

*Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana Mission Area
Sowing and Growing Disciples of Jesus*

THE CALL PROCESS HANDBOOK



For Congregations & Church-Related Organizations
Seeking to Call

ORDAINED PASTORS
ASSOCIATES IN MINISTRY
DIACONAL MINISTERS
DEACONESSES

*Mission Area Purpose Statement:
NT-NL Mission Area*

Sowing and Growing Disciples of Jesus

August 2011

PRAYER

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look with favor upon our efforts to seek and call new leadership for this congregation. Fill our imaginations, strengthen our commitment, empower our energies, and grant us the grace and wisdom we need. Inspire us by your Holy Spirit to see who we are as a called people, gathered into one fellowship, enlightened by your gifts, and sanctified for the mission and ministry that you have entrusted to us. And grant us the vision to see your hand guiding us to the person and the future that you have in mind for us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

God bless your work!

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ELCA web site: www.elca.org/call

(The ELCA web site has *many* excellent resources on a vast number of topics related to church life.)

This *Call Process Handbook* has been prepared for use in the Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana Mission Area. Other ELCA synods may have procedures different from those described here.



The Call Process

Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana Mission Area
Sowing and Growing Disciples of Jesus

CALLING

To Call a Pastor or Lay Rostered Minister is to Enter into a
Three-Way Covenantal Relationship

The church uses the word "Call" to describe the process of identifying, electing, and engaging in mutual ministry with a pastor or lay rostered minister. This is vastly different from our experience in other parts of our culture where it would be described as "advertising, interviewing, hiring, and employing" someone to perform a "job". Calling a pastor or lay rostered minister is to enter into a three-way relationship (the people, the pastor or lay rostered minister, and our God). It is much more akin to marriage than to management in its character because it is built on vows, trust, and mutual commitment. The pastor or lay rostered minister has the solemn obligation to serve Christ first of all, and out of that obligation enter into mutual ministry with a congregation that likewise has a solemn obligation to serve Christ. The word "covenant" (rather than "contract") can be used to describe this relationship because "covenant" implies the partnership of the two parties in an equal and shared relationship rather than the hierarchical relationships that occur between employer-employee. The Call Process is a procedure of courting and discovering one another in the hopes of finding a "match" that can last even for a life-time.

*What it Means to Call:
The Scriptures
The Confessions
The ELCA*

THE SCRIPTURES

❖ In its most literal usage, "call" (*kaléo*) is used in the sense of giving something a name (e.g. "God *called* the light Day," Gen. 1:5) or to summon someone or something (e.g. "Herod *called* the wise men secretly..." Matt. 2:7). The act of naming or summoning often implies a claim or ownership that is exercised over the one or the thing that is called. That idea is expressly stated in Is. 43:1 ("I have *called* you by name, you are mine") and in I John 3:1 ("See what love the Father has given us, that we should be *called* children of God; and so we are.")

It is God's initiative that extends this "call" out of sheer grace and love (in Gal. 1:6 Paul says God "*called* you in the grace of Christ"). God's call separates the person or the people from all others (e.g. "I *called* Israel, my son, out of Egypt," Hosea 11:1) and gives them a work

(*vocare*, vocation) to do (e.g. Jesus *called* to him the twelve...and sent them out to preach and have authority," Mark 3:13-15).

To be "called" can also refer to placement within a particular office. St. Paul speaks of himself as "*called* to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). The Holy Spirit spoke to the early Christians to set apart "Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have *called* them" (Acts 13:2).

Of particular interest are the "calls" extended to various prophets in the Old Testament and disciples in the New Testament.(1) Though variously expressed, their calls have striking similarities:

- The call came at God's initiative, often despite the individual's own hesitation or objection.
- The call was specific and personal, naming the one called.
- The call established, first, a vertical relationship to the One calling.
- The call established, secondly, a horizontal relationship to the world by giving the person a mission, a work, a vocation to perform.
- The call was followed (normally) by a period of preparation or spiritual formation before beginning the ministry.
- The call was lived out in a life of faithful service in which God was active in the world through the individual or group.

THE CONFESSIONS

❖ The Lutheran Confessions offer only a few comments on the nature of the call. In the Formula of Concord it is clearly taught that God initiates the call to all of God's people through the Word. That call is confirmed in baptism. All Christians live in response to the grace and calling of God by doing the works ("good works") that befit that calling.

Martin Luther was clear that every Christian is called into faith, into the life of Christ, and into the church by the action of the Holy Spirit through the Word. That calling comes at God's initiative, is born of grace, and imparts faith and gifts of the Spirit for use within the Body of Christ. Each Christian hears this calling by the preaching of the Word and has that calling confirmed or expressed in his or her baptism. Once called, *all of us* are set apart for a work to perform, and just as there are a diversity of gifts so there are a diversity of callings or vocations.

