future health and well-being of the congregation. Being specific about what the previous rostered minister can and cannot do in the congregation is key to a healthy relationship with the incoming rostered minister. For the Letter of Agreement between a Rostered Minister and the Congregation, *see Appendix 4*. The rostered minister and the Congregation Council complete this agreement, which can be done during the Exit Interview or at another time before the rostered minister's last worship service.

It is common for congregation members to feel a wide range of emotions at the departure of their pastor or deacon, including grief, joy, shock, betrayal, anger, anxiety, and hope. Leaders must stay present to wide-ranging emotions of the congregation even as they process their own thoughts and emotions. It is important not to minimize what the congregants are feeling. As a Congregation Council, listen to all and give space to process.

The Council should arrange a farewell event (or events) for the departing rostered minister. This includes a time for congregants to express appreciation and hope for the minister. It can include:

- A farewell gift
- A service and/or reception (including an invitation to area clergy and community leaders)
- A seated dinner or informal potluck

Saying "goodbye" to the departing rostered minister is integral to saying "welcome" to the next rostered minister.

In the final worship service with the rostered minister, the Thanksgiving and Farewell of the Rostered Minister may be used. *See Appendix 8*.

Step 5 – Completing All Obligations

Another healthy step in the process of a rostered minister leaving is completing the obligations between minister and congregation.

- **Future Correspondence:** Obtain a forwarding address, phone number, and e-mail address to forward any mail the minister may receive and to mail anything not completed by the time of departure. Please also communicate this to the Office of the Bishop.
- **Portico Benefit Services:** The president and treasurer ensure that an End of Call form is completed in order to cease billing from Portico. The document can be found at www.porticobenefits.org. The congregation is responsible for the pension and benefits until this document is completed. The exiting minister must complete a Change of Call form to inform Portico where to mail upcoming invoices.
- **Parsonage:** If there is a parsonage, schedule a walk-through with the current pastor to plan for the resolution of any issues identified in the walk-through.
- **Receive the Parochial Reports and Financial Record:** Upon the rostered minister's departure, the secretary of the Congregation Council meets with the departing minister to review and receive parochial reports and financial records. The parochial reports should be kept in a separate file, which remain the property of the congregation. The secretary addresses and completes the Certificate of Church Records and Certification and Completion of Financial Records. *See Appendix 6 and Appendix 7.*
- **Settle Financial Accounts:** A congregation under financial obligation to its former minister must make satisfactory settlement of the obligation before calling another minister. Such financial obligations may include loans on housing, grants, vacation pay, etc. In the same manner, any financial obligations of the minister to the congregation must also be satisfied.
 - Continuing Education funds left unused by the rostered minister are not paid out to the rostered minister at the end of their time in the congregation. Similarly, continuing education weeks not used are not compensated to the rostered minister.

Step 6 – Pastoral Support for the Transition

Before the rostered minister leaves, the Congregation Council should contact a supply pastor to conduct worship services between the departing minister's last day and the intentional interim's first day. Compensation rates for these services and a list of supply pastors are available on the Synod's website.

If an intentional interim pastor is appropriate for the congregation, the Office of the Bishop will provide at least one potential name to the Congregation Council. This is discussed more in Phase 2.

Because this time is so crucial in the life of the congregation, a long-term supply pastor is only a viable option when the future of the congregation is uncertain, or under other special circumstances.

To ease anxiety: contact a supply pastor to conduct worship services between the departing minister's last day and the Intentional Interim's first day.

Step 7 – Responsibilities and Roles in the Transition Process

The Council should review the responsibilities and roles of the transition process at the first meeting after the rostered minister departs.

- **Office of the Bishop:** Responsible for holding the congregation in prayer throughout the whole transition process, articulating the purpose of the intentional interim process, providing resources as needed to assist you, and providing appropriate and qualified candidates to the Call Committee.
- **Intentional Interim Pastor:** Responsible for leading the ongoing ministry of the congregation, providing pastoral care, leading worship and administering the sacraments, and leading the transition team through the transition process.

- **Congregation Leadership:** Responsible for supporting and leading the congregation in its ongoing ministry and providing prayerful support and encouragement to the transition team and the Call Committee.
- **Congregation:** Responsible for supporting its ongoing ministries: baptisms, worship, faith formation, service, sacraments, stewardship, and relationship with the wider church. Also responsible for holding the transition team and the Call Committee in prayer.
- **Outgoing Rostered Minister:** Responsible for maintaining professional distance from the congregation once they have departed. The out-going pastor is expected to not contact the congregation or its members and not get involved in the work and ministry of the congregation.
- **Future Rostered Minister:** Responsible for prayerfully discerning God's call.
- **Transition Coach:** Responsible for maintaining connection between the Office of the Bishop and the congregation.

Theology of Healthy Transitions

Transitional ministry is not new to the people of God – the world experiences constant change, transition, and movement. So, it is a good thing that God is not stoic, lethargic, nor immobile! God goes with us through changes, turning them from simple transitions to transformations.

Scripture is filled with transitional times. Abram and Sarai left them home so that they could live an abundant life. Ruth left all she knew and went with her mother-in-law to a foreign land, taking her future upon herself. John the Baptist was the bridge between hundreds of years of prophetic proclamations about Jesus and the voice of God incarnate walking on Earth with us. Jesus leads us from death to life, crossing the divide with the transformation of resurrection.

Congregations in transition may feel as though the myriad of steps of the transition process are like wandering through the wilderness. This is normal, as uncertain and scary as it might be. The Israelites experienced the wilderness, so did Jonah, so did Jesus. And yet it is these kinds of experiences in scripture in which God shows up most clearly, most closely, most intimately. And that is true for us, too. These transitional times are not always welcome, but God welcomes us into them so that we can experience God more than before.

The rostered minister and the leaders who are shepherding a congregation through the transition process are called to remind those they lead that God is present in the transition. Completing the steps is necessary; and yet the relationship with God is just as important.

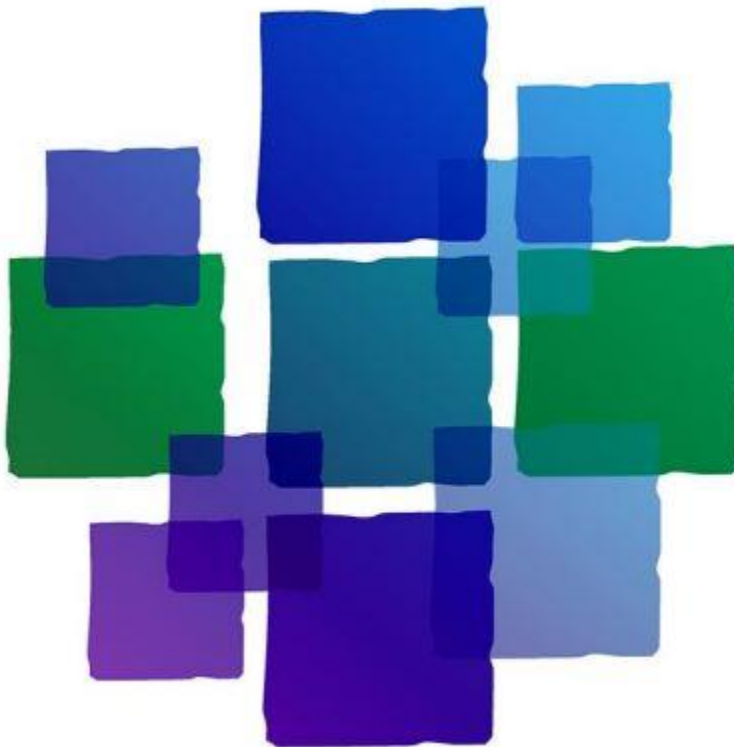
It is a good thing that God is not stoic, lethargic, nor immobile!

We need to keep Jesus at the center of the transition process. Jesus reminds us in the parable of the man who built his house upon the sand, a bad foundation leads to a bad outcome. It is important to engage in Scripture, to worship together, and to study how God has worked with and for God's people. How is this transition like one in Scripture? Does the congregation need to be reminded, from 1 John 4, that "God is love"? Do they need to hear "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy", from Exodus 20? What do they need to hear from the past, so they can move forward well into the future?

By engaging in the transition with this theological foundation in mind, congregation leaders allow God to be seen more clearly – our whole theological purpose. And when we cling to our purpose, we promote health and life – which is what God desires for us.

Read Scripture, engage in prayer. Dive into personal reflection and community self-study. Learn from the transitions in Scripture, modeling the parts of those stories that draw people closer to God and each other.

Phase 2



Intentional Interim and Self-Study

Phase 2 – Intentional Interim and Self-Study

Planning provides a roadmap through the “wilderness” of the transition process. Planning also allows the ministry and the mission of the congregation to continue. As the people of God, we are not part of a congregation just to do the tasks that make the gears function. Instead, we are people created, called, and sent forth to be the hands and feet of God for the sake of others.

As the congregation continues to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, the leadership of the congregation prepares to guide the community of faith through this next chapter. In order to lead in a healthy manner, these individuals engage in self-reflection, involve themselves in the community, and connect with God. Turn again to the Spirituality Resources in **Appendix 1** as you enter this new Phase.

Step 1 - The Intentional Interim Time

When a rostered minister leaves, the congregation will turn to the lay leadership for direction and purpose. The Council, staff, and remaining rostered ministers empower the congregation to continue the ministry of the congregation, including:

- Worship Services – supply pastors, musicians, liturgists
- Pastoral Ministry – hospital visitation, home visits, baptisms, funerals, weddings
- Staff Support and Guidance
- Congregation Leader Support
- Initial Processing of Congregation Emotions

Step 2 – Calling an Intentional Interim Pastor

In consultation with their Transition Coach, the Council will decide which model of transitional leadership is best for the congregation. Most congregations will utilize the expertise of an intentional interim pastor.

The Office of the Bishop will provide one or more names for an intentional interim pastor. The Council interviews the candidate(s) and determines who will be the intentional interim. For sample intentional interim interview questions, *see Appendix 9*. The Council has the authority to be in partnership with the Office of the Bishop in contracting with the interim pastor. If a candidate provided by the Office of the Bishop does not seem like a good fit for the congregation, the Council will share this decision with the Office of the Bishop so an acceptable solution can be found. The Council negotiates a time frame and compensation package with the interim pastor. In most intentional interim situations, the congregation contracts with the pastor while the official call comes from the Synod Council.

Once an Intentional Interim Pastor has been selected, the Council and interim will negotiate compensation. Keep the transition coach informed throughout this process. When the compensation negotiations are complete, complete Intentional Interim Form A and B, **Appendix 10**, and submit them to the Office of the Bishop. The Synod Council will vote on the official call.

Instead, we are people created, called, and sent forth to be the hands and feet of God for the sake of others.

On the first Sunday the intentional interim begins ministry in the congregation, use the Litany of Beginning for Intentional Interim Minister, **Appendix 11**, to welcome the Intentional Interim into that leadership role.

Compensation Recommendations from the Office of the Bishop

The intentional interim minister should be compensated at the same rate as a settled pastor. This is not a time to save money by paying an interim pastor less. While their ministry is different than that of a settled pastor, their contributions to the congregation are important and should be compensated fairly.

Congregations with Multiple Rostered Ministers

In the case that a congregation which had more than one rostered minister, a Transitional Consultant may be an option in lieu of an intentional interim pastor. The Office of the Bishop can assist in discerning whether a transitional consultant or intentional interim pastor is right for your congregation.

If the call of the remaining rostered minister is co-terminus, that rostered minister must resign their call at the time the other minister does. The remaining minister usually stipulates in their resignation letter that it will be effective at a certain point, such as six or twelve months in the future, or when the call of the new rostered minister is accepted. If the calls are not co-terminus, the remaining rostered minister may remain on staff, but should not serve as the intentional interim.

In most instances, a rostered minister remaining in the congregation will not be a candidate for the recently vacated position. If, in consultation with the Bishop, it is deemed possible for the remaining rostered minister to apply for the vacated position, their name will usually be offered along with other candidates.

If the remaining rostered minister is not recommended to the vacated position and was not in a co-terminus call, that rostered minister will submit their letter of resignation upon the calling of a rostered minister to the vacated position. The rostered minister called to the vacated position will decide whether or not to accept the resignation.

Step 3 – Transition Team and Self-Study

Purpose of the Transition Team

The transition team is formed with two goals:

1. to discover a new and deepened sense of identity and purpose for the congregation and
2. to establish a healthy relationship with the next rostered minister.

The transition team does this by engaging in the self-study process – intentionally looking at who the congregation has been, who the community is now, and who God is calling the community to be in the future. The self-study creates a roadmap for the congregation and the Call Committee, acknowledging all aspects of the congregation's identity for the sake of the future.

The transition team also:

- Allows the Congregation Council to focus on supporting the ministries of the congregation and the regular business of the church
- Helps congregation members grieve the loss of their minister and gain perspective on the chapter of the congregation's life that has now ended
- Gathers the feelings and ideas of both members of the congregation and people living in the surrounding community about their church
- Provides a forum for sharing and focusing hopes and aspirations for the future
- Helps the congregation move from focusing on the past to a state of readiness for a new chapter in its life under the leadership of a new minister
- Involves the congregation in accomplishing the developmental tasks of the interim period
- Begins work on the Ministry Site Profile, the congregation's resume

The members of the transition team commit to the unique opportunity presented in the transition time. It is a time of high challenge for any congregation, a time for self-assessment, and a time for visioning and recommitment to mission and ministry. The overall goal is to bring the congregation into a state of readiness to move forward under the leadership of a new minister.

Forming a Transition Team

The transition team is formed in the weeks following the arrival of the intentional interim pastor. It is made up of five to seven individuals, and is responsible for gathering, celebration, research, analysis, documentation, and study. The team (which is different than the Call Committee) is appointed by the

Congregation Council in consultation with the interim pastor and is responsible for readying the congregation before the Call Committee begins the work of calling a new rostered minister. This process will take as long as needed to gather and assess information.

