

Call Process Manual

Introduction

The Calling of a pastor, diaconal minister or Associate in Ministry is a time of significant change, both for professional leaders and congregations. There are special needs and circumstances in every situation, even as there are special opportunities to express love for one another, complete a ministry, make evaluations and prepare for the future.

There are certain responsibilities that arise at this time, both to pastors and congregations, and there are procedures that are uniquely ours, as Lutheran Christians. It is important for professional leaders and congregations to understand and respect each other's responsibilities. For the purposes of this document, the term "pastor" is assumed to include Diaconal Ministers, Associates in Ministry or others that are set apart for special ministry by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and are recognized and included on the rosters of this church.

This manual seeks to make clear to all concerned what the process is, and how we provide for the mobility of pastors and the staffing of congregations. Throughout the process, all concerned need to avail themselves of prayer, so that this process is not a mere mechanical event. We need God's Holy Spirit at every step, and it is right to ask for divine guidance.

A Prayer of Guidance

Lord, our God, our future is not yet known. Help us see which way we should go, and whom you will send to us as pastor. Your presence is very much needed. Help all of us involved in this change to look for the Light of your Son, Jesus the Christ, that the Way may become clear, and your will may be done. Amen.

Overview

1.0 Resignation and First Meeting

Upon the resignation of a Pastor or Associate in Ministry, or in the event a congregation wishes to add new staff, the Council arranges to meet with the Bishop of the synod (or the Assistant to the Bishop).

- 1.1 The initial meeting with the Bishop normally take places before the termination of the departing leader.
- 1.2 The Bishop (or Assistant) meets with the Congregation Council and Call Committee, if one has been elected or appointed.
- 1.3 The agenda of the meeting will normally include the following topics:
 - a. Theology of the Call
 - b. Exit interview and farewell planning
 - c. Determination of Interim needs
 - d. Overview of the Call Process
 - e. Role of the Office of the Bishop during the Call Process
 - f. Election of the Call Committee (if necessary)
- 1.4 The Bishop (or Assistant) may notify the Dean of the Conference, in a manner of the Bishop's choosing, of the initial meeting with a congregation.

2.0 Development of Congregational Profile

The Office of the Bishop will assist the Call Committee in the preparation of the Congregational Profile.

- 2.1 An Assistant to the Bishop will be available to the Call Committee for meetings and consultation during the development of the Profile.

2.2 The Assistant to the Bishop may seek the assistance of the Bishop, other staff and/or the Dean of the Conference as needed.

3.0 Presentation of Candidates and Interviewing

Upon the completion of the Congregation Profile, the Office of the Bishop normally submits the names of three candidates for interview by the Call Committee.

3.1 The congregation may be invited to submit names of pastors, or other rostered leaders, who may be possible candidates, and who match the gifts and ministry style identified in the Profile, to the Office of the Bishop.

3.2 All initial contacts with possible candidates shall be made through the Synod Office.

3.3 The Bishop and staff will identify candidates who meet the requirements of the congregation as set forth in the Profile for recommendation to the Call Committee for interview.

3.4 The Call Committee is responsible for arranging and conducting the interviews of candidates recommended by the Bishop. It is expected that the interviews of all candidates would be completed within 30 days of the first interview.

3.5 The Call Committee shall notify all candidates of the results of the interview process within 2 weeks of the last interview.

3.6 If none of the candidates are considered suitable, the Call Committee shall notify them that they are no longer being considered for the call. Additional candidates may then be requested from the Office of the Bishop.

4.0 Recommendation to the Congregation and Call Meeting

When the Call Committee has identified a suitable candidate, they notify the Congregation Council and arrange a Congregational Meeting to vote on extending a call.

4.1 Proper notification shall be given to the congregation for a call meeting. The Call Committee may include with the notification a vitae of the candidate and a summary of the compensation package to be voted on at the meeting.

4.2 The Call Committee shall coordinate the date of the Congregational Meeting with the Synod Office to ensure that the Bishop or his/her designee is present.

4.3 The congregation shall vote by written ballot to extend the call, with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of the voting members present required. If the vote to extend the call is affirmative, the congregation then approves the compensation and benefits package by a simple majority vote.

5.0 Acceptance of the Call and Installation

The officers of the congregation complete the *Letter of Call* and *Definition of Compensation, Benefits, And Responsibilities*, obtaining the signatures of the President and Secretary of the Congregation, and forward the forms to the Bishop.

5.1 The Bishop shall attest the call and forward it to the candidate.

5.2 Upon receipt of the *Letter of Call*, the candidate has thirty (30) days in which to respond.

5.3 If the Call is accepted, the pastor, or other roster leader, and the Congregation Council shall establish a date for the start of the new ministry. The Call Committee shall assist in the transition, moving and startup for the new pastor and family.