The calls to ordained ministry or lay rostered ministry are only certain kinds of the many callings that are possible among Christians. Calls to these forms of ministry are specific and occur as God works through the church. The Augsburg Confession declares that it "is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."(2)

1 e.g. Moses (Ex. 3:1-4:18), Isaiah (Is. 6:1-13), Jeremiah (Jer. 1), Mary (Luke 1:26-38), the twelve (Mark 3:13-15), and St. Paul (Acts 9:1-25).

2 The Confessions understand the ministry to exist in service to God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, first of all, and then, on account of this service, also as a service to the church and world. Ministry exists to proclaim the Gospel! "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and sacraments. Through these, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where God pleases, in those who hear the Gospel" (Augsburg Confession).

The Christian leaders of the future have to be theologians, persons who know the heart of God and are trained--through prayer, study, and careful analysis--to manifest the divine event of God's saving work in the midst of the many seemingly random events of their lives...If there is any focus that the Christian leader of the future will need, it is the discipline of dwelling in the presence of the One who keeps asking us, 'Do you love me?'

-Henri Nouwen

THE ELCA

❖ In the documents of the ELCA(3), the idea of the call is reaffirmed as belonging squarely within baptismal theology. There is only one foundational call, and that is the call that all experience at the time of their baptism. Baptism is God's gracious initiative to incorporate us into the Body of Christ. It is God's doing, not ours. Baptism plants faith like a mustard seed that will grow through the years as the person is shaped by the Word of God within the community of the faithful. Baptism draws the person into God's family in order to send the person out to perform their calling (a work, a vocation). The Service of Holy Baptism echoes this understanding in the final words spoken by the pastor:

Through baptism God has made these new sisters and brothers members of the priesthood we all share in Christ Jesus, that we may proclaim the praise of God and bear his creative and redeeming Word to all the world.

The church has, and will continue to have, various ways of understanding and imaging the nature of the call. *Diaconia*, which is the original Greek for "minister," clearly implies "servant" which has, in fact, been the dominant metaphor for the call to ministry for centuries.

There are four "rosters" (categories) of professional service within the ELCA:

- The call to ordained ministry is distinguished by the duties of proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments. Such persons have both a college and seminary education, have been tested by the church for commitment and ability, and have been approved for service.
- The call to diaconal ministry is distinguished by a call to serve the world for the sake of Christ and under the auspices of the congregation in specific ways: to minister to the needy, to bring justice and peace, and to provide healing and help. Such persons are likewise educated (Masters degree in theological studies), tested, and approved by the church for such service.

3 The ELCA's report entitled Together for Ministry talks about the call that all Christians have and compares that to the particular call that those on the rosters of the church have. The particular call to ordained ministry is for the specific purpose of proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments. Those called to this particular calling among the diverse callings that Christians experience are to feel an "inner call" from God as well as an "external call" from the church. If so, then they rightly have a "regular call" of the kind to which the Augsburg Confession refers.

The report's principle purpose is to describe and define the forms of ministry that the ELCA will recognize. The report speaks of the ministry of all the baptized, the ministry of those ordained to Word and sacrament ministry, and the ministry of lay rostered ministers who serve as diaconal ministers, deaconesses, and associates in ministry.

- The call to the ministry of deaconess is for those who are a part of an intentional community of sisters who are dedicated to serving, tested and approved, and active in the life of the church for Christ's sake.
- The call to associate in ministry is for specific duties (for example educational, youth, music, or administrative tasks); it requires a bachelors degree, theological competence, and approval by the church.

A Three-Step Process: Preparation Conversation Transition

*The Congregation Council, Transition Team and Call Committee members are called to be **leaders** in the process that is to follow. **You have the excellent opportunity to learn, to teach, to give direction, to instill hope, and to build a renewed sense of vision and excitement about the mission and ministry of your congregation.** The three-step process allows you to do just that: learn about the hopes and dreams of the congregation, learn about "calling," and learn about the Call Process (Step One: Preparation). You will engage in the activities of doing what you have learned (Step Two: Conversation). And you will teach and share what you have learned and done so that all within the congregation can have the experience of growing together (Step Three: Transition).*

PREPARATION 10-14 Weeks

❖ We all start at the "bottom" when we do something unfamiliar. It is important, therefore, to learn about the task ahead and to take the time to study scripture and other available information (reading through this entire handbook) so that you will be prepared.