The intentional interim pastor will lead the transition team through this process using a variety of tools. The transition team works closely with the intentional interim pastor to plan and guide a process that invites the whole congregation into a time of self-reflection, preparing the congregation for a new future with a newly called rostered minister. The Council supports the transition team through prayer, engaging in the life of the congregation, and providing resources as needed.

A transition team must:

- Value each team member's contributions and take suggestions and ideas seriously.
- Listen.
- Become acquainted with resources for gathering and evaluating information.
- Hold and honor confidentiality.
- Foster the trust of the church membership.
- Gather the information needed to create a vision for the congregation, establish goals, and define activities for the future ministry of the church.
- Collate and interpret information gathered from the congregation and its life and vision of the future.

"Members activate themselves. Leaders cannot activate others. They can model behaviors appropriate for church member to lead charismatically." -Dry Bones Breathe, 1978

The Work of the Transition Team: Five Developmental Tasks

The transition team works with the congregation to focus on five central developmental tasks.

1. Coming to terms with history

The congregation gathers to remember their stories. They tell one another public and personal stories of the congregation, teaching newer members the history, and reminding the current community who the congregation has been. They make sense of how God has been active in their history, through all the ups and downs. In addition, churches may have "old issues" or conflicts which never were fully resolved. These tend to re-surface in unsettling times. This remembering is critical so that the community can be invited to let go of these issues before they are asked to imagine a new future with a new minister.

2. Discovering a new identity

The congregation is asked a variety of questions: Who and what are they becoming as a congregation, and how has our context changed over the years? What gifts (assets) define us, not simply our building or staff, but our changing church participants and neighbors? We need to watch and listen, not only for what to conserve, but for what might be emerging in the midst of this new identity.

3. Managing shifts in leadership

Congregations in a transition time often experience shifts in power of leadership depending on the relationships of individuals to the former minister. This is also a time for considering whether patterns of involvement in the church are healthy or unhealthy, empowering or disempowering for most of the congregation. The task is to see that leadership develops in positive and creative ways for the good of the whole church.

4. Strengthening our sense of being the church together

We are not only a local congregation, but part of a regional, national, and global church. How closely do we identify with our Synod and the national church body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? What has been our connection with our ecumenical siblings?

5. Committing to our new future and a new leadership

As the work of the preceding four developmental tasks comes to maturity, the congregation becomes clear about their future so they can invite an appropriate new rostered minister to lead with them into that new future. Other new staffing should be considered on conditional basis, so that the called minister has the opportunity to influence future staffing.

The Work of the Transition Team: Other Tasks

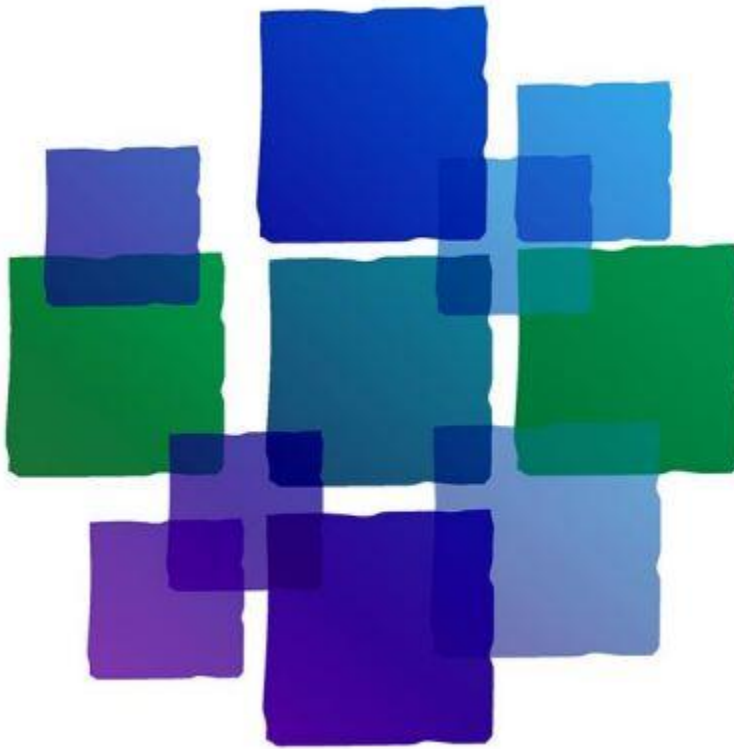
The transition team also attends to the following details, with the help of the Intentional Interim Pastor:

- Update the current congregation constitution. ***See Appendix 12.***
- Study the congregation and the surrounding community
- Establish and/or affirm core values. ***See Appendix 12.***
- Develop and/or affirm mission statement. ***See Appendix 12.***
- Create and/or affirm vision statement. ***See Appendix 12.***
- Review staffing needs and concerns and update job descriptions
- Review policies and procedures. ***See Appendix 12.***
- Assess the congregation's financial reality. ***See Appendix 13.***
- Assess the congregation's stewardship of resources. ***See Appendix 13.***
- Assess the congregation's structural and property issues. ***See Appendix 13.***
- Begin work on the Ministry Site Profile (MSP), along with the Call Committee. ***See Appendix 16.***

Step 4 - Report from the Transition Team

After the congregation has spent time in self-study, collecting data, and tightening the congregation's infrastructure, the transition team prepares a Transition Report to be shared with the Council, the Call Committee, the congregation, and the Office of the Bishop.

Phase 3



The Call Process

Phase 3 – The Call Process

Turn again to the Spirituality Resources in **Appendix 1** as you enter this new phase. Reorient the Council, Call Committee, and transition team to spiritual development and self-care. Calling a rostered minister is not hiring someone to do the work of the congregation, nor to do work for the congregation. When the new pastor or deacon arrives, the community of faith engages in God's work with renewed vigor alongside the pastor or deacon.

To issue a call to a candidate, the congregation engages in discernment as to God's will in their context. The candidate as well discerns God's will in their life. Not every congregation is a fit for every rostered minister, and not every rostered minister is a fit for every congregation. Constant inquisitiveness of what God desires leads a congregation and minister throughout this phase.

Step 1 – Establishing a Call Committee

The Purpose of a Call Committee

The Call Committee builds on the work of the transition team, striving to identify the candidate who is best suited to lead the congregation into God's future and recommend that candidate to the congregation for call. The Call Committee does not look for the best candidate of those given, but the right candidate for this congregation at this point in its life. The work of the committee is done prayerfully, and the people on the committee open themselves to the call and movement of the Holy Spirit. Because of the Spirit's activity, serving in this manner is transformational.

Forming the Call Committee

As the transition team nears the end of their period of self-study and discernment, the Council begins work on forming the Call Committee. The Call Committee's work, however, will not start until the transition team's report is completed and submitted.

The Council reviews the congregation's constitution to determine the structure and make-up of the Call Committee. The constitution may stipulate such things as the number of members on the Call Committee and how they are chosen. Often, the committee is six to twelve people. It is chosen by the Council or elected by the congregation. The constitution may also delineate how a chairperson is selected; if not indicated in the constitution, the Call Committee may appoint their own chair.

To issue a call to a candidate, the congregation engages in discernment as to God's will in their context.

Whether elected or appointed, it is important for the Council to work with the intentional interim pastor to nominate qualified individuals. Considerations should include people who are:

- Able to acknowledge their biases and still work for the good of the whole congregation
- Open to the direction of the Holy Spirit
- Practiced in spirituality and prayer life
- Committed congregation members, able to invest time and energy over multiple months
- representative of the congregation while not emboldening factions
- Good listeners and team players
- Able to work through consensus, not unanimity nor simple majorities

Other considerations for the Call Committee:

- Diversity (e.g., cultural differences, age, gender, length of membership, worship attendance, level of involvement)
- Family members of Council members or staff should not serve on the committee
- Family members should not jointly serve on the committee
- The number of Council members should be limited, to avoid an outsized influence

The Congregation Council shares the name of the committee chair and its members with the Transition Coach. **See Appendix 15** for the Call Committee Member Form.

Recognition of the Work of the Call Committee

The names of the Call Committee members should be made public in print and oral communication. In order to build trust, it is important for the congregation to know who these members are, so posting photos of them and their contact information is also appropriate.

The Call Committee should be installed in a regular worship service of the congregation. The congregation is encouraged to pray for these individuals and their work for the sake of the health and future of the congregation. **See Appendix 16** for the Installation of Call Committee litany.

Call Committee Basics

There are many pieces to the work of the Call Committee. Their authority comes from either the Council or the congregation, depending on how the congregation's constitution allows for their election. The Call Committee is charged with seeking out the right candidate for the congregation.

Authorized expenses of the Call Committee are paid by the congregation, which may include: community building opportunities, administrative costs, hospitality when interviewing candidates, travel expenses as needed.

As the Call Committee begins to meet, they should spend intentional time building relationships with each other. Part of this time should be spent deepening spirituality through worship, prayer, and Bible study. The Call Committee should engage the Spirituality Resources in **Appendix 1**. The Call Committee reads the transition team report and reflects on it. The committee members learn from each other how they experience the congregation and how they live out their life of faith through their shared congregation.

The Call Committee, unless otherwise elected or appointed, should choose their own chairperson in their first meeting together. This individual convenes meetings, sets agendas, and is the primary contact person with the Office of the Bishop and rostered minister candidates. The chair organizes the Tri-Transition meeting with the Transition Coach.

Meetings of the Call Committee open with devotions and prayer, led by different members. Devotional time is important, and intentionality in this aspect of the meeting will align the remaining time together to God's will. Do not rush relationship building nor spirituality. Meetings happen as often as the committee needs – perhaps weekly or twice monthly. **See Appendix 18** for a Call Committee Sample Agenda.

The Call Committee engages in active communication in four main areas:

- with each other
- with the congregation
- with the Transition Coach
- with the candidates

Timely communication is imperative. Communication that keeps each party abreast of what is happening with the appropriate amount of detail is a necessity. For example, a Call Committee may let the congregation know they are interviewing candidates, but not give specific names of candidates.

The Call Committee is charged with seeking out the right candidate for the congregation.

At the same time, confidentiality cannot be overemphasized. Confidentiality and secrecy are not the same thing – the former allows discussion and holds trust; the latter is based in fear and the need for control. Committee members should communicate openly with each other about hopes, dreams, critiques, and issues. Commentary about candidates should remain within the Call Committee, and not be discussed outside of it.

The names of prospective candidates must be kept confidential. Mention of specific candidates outside the Call Committee is inappropriate until the recommendation to Council occurs, as a rostered minister may not have told their current congregation, references, or other individuals about their willingness to interview at another congregation.

Step 2 – Completing the Ministry Site Profile (MSP)

The Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is the document that the Call Committee completes, sometimes with the help of the transition team or Council. The Transition Report should be used to complete portions of the MSP. This document is the resumé of the congregation. It is important that this document accurately reflect the congregation and the local community. Take time completing this, so that your first impression to candidates is both engaging and accurate. *See Appendix 16.*

Step 3 – Overview of the Interview Process

Once the MSP is complete, the Office of the Bishop staff engaged in the transition process enter a time of discernment to identify appropriate candidates for the congregation. This may take four to six weeks.

The Office of the Bishop identifies candidates based on many factors, including how the congregation's MSP and the resume of the rostered minister, known as the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) compare. The Office of the Bishop also takes into account their knowledge of the congregation, which is why building an open relationship with the Transition Coach is so important. The more the Transition Coach understands the congregation, the better the Office of the Bishop staff can identify candidates for the position. If the congregation wishes to interview a candidate whose name has been raised from within the congregation, the Call Committee must submit that name to the Office of the Bishop. That individual may or may not become a candidate for the open position.

During this time, the Call Committee prepares for the interview process. Sample Questions for Candidate Interviews are found in *Appendix 19.*

The general outline of the process is as follows:

- The Transition Coach offers names to the chair of the Call Committee. Two to four names are usually presented at once, when possible.
- The chairperson calls each candidate within a week of receiving the names. This initial contact is often when a first interview is scheduled. All candidates receive a first interview.
- The committee engages in the first interview, often via video call. Each candidate should be afforded the same amount of time and same means for interviewing (in person, video chat, etc.)
- After the initial interview, the committee releases candidates who do not seem to be an appropriate fit via a phone call, thanking them for their interest and time. Addressing this promptly is important so the candidates can consider other call possibilities. The Call Chair contacts the remaining candidates and let them know they would like to set up a second interview. The Transition Coach is informed of which candidates are released and which will continue in the process
- References may be checked after the first interview, but ask the candidate for permission first.
- If none of the initial candidates are a fit, or more candidates are desired, the chair will contact the Transition Coach to discuss this. More candidates may be identified and given when needed.

- The committee conducts a second interview with the candidate(s), which may be via video chat or face-to-face.
- The committee runs a background check on the finalist candidate(s) after informing them they will do this. The ELCA Churchwide Office recommends Oxford Document Management Company, Inc. (www.oxforddoc.com, info@oxforddoc.com, 800-801-9114).

Preparing to Interview Candidates

As you prepare to interview candidates, keep confidentiality and communication at the forefront. Prematurely divulging information about the candidate may jeopardize their current ministry, and it may sow division within the congregation seeking the new minister. The Call Committee should update the congregation regularly at this time, informing them when they receive candidate names (but not what the names are), that interview questions are being determined, and the approximate call timeline. Read through the Rostered Minister Profile (RMP) in full for each candidate. The RMP gives a good picture of the candidate, but the interview is where they come off the page and become real candidates. The Call Committee reads the RMPs on their own, and engages in discussion together as a full committee prior to the interviews. The committee should prepare questions, and should ask the same questions to each candidate in the same order. Interviews should be conducted in the same manner; all in-person, all on the phone, all on video call.

The candidates have read through the congregation's MSP in preparation for the interview. Before the interview, other written materials are sent to the candidates. Suggested items to include are: a recent annual report, worship bulletins, newsletters, a list of staff, a list of Council members and Call Committee members, a picture of the Call Committee, the congregation's constitution, and the annual budget. The committee should be open with these documents, as the candidate will see all this if they are called to the congregation, and hiding anything from the candidate can lessen trust.

Each round of interviews should be conducted within a two-week period, though one week is often better. This ensures that the first interview is still fresh on the mind when the last interview happens.