5.4 The new pastor shall consult with the Conference Dean to determine the date of installation. The Dean installs the new pastor in the congregation at the direction of the Bishop.

5.5 If the installation service is conducted on a Sunday morning, requiring the Dean's absence from his/her normal Sunday morning responsibilities, the installing congregation shall be responsible for the expense of a supply pastor for the Dean.

5.6 The Conference Dean, in partnership with the Congregation Council, shall conduct a review of the ministry of the congregation between the sixth and ninth month of the new ministry.

5.7 If the Call is not accepted, the process resumes with the Call Committee interviewing further candidates.

Saying Goodbye ... and Looking Ahead

FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

The time of transition between when a pastor has left and before the new pastor begins may be filled with many emotions, and highs and lows. It often is a time of mixed feelings – there may be sadness in having a pastor leave as well some excitement about the potential of a new beginning. Several important steps need to be taken at this initial step of transition. The first is to make the plans for saying goodbye. One of the important ways that a congregation helps the transition begin is by having a suitable farewell event. The church often does a fine job of saying goodbye. A special planning committee can help the congregation say thank you, we love you, goodbye and God's blessings on your future.

In addition to planning a farewell event, the Council should schedule an exit interview (an example is provided in the “Resources” section). This gives an opportunity to talk with the pastor about the plans and visions that he or she may have that still could be viable, even under new leadership. In addition, there may be problems or concerns that the pastor might like to point out to a group as he or she prepares to leave.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the secretary of the congregation to meet with the departing pastor and receive the parochial records. The secretary is required to certify to the bishop of the synod that the records have been received in good order.

RELATIONSHIPS TO FORMER PASTORS

This time of transition is also a challenge for both the pastor and parishioners as the pastoral relationship ends and new relationship boundaries are established. For congregations, it is a time of grief, anxiety and confusion. Saying goodbye is never easy.

A good pastoral relationship is a blessing. Congregations who have been served competently and compassionately by a pastor often want the continued pastoral leadership and presence of the former pastor at their family's weddings, baptisms and funerals. When a pastor resigns or retires, he/she may be asked to do numerous “special occasions”. This is a delicate area and painful for lay people and pastors alike.

The congregation may need the reminder that when a pastor leaves all professional contacts stops. No pastoral acts are to be requested. No consultation about programs. No counseling about concerns. None. Why? It confuses and potentially causes conflicts. The new pastor needs to become established and the departing one needs to release responsibility. While it is tempting to invite the previous pastor to be involved in weddings, funerals, and baptisms, etc., everyone is better served if you do not. Inviting the former pastor(s)/family as friends is possible, of course, though even that sometimes causes confusion among members, too.

While this desire to continue a good pastoral relationship is understandable, it is inappropriate and a matter of professional ethics for pastors. What is at stake is the integrity of the pastoral office. When a pastor leaves a parish, he/she is no longer the pastor of those parishioners; he/she may continue to be a friend (though this is tricky), but the pastoral relationship has ended.

Upon leaving a congregation, it is not appropriate for the former pastor to continue to function in that role by performing pastoral acts for former parishioners. This is most difficult for people to comprehend. It is sometimes fitting to do what other friends do—attend a wedding or funeral, for example. The pastoral act of presiding at those services, however, belongs to the interim or newly called pastor.

Former Pastors: The responsibility of establishing new relationship boundaries is yours. When asked by former parishioners, respond immediately, “It’s simply not proper for me to do that. I’m not your pastor anymore, but thanks for considering me. I would love to come as a guest, if able, as your other friends do.”

Parishioners: Don’t ask. It is awkward for both the current and former pastors. Honor your former pastor by inviting him/her to come as a guest. Show respect to the new or interim pastor by allowing him/her to perform his/her pastoral duties.

Current Pastors: Speak the good and positive word about your predecessor and the relationship the former pastor had with the congregation, but do not yield your pastoral role.

The transition from one pastor to another—while an exciting journey—is also one that is difficult to navigate. Yet, with God’s help, we can discover the creative life-giving opportunity that is change. With the Spirit’s power, we can let go of the old and reach out for the new.

ELCA Policy regarding Retired Pastors

Retired Pastors

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Ordained ministers may retire upon attainment of age 60, or after 30 years on the roster of ordained ministers of this church or one of the predecessor bodies, or upon disability, and continue to be listed on the roster of ordained ministers of this church, upon endorsement and by the synodical bishop, by action of a Synod Council in the synod in which the ordained minister is listed on the roster... (Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [bylaw 7.41.17]).

Persons who have served within the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and who have determined that they will enter retirement are not only to be honored for their pastor service, but are seen as important resources for ministry within the life of this church. To enter this new phase of one’s life is always a significant milestone. It is a transition into another important stage of life for every retired person. It is true also for the retired pastor (and spouse if the pastor is so blessed.)