The Congregation Council's major tasks during the "Preparation" step are

- to create a Transition Team to help bring closure to the current ministry and to engage interim ministry assistance during the time of vacancy,
- to identify the "form of the ministry" that the congregation needs in the future, and
- to help prepare the "Ministry Site Profile," particularly the budget information.

The Call Committee's major tasks are

- to study the nature of "calling" and "ministry" in the church,
- engage the congregation in various assessments of who you are and what your goals for the future are, and
- plan the details of the process you will use to seek a new person

CONVERSATION *14-16 Weeks*

❖ Once prepared, it is time to act. Step by step procedures are suggested so that it can be accomplished wisely. The Call Committee works on behalf of the congregation (and reports to the Congregation Council) and, therefore, has a great responsibility to fulfill. The time of "Conversation" culminates in the Call Committee's selection of a single candidate to recommend to the Congregation Council along with the Call Committee's thoughtful reflections on why this person is being presented.

TRANSITION *10-14 Weeks*

❖ The work of the Call Committee is not yet done. You have learned and grown through the weeks of work that you have shared together. The whole congregation needs to share in that learning and growth. The time of "Transition" gives you the opportunity to teach others and give them the same sense of vision that you have come to have.

TOTAL SEARCH TIME-LINE:
34-44 Weeks (8-11 Months)

*Foundations:
Prayer and Faith
Three Goals
Eight Principles*

PRAYER AND FAITH

Where do you begin? With prayer. With confidence that the grace and Holy Spirit of God attend your work. With a sharing of your own faith and hope. With time to reflect on your task, on the nature of mission and ministry, and on the idea of "calling." Clarity about the following three goals and eight principles will help define your task and determine the boundaries for your decisions.

THREE GOALS

1. Selection: The main goal, of course, is to select the right person for your ministry based on faith, dedication, and ability (rather than other, extraneous characteristics), and to "match" that with the congregation's needs and goals.
2. Vision: The process is also a critical time for the church to set goals and directions based on the hopes and dreams of the people and the call to service that the congregation has in its community.

3. Instruction: The process gives a unique opportunity to learn about mission and ministry, the work and calling of a pastor or lay minister, and the nature of our church as God's community of faithful people in mission. The whole congregation can be taught about these things.

EIGHT PRINCIPLES

1. Interdependence: The congregation, the mission area, and the ELCA all have a part to play in the search and selection; each must work cooperatively with the others to achieve the very best results. We make every effort to respect the part of the process that entrusted to each of these three.
2. Trust: Mistrust is the way of the world; "trust" (which scripture translates with the word "faith") is the cornerstone of our community. Invite the trust of the congregation, the mission area office, and the candidates; never abuse that trust, but prove worthy of it.
3. Faithfulness: Faith, loyalty, and fidelity to the Gospel are marks of our way of doing business in the church. Trust that the Holy Spirit is within the process, shaping and guiding it even when it does not unfold just as you had wanted or expected it to.
4. Mission: The congregation does not exist for its own sake, but for the mission of Christ's ministry on earth. It is not "our" church, but Christ's. We walk together in faith and unity, sharing leadership and control, and offering praise and forgiveness to one another.
5. Covenant: Pastors and lay ministers are not "hired" as employees, but "called" to be servants of the Gospel in and among a community of people. The relationship between this person and the congregation is therefore more covenantal than contractual in nature.
6. Inclusivity: Committee membership and leadership does not belong to the few but should be representative of the diversity of the congregation.
7. Confidentiality: The Call Committee is not to disclose names of candidates or other identifying information so that the current ministry of these candidates is not harmed. Their ministry is based on trust, and they have entrusted themselves to the committee's careful handling. (An exception might occur if the candidate releases the committee from the obligation for confidentiality.)
8. Non-Discrimination: Persons should never be disqualified from consideration on the basis of "external" qualities (age, gender, race, or physical disability); "internal" qualities are the essential things (faith, talents, and dedication).



STEP ONE: PREPARATION

A Time of Adjustment as the Congregation Brings an End to the Ministry that Has Been and Prepares for What Next Will Be.

"Preparation" begins with the announcement of a pastor's or lay rostered minister's impending departure and continues until the point at which the Call Committee is ready to begin interviewing prospective candidates. The congregation can be expected to experience some grief during this time, some anxiety regarding the vacancy and search, and a concern about taking leadership. Your leadership will require an awareness of these dynamics, a conviction that you can and will act sensitively and decisively, a confident faith that there is strength in your community and faith life, and support within the mission area and congregation. Anxiety can be transformed into anticipation!