Congregations with Multiple Rostered Ministers

For congregations with multiple rostered ministers, see Phase 2 for more information on co-terminus calls and instances where the remaining rostered minister wishes to interview for the open position.

Step 4 – Interview Process

First Interview

All candidates receive an initial interview. The initial interview is usually 30-45 minutes, and covers a few questions that the Call Committee has. It is important to leave 15 minutes for the candidate to ask questions of the committee. This is a mutual process, and the candidate needs to get to know the congregation as much as the congregation needs to get to know the candidate.

After each interview, the Call Committee should discuss the candidate, their impressions and reactions, and whether or not they would like to continue interviewing that candidate more.

Second Interview

Each Call Committee will determine the appropriate next right step. Some Call Committees will choose to conduct a second interview via phone or video. Some Call Committees may be ready to move to a face-to-face interview. The Call Committee needs to gather the relevant information to either move forward with a candidate or to release the candidate.

Face-to-Face/Formal

Before the visit, prepare these things:

- Set up dates and times for interviews, tours, and other activities, including time with a real estate agent if the candidate is new to the area.
- Arrange for travel, lodging (hotel/motel, not a parishioner's home), and meals
- If the candidate is flying, provide a car so they can take time to look around on their own
- Determine which Call Committee members will initially meet and welcome the candidate
- Show the candidate (and spouse, if applicable) around the area and provide periods of unstructured time for them to decompress away from the Call Committee
- Provide and accompany the candidate to meals
- Invite (but do not require) the candidate's spouse to visit as well; the spouse may join in all elements of the visit, except for the formal interview
- Ensure that many different Call Committee members have a chance to interact informally with the candidate. For example, the person who shares meals with the candidate could be different than the one who takes them on a tour of the area.
- All expenses should be covered by the congregation
- Provide the candidate a timeline of the day(s) they will be visiting

The leadership needs which have been identified on the Ministry Site Profile should be used to form an outline for the interview. The committee will create eight to ten detailed questions based on this outline. The committee should be flexible, understanding that in the interview conversation, not all questions will naturally flow into each other, and may need to be asked in a different order. While this is the case, the same person should lead the interview, to give the most consistency. Individual members should take turns asking questions, which have been prepared and assigned ahead of time.

Avoid questions which may be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Instead of asking, "Do you think you are effective in your ministry with youth?", ask "Tell us about your approach to youth ministry." Instead of asking, "Are you a good preacher?", ask "How do you go about preparing and delivering a sermon?"

At the end of the formal interview, the candidate should be allowed time to ask questions of the Call Committee. The candidate may have a long list of questions, as they discern whether or not this is a community where they may effectively serve God and Christ's church. You may review Sample Questions Candidates Might Ask in **Appendix 20**. The interview process is a two-way street, as both seek to discern God's will. The chair should also let the candidate know the timeline going forward.

Evaluation of Interviews

The Call Committee should evaluate each candidate immediately after the interview, while the interview experiences and impressions are fresh in their minds. Fifteen to thirty minutes is a good timeframe to discuss and prayerfully consider each candidate and their responses.

The interview process is a two-way street, as both seek to discern God's will.

The Call Committee creates its own way of evaluating candidates. Some committees use a point system, ranking candidates answers to questions asked. Others will utilize a more organic approach, sharing observations and wondering together about how the candidate would fit at the congregation. The committee should decide on the manner of evaluation before the first interview is conducted.

Engage in prayer. Seek the Holy Spirit's will. Review the Transition Report and Ministry Site Profile. Allow each committee member to be heard. Repeat back what you hear for the sake of clarity. Work for a

consensus decision, not one that is necessarily unanimous. Ask, “who will best serve the congregation?”, and avoid asking, “Who do I like the best?”

Hearing Candidates Preach

The Office of the Bishop recommends that the Call Committee listen to multiple sermons from the candidate, so as to hear their true voice. This can be done by requesting recordings, or visiting their current context’s website or social media platform.

Discerning a compatible approach to preaching is critical in calling a new rostered minister. A Call Committee can ask the candidate for multiple audio and/or video recordings of sermons. Members of the Call Committee may also travel to the candidate’s congregation, once they have received permission from the candidate to do so. The Office of the Bishop recommends that a congregation not invite a candidate to preach at the congregation at which they are interviewing. This can create division in a congregation when some like that preaching style and others do not, and puts an abundance of focus on the preaching of one sermon, when the pastoral/diaconal role is much more than preaching in worship.

Releasing a Candidate

Appropriate release of a candidate is by phone – not by text, email, nor letter. Once a Call Committee has had personal connection with a candidate, it is best to release them from the interview process in a personal way.

Release a candidate as soon as the Call Committee decides to not continue with that individual. Because candidates may be in multiple call processes at the same time, it is helpful for their discernment to know as soon as possible which calls are possibilities, and which are not.

It is helpful for a candidate who is released from consideration to hear the reasons the Call Committee does not wish to continue the process with them. Specific reasons should be discussion among the committee, and the representative who calls the candidate should relay what the committee agreed to share. Saying, “you just weren’t the right fit” is not as helpful as “we thought you were not the right fit because our congregation engages in communal decision-making, and you stated you only make decisions by yourself.”

Background Checks and Reference Checks

It is important for the congregation to do its due diligence regarding the candidate.

- Complete a background check
 - o Once a candidate has been selected, a background check should be done (see page 29)
 - o Ask permission of the candidate before this is done; this allows the candidate to address anything that might come up in the check
 - o The Office of the Bishop can be the place that runs the Background Check, as they have the secure location for files that some companies require.
 - o Do a background check on the items that the congregation’s insurance company requires and suggests for a staff or clergy member.
- Check References
 - o Once you have confirmed with the candidate they are ready to have references contacted, call all references listed. Especially when a reference is a rostered minister’s current parishioner, the candidate needs to inform them of this possibility before they receive a phone call from the interviewing congregation. Sample Questions for Checking References can be found in **Appendix 20**.

Step 5 – Following up with Candidates

The Call Committee should send a letter or note of appreciation to each candidate for his/her/their

willingness to be interviewed. Any expense reimbursement not made at the time of the interview should be made now. Again, keeping the candidate up to date regarding the call process is essential. Any additional information needed should be asked in a phone call with the candidate.

It is crucial that the Call Committee immediately notify the candidate when they are no longer being considered. The decision should also be submitted immediately to the Transition Coach as well.

Courtesy and professionalism are essential during this process. The Call Committee will communicate openly and honestly with the candidate and will continually inform the candidate about the status of their process. The Call Committee is also asked to stay in regular contact with the Office of the Bishop.

Finalizing a Candidate Recommendation

The discussion with all candidates should be open, honest, and respectful through the entire process:

1. If the discernment concludes that this person is not the one the Holy Spirit is leading the congregation to call, the chair of the Call Committee should inform the candidate and the Office of Bishop. If requested, the Office of Bishop will provide names of additional candidates to the Call Committee. The Office of the Bishop will continue to look for candidates until the Call Committee is sure that the next right candidate has been identified.
2. If the discernment leads to the conclusion that this person is the one whom the Holy Spirit is leading the congregation to call, the Call Committee should make a formal recommendation to the Congregation Council.
3. The Call Committee chair should talk with the candidate to see if the congregation and candidate have a similar mindset on compensation amounts. Things to consider include:
 - Salary – this is a range, based on a number of factors, including years of experience and continuing education. See the Synod website for explanation and worksheets of defining compensation.
 - Benefits – Portico Benefit Services is the most widely-used company for ELCA congregations. Portico includes health insurance, retirement, and other benefits. This can be waived if a rostered minister has another source of benefits (e.g., spouse, military, previous employer). Contact Portico for estimates via phone or their website.
 - Paid Vacation – the recommendation is a minimum of four weeks of vacation, including four Sundays.
 - Continuing Education – the recommendation is a minimum of two weeks.
 - Parental Leave – the recommendation is six weeks at the birth or adoption of a child.
 - Involvement in the life of the Synod – First Call Theological Education (requirement for newly-ordained pastors and deacons), Theological Conference, Synod Assembly, conference gatherings.

Making a Recommendation to the Congregation Council

As the Holy Spirit has guided the Call Committee to a candidate, the decision to recommend this minister to the Congregation Council is typically reached by a consensus decision. In a consensus decision, the committee works toward the best interest of the community of faith, where all can live with the decision even if it is not their first choice.

If a consensus is not reached, the Call Committee may vote by secret ballot. The candidate ought to receive at least two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Call Committee for approval. The Call Committee should have considerable conversation before moving forward with a less than unanimous candidate. The Call

Committee should be able to articulate to the Congregation Council why it is moving forward with recommending the candidate, whether it was by secret ballot or consensus decision.

Once a Call Committee has decided on a candidate, the chair of the committee should call the candidate to let them know they are planning to recommend the candidate's name to Council on a specific date, and confirm with the candidate that they are feeling called to take this next step.

Step 6 – Vote of Congregation Council on Candidate and Compensation

Preliminary Compensation Discussions

When the Call Committee has identified their primary candidate, the committee chair should contact the Congregation Council President and executive committee to have preliminary discussions about the compensation package. It is prudent to check with the candidate prior to his or her name being brought forth to Council to ensure that the committee understands the candidate's compensation requirements and that they are in alignment with realistic compensation recommendations. The Council president and/or the Call Committee chair should have that discussion with the candidate.

The Vote of the Congregation Council on the Candidate and the Compensation Package

After the Call Committee has decided on a candidate, the chair of the Call Committee works with the Council President to schedule a special meeting of the council to hear the recommendation of the Call Committee.

The Call Committee chair presents the name of the minister at the special Council meeting, utilizing the Sample Outline of Candidate Recommendation to Council in **Appendix 21**.

A full articulation of why this candidate is being recommended will be explained to the Council. The council may also have the opportunity to meet and converse with the candidate. The following actions must be taken in order that the candidate be recommended to the congregation:

1. Candidate recommendation vote

A motion to recommend the call of the minister to the congregation will be made, seconded, discussed, and voted on by the members of the Congregation Council. A two-thirds (2/3) voting majority is required for the name to be presented to the congregation.

2. Compensation vote

The Congregation Council will also determine the compensation package to be recommended to the congregation for its approval. The candidate should be in agreement with the proposed package before the Council meeting. If there are changes, the candidate should be informed as soon as possible. Refer to the current Synod compensation guidelines for helpful information regarding appropriate compensation figures.

A motion to recommend the call of the minister to the congregation will be made, seconded, discussed, and voted on by the members of the Congregation Council. A simple voting majority (50% + 1) is required for the compensation package to be presented to the congregation.

3. Special meeting of the congregation

Should the Congregation Council approve the Call Committee's recommendation, the Council shall organize a special meeting of the congregation. The Council will establish a date, time, and place for the special meeting of the congregation to vote on the call of the minister and the compensation package. Proper arrangements will be made to notify the congregation of this meeting according to the congregation's constitution. Included in this notice will be the name and brief description of the minister and the compensation package. The description should be either written by the candidate or approved by the candidate prior to publication. Before

sending out this notice, the candidate should notify their current Congregation Council that they are now a primary candidate for this congregation.

4. Notification to the Synod Bishop

When the Congregation Council is ready to recommend a minister to the congregation, the Council President will notify the Office of the Bishop. The Office of the Bishop will send a Call Packet which will include the Letter of Call to be completed by the Council President or Vice President and then return it to the Office of the Bishop for the Bishop's signature. (Synod Constitution 14.11).

The Bishop will normally appoint a member of Synod Council to be present at this special congregation meeting. Inform the Office of the Bishop as soon as possible of the special congregation meeting date so this representative can be identified.

5. Meet and Greet

The chair of the Call Committee, the Council President, and the candidate should work together to find a mutually agreed upon time for the congregation to meet the candidate ahead of the special congregation meeting. This meeting, called the "Meet and Greet", should be scheduled at least one week before the special congregation meeting. It should not be scheduled for the same day as the meeting. *See Appendix 22* for information on introducing the candidate to the congregation.

Step 7 – Vote of the Congregation on Candidate and Compensation Package

At the special congregation meeting, the congregation will discuss and vote on two items: the call of the rostered minister, and the compensation package. The Office of the Bishop will send a representative to the congregation for the special congregation meeting.

1. A Quorum Is Required

The person presiding at the meeting will determine that a quorum is present according to the congregation's constitution and bylaws. If virtual meetings are allowed by the laws in your state, members present electronically are to be counted in the quorum.

2. First Motion: Vote to Call the Minister

At the congregation meeting, the first motion presented by the Congregation Council is that the congregation vote to call the minister. Since the Congregation Council is bringing this to the meeting, their recommendation counts as the "motion". It will need to be "seconded" by a member of the congregation before discussion can begin.

The Congregation Council and/or Call Committee will present information about the minister, why they were led to recommend this candidate to the congregation, and the strengths and gifts that the candidate offers to the ministry of the congregation. Only the one name recommended by Council can be voted on at this meeting. The vote shall be by secret written ballot. No absentee or proxy votes shall be accepted. The vote to call is a least 2/3 affirmative vote of those present, as stated in the model constitution for congregations C9.01.

3. Second Motion: Compensation Package

The second motion presented by the Congregation Council will be to approve the compensation package (salary, allowances, and other benefits) to be offered to the minister. As with the initial motion, it has already been "motioned" in Council, so only a "second" is needed before discussion ensues. Amendments to the package recommended by the Council can be made by majority vote of the congregation. The vote needed to approve the compensation package is a

simple majority. It may be taken by voice vote, show of hands, or written ballot. If the amounts in the package differ from the approved budget, then a favorable vote, in effect, changes the budget for the year. If the compensation package changes the congregation budget beyond constitutional limits, a separate motion will need to be made, seconded, and passed to approve the new budget.

If the Call Is Approved by the Congregation

After the call and compensation package has been approved, a phone call will be made by the president or vice-president of the congregation immediately to inform the minister of the outcome of the meeting. The minister may request to know the vote total or percentage – if this is requested, the officer of the congregation shall provide the vote details.