The following statement is a guideline for retired pastors, the congregations they served, and the synodical bishops in understanding the new status of a retired pastor. It is intended to affirm the past ministry of retired pastors, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves to the retired pastor, and to point to new arenas of service and support.

I. Roster of Ordained Ministers

A retired pastor is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the pastor resides. The retired pastor remains accountable to the synodical bishop where rostered. A retired pastor must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of ordained ministers and remains the subject of the standards for ordained ministers of this church.

II. Congregational Membership

A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one’s membership to another congregation allows the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor’s retired role.

III. Pastoral Service

At the time of retirement a pastor is no longer a pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in the congregation unless specifically authorized to do so.

The service of retired pastors is governed by the Constitution for Synods [S14.14.], which describes the role of ordained ministers in congregations in which they do not serve: “Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council” (S14.14.in the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

IV. Interim Ministry

One area of potential service for the retired pastor is interim ministry. Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America invites retired pastors to consider this important arena of ministry.

A retired pastor may serve as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only by the authorization of the synodical bishop. Retired pastors who wish to serve under call in an interim ministry must return to the active roster of ordained ministers.

V. Compensation

Retirement benefits provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the Board of Pensions, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to

pastors in retirement. Therefore, there shall be no financial commitment by a congregation or agency to retired pastors or their spouses.

A retired pastor who is authorized to serve (not under call) in a congregation for a stated period of time and for pastoral services may be compensated according to compensation practices within the synod.

The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or other responsibilities.

VI. Consultation with Synodical Bishop

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired pastors, a synodical bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a pastor at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the pastor's new retired status and its implications.

*Adopted by the Church Council
as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
under churchwide bylaw 7.41.17.
November 13, 1998*

PREPARING FOR THE INTERIM TIME

A vitally important step in beginning transition is to work with the Office of the Bishop in the selection and/or appointment of an interim pastor. Today many retired pastors and others have been trained and are prepared to help serve a congregation for the specific time between when a pastor leaves and a new regular pastor begins. The Office of the Bishop can work with the Council to help make this transition time a valuable growing experience for the congregation.

Some congregations may feel they can "get by" with supply pastors on Sundays and call upon neighboring clergy for pastoral emergencies. While this may seem satisfactory for a short time, experience suggests that it is preferable to have continuity and at least part-time interim pastoral services. There are important parish developmental tasks to be accomplished during the interim time. If the congregation does not have the benefit of a trained interim pastor to serve in the role of John the Baptist as a "way-preparer," the newly-called permanent pastor may have a difficult time being accepted by members. Likewise, giving in to anxiety and pressures to "hurry up and get us a new pastor" can be counter-productive in the long run. Ghosts of an unresolved past may return to haunt a new pastor who is chosen through a hasty call process. Experience in many parishes over the years also indicates that the congregation which tries to save money by getting by with minimal interim pastoral services is "penny-wise and pound-foolish." If only minimal pastoral compensation is required, many members will perceive that their regular contributions are not needed and the congregation's overall financial stewardship can decline rapidly.

A typical interim arrangement for smaller congregations is to engage the services of a retired or active pastor on a half-time basis. This will assure the congregation of ongoing continuity in Sunday worship, as well as basic pastoral care and some program leadership. Obviously, one who ministers on a part-time schedule will not be able to cover all the bases of a full-time pastor; this kind of arrangement gives unique opportunities for lay leadership to grow and assume functions which may have been previously carried out by the pastor.

Interim pastors do not serve under call from the congregation; if retired, they retain clergy status and if under call as interim pastor the source of call is the synod council. For clarity of expectations regarding expected areas of ministry and compensation, an Interim Service Agreement should be completed and signed by the pastor, congregational officers and Bishop or Assistant to the Bishop. Compensation for full or part-time interim pastoral leadership should be based upon the synodical guidelines, with possible adjustment as dictated by the needs and circumstances of the interim pastor. In order to be free of pressures from members to become a candidate for permanent call, the Interim Agreement includes a clear statement that the interim pastor is not eligible for permanent call. This also protects the call committee's ability to interview and consider a number of candidates without undue pressure from congregational members to call the one who is "close at hand."

INTERIM MINISTRY IN THE SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD

The period of transition in congregations, while in between permanent pastors, is an important time. It can be a "defining moment" in addressing the congregation's mission, clarifying it and stimulating growth

responses. It is an opportunity to review the past and anticipate the future, maintaining as well as envisioning the impact of its ministry. At the very least, the interim time will include carrying out tasks of preparation so that the next “chapter” of ministry begins with promise.

The work of interim ministry focuses on a congregation’s capacity to discharge its mission as a called instrument of the Lord of the Church, while experiencing a change of pastors. The emphasis is on REVIEWING its past and current state while ANTICIPATING the future. Attention is given to the congregation’s organizational structure and assessing its responsiveness in ministry without an exclusive concentration on the pastor’s role. Maintaining programs and services is a concern during the interim in providing continuity.