*Closure: The Congregation Council
The Bishop's Visit
Transition Team
Interim Ministry*

❖ When the announcement of departure is made, the president of the Congregation Council should notify the mission area office immediately. The Bishop will want to schedule a visit as soon as possible to talk with you and your pastor or lay rostered leader. The point of such an "exit interview" is to:

- Give thanks for the ministry that is concluding, identifying the changes and growth in the congregation.
- Hear from your pastor or lay rostered minister about what has been the most meaningful part of the ministry and what goals they have identified for the congregation.
- Hear, as well, about any "unfinished business" that they wish to turn over to the congregation.
- Hear from the leadership about their hopes and dreams for the future and the kind of ministry they see as most effective in this setting.

❖ The Congregation Council should appoint a Transition Team – about 6 members who will be a ministry team for the congregation, assisting in the management of the emotional and pastoral needs during the transition. The Team is accountable to the Council and has four particular responsibilities:

- Caring for the closure activities to help the previous pastor end well. Special events, gifts and remembrances are important not only to the pastor, but to members. Saying “goodbye” is an essential task.
 - Determine the readiness of the congregation to begin the Call Process, including the transition to an Interim Pastor, the management of the grief and emotional processes, and the stability of any issues of conflict, clear vision for mission, or finances.
 - Monitor the pastoral needs of the congregation during the interim and advise the Interim Pastor.
 - Facilitate the beginning of the new pastor’s ministry by planning welcoming activities, the Service of Installation, and ministry events to introduce the pastor.
- ❖ The mission area will supply documents that record the transfer of records from the pastor to the congregational secretary as well as attest to the completion of all financial obligations.
- ❖ The Bishop will appoint an "Interim Pastor" for you with the approval of the Congregation Council. The Interim Pastor provides services on a contract basis (part time or full time, as needed). Materials will be provided that will help you describe the interim ministry, set the fees for services, and write a contract. A "Litany of Welcome" will be provided for you to use as your Interim Pastor begins work. The mission area office also has information on "supply pastors" (go to www.ntnl.org / Congregations) – persons who give only one-time Sunday service. *Pastors who serve as Interim Pastors are not eligible for call as pastor.*
- ❖ Your congregation's constitution (C13.05) describes how a Call Committee is to be formed (either elected by the congregation or appointed by the council). It should be about six persons who are as diverse in kind as the membership of the congregation itself is. Under no circumstances should a departing pastor or lay rostered minister (nor their spouses) participate in the work of the Call Committee – nor current employed staff. (For further information see the handout *A Time of Transition*.)
- ❖ Once the Call Committee has been approved, the Bishop Assistant will want to schedule a visit to offer an “orientation session” for members of the Congregation Council and Call Committee. Anyone who wishes to learn more about the Call Process is welcome to attend. At that time materials will be delivered to help you in your work.
- ❖ If the congregation's vacancy occurs in the senior pastor position, the current associate pastor may be required to file an undated letter of resignation (depending on the terms of his/her Letter of Call). The associate pastor is not normally eligible for call as senior pastor; if the Congregation Council wishes to explore this possibility, please contact the Bishop as soon as possible.
- ❖ During a vacancy the current staff (especially an associate pastor) is in a difficult position regarding the correct role to play in the congregation. They will feel pressure to expand their work duties, to get involved in the Call Process, to assume the responsibilities of the departed senior pastor, and, for some, to consider becoming the next senior pastor. Avoid these

temptations. Help your associate pastor and other staff to maintain—and not change—their current job requirements and help the congregational membership not to confuse the roles of those on staff. Listen to the needs and the turmoil that your staff will express and help them by contracting with others to help pick up the work load—especially an Interim Senior Pastor.

❖ The Congregation Council's first tasks will be to (1) appoint the Transition Team and arrange for an Interim Pastor, (2) consider the "form of ministry" that is appropriate to the congregation (solo, senior-associate, co-pastors, pastor-lay professional, etc.) as well as job descriptions, and (3) review the budget both for an allocation for the search process and to identify the "best foot forward" that the congregation can offer in compensation and benefits.

❖ The Congregation Council should pour some significant energy into the identification of the congregation's three year goals. The council should actively seek congregational input in this assessment. The results are carefully recorded in the *Ministry Site Profile*.

Assessment: The Call Committee Surveys Complete the Ministry Site Profile Calling

❖ The Call Committee will likely meet weekly! Its first tasks will be to (1) elect a chairperson, secretary, and communicator and plan the details of the process that will be used, (2) complete the survey(s) needed to compile the *Ministry Site Profile*, seeking the congregation's input, and (3) receive and evaluate the information that the Council has provided.