The president or vice-president of the Congregation Council is responsible for completing the Letter of Call and mailing it to the Office of the Bishop for the Bishop's signature (Synod Constitution 14.11). The Transition Coach should be notified of the outcome of the vote immediately after the officer of the congregation informs the candidate.

The minister will send a letter to accept or decline the call to both the congregation and the Bishop's office. The minister will accept or decline the call within thirty (30) days, unless otherwise agreed upon (Synod Constitution 14.17 and 14.42).

If the Minister Accepts the Call

The newly called minister, in conversation with the Congregation Council, will set the date when ministry will begin in the new parish.

The president or vice-president of the Congregation Council will consult the newly called minister to determine when the acceptance may be publicly announced. This is done in consultation with the new minister, so they may inform their current Council and congregation before the news becomes public.

Arrangements for moving will be made between the minister and the officers of the calling congregation. The calling congregation is responsible for moving expenses. In some circumstances, the minister and the congregation may negotiate other arrangements.

The congregation and minister will coordinate an installation date with the Office of the Bishop

If the Call Is Not Approved by the Congregation

If the call is not approved at the special congregation meeting, the secretary of the Congregation Council will draft a letter to the candidate to report officially the results of the congregation meeting and to conclude the call process. Personal contact with the minister will be made before the letter is sent. The Office of the Bishop will also be immediately notified.

If the Call Is Declined by the Minister

In the event that the minister does not accept the call, the congregation should reassess the situation and determine if any changes need to be made to the community's expectations or the Ministry Site Profile before the process will begin again. More candidate names can be offered to the Call Committee by the Office of the Bishop.

Step 8 – Consider Special Situations

First Call Candidates – If this will be the candidate's First Call, they will need to be ordained before they begin serving in the congregation. The Rite of Ordination is something that the candidate will plan with the help of friends, family, and the Office of the Bishop staff. If the ordination will take place at the calling congregation, the ordination can also include the installation. See Phase 4 for more information.

The congregation also needs to be prepared to financially support the minister in First Call Theological Education. The minister will need time off to attend these gatherings, which does not count toward their vacation or continuing education time.

Multiple Congregation Parish – A call can come from only one congregation. The decision on which congregation will be the calling congregation needs to be decided before the vote. In the case of a parish with two or more congregations, each congregation votes separately on the call of the minister unless their constitution specifies another procedure. If no constitutional provisions state the number of votes necessary for election, two-thirds majority in each parish of all votes cast is necessary for approval.

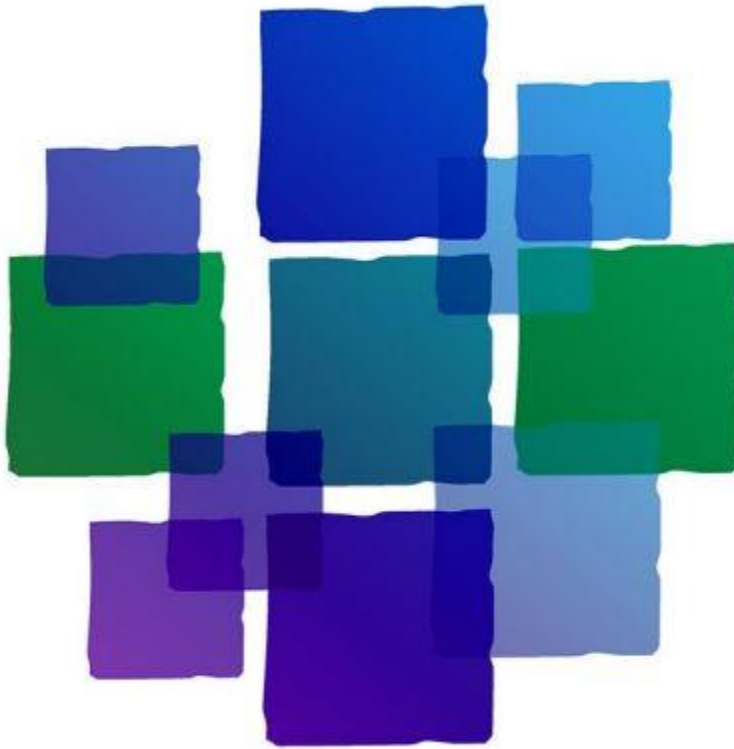
If one congregation approves the call and another does not, the call is not issued. No part of a joint parish may call a minister without the participation of the other.

Multiple Clergy on Staff – When a rostered minister is called to serve in company with another pastor or deacon, the privileges and responsibilities of each rostered minister will be specified in the documents that accompany the call. These documents must be drafted in consultation with the rostered ministers, Council, and the Office of the Bishop.

Term Calls – A congregation may call a minister for a specific term of years. This departure from the normal settled call must be described in a statement of purpose, which the Bishop must approve.

Part-time Ministries – Anyone in part-time ministry must be given permission and opportunity to seek additional employment to supplement his/her/their income. Please refer to the compensation guidelines for more detail. All arrangements for part-time calls should be discussed with the Office of the Bishop before the call is issued, and the details put in writing. See the Synod website for information on part-time ministry.

Phase 4



Now You Have a New Rostered Minister!

Phase 4 – Now You Have a New Rostered Minister!

Turn again to the Spirituality Resources in **Appendix 1** as you enter this new phase.

Installation and Ordination

All rostered ministers are officially installed to their new role by a representative of the Office of the Bishop. The Office of the Bishop encourages the installation to take place outside of a regular Sunday worship so that colleagues and neighboring congregations can celebrate the new ministry. The paraments and vestments are the color of the season. The installation may take place on a rostered minister's first Sunday, but may take place a few weeks or months later, as fits the schedule of the congregation, friends and family, and the schedule of the Office of the Bishop.

If the newly called rostered minister has not yet been ordained (that is, this is their first call), the ordination usually takes place before the ministry in the congregation begins, or on their first Sunday. The newly called minister engages with the Bishop in timing and location of the ordination service. This may take place in the calling congregation, or it may take place at a location with meaning to the newly called minister. If not at the calling congregation, a representative of the congregation is encouraged to be present at the ordination service. The parament and vestments for an ordination service are red; if the installation takes place at the same time, red supersedes the color of the season generally used for an installation.

Living Together as the Body of Christ

The tasks of the transition team and Call Committee have been completed, but the work of the congregation is not done. Now is the time to lean into the future, engaging what is enfolding in the life of the congregation.

The leaders of the congregation should take special time to thank those who have worked so hard to bring the new rostered minister to the congregation, and encourage them to engage in the work of spiritual renewal and engagement in the life of the congregation.

This is the time to connect the rostered minister to the congregation and community. Ask what they will need to engage well in both spheres, and what boundaries they need for their time and energy. Go with the new minister to visit the homebound members of the community of faith, introduce them to community leaders and other clergy, and invite them to social gatherings and special events.

Engaging in the life of the whole Synod is important for clergy and the congregation. Introduce the new rostered minister to the other pastors and deacons in the area. Ensure they have appropriate contact information for the Office of the Bishop. Encourage them to attend Synod and conference gatherings and functions. Inform them of the communication methods used throughout the Synod, including the newsletter from the Office of the Bishop. Show them where the Parochial Reports are kept.

Press Release

Two press releases should be created in recognition of the arrival of the new rostered minister. The first should be an internal press release – the congregation should know when the minister will begin at the congregation, important dates within the community of faith that are upcoming, and receive a brief message from the rostered minister about the hopes they have in this time.

The second should be an external press release. The surrounding community should know a new pastor or deacon is coming to the community. This may be done in the religion section of the local paper or as a standalone article, on the website, on various social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), and to community organizations and other congregations as is appropriate. This can help the new rostered minister to begin well, with community leaders looking out for a new face in their midst.

The “Firsts” of Ministry

As the “Firsts” unfold in the congregation, pay special attention to making them meaningful and intentional. For example:

- Introduce the new minister at their first worship service.
- At the first Council meeting, take time to engage in a meal or a walking tour of the neighborhood.
- During the first parade, fair, or community event, invite the new minister to attend with you.
- As the first school year unfolds, have the children present the rostered minister with a notebook or backpack that they have all signed.
- As the holidays near, invite the rostered minister to engage in one of your family traditions.
- At the end of the first year, celebrate with a potluck, slideshow, and fellowship time.

This is the time to engage the rostered minister in the congregation and community.

Evaluation and Review

In order to set a positive working relationship in the congregation, it is important for the Council or Mutual Ministry Team and the rostered minister to engage in mutual evaluation. Often this is done yearly; when a new minister is called, the first evaluation should be within six to nine months of their arrival. This is not only a review of the rostered minister, but also of the congregation and the relationship between the minister and the congregation.

In addition to regular evaluations or mutual assessments, it is helpful for the Council to engage those involved in the call process to give appropriate feedback about that process. The Call Committee, new rostered minister, and Council should engage in discussion about what went well, what was difficult, and what should be adapted for the future. This can be kept internal to the congregation, but may also be provided to the Transition Coach for further discussion.

Caring for the Call Committee, Council, and Transition Team

The work of calling a new rostered minister is emotionally taxing, time consuming, and spiritually deep. Offer practical ways the committees involved in the calling of a pastor can rest, rejuvenate, and continue to grow in faith.

The new minister should receive a written list of leaders in the congregation prepared for them before they arrive, which should include these three teams. The rostered minister may wish to spend extra time and effort engaging these members over the initial few months of their time in the congregation.

Plan a time to recognize and thank those who have worked to bring the new rostered minister to the congregation, such as a special time in worship or a meal after worship.

Leadership Development

The calling of a new minister begins a new chapter in the life of a congregation. Consider opportunities for growth that will enhance the ministry to thrive into the future. Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS) is a program that could inspire the congregation to grow in financial health. Excellence in Leadership (EiL) is an opportunity for lay and rostered leaders to grow in their self-understanding, becoming better equipped to lean into courageous, resilient ministry. If the new minister is in their first call, support them in First Call Theological Education (FCTE) through the Office of the Bishop (this is a requirement for all first call ministers).

Record Keeping

The new rostered minister is responsible for keeping track of all important church records and must leave them with the congregation when they depart. This includes baptisms, funerals, and weddings. Copies of service bulletins should be included in the record of the congregation as well. A physical book of all records should be kept. An electronic version may be kept as well if the congregation desires.

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Appendix 1

Spirituality Resources

The work of the congregation is centered on its relationship with God – that is especially true during times of transition. Because the work of calling a new rostered minister is a spiritual endeavor, this appendix is intentionally placed first in this manual. All the steps of the process and the details of paperwork and interviews are important – but they cannot be done well, and do not matter in the long run, if they are not rooted in relationship with God and connected to our collective spirituality.

What we spend time doing is what we become good at. What we model for others is what they come to see as the norm. Spending time in Scripture, in community conversation, in reflection on God's action in the past and present, and taking time to imagine God's future for us together will make us better at each of these things. We will grow closer to God, and God will grow closer to us.

What we model for others is what they come to see as the norm.

Two Models for Engaging Scripture Texts

1) Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) – This ancient form of Scriptural study invites the participant to hear the same passage multiple times, reflecting in silence after each time on a word or phrase that stood out to them. Slowing down with the Word of God, making time for that which speaks most directly to our souls, is key to the life of a Christian.

Leader: Open with Prayer

(Suggestion: *Almighty God, we look to your Word for guidance and hope. Open our hearts and our minds that we may hear your word for us. Guide us through your word to hear the good news for our lives together through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*)

A. One person reads the text out loud (See *Text Suggestions for Engaging Scripture*)

- Write down one word or phrase from the text that seems significant.
- Each person shares the word or phrase without additional comment.

B. A second person reads the same text out loud

- In silence reflect on what this passage is saying to you.
- Each person may share his/her reflection without additional comment.

C. A third person reads the same text out loud

- Each person reflects using only one sentence or less on what this passage is saying to the congregation at this time, while you are in the call process.
- If time allows, a 10-20 minute open discussion may be included at this time.

Closing Prayer:

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

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

2) Three Questions – This form of Scriptural study encourages the participant to reflect on what happened in the passage and how it relates to their own life today. It is good for the leader to introduce the three questions before the study begins.

Leader: Open in prayer

(Suggestion: *God who speaks to us, come again through your Holy Word. Inspire, enlighten, and equip us in this time. Bring us together as we strive to understand to what you are calling us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*)

What? Read the passage out loud as a group. After reading it, discuss what you heard in the passage. This first step is very simple – just state what you heard! Noting the small details is important – the word choice, the objects and people in the story, the geography and movement.

So What? What does the passage mean? What stands out to you as the main point? What is the point of it – why is it in the Bible?

Now What? Now that you have read the passage, noted the contents of it, and talked about the meaning, what does it mean for daily life? Now that you have encountered Scripture, how will you live differently? What will change because of this passage, whether today, this week, or this year?

Leader: Close in prayer

Texts Suggestions for Engaging Scripture

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

Suggested Biblical Texts:

Numbers 9:15-23	The Presence of God
Exodus 16:1-36	Grumbling and Manna
Matthew 28:16-20	The Great Commission
Romans 12:1-8 (9-21)	Sacrificial Living
1 Corinthians 3:1-9	Leaders in the Church
Ephesians 6:10-18	The Armor of God
Philippians 2:1-11	Humility of Christ
1 Timothy 2	Instructions Concerning Prayer
1 Timothy 3:1-13	Qualifications of Bishops and Deacons
1 Timothy 4:6-16	A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

Reflections on God's Call:

Call of Young People

1 Samuel 2:1- 3:18	Samuel's Call
Luke 1:26-38	Mary's Call

Call of the Elderly

Luke 1	Elizabeth and Zechariah
Genesis 18:9-15	Abraham and Samuel
Luke 2:22-38	Simeon and Anna

Call of the Disciples

Matthew 4:18-22	Call of the Fishermen
Matthew 9:9-13	The Calling of Matthew
Luke 5:1-11	The Call of the First Disciples

Reflections on being the Church:

Read a chapter of the Book of Acts together, reflecting on how God's kingdom and ministry in that book might be reminiscent of your own congregation.

Prayers for the Transition Process

These prayers are for each phase of the transition process, with a few extra for Phase 3. You are encouraged to begin each session of each phase with these prayers – repetition of prayer can be a good thing! It can help us hear and understand more deeply what we are asking of God. Using the same words over time can clarify our intentions within ourselves, cause us to question what we need, and center us with common language.