Such an “interim emphasis,” objective in nature, allows for an examination of a congregation’s health while seeking to prepare for the next era of its ministry. Preparation will consist of appropriate responses to the areas explored (such as pastor-lay mutual ministry with clarification of roles, mission priorities, leadership changes and training, effective organization and identifying unique characteristics of the congregation). This goes hand-in-hand with the developing “Congregational Mission Profile” describing the congregation.

During the interim time there is review of the congregation’s history in order to gain insight into significant patterns or themes that impact the present. Effort is given toward identifying the current active membership and its characteristics while also considering needed leadership changes. The interim pastor’s role is vital in modeling a constructive pastor/lay partnership and in encouraging forward movement.

Loss of the previous pastor is experienced by members of the congregation in different ways (personal, organizational, momentum/vision) and opportunity needs to be given for people to share their feelings and support one another in accepting this new reality.

It takes time for a congregation to adjust to a new circumstance in which its pastor is no longer present. Individually and as a congregation, members will find their way as they utilize available resources. The process of RE-VIEWING, RE-DEFINING and RE-VISIONING will be time consuming and yet productive in the end, responding to present and future challenges in ministry.

Each congregation presents similar but also differing challenges in the interim period. This is due in part to the circumstance that has resulted in the pastoral vacancy. For example, how difficult will it be to say good-bye to the pastor who is leaving? How long has it been since the congregation experienced a change of pastors? Is there division or brokenness which requires healing? Then, factors related to the congregation’s program and priorities in ministry account for still other challenges. Additional situations requiring interim pastoral service may be congregations in which pastors are planning a sabbatical leave or where there is medical leave.

Identifying specific challenges and arriving at realistic goals for the interim period is an important discipline. Understanding the temporary but unique aspects of interim ministry can lead to opportunities for exploration and growth.

SELECTING COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

The Committee which guides the Transition Process is called the "Call Committee." The members may be elected by the congregation or appointed by the Congregation Council. Be sure to check your congregation's constitution. We recommend a committee size of 6 members representative of the areas of congregational life.

A critical relationship is that between call committee and the Congregation Council. In some congregations, constitutions require that the Congregation Council must recommend one candidate by a 2/3 vote of its membership. Strive for clear understanding!

It is helpful to select a chairperson for the Call Committee who is not the chief elected lay officer of the congregation (president or vice president, depending on your structure). That person will have ongoing responsibilities for congregational life. The Call Committee chair need not be a member of the Council.

The Characteristics desired in Call Committee members are as follows:

1. WORSHIP PARTICIPATION:

Familiarity with the worship life of a congregation is critical for a call committee member. The member should know how the congregation worships and what its expectations are relating to worship. More importantly, regular participation in worship speaks of a commitment to honor God, hear His word, and receive God's gifts of mercy and grace.

2. A PERSON OF PRAYER:

The call committee will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer as it goes about its work. The committee will invite and lead the congregation in praying that God's will be accomplished in the call process. A person who prays will be able to entertain new thoughts and directions as the Spirit leads.

3. CAN REPRESENT THE WHOLE CONGREGATION:

The call committee should consist of persons who know the needs of the whole congregation, and while they might have a primary interest in one area, they are able to make judgments based on the greater good of the whole congregation. The goal is to make winners of the whole congregation with no one feeling that they were the loser.

4. ABLE TO SPEAK OUT:

People on the call committee need to be able to express their thoughts and feelings. They should not be domineering or authoritative persons. Rather, they should be people who have confidence in their thoughts and reflections, and be able to give them voice at the appropriate times.

5. ABLE TO LISTEN:

While they need the confidence to speak, they will also need the skill of being a good listener. They will need to listen to one another, and they will need to listen deeply and thoughtfully to a candidate being interviewed.

6. A PERSON OF CONVICTION WITH THE ABILITY TO REACH CONSENSUS:

The most effective members will be those who have clear convictions and are able to express them, while listening to the thoughts and convictions of other members. They will need to be people who are capable of working together towards consensus, trusting that the Holy Spirit is at work through them.

7. AVAILABLE:

The time commitment is normally around one year. During that time, there will be regular meetings early in the process and more frequent meetings during the interview time. Call committee members will need to be able to adjust their schedules so that they can attend ALL committee meetings, especially during the interviewing time. Only members present during the interview of all the candidates being considered should participate in the decision making discussion.

8. FEMALE, MALE, YOUTH REPRESENTATION:

The committee should include a balance of men and women. Some congregations/councils may choose to have a youth member (15-25 years of age). A youth member should be chosen because they have

the above listed abilities and characteristics. It serves no purpose to have a youth member who is present in body, but does not feel qualified to participate in the deliberative process.