❖ The Call Committee takes responsibility for having the *Ministry Site Profile* completed and submitted electronically to the ELCA database.

❖ The Call Committee should read and discuss the previous chapters on “calling,” thinking very carefully about what the “the call” means to you, your members, and your ministry setting.

❖ Invite your Interim Pastor to use two or three of the Sunday sermons to reflect on ministry, the call, the congregation, the church as focused on Word and Sacrament, and what it means to him or her to be a pastor of the church.

Planning: Principles Steps Statement

❖ The Call Committee should organize for the time of Conversation by reviewing the Three

Goals. How can you not only accomplish "selection," but also help the congregation shape its vision and understanding?

❖ The Call Committee should spend time reviewing and discussing the Eight Principles. How can this Call Process help promote a sense of community, trust, and sensitivity?

❖ The Call Committee should review the suggested procedural steps described under "Conversation". Modifications may be proposed, but they must be consistent with the Three Goals and must conform to the Eight Principles. Any significant modifications must be endorsed by the Bishop.

❖ From time to time--and only with good reason--the Bishop may also require modification of the Conversation Step to fit any special circumstance of the congregation or its candidates. Several things are not negotiable because they are prescribed by the constitution:

*Congregations are required to call those who serve in ordained and lay rostered ministry only from among those who are rostered by the ELCA (Constitution *C6.03.c. and d.) and only from among those whom the Bishop has recommended (*C9.02). There are provisions available for calling ministers of one of our ecumenical partners (Episcopal Church USA, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ). The congregation is to conduct their election by "at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting regularly called for that purpose" (*C9.01). To be a valid Letter of Call, it must be attested (signed) by the Bishop (*C9.04). A call is considered to constitute a "continuing mutual relationship and commitment" (*C9.05)--i.e. lifelong--except in the instance of resignation, incapacity, dissolution of the congregation, discipline, or mutual agreement to terminate the call.*

❖ "Term Calls" are not generally considered appropriate; a call is "open ended." The call to an associate or assistant pastor or to a lay rostered minister who is supervised by a senior pastor may, however, be written as "co-terminus" with the senior pastor. This means that the person will submit a letter of resignation at the time the senior pastor departs; the Congregation Council together with the arriving senior pastor can accept the resignation or act to re-affirm the call to the person to continue in their current capacity. The mission area office has further printed information about co-terminus calls.

❖ The committee will need to map out its own time-line, assign various duties to members (for correspondence with the candidates, communication with the congregation, hosting the candidate, hosting the spouse, collecting an information packet of community information, etc.), and agree on a procedure to keep the congregation informed on its progress.

❖ Any suggestions for nominations that the Call Committee receives should be forwarded to the Bishop's office. Do not contact candidates directly, except those presented by the Bishop's office for your consideration. Suggestions for nominations can come from **three sources**--the congregation, the pastors or lay rostered ministers themselves, or from the Bishop--but all suggestions must be channeled through the Bishop's office where the long list of possibilities will be shortened to a manageable and appropriate list for consideration and where candidates will be screened for availability, openness to call, and suitability.



The Call Process

Northern Texas – Northern Louisiana Mission Area
Sowing and Growing Disciples of Jesus

STEP TWO: CONVERSATION

A Time to Conduct a Fair, Effective, and Proper Search
for a Pastor or Lay Rostered Minister

"Conversation" begins when the Call Committee receives nominations from the mission area office and continues until the committee has identified its final selection. This period of time can be characterized by growing anticipation and excitement. Indeed, the Congregation Council and Call Committee should actively pursue the hopeful feelings of the congregation. But it is also possible that the Call Process may be side-tracked by disappointment or problems. The "ideal" process that you set out to accomplish in Step One may succumb to the "real" experience of people, events, and glitches in this next step. The committee should avoid the temptation to short-circuit a patient and careful search, or be distracted by politics, personalities, and problems. To begin each meeting with prayer and devotion may be more important than ever before!

THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS

*Thou shalt pray for this work constantly.
Thou shalt remain patient and await God's timing within your process.
Thou shalt observe confidentiality always.
Thou shalt reassure folks of your progress.
Thou shalt be honest with your candidates.
Thou shalt report regularly to the council.
Thou shalt keep an open mind, subject to the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit.*

*Initial Review:
Rostered Leader Profiles
Telephone Interview
Committee Discussion*

❖ During the 2-4 weeks after receiving the congregation's profile, the Bishop and Bishop Assistant will review all that you have written in the *Ministry Site Profile* and will contact

prospective candidates. Your list of candidates will be delivered to you by mail or in person, depending on the situation. Your mission area office is responsible for ensuring that the candidates you receive are persons who are available for call, willing to enter into a conversation about call, able to work within your budgetary constraints, and endorsed by their home Bishop as ready for call. This requires coordination among the synods and a certain set of protocols or rules to be certain that synods respect one another's territory and rostered leaders. This also helps explain why Call Committees are asked not to contact prospective candidates directly, but to have your mission area staff do that for you.