After the Rostered Minister Announces their Departure

God of all time, you have journeyed with your people through countless transitions in leadership and ministry. Be with us, now, as we say goodbye to our pastor/deacon. Help us speak kindly and truthfully, to send them on their way with grace. Grant us wisdom to begin the transition process well; calm our anxiety, excite our curiosity, give clarity to our hopes and visions for this community of faith. Empower us to ask difficult questions, to listen to uncomfortable answers, and to see your guidance in every moment. All this, and all else we need, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

During the Intentional Interim and Self-Study

Loving God, be with us and guide us during this time of discernment. Fill our leaders with your wisdom. Keep us mindful of the work you would have us do. Lead us and guide us, O Lord, to be about the work of your kingdom even as the search for a new rostered minister continues. Bless all who have taken on extra responsibility and fill them with a sense of your love and presence. We pray in your Son's name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Work of the Call Committee

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on us! We thank you that throughout the generations you have raised up people to serve your church in all times and in all places. As we go about the task of calling a new rostered minister to serve with us, we pray for a spirit of mutual trust and for the ability to speak fully and listen faithfully to each other. We pray for the spirit of wisdom to be in our midst as we go about the task to which we have been called. We give thanks for all who have served this congregation as servants of your Word, especially do we remember *[at this time, names of former and present pastors, deaconesses, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and lay leaders in congregations may be spoken by those gathered]*. Fill us with the love, grace, and confidence that can only come from you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

During Interviews

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

During Difficult Decisions

Power of the eternal Father, help us. Wisdom of the Son, enlighten the eye of our understanding. Tender mercy of the Holy Spirit, unite our heart to you. Eternal God, restore health to the sick and life to the dead. Give us a voice, your own voice, to cry out to you for mercy for the world. You, light, give us light. You, wisdom, give us wisdom. You, supreme strength, strengthen us. Amen. *(Adapted from a prayer by Julian of Norwich, from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 87)*

In General Meetings

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

For the Ministry of the new Pastor or Deacon

God of renewal and re-creation, as we welcome a new pastor/deacon into our community of faith, empower them to be your hands and feet in our midst. May they inspire us, that the whole congregation may become your hands, feet, and heart for the sake of the world. Model in them how we are to live. Empower us to follow as they lead. Guide us all to be your kingdom on earth, and remind us that all we do and say reflect the Lord Jesus in who we put our trust. Amen.

Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions about the Transition Process

How long will it take to find a minister?

Every congregation is different and the length of the transition varies. Once the transition team completes their work and the Call Committee begins its work, it will normally take between 8-18 months, but some last longer. The length of the process depends on the number of candidates interviewed, the time Call Committee and candidates have available for conversation, and the needs of the congregation for grieving and preparation for the next minister.

What will the congregation do during this time of transition regarding pastoral leadership?

In a pastoral vacancy, the Office of Bishop, in consultation with the Congregation Council, will appoint an Interim Pastor who will, at a minimum, lead worship/preach (or arrange for this leadership) weekly, meet with the Council each month, and provide emergency pastoral care. The responsibilities of the Interim Pastor will vary and may range from a few hours a week to full-time, depending on the availability of the Interim Pastor and the needs of the Congregation. A letter of agreement is signed between the Council and the Pastor that explains exactly what the Interim Pastor will be doing during this time and will be signed off by the Bishop.

What are the sources of names provided by the Office of the Bishop to the Call Committee?

The names of the candidates come from a variety of places, including:

- Pastors or Deacons from our Synod asking to be available for conversation with Call Committees and having submitted their Rostered Minister Profile.
- Pastors or Deacons from other synods who have asked that their Rostered Minister Profile be shared with congregations in this synod. Candidates from outside this Synod must be given clearance by their Synodical Bishop and approved by the Bishop before they can be considered for an interview.
- Pastors and Deacons identified by the Office of the Bishop as particularly suited for a congregation.
- Recent seminary graduates awaiting their first Call.
- Names of Pastors and Deacons suggested by members of the Congregation must be shared with the Office of the Bishop and approved by the Bishop to be considered potential candidates.

How do we determine appropriate compensation?

The synod compensation guidelines serve as benchmarks to guide congregations and candidates in helpful conversation regarding what is fair and adequate. If compensation is far below guidelines, fewer candidates may be able to consider the call to a particular congregation. A representative from the Office of the Bishop will accompany you through this process. The synod compensation guidelines are on the synod website.

Can we invite the candidates to preach in our congregation on a Sunday morning?

Although it has been a common practice in the past, the Office of the Bishop does not recommend that candidates be invited to preach in a congregation where they are being considered as a candidate. If a candidate preaches in the congregation, the entire congregation becomes involved in the overall process and members are put in the position of deciding that person's merit on the basis of worship leadership and one sermon alone, which is only one of many elements of pastoral ministry. This displaces the careful, prayerful discernment of the Call Committee. With permission from the candidate, the Call Committee should travel to the Minister's congregation or to a neutral site to hear him or her preach. When a Minister is being considered and is not presently serving a site the Office of the Bishop staff can assist in setting up a pulpit supply location for him or her to preach and lead worship where the

Call Committee could go to participate in worship. It is appropriate for the congregation to meet the final candidate at an informal meet and greet.

Viewing more than one sermon is helpful, in order to get a fuller picture of how the candidate preaches. The Call Committee can do this by viewing sermons online or asking for the candidate to provide recordings of multiple sermons.

Should the congregation expect there to be expenses related to the work of the Call Committee?

Yes. Mileage reimbursement to committee members and to any candidates who interview with your committee can be expected. The committee may also have receipts for expenses related to meals or refreshments provided. We recommend that you use the standard IRS mileage rate for reimbursement. Often a Council will designate the expenses of the Call Committee and the process out of any remainder left in your pastoral compensation package.

Should there be alternate members of the Call Committee?

We do not recommend alternate members; however, if alternates are elected or appointed, they should attend all meetings of the Call Committee and have voice, but should not vote unless a regular member of the Committee finds it necessary to relinquish his or her position.

What if we cannot decide on a candidate?

Pray. Spend time in Scripture. Engage in a Bible study as a Call Committee. The call process is more about discerning – trying to figure out what God is up to and the direction God is calling – than just making a pro-and-con-list decision.

If you are stuck between two candidates, talk as a committee about what your hesitations are with each one, and what the future might hold with either candidate. Engage in Bible Study together, and in the conversation consider how each candidate might lead you to be more like Christ.

If none of the candidates provided seem to be the candidate for your ministry, ask for more names from the Office of the Bishop. There is an important difference between choosing the best candidate and the right candidate – the latter is what we strive to discern.

Appendix 3

Exit Interview

It can be helpful to the congregation, and to the departing minister, to engage in an exit interview together. Though not a requirement, it can move both congregation and minister to reflect on their time together and move into their distinct futures in a healthy manner. This can be conducted by the transition team or a group from the Congregation Council. It is best to limit the total number in the interview to four or five individuals.

Questions the committee might ask the departing rostered minister:

1. What was the attracted you to accept the call to this congregation?
2. What was your assessment of this congregation when you first came? How has that assessment changed during your time here?
3. What would you say was the most satisfying part of your ministry?
4. What would be some of the most frustrating parts of your ministry here? What actions or changes would make those areas less frustrating for the next minister?
5. Are there any organizational or structural issues that you see could be improved? Do you have any recommendations in that regard?
6. What strengths or special talents do you see in this congregation? Do you have ideas on how we might use or continue to use those gifts to the best advantage in the future?
7. What opportunities for ministry do you see in this community that we as a congregation might address in the future?
8. If you had a chance to start your ministry over again in this congregation, what might you do differently?
9. What has been your relationship with the leadership of the congregation? How might lay leaders be more effective in leading the congregation?
10. What have been the areas of growth in this congregation during your ministry here?
11. What would you like to see us doing five years from now? What unfulfilled goals of yours would you like to see carried forward?
12. What do you think this congregation can do to strengthen and support the incoming rostered minister?
13. How can we be helpful to you in your leaving?
14. What did we not ask you that we should have asked?

Questions the minister might ask the committee:

1. What were your visions and hopes when you called me to minister with you here? How are they different now?
2. What did you see as my greatest contribution to your ministry here?
3. What do you think were the highlights of our ministry together?
4. If we had an imaginary chance to do this ministry together again, what might we do differently?
5. How has the congregation grown/changed in our time together?
6. Are there any unfinished matters that we should discuss before I leave?

After the interview, share this information with the Council, the Transition Team, and the Transition Coach. This interview is for the sake of the ministry going forward, and should be taken into account when calling the next rostered minister. These expectations should be made clear to the rostered minister before the exit interview begins.

Appendix 4

Letter of Agreement between a Former Rostered Minister and the Congregation

This is a letter of agreement at the time of resignation/retirement between Pastor/Deacon _____ and the Congregation Council of _____ in _____ (city), _____ (state). It is a clarification of the former pastor's/deacon's role in relationship to this congregation. It is to be shared throughout the congregation so that others may understand changes in responsibilities and can cooperate together as the congregation and former pastor/deacon move into another phase of their respective lives.

1. The pastor's/deacon's resignation, effective _____, signifies his/her/their understanding that all pastoral and administrative duties in this congregation are terminated as of that date.
2. It is mutually understood that this termination of responsibilities applies also to the Interim period before another pastor/deacon is called, since the congregation needs some time and space between pastors/deacons to discover who they are now, where they want to go, and with what new leadership. It is agreed that the Congregation Council will make provision with the Office of the Bishop for interim pastoral leadership for the congregation.
3. The former pastor/deacon agrees that he/she/they will not officiate or assist at any baptism, wedding, or funerals in this congregation, but may attend as a worshipper on occasion. This is to prevent divided loyalties in the congregation and pressures on either the former for future rostered ministers or interim pastors.
4. The former pastor/deacon agrees that he/she/they will not continue to make pastoral visits on members of the congregation. Circumstances make it necessary for exception for limited involvement in the following instances:
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
5. The former pastor/deacon agrees that if attending this congregation in the future, it will only be as worshipper and participant and he/she/they will neither say nor listen to any uncomplimentary or critical remarks in any gatherings concerning the interim, past, or future rostered ministers.
6. The former pastor/deacon will not do services (wedding, baptism, funeral, etc.) unless it is the specific initiation and request of the current pastor/deacon and/or Council (rather than member).
7. If, after approximately one year, there is a desire on the part of the next pastor/deacon to review any of the above items, the former pastor/deacon pledges to accept the guidance and instruction of the next rostered minister and Congregation Council about any participation in the life of _____ Lutheran Church.
8. The former pastor/deacon will remove his/her/their vestments, equipment, books, and possessions by _____. All items belonging to the congregation will remain in the congregation. Keys to the building will be returned to the church office, no later than _____.
9. The former pastor/deacon will continue serving in the community in the following capacities:
 - a) _____
 - b) _____

Former Minister: _____ Congregation President: _____

Appendix 5

Sample Newsletter Article for the Congregation

Subject: The relationship between the congregation and our departing Pastor/Deacon

Dear Congregation,

Pastor/Deacon (name)'s last day at our congregation is (insert date). As we engage in the time of transition ahead of us, we ask that you read and reflect on the information below. These agreements are important as we all move forward into the future. They reflect the healthiest practice in Congregation ministry and will serve both us and our departing minister as we continue to be the body of Christ in this world.

The Church Council and former Pastor/Deacon have agreed to the following, and seek your cooperation, regarding the positive future relationships among us:

We will do everything possible to uphold the mission of the Church and the positive quality of life in this congregation.

We will recognize the need for time to adjust to the new relationships, and will reach out in care and compassion to one another.

We will honor the departure of the former pastor/deacon so duties may be relinquished; and will honor the arrival of the new pastor/deacon by seeking her/his/their counsel and ministry. We are aware that conducting pastoral acts (such as baptism, weddings, funerals, confirmations, communions) and defining ministry programs and leadership styles are no longer the prerogative of the departing pastor/deacon, but belong to the arriving rostered minister with the Council and congregation.

While we recognize that the departing rostered minister (and family) will continue to be our friends, **we will not seek**, nor will the pastor/deacon accept, official roles in the congregation for "pastoral acts." They may be included in the invitation list to attend as friends, if schedules and logistics permit.

Experience across the Church has shown that continuing relationships with former pastors/deacons is very positive when the above things are kept in mind.

In Christ,

(Name) Church Council

Appendix 6

Certification of Congregation Records

(To be completed by the secretary of the congregation and submitted to the Office of the Bishop in your respective synod – see page 2 for contact information)

In anticipation of a pastoral vacancy, I have examined the Parish Register of

Name of Congregation

Address of Congregation

Name of Pastor

and testify that the records have been maintained in good order during the tenure of this pastor, in accordance with the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations which stipulates, "The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod."

Signature of Congregation Secretary

Date

The parochial records of each congregation shall be kept in a separate book, which shall remain its property. 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:

- Installation in another field of labor, or
- issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer

Appendix 7

Certification and Completion of Financial Records

(To be completed by the secretary of the congregation and submitted to the Office of the Bishop in your respective synod – see page 2 for contact information)

All financial obligations, salary, pension, health, death benefits and allowances, together with Continuing Education funds have been met and paid to:

Rev./Dcn. _____
up to the effective date of termination of services. Also, satisfactory settlement of financial obligations has been made by Rev./Dcn. _____ to the
_____ Lutheran Church.

Date

Pastor/Deacon Signature

Treasurer

Appendix 8

Thanksgiving and Farewell of the Rostered Minister

When used as part of the Sunday Service, the Thanksgiving and Farewell may follow the Prayers of the People. In other service settings, it may precede the Benediction.

The Rostered Minister, a Representative of the synod/cluster designated by the Bishop (Representative), and a Leader of the Congregation (Leader) come forward. Due to availability, a representative from the synod may not be present for this service. The likelihood of representation is increased if the date of this service is first coordinated with the Office of the Bishop.

