



The Call Process

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

Mobility in the ELCA

Some Information and Encouragement For those Considering Mobility

Mobility within the ELCA can be confusing and frustrating. Each ELCA synod has its own Call Process and each congregation does the process in its own way. This bulletin is meant to offer some general counsel on mobility, but you are urged to work closely with the synod office(s) that have received your mobility information.

Entering Mobility

The discernment process that leads to the decision to become available for call is an important one, for it is best that the decision be driven by prayer, a clear sense of the calling of the Spirit, and insight into the nature of one's spiritual gifts. Ideally, a decision to seek Call will be driven by a readiness to expand opportunities or to answer a spiritual calling, rather than by a need to step away from conflict, or to deal with burnout, or to seek greater compensation. It is generally not a good idea to consider mobility if you have been in your present Call less than three years, or if you are in the midst of a capital campaign or construction project, a major congregational reorganization, or a personal or professional crisis. Confer with the Bishop or Bishop Assistant to help you with your discernment process.

Completing the Mobility Forms

All 65 synods of the ELCA use the same standardized forms for mobility, though some synods will ask for supplemental information such as written information or a personal interview. The standardized forms must be completed online at www.ELCA.org/call. If you must have a hard copy of the blank form, please contact the mission area office. The *Rostered Leader Profile* is filled out using a free program called Formatta. Note that the form has two optional sections (*Candidate Commentary* and *Twelve Reflections*). Use the

format of the form to present yourself in the best way possible; be creative. The form is not meant to be exhaustive, but to allow you a way to introduce yourself in anticipation of a conversational interview. Toward the end of the form you will be able to indicate the synods that you wish will take note of your forms. Follow the directions for sending your form electronically to the Mobility Database System. The mission area office will review your work and approve the form for posting to the ELCA's database. Feel free to visit with the Bishop Assistant about what to expect from the synods, how to advance your mobility, and the current status of mobility in the ELCA.

Flexibility

A search for a new Call is greatly affected by the flexibility that you can offer. To restrict oneself to a small or a popular geographic area, or to a limited range of ministry interests, or to a congregation or city of very specific characteristics, or to a certain compensation package, or to any of a host of personal or professional preferences only shrinks the pool of possible Call opportunities. Begin your search as broadly as you can and only narrow that field later as you begin to see the way interview opportunities are shaping up. Give the Spirit room to work! More than one pastor has said that they had not thought they would accept a Call like the one they did, until they went ahead and agreed to interview. Use the "Ministry Opportunities" page on www.ELCA.org/call to learn about openings. Never contact a congregation directly; always direct your inquiries to that synod's bishop.

Advocacy

After your mobility information has been posted for at least three weeks, you may contact the

synod offices with your own letter of interest or with a phone call to offer further information. Ask them about their form of the process, the type of vacancies they are experiencing, compensation guidelines, special rules (e.g. co-terminus or term Calls), and what you can do to advocate for yourself. Many synods maintain information on a website; some will prefer to contact you rather than be contacted; some do a great deal of this work using email. It is not generally helpful to have others call the synod office on your behalf unless your search is entering the realm of “urgent.” Nor is it helpful to flood the synod office with information, documents, professional resumes, or reference letters that have not been requested. Most every synod office has an Assistant to the Bishop who manages Call Process within the synod, and this person will welcome it if you stay in contact in a friendly way without being overly persistent or demanding.

Becoming a Candidate

Before your mobility information is submitted to a Call Committee, the mission area office will call you. Feel free to ask your questions before agreeing to interview. You need not be convinced of your readiness to take a certain Call before you would agree to interview there, but you should feel an openness to consider such a possibility. The mission area office will send you a copy of the congregation’s profile – usually one at a time, although some synods may allow you to be a candidate in several congregations at once.

- **Be patient.** The chairperson of the Call Committee is responsible for contacting you, but sometimes it takes their committees three or more weeks before they place the phone call.
- **Be Prepared:** The committee may ask you for a phone interview before proceeding to a personal on-site interview. In either case, do your homework, know the congregation and its profile, have your questions about mission and ministry well conceived, listen carefully and speak only after reflection. Wait for the committee to raise the issue of compensation, but be prepared to suggest the range of compensation that you might expect. Most especially, spend time in reflection on the nature of your ministry, the hopes and dreams that you feel, the commitments of faith and energy that you have to give.
- **Be Genuine:** Call Committees want to know three things especially (often in this order of importance): who you are as a person of faith,

who you are as a person of interests and relationships, and who you are as a person of skills and competencies. *The energy, vision, and warmth that you inject into the conversations will make all the difference.* Your spouse (if applicable) should participate in the second and subsequent trips to the congregation, but should not participate in the intensive interview(s). Always dress, act, and reflect a professional and caring demeanor. In the long run it never pays to represent yourself as something you are not, to withhold information about yourself, or to be ingenuine. If you have any kind of unique “history” (medical, marital, criminal, emotional, etc.), you are expected to make the committee aware of it lest such information come out in a different manner or at another time and then seriously damage your ministry among them.

- **Confiding:** If you are invited to interview, it is wise to tell your Council president. If you are the choice of the Call Committee, tell your Congregation Council. If you receive a positive vote from the congregation, tell your own congregation. Whether accepting or declining, put it in a letter with a copy to your bishop.
- **Serial or Parallel:** Some synods will only allow you to interview in one place at a time. Other synods will begin you in a second process after a set number of days (30 or 45) have elapsed in the first process.
- **Confidentiality:** Call Committees generally are asked to follow confidentiality. There may be occasion when they ask you to release them from this obligation. If the request seems questionable, contact their synod office.
- **Evaluation:** If you have observations or discomforts about a particular Call Process that would be helpful for the synod office to know, please let them know. Likewise, be open to hearing from the Call Committee or synod office how your interviewing was perceived.

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