❖ **Thirty Day Rule:** Call Committees have the list of candidate's names exclusively for thirty days. After that time a candidate's name may be submitted to another Call Committee; if so, the committee will be notified. If any of those being submitted to you are already under consideration in another location, you will be notified also. (The bishop can suspend the 30 day rule if urgency requires it.)

❖ The nominees for call will receive your congregation's profile from the Bishop Assistant on the same day that you receive the nominees' written profiles. Each member of the Call Committee reads the profiles (remember to follow confidentiality and to avoid discrimination) and looks for (a) the candidate's relevant experience, (b) impressions of the candidate's style of ministry, and (c) unique interests or talents.

❖ Every candidate is phoned by one of the members of the committee to (a) thank them for their interest, and (b) introduce them to the work of the congregation and the structure of the call process.

❖ From now on each of your candidates should be contacted at least every 3-4 weeks so they know of your progress. They get anxious too!

❖ **Confidentiality:** Tell the congregation of your progress (announcements at worship, in the bulletin, time-line chart on a bulletin board) weekly or bi-weekly; only do not reveal the names of those who are under consideration so as not to harm trusting relationships in the ministries of those you will interview but not call. Pray for your work regularly within the Prayer of the Church.

❖ The committee can schedule a conference phone call with each candidate as a "get-acquainted" activity, but the goal remains to have on-site, personal interviews with all candidates.

Interviews: On-Site Interviews Information

❖ The committee plans to meet all of the candidates in person. The chairperson makes the arrangements and sends each invitee a packet of helpful information (annual reports, bulletins,

church directory, historical sketch of the congregation, and information from your Chamber of Commerce). A one-day or over-night visit is appropriate. Intersperse meetings with the committee with time to see the church, parsonage, community, and time to rest. This is normally a visit between the candidate and committee only; if the spouse does come along, he or she should not participate in the intensive interview time. *The congregation is responsible for all expenses of the visit (travel, meals, lodging) for the pastor and spouse.*

- ❖ The chairperson of the Call Committee and one other member may wish to visit separately with each candidate regarding their needs and expectations for compensation and benefits.
- ❖ Each visiting candidate might be asked to prepare something he or she is comfortable doing (e.g. devotion, Bible study, prayer) to start the main meeting with the committee. Encourage the candidate to be prepared, as well, to ask specific questions or to see specific things within the community.
- ❖ If the search is for a senior pastor, each of the candidates may be given time to visit with the current staff as a group and with the associate pastor alone. The staff may, in turn and speaking as a group, offer their comments on each candidate to the Call Committee as feedback; the associate pastor may also give feedback to the committee. But no staff person should serve on the Call Committee, or deal separately with the Call Committee, or be placed in the position of unduly influencing the committee's decision.
- ❖ If the search is for an assistant pastor, associate pastor, or lay rostered minister, the senior pastor should be given significant time to meet privately with each candidate and then should give his/her feedback to the committee. The senior pastor may serve as a full member of the Call Committee and should, at least, meet regularly with the Call Committee. *It is unwise for a Call Committee to recommend any candidate that the senior pastor opposes.* The mission area office can be helpful in identifying agencies that may be helpful in evaluating the potential strengths and weaknesses of a multiple staff team.
- ❖ The committee agrees on 1-2 candidates that they want to continue with; the other candidates are released from consideration either in a letter (copy to the Bishop's office) or by phone. Please complete the confidential evaluation form on each candidate that you are releasing and return it to the Bishop's office.
- ❖ Many committees choose to do a second interview with the finalists. The interview allows the conversation to go deeper and allows the committee to come to a final determination. At the time of this second interview, compensation issues should be discussed either by the committee as a whole or by committee representatives.
- ❖ Committees should do Background Checks on the candidate they are considering recommending. Such checks are conducted at the congregation's expense and with utmost sensitivity and confidentiality. The checks may include a criminal background check, credit history report, and/or motor vehicle check. A signed Consent Form is required prior to

conducting a Background Check.

❖ Phone the references of your 1-2 candidates to hear their evaluation. Ask the candidates to supply you with an audio or video of a recent worship service. Ask for other information if you believe it is necessary (old newsletters, special educational event materials, biographical statements or faith statements). It is not recommended the committee visit the candidate in his or her current ministry setting since it is impossible to do so without violating confidentiality and doing harm to the ministry in the candidate's current setting.