CONFIDENTIALITY & COMMUNICATION

To protect the ministries of candidates in the present positions, **NO NAMES OF CANDIDATES SHOULD BE DISCUSSED OUTSIDE THE SELECTION COMMITTEE UNTIL THE TIME OF RECOMMENDING A CANDIDATE TO THE CONGREGATION.** You are free to discuss qualities, of course.

Communicate, using posters, newsletter and bulletin announcements (see Exhibit 14), as well as personal conversations. Let people know that you are making progress at every opportunity. Do not be secretive about your sessions, but explain that interviews are not open sessions because of the need to keep confidentiality.

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION PROFILE

A vital time for planning is when a congregation prepares to call a new pastor. It would seem like a commonsense thing to do, for in the absence of a comprehensive plan for ministry, how can a call committee recommend with confidence and integrity a candidate for the congregation to call? Pastors are not merely chaplains to individual members; they are the primary interpreters of the congregation's vision and mission. Perhaps this is why congregations often conclude they must wait until the new pastor is on board before they plan.

But in the absence of a congregational vision, what is the basis of selecting a new pastor? Congregations may poll the membership for its views on the qualities and strengths needed in the next pastor, but the outcome is predictable. Congregations want effective preaching and teaching, sensitive pastoral care, attention to children and youth, and a supportive influence in the congregation's organizational life. But based on the congregation's vision for the future and the ministries that are planned, what more specifically are the qualities and strengths needed?

If a call committee implicitly assumes a vision for the congregation that has to broad support within the group and selects the pastor accordingly, the seeds of trouble have been sown. It's important for the congregation to have its vision and mission clarified in advance of a call.

The Congregational Mission Profile serves several purposes—it helps assess congregational needs and summarizes goals in ministry.

The Profile is also used by the Bishop and staff to best match available candidates with your unique situation. The Call Committee is encouraged to obtain information and input from a broad spectrum of the parish membership. In addition, neighboring congregations may be helpful. Your conference dean may be able to facilitate a process whereby you can invite others to share with the committee how they view the ministry and leadership needs of your parish. Once the Profile has been prepared by the Call Committee, it should be reviewed with the Congregation Council to ensure that the ministry goals are in concert with those determined by the parish.

Candidates also will receive a copy of the profile (plus other community information which may be supplied by the call committee) so they may answer and ask questions intelligently during the interview. The Assistant to the Bishop will review the profile with you.

SYNOD OFFICE RESOURCES

The Assistant to the Bishop will normally be the person meeting with the congregation during the transition. The Bishop's staff will assist in arranging for interim pastoral services. The interim pastor does not participate in the call process in any way and is not available as a candidate for the call in the parish being served. The Assistant to the Bishop will assist in determining pastoral care needs and compensation. The local Conference Dean will also be available as a resource and support.

After staff review, the Assistant to the Bishop will then present resumes/profiles of potential candidates. Normally up to three candidates may be presented for the committee's consideration. The committee will then determine an interview procedure. Please be sure to notify each candidate regarding the process being followed and the time frame. Names of candidates may also have been received from members of the

congregation. The Bishop's office will assist in screening these (and other candidates), provide additional information, discuss availability, etc.

INTERVIEW & SELECTION

Suggested interview questions for both call committee and pastoral candidate are given in the Resources section of this manual. Please give yourselves time to prepare the interview questions and assign persons to cover certain questions. The exhibit questions are guidelines—frame them in your own words. Try to avoid asking hypothetical questions such as "If you were the pastor here, how would you ... ?" Management firms recommend designing behavior-based interviews. This is directly related to real-life concepts; skills, knowledge and abilities seen in previous parish experiences are likely to be repeated, and behavior-based interviewing brings these qualifications to light. Your Assistant to the Bishop will work with you on interview techniques. The interview often includes both formal question/answer time and informal visiting, perhaps over a meal. Be sure the candidate has an opportunity to ask questions, too, and to see the community, church building, etc. Remember that the interview is for the candidate's benefit as well as the committee's. The candidate(s) will need to learn as much as possible about the ministry of this parish, the community setting, etc.

Please be sure to give the Assistant to the Bishop the interview schedule. The evaluation session may be scheduled with the Assistant to the Bishop present.

Some congregation members feel it necessary to meet the person recommended by the call committee. An informal reception may be arranged for members to meet the recommended person. However, time and distance factors may preclude such an occasion. Try to bear in mind that the call committee has done the personal interviewing and the congregation is not expected to act as a committee of the whole and interview the candidate again. We do not recommend that candidates preach "trial" sermons. It is more appropriate for the committee to visit the candidate on his/her "home turf."