If the Rostered Minister who is leaving is a pastor, use the first paragraph, then continue to the third paragraph. If the Rostered Minister who is leaving is a deacon, use the second paragraph, then continue to the third paragraph.

Leader: Pastor *(name)*, on *(date)*, we called you to be our pastor: to proclaim God's Word, to baptize new members into the Church of Jesus Christ, to announce God's forgiveness to us, and to preside at our celebration of the Lord's Supper. With the Gospel, you have comforted us in times of sickness and trouble and at the death of our loved ones. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you *(and your family)* have been important to our life together in the Church of Jesus Christ, in our service to this community, and in God's mission to the world.

Leader: Deacon *(name)*, on *(date)*, we called you to be our deacon: to proclaim God's Word, to announce God's forgiveness to us, to lead us in service and growth of faith. With the Gospel, you have led us to deeper relationships with ourselves, our God, and our neighbors. Sharing our joys and sorrows, you *(and your family)* 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 world.

Leader: On *(today, or date if last day is in the future)* 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.

Rostered Minister: I thank you, the members of *(name)* Lutheran Church, for the love, the kindness, and the support shown to me *(and my family)* during active ministry among you. I ask forgiveness for the times I have not served well. I am grateful for the ways my ministry has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

Congregation: We receive your thankfulness. We offer you our forgiveness and accept that you now leave to *(resume your ministry in another congregation, retire, etc.)*. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask forgiveness for the times we have not served well with you. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.

Rostered Minister: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

Omit the following line and corresponding congregation response if the pastor is retiring.

Representative: Do you offer encouragement for her/his ministry as it unfolds in her/his new congregation?

Congregation: We do, with God's help.

Representative: Do you, Pastor/Deacon (*name*), commend the congregation into the care of another pastor/deacon?

Rostered Minister: I do, with God's help.

Representative: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here?

Rostered Minister: I do, with God's help.

Representative: People of God, as representatives of the members of _____ Lutheran, and with thanks to God for the ministry of Pastor/Deacon (*name*) among you, do you now release her/him from service as your pastor?

Congregation: We do, and we give thanks to God.

Representative Pastor (*name*), 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 _____ Lutheran Church?

Rostered Minister: I do, and I give thanks to God.

Representative: On behalf of the (*name*) Synod I witness to the words spoken here: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. We will hold you in our prayers as you (*begin your ministry at name of church, retire, etc.*). We pledge our support and love to you and wish you God's blessing.

Leader: Let us pray: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future that rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. We give you thanks for the countless ways our lives have been woven together in the tapestry of your church. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories, but move us in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

Representative: Pastor/Deacon (*name*) and representatives of _____ Church: your sisters and brothers in the Rocky Mountain Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America give thanks to God for the ministry you have shared. We promise you both our continued support and prayer.

Rejoicing in the blessings of God in this congregation and in the ministry of Pastor/Deacon (*name*), with hope in God's abundant grace in years to come, I announce that this pastoral relationship is ended effective (*date*).

Leader: 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.

Congregation: Amen. Thanks be to God!

The Peace is shared.

Appendix 9

Intentional Interim Interview Questions

The following questions are merely suggestive. Interviewing an interim candidate is an important step, and should be taken with care. How an interim leads, interacts with the congregation, and engages spirituality will impact the congregation's reflection on their past and their movement into the future.

1. Tell us about your faith journey and your relationship with Jesus.
2. What led you to be a pastor in the ELCA?
3. Why are you interested in leading our congregation through this interim time?
4. How do you lead?
5. How do you engage with conflict?
6. How do you manage anxiety within the congregation and between groups?
7. How do you prioritize the duties of an interim?
8. How do you engage in spirituality, and how do you encourage others to engage in the life of faith?
9. How do you preach?
10. How do you engage in the life of the synod and the ELCA?
11. What is the role of an intentional interim in the larger community?
12. Tell us about yourself outside of your role as intentional interim pastor.

Appendix 10

Form A: Letter of Agreement for Interim Pastoral Ministry

There are times when congregations will need to be served by interim pastors while they seek settled pastoral leadership. During such service to a congregation, an interim pastor shall have the rights and of a regularly called pastor. Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop of this synod that the parochial records for the period for which the interim was responsible are in order.

Keeping in mind the apostolic advice that all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), the church provides for the service of interim pastors.

_____ covenants with _____
Name/City of Congregation Name of Intentional Interim Pastor

to serve as Interim Pastor with the following conditions and mutual covenants:

Time period beginning _____ and ending _____.

Extensions of time of service shall be with consultation and approval of Bishop.

Although interim appointments normally are concluded with the acceptance of a call by a pastoral candidate, circumstances of need within the Synod may result in the re-assignment of the interim pastor prior to the arrival of the new pastor in residence. Should such a re-assignment be necessary, concurrence will be sought from the congregation's leadership in such a manner as to provide continuing pastoral care to the congregation until the call process is complete.

This agreement may be terminated with thirty days' written notice, by either party if necessary.

We together will:

- Prepare for the arrival of the new pastor.
- Seek to confirm and identify current issues facing the congregation and develop ways of dealing with them.
- Strengthen the congregation's linkage with the conference, synod, churchwide units and the resources that may be available for our ministry.
- Subscribe to the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution and bylaws of this congregation.

You as Interim Pastor will:

- Preach and teach the Word of God.
- Preside at worship and administer the sacraments according to the practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Provide pastoral care to all members of the congregation according to our needs and uphold us in prayer.
- Give pastoral leadership for the meetings, activities and organizations of the congregation as time allows.
- Encourage us to support the total ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Be responsible for the recording of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals, attendance at Holy Communion, and the maintenance of the membership rosters; and report the statistics of the congregation promptly and fully as requested by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- The Interim Pastor shall refrain from exerting influence in the calling of a new pastor.
- During this interim, will give special attention to the following:

We, the congregation, will:

- Commit ourselves to the Gospel by faithful participation in worship, learning and fellowship activities.
- Receive you as our Interim Pastor, uphold you in prayer, and accord you our love, respect and good will.
- Look to you to preside at baptisms, celebrations of Holy Communion, and the rites of the Church.
- In exchange for approximately _____ time pastoral support, compensate you in the following ways:
 - Pay you a weekly salary and housing allowance of \$_____.
 - Pay you a weekly expense allowance of \$_____, for which you will provide a bimonthly accounting to the congregation's treasurer.
 - Provide continuing education time at a rate of one week of study time per six months of interim service.
 - Grant one week of paid vacation per each three months of interim service, not to exceed four weeks per year.
 - Any coverage for this Interim Pastor under the Pension and Benefits program of the ELCA will be arranged for and agreed to by the congregation and interim pastor.

We, the Office of the Bishop, will:

- Provide mutual support for the Interim Pastor.
- Provide mutual support for the congregation through periodic consultation and assistance during the call process.
- Respond to the reports of the Interim Pastor and the congregation.
- Provide interim ministry training opportunities for interim pastors and congregations.

Exceptions to any part of this agreement must be in consultation with the bishop of this synod.

Agreement issued by:

Congregation President

Date

Congregation Secretary

Date

Accepted By:

Intentional Interim Pastor

Date

Attested By:

Bishop

Date

Please send the completed form to the Office of the Bishop for the Bishop's signature. The original will then be sent to the Interim Pastor, and a copy to the congregation.

Form B: Letter of Agreement for Interim Pastoral Ministry

*From the Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (*C9.06)*

“At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.”

I, Pastor _____, with the consent and affirmation of the Congregation Council, accept the appointment of the Bishop of the _____ Synod to serve as Interim Pastor of _____ Lutheran Church, beginning _____ and ending _____.

I understand that it is the policy of this synod that for the good of the congregation and the integrity of the call process, it is inappropriate for me to be a candidate for the regular call to serve as pastor of this congregation. I agree that I will not accept such a call.

Signed:

_____	_____
Intentional Interim Pastor	Date

_____	_____
Congregation President	Date

_____	_____
Bishop	Date

Appendix 11

Litany of Beginning for Intentional Interim Minister

It would be appropriate to insert this ritual into the Sunday morning liturgy on the first or second Sunday that the Interim Pastor begins ministry among you. As a symbol of beginning, place it at the beginning of the service after the Greeting and the Kyrie.

Congregation President: Pastor (name) has been recommended by the Office of the Bishop and affirmed by the Congregation Council at (name of congregation). The Council met on (date) to interview this pastor and we believe that she/he/they possess the gifts necessary to guide this congregation through the transition process. I will now read the interim agreement between Pastor (name) and this congregation.

Congregation President (reads the agreement):

Congregation President (to the pastor): Is it also your understanding of this agreement?

Pastor: It is, and I commit myself to this new trust and responsibility. I promise to fulfill my responsibilities here to the best of my ability in accordance with the scripture, with the Lutheran Confessions, and the Constitution of the ELCA. 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?

Congregation: We will.

Congregation President: Welcome Pastor (name). We now officially begin our partnership in this interim ministry in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: Let us pray:

Almighty God, you call your people in baptism into death and resurrection of your son, Jesus Christ. You turn us from the old life of sin and gave us rebirth and everlasting life. May we be renewed daily by the gift of your Holy Spirit and may we be especially aware of your leading in this interim period. Grant us faithfulness and peace in all that we do that you might be glorified among us. We pray through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

Appendix 12

Litany of Installation for a Transition Team

To be included in the worship service before the Prayers of the People.

Interim Pastor: The following persons, having been chosen to be the transition team, are asked to come forward as their names are called: (read names aloud)

Interim Pastor: Saint Paul writes: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability for some particular service to everyone. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

You have been appointed to a position of leadership and trust in this congregation. You are to reflect on who we are as a congregation, illuminating for us who we have been and who we are, so that we may boldly and authentically live into the future.

You are to help us to come to terms with our history, and to discover the new identity we are currently living into. You are to help us manage the shifts in leadership of our lay volunteers, and strengthen our sense of being church together. And you are to commit to our new future, inspiring us to do the same.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I now ask you: Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the transition team?

Transition Team: We will and ask God to help and guide us.

The committee faces the congregation, which stands.

Interim Pastor: People of God, I ask you, will you support the transition team with your prayers, your words, and your actions?

Congregation: We will.

Interim Pastor: People of God, will you engage in their questions, share your thoughts with kindness, and help them in every way to do the work we are entrusting to them?

Congregation: We will.

Interim Pastor: I now declare you installed as the transition team of this congregation. God bless you and your work together.

Interim Pastor: Let us pray,
Lord, bless this team and its work. Inspire them to ask revealing questions. Help them open our eyes to see who we have been as a community of faith. May your Holy Spirit work in and through them, breathing new life into our conversations and our community. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The worship service continues with the Peace.

Appendix 13

Review of History, Mission & Values & Vision, and Constitution & Policies

History

In order to move into the future, congregations need to come to terms with their history. There is in every congregation that which has been creative and worth celebrating and that which has been debilitating. Just as human beings are shaped by their histories and experiences, so too, is a congregation.

The interim time should be filled with the telling of stories, remembering the happy events of the past and talking out loud about the sad ones. Sharing the history helps members get a perspective on their past, helps the “remember” things they may not personally have experienced, and frees members from unexpected and seemingly unexplainable actions that might pop up later.

Your interim pastor will have some ideas on how to help the transition team lead through this review of history but here are some suggestions you might want to consider.

- Have a “History Day” and invite people to bring old snapshots of past church events. Plan an album by decade or by year where these pictures can be put and invite people to tell and write stories about them in the album. Make it a day of celebration, with cake, music, and games.
- Make a timeline of the church putting years of pastors’ service, building projects, significant events of the congregation on the line. And then ask members to write on the timeline when they joined or were married or were baptized. Ask them to write memories on the timeline of things that were significant for them. Talk about the events and what they mean to people. Do not be afraid to talk about why a pastor left or why a pastor served for only a short time. Name the emotions that people experience in the memory.
- Put a church trivia quiz in each newsletter. Be sure to publish the answers (in that edition or in the next newsletter), since knowledge of the history is what this is about.
- Do an Achieve, Preserve, and Avoid (APA) Analysis with various forces groups. Ask the questions, “As a congregation, what do we want to Achieve? Preserve? Avoid?”

If you notice that the congregation is generally “living in the past,” that is, they long for things to “return” to the way they were; if they are unwilling to look at the why of traditions and practices; if they are stuck in anger, denial, grief or alienation; or if they exhibit selective memory of the congregation’s past, then addressing the history in a creative way will be important.

Sharing the history...frees members from unexpected and seemingly unexplainable actions that might pop up later.

With the pastor, pay special attention to individuals who are having difficulty with this process. Not everyone will be able to move ahead at the same rate and pastoral care is important to everyone. Since your interim pastor does not know members as well as you do, be helpful in identifying for him/her/they, people who may need special pastoral attention.

Mission, Core Values, and Vision

Every church has a purpose. Some churches sum this up in a “mission statement”. We know that we have been sent “to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19). And we know the churches function in the areas of faith, fellowship and service. A mission statement that reflects those things could be applied to almost any Christian church. But no two churches are exactly the same. Each one has a different personality, a different ambience, a different realm in which it functions best.

Core Values guide the everyday actions of members and staff as well as planning of the congregation. They communicate what the congregation stands for and on what principles it operates. They are necessary to speak out loud, to write down, and to publicize, so that new and old members alike operate from the same center of being. A congregation which demonstrates its core values at a high level is more effective in its ministry. As you begin to evaluate and update your mission statement, try to list four or five core values of your congregation.

Every church also has a vision, what it shall be some day. A vision is necessary for survival. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” (Proverbs 29:18) Maybe you have not given much thought to the vision of the congregation lately. The interim period is a good time to re-vision your congregation. Prepare your hearts for the vision that God has for you. Spend intentional time in the interim period with spiritual disciplines.

A vision statement is more about becoming:

- It pictures the future of your church as God has planned it to be
- It describes the results you hope you will realize in the “real world”
- It captures the uniqueness that God has given your church
- It is short, motivational, and easy to memorize

Example: to be a church that is known as a safe haven for all people.

A mission statement is more about doing:

- It tells something about your purpose as a part of the larger body of Christ
- It hints at how you will make your vision a reality
- It is short, motivational, and easy to memorize

Example: We welcome our neighbor with enthusiasm and love, knowing that God will show us the ministry we might do.