*Recommendation:
Vote to Recommend
Reflections
Release Nominees*

❖ The committee convenes to finalize its recommendation. Open the meeting with prayer. Recall the goals and hopes you had for the Call Process as you began.

❖ Let each member speak in favor of the candidate of his or her choice. Agree by consensus or secret ballot and by a 2/3 majority on the candidate to recommend to the Congregation Council.

❖ If no candidate receives a 2/3 vote and you are deadlocked, call the mission area office. You will likely need to release all candidates and begin again.

❖ If a 2/3 majority is reached, notify your candidate that the committee has voted to recommend his/her name to the Congregational Council. Clarify and reaffirm with your candidate the terms, time-table, and compensation that will be proposed to the council. Ask your candidate if he/she is prepared for you to take this next step.

❖ Whenever the committee decides that a candidate is no longer under consideration, the committee should contact the candidate by letter and/or phone to tell them that they are being released. Be certain to tell the mission area office of the action you have taken. If you wish to hold on to your "number 2" candidate, please contact the mission area office.

❖ With agreement on the one candidate of choice, ask for a joint meeting with the Congregation Council. This is the committee's opportunity to help others learn just as you have learned and be persuaded just as you are persuaded.

❖ Begin by reminding the Council of the goals and directions described in the *Ministry Site Profile*. Continue by offering a summary of the committee's deliberations and conclusions. You may distribute to the council copies of the profile of your nominee (but may not release the names or profiles of the other nominees). Invite the council to ask questions or offer comments.

❖ The council may accept the recommendation and by a 2/3 vote send the nomination to the congregation for election at a congregational meeting, OR fail to reach a 2/3 vote and send the committee back to work to bring another recommendation at a later date, OR--in some cases--ask to have the candidate return to visit in person with them as well. It is strongly recommended that all compensation issues be finalized with the candidate prior to recommending him/her to the congregation. Compensation must meet the minimum requirements set by the Mission Assembly (see the document *Care and Compensation* at www.ntnl.org).

Possible Interview Questions

1. What led you into ministry; what does it mean to you that you have been called?
2. What three things have given you the most joy in your ministry in recent years; what has required hard work?
3. When you have a day off what would you most likely do?
4. Where do you experience God's grace in your life?
5. What kind of worship experiences most inspire you; what kinds of sermons do you aspire to?
6. What priority do you give educational ministry? Confirmation instruction?
7. What is the role of the laity, the Congregation Council, the church staff; how do you like to relate to each?
8. What are the three themes that often appear in your sermons; describe your devotional life.
9. What convictions do you have about stewardship, evangelism, social ministry, visitation, youth, worship and music?
10. How does your spouse see him/herself as a member of the congregation?
11. In what ways do you like to work within the surrounding community?
12. How do you view communion practices, various worship forms, and creative expression in the church?
13. What three themes are we likely to hear repeated in your preaching and teaching.
14. Also:
15. Also:
16. Also:



STEP THREE: TRANSITION

A Time to Present the Candidate for Election And Assist in the Time of Transition

"Transition" begins with a presentation to the congregation regarding the recommendation and continues until the nominee is elected and situated within the congregation. This is a time of excitement and freshness and should be handled with an objective of generating momentum and community spirit. Temptations to speed up the process in order to have the pastor or lay rostered minister "on the job" as soon as possible can happen as easily as the temptation to slow down the process for fear of making a mistake. Continue to trust the process and the God who is within the process bringing it to completion!

Sharing: Presentation Introductory Event Election

- ❖ The Congregation Council should call for a time at a worship service in which the Call Committee can repeat its presentation of its recommendation. A handout can be prepared that contains the rationale as well as a narrative biographical sketch of the nominee. A time of questions and comments can follow.
- ❖ The Call Committee and Congregation Council arrange for a day when the nominee can visit again and meet the entire membership of the congregation. The pastor or lay rostered minister's spouse and family (if any) can come along also. Make a fun day of it: a reception, a visit with various groups, a worship time (including a sermon by the nominee if she/he agrees), a pot-luck dinner. Allow for time when the nominee can introduce herself or himself and respond to questions.
- ❖ The Congregation Council calls for a congregational meeting to elect the pastor or lay rostered minister. Such a meeting generally requires two weeks and/or written notice to all members (check your constitution for the requirements). The meeting may have only two items of business and none other: (1) to call the pastor or lay rostered minister (using a secret ballot, requiring a 2/3 majority, having the presence of a quorum verified). No absentee or proxy voting is permitted, and there is no need to have a second motion to "make it a unanimous vote;" (2) to

accept the basic compensation package (requiring a simple majority vote). Please note that the motion on compensation need only say, “...that the budget of _____ Lutheran Church reflect a total of \$XXX for Defined Compensation (that is, cash salary, housing allowance, and Social Security allowance), in addition to participation in the ELCA pension and medical program.” Reimbursements to the pastor or lay rostered leader for automobile use, professional expenses, and continuing education are NOT compensation items; they are a part of the congregation’s operating expense budget.