CANDIDATE QUALITIES

The Body of Christ, by its inclusiveness, is richly diverse. Naturally, ordained ministers and Associates in Ministry reflect such diversity. Variety is expressed in differing spiritual gifts and leadership styles, which affect appropriate "matching" of congregations and candidates. The leadership profiles and resumes of candidates and congregational profiles are tools used to better discern the guiding of the Holy Spirit. While we do not ignore "physical" characteristics where they would enhance ministry, we emphasize spiritual and leadership qualities, potential, and experience related to the needs of each situation. We are careful not to discriminate based on characteristics such as gender, age, ethnic background, physically challenged, or marital status. (See "The Affirmative Call" in the Resources Section for a more thorough discussion of these issues.)

CHOOSING THE CANDIDATE FOR RECOMMENDATION

In the midst of resumes, profiles, telephone calls and interviews, we may become so caught up in procedures we lose sight of the fact that this is God's call. This is a CALL process and so we emphasize it is not the hiring of a pastor to do things for us. Instead, we ask ourselves (committee and candidate) is the Holy Spirit calling this person and this parish together? The call committee is being used by the Spirit to discern the qualities which match or do not match this parish and this pastor. The decision will be made based on prayer and as much information as can reasonably be gathered. Committees must be sensitive about gathering additional information. Plain common sense and courtesy are the best guidelines. References listed may be personally contacted. If more information is desired, ask the candidate for someone to call regarding a specific area, i.e. youth ministry or educational ministry. If in doubt about how to proceed, consult your friendly Assistant to the Bishop.

NOTIFY CANDIDATES OF YOUR DECISIONS (See the Resources section for guidelines regarding a letter to candidates not recommended.) Let candidates know promptly when a decision will be considered. If a decision is to be delayed, let the candidate know promptly when a decision will be made.

Procedures for nominating one candidate to the congregation vary somewhat; you will need to determine the requirements in your congregational constitution and related documents. Your synod staff representative can offer assistance. In the case of some congregations, for example, the Congregation Council must recommend a candidate by a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of its membership (not simply $\frac{2}{3}$ of those present at a meeting). The ELCA Model Constitution for congregations states simply that a Call Committee shall seek the advice of the bishop of the Synod. Presumably, the Call Committee is authorized to present a candidate

directly to the congregation. In any case, however, endorsement by the Congregation Council is to be encouraged.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Once a candidate has been selected, the Council prepares for the congregational meeting. Normally, written notice is sent, plus announcement on two successive Sundays. (Check your own constitution to verify this.) A mailing, including the meeting announcement, will also include a brief description of the recommended candidate. The proposed compensation worksheets will have been completed by the Council, preferably including discussion with the candidate, and definitely with the Assistant to the Bishop. At the congregational meeting, presentations by Council (and Call Committee) members need to be made, positively articulating the rationale for the candidate. A question and answer time is typically held. The Assistant to the Bishop will be present and may conduct the meeting. Sometimes, because of schedule conflicts, another person may be appointed to represent the Bishop at the call meeting.

The congregational constitution dictates requirements for election of a pastor. In most cases a $\frac{2}{3}$ of those voting members present is required to issue a call, and voting is by written ballot. While the ballots are being counted, compensation details to accompany the call can be presented and approved—usually a simple majority vote by voice or show of hands is stipulated.

A third motion should call for an initial six to nine-month review and subsequent evaluations of mutual ministry. An additional motion is required if the congregation is applying for ELCA financial support.

A telephone call to the candidate announcing the results is customary. The formal call form should be completed and forwarded to the Bishop for signature. The Bishop then forwards the call to the candidate chosen. The candidate normally has up to 30 days in which to respond in writing.

WHAT IF WE ARE TURNED DOWN?

Call the Assistant to the Bishop whenever you have received an answer, either positively or negatively. If you are turned down, you will want to discuss what happened and begin the process again at the most appropriate point. Remember, there is always an open future in Christ.

WHAT IF THE PASTOR WANTS TO DELAY COMING?

Sometimes local considerations make it difficult for a candidate to leave within the normal 30-60 days after accepting. Arrival times are negotiable, with many factors to be considered. Your Assistant to the Bishop will assist you in dealing with this item, too. A few weeks one way or the other is not a lot when you look forward to many years together.

HOUSE HUNTING, MOVING AND SETTLING IN

Normally, candidates will have had a chance to see the parsonage, if there is one. It is important to assist the candidate (and family, if any) in becoming acquainted or tour the immediate area before or after the interview to get ideas about available housing. You may be able to indicate where good schools, shopping, housing values are located.

Congregations specify moving expense reimbursement in the call. There are some companies which will give a discount to Lutheran clergy, but they are not automatically the best. While it is tempting to save money by "doing it yourself," that is usually not a good practice. Prorating the moving costs over the years makes it cost effective for most congregations to authorize the candidate to choose a professional moving company. Special offerings during the transition period can be received to cover the moving costs if a reserve fund has not been included in prior budgets. While these transition are happening it is important for your new pastor to feel welcomed and wanted. Notes and cards of greeting are appropriate.