Core values are more about being:

- Each one will describe what people experience in your congregation
- Together they capture the uniqueness which is your congregation
- They are fundamental to the beliefs and lived out

Example: Empowerment; Hospitality; Challenge; Journey; Community

Encourage the entire congregation to think about these three areas: mission, vision, and values. To do so, establish a Bible Study (or multiple) on the book of Acts, or 1 Corinthians, or Nehemiah, and as you read each chapter, ask these questions:

- What is the vision of this passage?
- What is the mission of the passage?
- What are the core values of this passage?
- How does this vision, mission, and core values relate to our congregation’s? What can we learn?

After a few weeks or months of Bible study, gather the congregation together for three weeks of brainstorming and conversation, led by the Transition Team, Call Committee, Council, or a combination of these three. Each session below will take about an hour. Remind participants that nothing will be set in stone at these meetings.

1. **The first week**, discuss the vision of the congregation. Where do the members see the congregation in five or ten years?
 - a. *(15 minutes)* Start with a timeline (this could be the same timeline as in the “History” section above, or a new one). Have a few voices review where the congregation has been. Talk

about what a vision statement is. Encourage participants to dream big, and to wonder about what God desires for this community of faith.

- b. *(10 minutes)* Allow time for conversations around tables. Pose the question, “What do you hope the congregation will be like in five years?”
 - c. *(5 minutes)* Invite participants to write down one or two responses to that question, and place them on the timeline on the “five years in the future mark”.
 - d. *(5 minutes)* Read the responses to the whole group. Do not offer extra commentary.
 - e. *(10 minutes)* Allow time for conversations around tables. Pose the question, “What do you hope the congregation will be like in ten years?”
 - f. *(5 minutes)* Invite participants to write down one or two responses to that question, and place them on the timeline on the “five years in the future mark”.
 - g. *(5 minutes)* Read the responses to the whole group. Do not offer extra commentary.
 - h. *(5 minutes)* Allow time for comments and questions. Remind the group that all the responses will be brought to the Transition Team, Call Committee, and Council for discussion and discernment. Thank everyone for their time, and close in prayer.
2. **The second week**, discuss the mission statement of the congregation.
 - a. If your congregation has a mission statement, read it to the group gathered. Are they familiar with it?
 - b. *(15 minutes)* Discuss what a mission statement is to do – to proclaim the purpose of the congregation. What are some examples of mission statements they have heard of from other organizations, whether congregations or not? How long can a mission statement be for the people in the room to easily remember it?
 - c. *(10 minutes)* Around tables, invite participants to wonder about the current mission statement. How does it reflect the purpose of the congregation? And does the purpose of the congregation reflect the mission statement – that is, is the energy and resources of the congregation focused on the mission, or on something else?
 - d. *(10 minutes)* Come together for a large group discussion. What emerged in the table talk?
 - e. *(15 minutes)* Around tables, encourage conversation about these questions. Are there words or phrases that need to be in this congregation’s mission statement? Are there things that certainly do not need to be in it? Does the current statement need to be a) kept entirely, b) tweaked, c) entirely re-written?
 - f. *(10 minutes)* Come back together for a time of wrap-up. Listen to comments and questions. Thank everyone for their time, and close in prayer.
3. **The third week**, discuss the core values of the congregation
 - a. *(15 minutes)* Define core values. Give one or two leaders time to talk about their own core values (inform them you will ask them ahead of time). Invite them to share a story of when those core values were upheld, and one when they were not. What did that feel like?
 - b. *(10 minutes)* Encourage discussion around tables about the individual’s core values. Have one person take notes, writing down all the core values mentioned at the table. Post of the wall under a sign marked “My Core Values”.
 - c. *(10 minutes)* Encourage discussion around tables about the congregation’s core values.
 - d. *(5 minutes)* Have participants write down three to five core values they see in the congregation on sticky notes. Invite them to post their stickies on a wall, grouping them by value. Read all the values, starting with the ones with the most stickies.
 - e. *(10 minutes)* Challenge each table to come up with the “five core values of this congregation” after hearing all these examples. Write them on separate stickies and place on another wall.
 - f. *(10 minutes)* Read all the core values, starting with the most mentioned. Thank everyone for their time, and close in prayer.

After these sessions outlined below are complete, gather the Transition Team, Call Committee, and Council and articulate vision statements, mission statements, and core values.

Constitution and Policies

It is important that your constitution is updated so that your call process goes smoothly. Review your current constitution and compare it to the model constitution of the ELCA. You can download the model constitution from the ELCA website <https://www.elca.org/constitution>. The model constitution has various changes, usually minor, every two years after the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August. Every Congregation Council should include updates to the constitution at least every other year in the congregation's Annual Meeting.

As you review your constitution in transition period, make note of the sections and lines that must be in your constitution and the things that are optional or have various options. If you have not updated your constitution recently, you may find that there are a number of decisions to be made about changes.

When you have updated your constitution, send it to the Synod Constitution Committee for review at the Office of the Bishop. The committee ensure that you do not have conflicting statements in sections and that it is consistent with the ELCA model constitution. The committee will return your constitution within 120 days and keep a copy of file in the synod office. If the 120 days expire before it is returned, the constitution becomes effective as it was submitted. Remember that a change in the constitution, even an update, takes at least one congregation vote, so be sure to do this early in the transition process. For more information about the process for updating your constitution, see Chapter 16 of your constitution. For information about updating Bylaws, see chapter 17.

While this task is assigned to the oversight of the transition team, it is likely there are one or two people in the congregation who are gifted and interested in this particular task. Let those people work out the draft and bring it to the church Council for review and revision.

At the same time that you are reviewing your constitution, be sure your congregation policies are in place and up to date. Begin work on these policies during the interim period so your new rostered minister can begin their ministry well. At a minimum, every congregation should have a current personnel policy and financial policy including endowments and investments. You should also look at creating a mutual ministry policy, wedding and funeral policy, memorials policy, safe children policies, publications policy, policies regarding use of building and special equipment, etc.

It is important for incorporated entities to have procedures in place so decisions are made in an orderly manner and reflect the core values of the congregation. Decision-making becomes streamlined as policies provide guidance and framework for committees, boards, and individual members.

Begin work on these policies during the interim period so your new rostered minister can begin their ministry well.

Appendix 14

Stewardship during Transitions

Supporting the mission of your congregation is more than just calling a rostered minister. But the call process can serve as the impetus to look at stewardship in the congregation. It can help the ministry that will take place with the new pastor or deacon to know what the resources of the congregation are and that they are being used well. Talk over a stewardship strategy with your interim pastor and feel free to contact the Office of the Bishop for resources in this area.

Stewardship is a key to accomplishing the mission of the congregation and is a reflection of its health as well. There is no “perfect” stewardship plan for a congregation and the same plan may or may not be effective in any two years. However, every stewardship plan is integral to your core values, your vision, and your mission.

We are sometimes hesitant to talk about stewardship in churches, because when we hear “stewardship” we often think “money”. But stewardship is more than just finances. We exercise stewardship every time we make a decision about what we will or will not do, buy or will not buy, engage in or not with our time or effort. Christians are called to be intentional about their stewardship, not just of money, but of the rest of their lives as well.

Intentional stewardship is bringing to consciousness and witness those things that we are already doing and those things that we intend, with God’s help, to do in the future.

As you develop your stewardship plan in the congregation remember these things:

- People give to purposes they believe in.
- People give to things that make a difference.
- People give to things where they feel they have “ownership.”
- People tend to be generous, decent, and fair.

Think about how you present an overall stewardship plan that includes regular offerings to the congregation, special gifts and capital campaigns, and end of life or legacy gifting. The Congregation Council takes leadership on stewardship during the transition time. Work with your interim pastor to develop your intentional stewardship plan.

Stewardship is a key to accomplishing the mission of the congregation and is a reflection of its health as well.

Good stewardship relies on vulnerability and accountability. When leaders are transparent about their own stewardship – choices, priorities, and especially financial support – others will engage more. This is difficult – but vulnerability is not meant to be easy. In the same way, leadership who are held accountable for how they invest their time in the congregation are better leaders and inspire others to participate more. A congregation president who does not show up to worship and only comes to the weekly coffee conversation time will be less effective and inspirational than one who gives their time, energy, and finances to the congregation.

Stewardship of Property Inventory

Related to your overall stewardship plan is an inventory of your corporate physical plant. As you get ready to call a new pastor or deacon and re-evaluate your ministry as a congregation, the following inventory will give you some questions to ask yourselves about property and the message the property gives as a witness to who you are.

This is not meant to be a checklist, to simply answer the questions, but as a guide for making improvements and upgrades to make the building more inviting to guests and hospitable to all who enter. It will lead to discussions within the Council about both material ways to be hospitable and non-material ways, as well.

1. Are you proud to bring friends, guests, and visitors to your church? Why or why not?
2. When was the facility built?
3. Is the building well located for present and future community needs?
4. When was the last renovation? What kind of renovation was it? How much did it cost?
5. How were the funds raised for the last remodel/renovation? Is there still debt from that time?
6. Are outdoor signs well placed for traffic visibility? Are they lighted?
7. Is information current on outdoor signs?
8. Do outdoor signs have phone numbers, email, and website addresses?
9. Does the property look well kept? Is it landscaped?
10. Is access to the main entrance to the building easily identified?
11. Do the main doors have glass for easy visibility?
12. Is the facility handicap accessible? Do the outdoor signs have accessibility symbol?
13. Is there adequate parking? Is the parking lot lighted?
14. Is there well-marked visitor and handicapped parking?
15. Are there good directional signs inside the building (to bathrooms, offices, sanctuary, fellowship hall, etc.)?
16. Are hallways and rooms well-lit? Are they well-lit at night?
17. Are the windows clean?
18. Are closets and storage areas assigned and tidy?
19. Are Sunday School rooms free of excess paper and clutter? Are the rooms inviting?
20. Are the bathrooms clean?
21. Is there a baby changing table in the bathrooms (both men's and women's)? Are there step stools for children in the bathrooms?
22. Are faucets and drinking fountains free of leaks?
23. Have the halls and rooms been recently painted?
24. Are the bulletin boards updated and kept tidy?
25. Is the nursery clean and in good repair? Are toys checked and cleaned on a regular basis?
26. Is the floor in good repair? Is the carpeting up to date?
27. Is the roof in good repair? Has water damage been repaired?
28. Are fellowship areas welcoming to visitors?
29. Are chairs and tables in fellowship areas clean and orderly?
30. Is the sanctuary inviting and inspiring?
31. Are the pews comfortable and convenient for families and elderly?
32. Is there non-obtrusive but convenient space for wheelchairs in worship?
33. Is the furnace and heating system in good repair?
34. Is there a need for air conditioning in offices or sanctuary? Is it in good repair?
35. Is there ongoing capital fund for building emergencies and planning remodels?
36. Is the kitchen up to code? Do the appliances work? Is there room to do what is needed for the life of the congregation?
37. Is the library inviting and orderly?

Appendix 15

Call Committee Member Form

Please fill out this form and mail to the Office of the Bishop or your Transition Coach. This is helpful for healthy communication, and also for mailing the Call Paperwork once a candidate is identified.

Congregation: _____

Address: _____

Congregation President: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: Home: _____ Office: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

Chair of the Call Committee: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: Home: _____ Office: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

Secretary of the Call Committee: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: Home: _____ Office: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

Other Committee members: (Names, Phone numbers, E-mail addresses):

Appendix 16

Installation of a Call Committee

To be included in the worship service before the Prayers of the People.

Interim Pastor: The following persons, having been chosen/elected to be the Call Committee, are asked to come forward as their names are called: (read names aloud)

Interim Pastor: Saint Paul writes: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability for some particular service to everyone. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

You have been appointed to a position of leadership and trust in this congregation. You are to seek the will of God and the mind and spirit of the congregation with regards to our pastoral needs.

You will examine the qualifications of prospective pastors, interview those who appear to be suitable candidates, and give a recommendation regarding the issuance of a call by the congregation. In all your deliberations, you are to be examples of faith active in love, seeking to maintain the life, harmony and ministry of this congregation.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I now ask you: Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the Call Committee?

All: We will and ask God to help and guide us.

The committee faces the congregation, which stands.

Interim Pastor: People of God, I ask you, will you support these, your brothers and sisters in Christ, in their task, and will you undergird their efforts with your prayers?

Congregation: We will.

Interim Pastor: I now declare you installed as the Call Committee of this congregation. God bless you and your work together.

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

The worship service continues with the Peace.

Appendix 17

How to Complete the Ministry Site Profile

The Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is a form used throughout the ELCA and is available on the ELCA website at <https://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites>. The Ministry Site Profile is the first information that a candidate will see about your congregation. It is your cover letter, resume, and first impression. Take your time with it!

In order to complete the form, one committee member goes to the link above. Follow the instructions for “Ministry Sites”. The system will ask you to sign in. You can do this with any email address, even if it was not used previously for your congregation. If you do not have an account with the ELCA, you will be asked to create one.

The form is entirely online. A pdf version is available at the above link so the whole committee knows the questions that need to be addressed. As this is a work of the group, and not of one person, it may be helpful to come together and craft responses to questions, then copy and paste them into the online form at a later date.

The Ministry Site Profile...is your cover letter, resume, and first impression. Take your time with it!

Below is a description of the various sections of the MSP.

Part I Who We Are

Congregation information is recorded and descriptive paragraphs are written about the community as well as the congregation. This information should come out of the work done by the Transition Team. If this information is not available, talk to the office administrator, Council President, and Interim Pastor. When was the last time the membership rolls were updated? How accurate are your church records? What is the policy for maintaining accurate records?

Part II Our Vision for Mission

Statements about the church as a community, leadership style, programming, and theological perspectives are presented and a characteristic scale is completed. Paragraphs are written to describe the congregation’s purpose, giftedness, and mission. References for the church are provided.

Part III Leadership Needs

Priorities are set for ministry tasks and gifts. Mutual expectations are defined and a Compensation Range and Benefits are indicated. (This information comes from the church Council, Executive Committee, Treasurer, or Finance Committee.)