❖ The congregational president may phone the nominee of the results of the election immediately and phone the mission area office the next working day.

Letter of Call: Mutual Expectations Compensation & Benefits Transmittal

❖ The president and secretary complete and sign the Letter of Call and compensation documents. Blank documents, instructions, salary guidelines, and information about the pension and medical program of the ELCA will have been supplied to the congregational president. The Letter of Call and compensation document must be sent to the Bishop for verification and signature. If a separate job description has been written, it should be included also. If the Letter of Call and compensation documents are in order, the Bishop will sign it and forward it to the pastor or lay rostered minister.

❖ Upon receipt of the Letter of Call, the pastor or lay rostered minister will have 30 days in which to accept or decline. He or she should respond in writing and should sign the compensation document. Failure to respond within 30 days nullifies the Call.

❖ If the pastor or lay rostered minister accepts the Call, he or she will have 30 to 60 days to bring closure to his or her current ministry and move to the new location. This interval of time should be mutually agreed upon between the pastor-elect or lay rostered minister-elect and the Congregation Council.

❖ The congregation is normally responsible for all costs incurred in moving to the new ministry setting.

❖ The Council and Transition Team should be certain that the Interim Pastor is appropriately thanked and bid farewell using the "Litany of Farewell" that is provided.

❖ The Council should also be certain that the Call Committee is publicly thanked for their service on behalf of the entire congregation. Many Call Committee members will say that this work has been among the most exhausting – and rewarding – work they have ever done!

*Beginning Together:
Service of Installation
Get-Acquainted Events
Mutual Ministry Committee*

❖ The Service of Installation is a necessary and appropriate way to inaugurate the ministry. The Council should rely on the Transition Team to plan the service, as well as other activities to help welcome and situate the new pastor.

- The Dean of the Conference will officiate at the installation as the Bishop's representative. The date of the service will therefore be coordinated between the president of the congregation, the Dean of the Conference, and the elected leader.
- The service will normally take place at a time other than Sunday morning so that it can be an all-Conference event, inviting pastors, lay rostered ministers, and congregational members from throughout the conference to be present. Every attempt should also be made to have it be a community and ecumenical event by inviting area non-Lutheran religious leaders and community leaders to join in the celebration.
- The service is a festive celebration of the mission that the congregation is called to and the way this elected leader will add his or her gifts for ministry to the work of the People of God within your church.
- If possible, conclude the celebration with a reception that will serve to introduce the pastor or lay rostered minister to the congregation and community.

❖ Very soon after arriving on-site, the pastor or lay minister should pursue – with the Transition Team's guidance and support – a series of events that allow him or her to be introduced one-on-one to individual members and/or groups within the congregation, for example: neighborhood home-gatherings, a series of events in the fellowship hall, being accompanied on first-visits with all homebound, youth dinner in his or her honor, Sunday School opening program, and the like.

❖ The Transition Team should meet regularly with the new pastor or lay rostered minister specifically to assist the process of transition and to support the person with his or her questions or concerns. Avoid the temptation to "unload the load" of leadership upon him or her, but enter with him or her into mutual ownership of the total ministry.

❖ It is strongly recommended that the congregation establish a Mutual Ministry Committee (which is different from Staff Support Committees and Personnel Committees that tend to manage policy, employment requirements, organizational structure) to support your rostered leader in a personal way during the years ahead. The mission area office can assist you in developing such a committee and can point you toward helpful resources.

- ❖ Once the new pastor is in the care of the Mutual Ministry Committee, the work of the Transition Team is concluded.
- ❖ Pray for your new leader yourself – regularly and earnestly.



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- Has this "Call Process Handbook" been helpful? Have the handouts, letters, and phone contacts with mission area office been helpful? We would like to know and welcome your comments either verbally or in writing.

***GO IN PEACE!
SERVE THE LORD!***

Almighty God, through your Son Jesus Christ you gave the holy apostles many gifts and commanded them to feed your flock. Inspire all pastors to preach your Word diligently and your people to receive it willingly, that finally we may receive the crown of eternal glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.