Assure the candidate of time to move and settle in. Effectiveness will be enhanced in the long run, and attitudes will be positive. Usually, a full week is necessary to unpack, get utilities hooked up, find the stores, doctors, dentists, hospital, schools, etc. You can help by offering lists of addresses for each of these whom you feel to be reliable and worthwhile. You may also offer to prepare meals, baby-sit, house the pastor/family until furniture and utilities are in place, etc., depending on the needs.

Be sure the pastor's office has been cleaned, and that all signs have been updated with appropriate name changes. Often, stationery and calling cards can be ordered and in place if discussed in advance with the candidate.

INSTALLATION & WELCOME

A date and time for the installation should be set for several weeks after the pastor's arrival. CONTACT THE CONFERENCE DEAN TO CLEAR DATES FOR INSTALLATION. Your Conference Dean will install your new pastor on behalf of the Bishop. It is usually the new pastor's prerogative as to invitation of a preacher; the pastor may also want to designate the offering at installation for a special cause.

Welcome Events take many forms: A canned and paper goods shower ... dinner invitations for the first week ... potluck luncheon and introductions after the first Service ... refreshments and reception after the Installation ... a series of "cottage meetings" in members homes over the first several months, etc.

Introductions should be arranged for the pastor to area clergy (Councils of Churches, Clergy Associations, Conference/Coalition, neighborhood churches, etc.) and to community leaders as soon as possible.

Take time at the first Council meeting to "get better acquainted" -- likewise at committee meetings. Name tags and repeating names at the door on Sunday for several months will help, too.

The process of calling the pastor is now ended. Years of opportunity for growth in Christ lie ahead. Through the ministry of your congregation, God's mission will continue, the work done by the Call Committee will bear fruit.

God's richest blessing be with you all.

EVALUATION & SABBATICAL

Evaluation is a normal process, and is scheduled for six to nine months after the installation, then annually thereafter. Your Conference Dean will assist the Congregation Council in arranging and conducting the initial review. The focus should be on "the ministry of the congregation and pastor." Conflicts are reduced and effective ministry enhanced when mutual expectations are clearly discussed.

This is also an excellent time to begin a Staff Support Committee if your congregation does not have one in place. The Staff Support Committee provides a valuable "listening post" for congregational members and the pastor or AiM where differences can be discussed and resolved in a non-confrontational atmosphere. An excellent booklet describing the role of the Staff Support Committee and its functions is entitled *The Staff Support Committee: A Vision for Mutual Ministry* by George Keck, and is available from Augsburg-Fortress. Members of the Call Committee may be asked to serve in the initial Staff Support Committee until the new pastor or AiM is familiar with members of the congregation.

More and more congregations are encouraged by the mutual benefits of a specified period of time "away" periodically. One suggestion is an extra 3 months (often in the summer) for each seven years of continuous service. The sabbatical is used for renewal— through travel, study, engaging in some new and different activity—and is in addition to normal vacation and continuing education time. Contact the Synod Office for assisting in planning for sabbatical time.

Congregational Mission Profile

Forms:

An early step in calling a rostered leader is completing a Congregational Mission Profile, a document that describes your congregation's history, ministry, membership, community, and leadership needs. The form has a new look and is more explicitly focused on mission. The intent is to help a congregation to call the leader that can best serve the congregation as it lives out the Good News of God in its community. Hence, a Congregational Mission Profile is essential because of the role it plays in expressing who your congregation is now and what you want your ministry to look like in the future.

Process:

Often, those who read your congregation's profile may not know anything about your ministry or community. The Congregational Mission Profile is not only an opportunity to tell people you may wish to call about your congregation, but can also help a congregation reflect on its identity, ministry, and mission during a time of transition.

The profile is divided into five parts:

Congregation Information

Ministry Practices and Structure

Mission in the Community

Where is God Leading Us?

The Leader We Seek

Prior to completing the profile, it might be helpful to read through it first and do research by locating, for example, your congregation's annual reports. The Congregational Mission Profile will ask you to summarize information on your congregation and community. This information, found in your congregation's current Congregational Trend Report and Demographic Data for Your Zip Code Report, is immediately available on the Internet at www.elca.org/call. You will need your congregation's ID number and synod code to access the demographic reports for ZIP Codes your congregation serves. The congregation ID number and synod code can be obtained from your pastor, an ELCA Yearbook, or your synod office. (Click [here](#) to look up information on your synod office). Reports can be obtained via mail by calling the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2990.

The Affirmative Call

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to offer guidance to call committees and synod staff as they work together in the important matter of calling pastors and other rostered leaders. Its aim is to insure that every call process results ultimately in "the affirmative call," that is, a call free of inappropriate discrimination, unlawful bias or unjust relationships with candidates.