Part IV Commentary

The church’s vision, opportunities, challenges, and nature of the ministry site are presented in a page-long essay.

Part V Completion of Profile

Information for the Reference, Synodical Call Process Administrator, and how the congregation’s discernment process unfolded.

Finally, return to the initial website (<https://www.elca.org/Call-Process/Ministry-Sites>), and review the steps/checklist there. The MSP will not be activated until the Reference Recommendation has filled out their form. The person who submits the MSP should send the Reference the form via the website.

Appendix 18

Call Committee Sample Agenda

Monday, December 6
6:30pm – 8:00pm
Location

Preparation: Re-read the Interview Questions, Ministry Site Profile

Please bring: Bible, Ministry Site Profile, Writing Utensil, Sample Interview Questions

Ongoing Items:

Devotions and Opening Prayer: (One Committee Member)

Word on the Street? (All) What is going on in the congregation? What are people asking, wondering, needing to know?

Old Business:

Communication Plan: (All) Review

Ministry Site Profile Review: (All) Review Key Points

Interview Questions: Fine tune questions chosen last week. Are there other questions that should be considered? What are we hoping to hear? Come with interview questions that were selected last week prioritized.

New Business:

Interview Preparation: (All) If time permits, review Phase 3, The Call Process, and the information about interviewing.

Closing Prayer: (All)

Appendix 19

Sample Questions for Candidate Interviews

The following questions are merely suggestive; however, in forming any question the key issue is, “What answer are you looking for? How will you know when it’s answered well?”

Each interview is important. Take time to be spiritually grounded before you begin.

Each question may be evaluated in three ways:

- What does it have to do with the position?
- What do we need to know?
- Would we be willing to answer the same questions about ourselves?

Initial Interview

Set up 30-45 minutes with the candidate and all the Call Committee members. This is often done via a phone or video call. Choose four or five of these questions to ask each candidate. Ask the candidate to briefly tell you about herself/himself/themselves. What brought the candidate to this congregation at this point in time?

- Tell us about yourself and your life of faith.
- Why are you an ELCA pastor/deacon?
- Tell us about what gives you life in parish ministry.
- Who have been the most influential people in your life?
- What excites you about our congregation?
- Tell us a little about your leadership style.
- What outside-of-work opportunities do you enjoy?
- What would you like to know about us?

After each question has been answered, invite the candidate to ask their questions. Then, thank the candidate for their time. Let them know when they can expect to hear from you.

Second Interview

Some congregations will choose to do a second interview before a formal, face-to-face one. If that is true in your context, you may take some questions from the next section for that second interview, or develop your own.

Face-to-Face Interview

This interview, also known as the “formal interview”, takes place in a comfortable setting. It may take one to two hours. Plan your questions accordingly, knowing that the candidate will have questions to ask as well. You will not have time for all of these – choose ones or create your own that speak to your context and what you are looking for in a candidate.

General Questions:

13. Tell us about your faith journey.
14. Share with us your calling that led you to become a pastor.
15. Describe the areas of ministry which you value as high priorities.
16. Talk about the ministry areas you like to do. Why?
17. What pastoral/diaconal roles give you the most trouble? Why?
18. Discuss your strengths as well as those areas on which you need work.
19. Share your thoughts regarding the worship life of the congregation.
20. What are your expectations for yourself and lay persons in liturgical practices?

21. Describe your preaching philosophy and style. What things do you emphasize in your preaching? What are your ideas regarding children's sermons?
22. Discuss your thoughts and expectations concerning catechetical instruction.
23. Discuss in detail your expectations/philosophy of, and pastoral involvement in: Youth Ministry, Faith Formation, Evangelism, Stewardship, Benevolence, and Social Ministry.
24. From your perspective, what were the areas in the last parish which gave you personal satisfaction?
25. What role do you see the pastor/deacon fulfilling in relating to committees?
26. How do you see your role in relation to Congregation Council?
27. Describe your philosophy of visitation and pastoral calling.
28. What do you see as the mission of the Church? What are lay and clergy roles in that?
29. Why are you considering accepting this call?
30. How do you see yourself involved in our community and the synod?
31. Tell us about your hobbies.

Worship/Preaching

1. Describe how you go about preparing for the worship service on Sunday morning.
2. Think back in your ministry and tell us about the most difficult sermon you ever preached.
3. Share some of your thoughts about the worship life of a congregation.

Social Ministry/Outreach

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. How do you go about motivating the congregation to respond to community needs?

Administrator/Leader

1. Describe the steps you take 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 the Faith

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.

Evangelism

1. Describe ways in which you typically become acquainted and associate with unchurched people in your community.
2. What kind of guidance and training do you provide members of your congregation for reaching unchurched persons in the community?
3. Describe how you have achieved a multicultural approach to your ministry.

Interpersonal 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 yourself and another person and how resolution was finally achieved.

Ministry in Crisis/Counseling

1. Describe your style of ministry to person 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?

Interpreter of Theology

1. Describe ways in which you communicate the faith.
2. Describe your skills as teacher and preacher.
3. What resources keep you theologically and Biblically fresh and current?

Innovator

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 stagnate or failing and describe how you stepped in to revitalize it.

Denominational Leadership

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. Describe what you believe a congregation's role is as a member of the ELCA.

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.

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.

Your 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?

The Call Committee may find it useful to conclude the interview by asking the candidate:

- What are two or three things that we should know about you that we did not ask?
- Are there financial considerations of which we should be aware?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix 20

Sample Questions Candidates Might Ask

1. What do you think individuals like about this congregation? Why are you (the Call Committee) members of this congregation?
2. What are some of the things you hope this congregation will do in the future that would benefit you? Others?
3. What kinds of organizations do you have in this congregation? What kinds of activities take place on a weekly/monthly basis?
4. How do you welcome and assimilate new members?
5. What plans has the Council made for doing additional self-study and goal setting? What are the possibilities for growth in size and involvement?
6. What governing structure does this congregation have? How is it perceived?
7. What kind of benevolence do you support?
8. In what area(s) of social concern has the congregation been active?
9. How would you prioritize the functions of a pastor/deacon, both in terms of importance and number of hours? What gets deferred if time runs out?
10. How does the congregation view continuing education? Time off? Financial support? Will the rostered minister be encouraged to attend conferences and Synod Assemblies? Who will pay the expenses?
11. Who prepares the Council and Congregation meeting agendas? Who chairs meetings?
12. (In the case of multiple-staff ministries) How do you define tasks, lines of authority, conflict management, and reporting methods for the rostered ministers, staff, Council, congregation, and committees?
13. What kind of secretarial service will the congregation provide?
14. What is the community's image of this congregation?
15. What hardships has the congregation experienced? What are the major conflicts?
16. What is the attitude of the congregation toward the church-at-large (synod and ELCA)?
17. How many rostered ministers has this parish had in the past twenty years? How is the rostered minister's leadership accepted by the congregation?
18. What is the role of the lay members in carrying out the ministry of the congregation?
19. What support is there for the rostered minister's family? What are the expectations for the family? What is the school situation in this area?
20. What are the housing opportunities in the neighborhood? What present financial arrangements have been made for the pastor's housing? Has the Council and/or congregation envisioned any future ideas for the pastor's housing (shared equity, mortgage loan from the congregation, etc.)?
21. What moving arrangements do you anticipate for rostered minister and their household?

Appendix 21

Sample Questions for Checking References

Please remember that it is important to notify the candidates that you will be checking references. It is best to check references via phone call. When placing calls to references, emphasize the confidential nature of this process. Use a structured interview and ask the same questions of each reference. This helps to establish a more systematic procedure for evaluating all candidates and helps to focus on relevant issues. Equal treatment of candidates is essential. Other questions may be asked, and not all these need to be asked, but the same ones should be asked of each Reference.

First, identify yourself and the role you are playing in the call process. Second, identify and record the name of the individual to whom you are speaking and the working relationship this person has with the candidate.

Sample Questions

1. Tell me a little about your experience working with this candidate.
2. What were the candidate's responsibilities in order of importance?
3. How would you rate the candidate's effectiveness in her or his work?
4. How would you rate the candidate's passion and energy?
5. How would you describe the candidate's attitude?
6. How would you describe the candidate's relationship to the Congregation Council?
7. How would you describe the candidate's relationship with staff and volunteer workers?
8. What were the candidate's main strengths, outstanding successes, and significant failures?
9. How did the candidate work with people? Identify reasons for positive or negative working relationships.
10. How do you feel about the candidate's management techniques?
11. How would you describe the candidate's success in training, developing, and motivating persons?
12. What would most people with whom he or she worked say about the candidate?
13. What other information can you share that would help to develop a more complete picture of the candidate?

Appendix 22

Sample Outline of Candidate Recommendation to Council

When the Call Committee presents the name to Council, it is good for as many Committee members to be present as possible. It is encouraged that each member has a speaking role, and that these are planned ahead of time.

1. Opening and thank you to the Council
 - a. We are here to recommend one candidate
 - b. Thank you for your support, trust, and encouragement along the way
2. Call Committee Basics
 - a. What is a “Call”?
 - b. Call Committee process and timeline
 - c. Importance of prayer, spirituality, and discernment within the process
3. Introduce Pastor/Deacon (provide the candidate’s name at this time)
 - a. Candidate details (Rostered Minister Profile)
 - b. Match RMP strengths to Ministry Site Profile (MSP) desires
 - c. Why did this candidate stand out – not only as the best candidate, but the right one for our congregation?
4. Interview Process
 - a. First, second, third interview
 - b. We have listened to sermons, read articles, called references
 - c. We ran a criminal background check, which is standard
5. Call Committee Recommendation
 - a. It is our recommendation that _____ is the right candidate for the position of _____ at our congregation. We recommend that the Council meet the candidate, begin compensation negotiations with them, vote to accept the candidate, and schedule a Special Congregation Meeting for the congregation to approve this pastor/deacon.
6. Next Steps
 - a. Discuss the next steps with the Council
 - b. Answer any questions they may have about the candidate or the process.

Appendix 23

Sample Outline of Candidate Introduction to the Congregation

How a candidate is presented to a congregation is an important step to consider. As this may be the first time the majority of the congregation has heard anything about this rostered minister, the manner in which this is done matters. It should be clear, concise, and creative. It should fit the context of the congregation.

How can this be done creatively? If sent electronically, include a picture of the rostered minister both formally and with a picture of something the collect, like stamps, license plates, or race bibs. If delivered via mail, include a copy of the pastor or deacon's favorite dinner recipe.

Generally, this is done in a special newsletter article, sent to members of the congregation electronically or via physical mail. It can also be done during a Sunday morning worship service. Here is an example of a written introduction.

Dear Second Lutheran Church,

The Call Committee has been working diligently over the past six months, building on the work of the Transition Team and Congregation Council, in order to find the best candidate for our open pastoral position.

The Call Committee invested a few months in crafting the Ministry Site Profile, our congregation's resume. This was sent to potential candidates, and we received their resumes to peruse as well.

After numerous interviews, we settled on one candidate. The Call Committee recommended their name to Council, and now we are recommending this candidate to you to come and be our next pastor.

The Rev. Taylor Garcia grew up in Pleasantville, New York, under the watchful eye of the family Maine Coon cat, named Bunny, and an Angora rabbit, named Kitty.

Now living in Omaha, Nebraska, Pastor Taylor enjoys playing bridge, rock-climbing, herbal tea, and real-estate docu-dramas.

Pastor Taylor will be at Second Lutheran Church for a meet-and-greet with the congregation on Sunday, October 31, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. If you would like to watch Pastor Taylor lead worship, check out www.thirdlutheranofomaha.church.

A congregation meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, November 14, at 10am, in order to vote on whether or not to extend to Pastor Taylor the call to be our next settled pastor and the compensation package. We hope that you and all members of Second Lutheran can attend that meeting.

In Christ,

Second Lutheran Church Council

Appendix 24

Thanksgiving and Farewell of the Intentional Interim or Contract Pastor

Include this litany in the Sunday morning liturgy on the intentional interim or contract pastor's last Sunday in the congregation. As a symbol of leaving, place it near the end of the service – after the Prayers of the People, or before the Benediction. The Rostered Minister, the Congregation President, and the Council Secretary come forward. The Congregation President stands before the altar.

Congregation President: Today we offer our thanks and farewell as Pastor (name) concludes his/her/their time as Pastor of our congregation, grateful for the ministry they have done among us.

Council Secretary: Pastor (name) has served (name of congregation) Lutheran Church faithfully for (number of) months as our Pastor. The Congregation Council and our members therefore wish to have your ministry recognized with our thanks.

Congregation President: It is important that we within the fellowship of Christ recognize the endings and beginnings that are so often a part of our life together. We now say thanks over what has been and invoke God's blessings on what will be. You have been a blessing to us, and we thank you. We wish you every blessing as you leave us.

Rostered Minister: I thank (name of congregation) Lutheran Church, its members and leadership, for the love, kindness, and support that you have shown me. I am grateful that you received my ministry and that we were able to work together to accomplish many good things. I am confident that God has already forgiven any mistakes we made and that God blessed the work we did.

Congregation: We thank you for the compassion, wisdom, energy, and faith you brought to our congregation. You helped us in our time of need as a servant of Christ and blessing to God's people.

Congregation President: Will you, members with me of (name of congregation) Lutheran Church, now release Pastor (name) from the duties of intentional interim/contract pastor?

Congregation: We do, with thanks to God.

Congregation President: Will you pray for them as they continue in ministry in a new place?

Congregation: We will, with thanks to God.

Congregation President: Will you, Pastor (name), release and commit the shepherding of this congregation to its next pastor?

Rostered Minister: I do, with thanks to God.

Congregation President: Will you pray for us as this congregation looks forward to the future?

Rostered Minister: I will, with thanks to God.

Congregation: O God, your everlasting love for us all is trustworthy and sure. Give us confidence to go forward into the future, grateful for the goodness you have shown us in the past. Bless this servant of Christ, and bless our community of faith, for the sake of Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Congregation President: Go now, Pastor (name), surrounded by our love and led by the promises of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.