AREAS OF CONCERN

The vast majority of call committee members approach their task with a high commitment to fairness. They seek to be faithful representatives of the congregation that has chosen them to serve. They are likewise fair-minded and seek to serve the best interests of all who might be considered for the ministry position. Call committees recognize the many gifts for ministry among the great variety of persons God calls into service—from new seminary graduates to pastors with decades of experience; among Associates in Ministry, both male and female. Congregations are willing to grow and experience new leadership.

Nevertheless, some problem areas remain. They include:

Age discrimination: Pastors and other rostered leaders above a certain age or within a few years of retirement find they may not be considered for a particular call because of their age. At the other end of the scale, younger persons may be dismissed as too youthful.

Gender discrimination: This most greatly, if not exclusively, adversely affects female pastors, seminary graduates and associates. Twenty five years after the ELCA's predecessor churches saw the wisdom of ordaining women, it is still heard from time to time: "Our congregation is not ready for a woman pastor."

Marital status: Some congregations or members within a congregation cling to their personal image of the "ideal pastor." Often, this includes marital status and family situation. Inappropriate discrimination is most often experienced by single pastors (including those who have never married, as well as those who have known the painful realities of divorce or death of a spouse).

Racial/ethnic discrimination: While the church, in its official statements, has championed racial justice, we are not immune from inappropriate discrimination based upon a candidate's racial or ethnic background. The ministry of the Lutheran church has been enriched in recent years by the response of persons of color and many languages to the call. Yet, these sisters and brothers sometimes face discrimination.

Physical attributes or conditions: A recent article in *The Lutheran* told the story of a blind pastor's ministry. Many congregations have been blessed down through the years by the ministry of persons who are sometimes labeled as "disabled" or "handicapped." Nevertheless, there have been instances where a candidate's physical condition was the basis of inappropriate discrimination. Personal and physical needs (as, for example, a health requirement to live in a particular climate) may be appropriate considerations in recommendation for call.

PRINCIPLES

The Sierra Pacific Synod seeks to be guided by the highest principles of justice, fairness and openness in its relationship with congregations calling pastors or other rostered leaders. While the church is not bound by the same legal constraints as all other employers, it is our desire to avoid legalisms and strive toward even higher Biblical principles of fairness and justice than are reflected in the civil codes of the United States.

GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

- 1) While they are first and foremost Christian communities and gatherings of the people of God, congregations are also legal corporations and employers.
- 2) While age discrimination in and of itself is always inappropriate, in some cases expected tenure is an appropriate consideration. A congregation that has experienced several short term pastorates of 2-3 years, for example, may determine at the outset of a call process that the congregation can best be served by a relatively long-term pastorate of at least 7 - 10 years. That determination may result in candidates nearing retirement not being considered. Even so, the congregation will be expected to not simply assume a pastor's

retirement at age 65, for example; they will be encouraged to enter into conversations with older candidates to determine whether mutual agreements concerning tenure may be worked out.

3) Statements such as, "we're not ready for a woman" or "our congregation wouldn't accept a person of color" will be regarded as honest expressions of feelings. Such feelings, while genuine, simply cannot govern the conduct of a call process. The only appropriate criteria for recommendation of candidates by synod staff, and their consideration by a call committee, are those which relate to educational background, ministerial experience and a positive matching of parish needs with pastoral gifts. Where strong sentiments are felt by members in a congregation, this should be shared openly with the synod staff person. Every effort will be made to provide educational resources to assist persons in gaining understanding of the ELCA's beliefs and practices relating to ordained and lay ministry.

4) While discrimination on the basis of marital status or family circumstances is inappropriate, call committees and synod staff are to be concerned for the holistic needs of pastoral candidates. Therefore, the synod's pastoral profile forms give opportunity for candidates to state their family situation in addition to educational and ministerial experience. Many times, the congregation and synod are asked by candidates to offer assistance in exploring opportunities for spouse employment in the area etc. In some cases, size of parsonage or resources available for housing allowance will affect candidate recommendation by the bishop's office. In all such situations, the considerations shall be openly discussed with prospective candidates. In most ministry situations residence in the local community where the congregation is located is recognized as an essential component for effective ministry. Such a determination shall be arrived at in consultation between a call committee and synod staff, and made known to all prospective candidates in advance of recommendation to the congregation.

5) Occasional acts of inappropriate discrimination shall be dealt with in an evangelical spirit of "guidance and counsel." Pastors or other rostered leaders who feel they have suffered discrimination, should discuss their situation with the bishop or associates. Incidents of discrimination against candidates may be shared with any future candidates; such knowledge is relevant to their consideration of a potential call and will involve issues that need to be addressed in future ministry in that place.